



UNIVERSITY OF  
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**Xenophobia in South Africa: The perspectives and  
experiences of African international students at the  
University of KwaZulu Natal (Pietermaritzburg  
Campus)**

by  
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**This Dissertation is submitted in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (International Relations)  
School of Social Sciences University of KwaZulu–Natal  
Pietermaritzburg,  
South Africa.**

**Supervisor:  
Professor Dorcas Ettang**

**2025**

## DECLARATION

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As the candidate's supervisor, I certify the above statement and have approved this thesis for submission.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 21st of March, 2025

**Prof. Dorcas Ettang: Supervisor**

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely husband, Patrice Nzosaba, and to my beautiful mother, Mrs. Mercy Goto, for their prayers, love, moral support, and continuous encouragement throughout my academic journey. To my wonderful and amazing 8 children Pax, Emery, Aaron, Marlaine, Dunia, Fabiola, Baraka-Joshua, and Abale-Jonathan, may God bless you all and continue to guide and protect you in all aspects of life. In addition, I dedicate this thesis to all the mothers trying to balance the responsibilities of being a working mum and wife while pursuing their studies. I encourage these mothers to keep going and never give up on their dreams; all their hard work will benefit their families and the community.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|            |                                                       |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| ADB        | AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP                        |
| ACO        | ALIEN COMPLIANCE ORDER                                |
| ANC        | AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS                             |
| AU         | AFRICAN UNION                                         |
| CA         | CONTENT ANALYSIS                                      |
| CFC        | CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRE                               |
| COVID-19   | CORONAVIRUS 2019                                      |
| DA         | DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE                                   |
| DHA        | DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS                            |
| DHET       | DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING DRC       |
|            | DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO                          |
| FQD        | FOUR QUADRANT DIAGRAM                                 |
| HDR        | HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT                              |
| HSRC       | HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL                        |
| HDU        | HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED UNIVERSITIES               |
| ISP        | INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PARTICIPANT                     |
| IPA        | INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS                      |
| IR         | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS                               |
| LSP        | LOCAL STUDENT PARTICIPANT                             |
| NAP        | NATIONAL ACTION PLAN                                  |
| PCT        | POWER CONFLICT THEORY                                 |
| REC        | RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE                             |
| RI         | REGIONAL INTEGRATION                                  |
| SA         | SOUTH AFRICA                                          |
| SAAPS      | SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE        |
| SADC       | SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY                |
| SAHRC      | SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL                    |
| SAMA       | SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION                     |
| ST         | SCAPEGOAT THEORY                                      |
| TA         | THEMATIC ANALYSIS                                     |
| UKZN (PMB) | UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL (PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS) |
| UNHCR      | UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE AGENCY                         |
| WMA        | WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION                             |
| ZANU-PF    | ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION-PATRIOTIC FRONT       |

## **ABSTRACT**

Xenophobia is a problematic issue that has affected the social, economic, and political atmosphere in South Africa. The end of apartheid and the new democratic status of South Africa have brought substantial economic, social, and political changes that continue to affect the issue of migration in the country. After the apartheid transition, South Africa faced an increase in its migrant population from African countries. A substantial rise in xenophobia and numerous attacks on foreigners have accompanied this increase in migration. This study examines the issue of xenophobia in South Africa based on the views and experiences of African international students at the University of KwaZulu Natal (PMB Campus). This study employs a qualitative approach to collect in-depth and personal experiences and views of African international students at UKZN. The study uses semi-structured interviews by interviewing a total of [33] participants, [17] African international students, [16] local students, and [1] representative from the international office. This study uses convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques to recruit the participants, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the selected participants. This study adopts [4] theoretical frameworks due to the complex nature of xenophobia in South Africa; these include scapegoat theory, isolation hypothesis, biocultural hypothesis, and power conflict theory as the main analytical tools to examine the nature of xenophobia in South Africa and institutions of higher education based on the views and experiences of African international students at UKZN. The findings of the study revealed that the nature of xenophobia within institutions of higher education is covert xenophobia, which is a form of discrimination that is disguised and subtle rather than public or obvious. Covert xenophobia discriminates against African international students through often unnoticeable or seemingly passive methods, and it is expressed in xenophobic attitudes and discriminatory practices. It is not expressed in violent attacks like in the South African communities.

The study reveals that African international students experience xenophobia on campus through discrimination, institutional exclusion when seeking employment or scholarships/funding, stereotyping, language barrier, isolation and social exclusion from campus activities, and fear of reporting xenophobic practices. However, most of the participants stated that on campus is a much better space than the nature of xenophobia experienced off campus, which is more intense and violent in nature. The findings reveal that African international students face a high level of xenophobia off campus, especially in the healthcare sector, for example, in public hospitals and public clinics, in such a way that some choose to self-medicate to avoid going to clinics of hospitals. The study recommends that it is essential for universities and governments to address these issues by implementing policies and programs aimed at promoting integration, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Educational institutions such as UKZN should offer resources and support for students who experience xenophobia and actively work to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their background or nationality. This study recognizes that xenophobia in South Africa is a complex issue that transcends national boundaries. Therefore, the author advocates for a collective effort by African states to find sustainable

solutions to this African problem. By highlighting the need for African nations to work together, the study positions itself as a proponent of African-based initiatives and interventions tailored to the unique socio-political landscape of the African continent. The study recommends that by fostering a sense of shared responsibility within Africa, the researcher encourages the development and implementation of strategies that reflect the various perspectives and experiences within Africa, eventually contributing to a united and effective response to the issue of xenophobia in South Africa and institutions of higher education such as UKZN.

**KEYWORDS: Migration, Xenophobia, Experiences of UKZN African International Students**



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Migration is one of the most important aspects of globalization, and it has resulted in growing numbers of people moving within countries and across borders, looking for greener pastures. South Africa's emergence from the Apartheid era brought forth the promise of a democratic society founded on equality and social justice. This transition, however, has been fraught with complexities, particularly concerning migration and the emergence of xenophobic sentiments. The dismantling of Apartheid's restrictive borders coincided with increased migration from other African countries, drawn by the allure of economic opportunity and political stability. This increase in migration, while contributing to the nation's diversity, has also fuelled social tensions, manifesting in sporadic outbreaks of violence and discrimination directed towards foreign nationals. This phenomenon, broadly termed xenophobia, reflects deeper anxieties surrounding resource scarcity, unemployment, and the preservation of national identity in a rapidly changing society. These tensions are also present within South Africa's higher education institutions, where African international students, particularly those from other African countries, navigate a complex social landscape. This study delves into this critical issue, focusing specifically on African international students' lived experiences and perspectives at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

In line with the above views, Crush and McDonald (2002) state that South Africa's renewed participation in the global economy has led to distinct patterns of migration, bringing with them a range of challenges and opportunities related to this movement of people. Otu (2009) states that the transition to a democratic South Africa after Apartheid resulted in significant economic, social, and political shifts that continue to shape migration patterns in the country. In addition to Otu's (2009) view, Singh (2010) argues that the fall of Apartheid marked a turning point in South Africa's history, ushering in a new democratic era that attracted increased migration from other African countries and this period holds particular significance when examining the complexities of xenophobia. The above authors collectively show that xenophobia in South Africa is a multifaceted issue with deep historical roots. While economic factors and competition for resources undoubtedly play a role, it's crucial to acknowledge the lasting impact of apartheid on social relations and perceptions of "otherness." The isolation hypothesis, coupled with the

enduring effects of systemic violence, provides a nuanced lens through which to understand the distrust and fear that fuel xenophobic attitudes.

In addition to a thriving economy, highly promising democracy, and a relatively peaceful environment, South Africa rose to occupy prominent positions in Africa and internationally (Gomo, 2010). Gomo (2010) states that South Africa's swift integration into the global stage brought new responsibilities, including providing refuge for those escaping conflict, economic hardship, and persecution, primarily from other African nations. However, Gomo (2010) argues that this is a massive burden for a country that is still recovering from long years of the oppressive rule of apartheid while they are also trying to put their country in order. Gomo (2010) emphasizes the dual reality of South Africa's post-apartheid identity, a nation with a thriving economy and democratic ideals, yet still grappling with the legacy of its past. This creates a tension between welcoming those seeking refuge and managing the perceived burdens of responsibility.

According to Hook and Eagle (2002), South Africa's extended isolation on the global stage, particularly during the Apartheid era, fostered a sense of detachment from the wider world. For Hook and Eagle (2002), this isolation bred unfamiliarity, leading some South Africans to view foreigners with suspicion and distrust, a phenomenon that aligns with the isolation hypothesis. This shows that xenophobia is partly rooted in the country's history of segregation and limited global engagement. In addition, Hamber (1997) states that the Apartheid segregation policy robbed black South Africans of their rights as citizens as they experienced beatings, arbitrary arrests, torture, and assassinations. Also, they experienced poverty, malnutrition, inferior education, urban overcrowding, and social strife in townships resulting in a culture of violence.

Hamber (2004) adds another layer to this argument by highlighting the deep-seated trauma and culture of violence engendered by apartheid. This perspective suggests that xenophobia is linked to unresolved societal issues and the psychological scars of the past. Hamber (1997) further indicates that while violence is undeniably a part of South Africa's social landscape understanding its pervasiveness requires a deeper dive into the historical and social forces that have shaped this reality. Apartheid, with its brutal enforcement of racial hierarchy, not only normalized violence as a tool of control but also created deep-seated inequalities and social fragmentation that persist to this day. These enduring legacies, coupled with widespread poverty and limited opportunities, create a breeding ground for frustration and resentment, often manifesting as violence.

For this study, it is crucial to contextualize the culture of violence because the study acknowledges that xenophobia doesn't exist in a vacuum; it is deeply intertwined with South Africa's pervasive culture of violence, a legacy of the country's apartheid history. One can say that by contextualizing xenophobia within this broader framework of violence, we gain a deeper understanding of its root causes and the complex factors that contribute to its persistence. The systemic brutality of apartheid normalized violence as a means of oppression and control, leaving an indelible mark on the social fabric. This normalisation of violence, coupled with the trauma of displacement, poverty, and inequality, has created a fertile ground for aggression and prejudice to flourish. Similarly, Mlambo (2019) argues that the deep-rooted culture of violence in South Africa, stemming from its apartheid history and ongoing socio-economic struggles, intensifies xenophobic attitudes. He highlights that violence has become a normalised way to resolve conflict and competition for scarce resources, making it a common response to economic or social tensions. For Mlambo (2019), the violent events of 2008 and 2015 clearly demonstrate how societal pressures can escalate into xenophobic violence.

Mlambo (2019) observes that in 2008, violence in townships resulted in the deaths of over 60 people and displaced thousands of foreign nationals, while similar attacks in 2015 targeted African immigrants. These incidents underscore how economic competition and a violent culture can lead to brutal assaults on foreign nationals. Mlambo (2019) also emphasizes that as societal tensions rise, social cohesion breaks down, increasing the likelihood of violence. Local populations, feeling threatened, may unite around a shared identity, excluding foreign nationals, which fuels collective violence and deepens divisions. This cycle of fear and hostility further entrenches violence and negative stereotypes within society. Thus, this same culture of exclusion and hostility is often mirrored in educational institutions, as African international students (AIS) at UKZN report experiencing various forms of xenophobia, including verbal harassment, social exclusion, and stereotyping, which further isolate them from the broader student community. Beyond the campus, AIS students also encounter xenophobia within South African communities, where they may face hostility, distrust, and even violence. This pervasive atmosphere of exclusion extends into their daily lives, affecting their ability to integrate into society and access essential services such as healthcare, thereby reinforcing their sense of alienation. Therefore, examining the experiences of African international students requires acknowledging this broader

context of violence and recognizing that their encounters with xenophobia may be shaped by and contribute to these deeply ingrained patterns of aggression within South African society.

Returning to the broader discussion, Singh (2010) further argues that migration has increased due to global trends of globalization, the deterioration of institutions, poor leadership, and political conflict in weak and unstable African countries. Singh (2010) asserts that during the Apartheid era, African immigrants entered South Africa, but they were very few and worked mainly in the agricultural and mining sectors. Historically, in South Africa, immigrants were not accorded similar privileges to their white counterparts, who were able to move across the country freely (Nyamnjoh, 2006). African immigrants, mainly from their neighboring countries, entered the country under strict conditions and settled only for restricted and temporary periods (Morris, 2001). According to Otu (2009), migrants principally came from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, from countries such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, and Botswana. They were mainly unskilled migrants who worked in the mining industries of South Africa.

In line with the above, Nyamnjoh (2006) argues that the end of apartheid led to a surge in migration to South Africa. Furthermore, Statistics South Africa estimated in 2019 that the country's population was 57.73 million, with a net migration of 1.02 million people between 2016 and 2019 (StatisticsSA, 2018). In addition, several factors drive people, including African international students, to migrate. These motivations can be broadly categorized as economic, political, social, and environmental: These categories also relate to what is known as “push” or “pull” factors (StatisticsSA, 2015). The push factors are common in the benefactor's country, while pull factors are found in the host country. These two forces are necessary for migration (Kline, 2003). Zimmermann (1996) states that the pull factors attract an individual to move to a specific geographical location with better working conditions, such as a sound education system, social security, and a booming economy, while supply push factors, such as bad governments, poverty, war, human rights violations, and unemployment provoke people into migrating to other areas.

As highlighted above, Kanayo, Anjofui, and Steiegler (2019) explain these four categories as they state that several political factors contribute to migration, such as violent conflict,

underdevelopment, poverty, political instability, and corruption. For Kanayo et al. (2019), in recent times, many African states have been grappling with intense armed conflicts, inadequate governance, escalating poverty, extensive human rights violations, and widespread displacement. For this study, the decision to study abroad for some African international students at UKZN is also shaped by the challenging political realities of their home countries. Odiaka and Oriugu (2017) illustrate how civil wars, political persecution, and human rights violations create an environment of fear and instability, compelling individuals to seek refuge and safety elsewhere. Thus, some African international students are not only seeking academic advancement at UKZN but also a chance to learn and live in a more equitable and just environment, free from the constraints and dangers they may face in their home countries.

In line with the above views, the economic factors for migration are mostly limited economic opportunities, high unemployment, and poverty. According to the World Bank Group (2018), many African countries struggle with limited economic opportunities, pushing individuals to seek better livelihoods elsewhere. Garlick, Leibbrandt, and Levinsohn (2016) also state that significant wage disparities between South Africa and neighboring countries create a strong economic incentive for migration. The decision for some African students to pursue higher education at UKZN is often deeply intertwined with the limited economic opportunities and stark realities of their home countries. As the World Bank Group (2018) highlights, many African nations grapple with high unemployment and pervasive poverty, pushing individuals, including African international students, to seek better livelihoods elsewhere. For African international students, pursuing a degree at UKZN represents not only an investment in their education but also a strategic move towards securing a brighter economic future in South Africa. For Kanayo et al. (2019), Social Migration encompasses migration driven by social factors, including family reunification, access to better social services (healthcare, education), or a desire for a more desirable social environment. Dinbabo and Nyasulu (2015) suggest that South Africa's relatively advanced social and economic development makes it attractive to migrants. On the other hand, environmental factors like climate change, natural disasters, and resource scarcity are increasingly driving migration globally (Kanayo et al., 2019). Educational migration has also increased in South Africa as many international students are choosing to study in South Africa.

Schoole (2015) notes that South Africa boasts the largest higher education system on the African continent, encompassing 26 public universities catering to diverse needs, from advanced research to skilled workforce training. Each of these institutional types attracts a high share of Africa's international students, helping to curb the country's brain drain. The data provided by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training in 2013, as cited by Schoole (2015), reveals a striking trend in international student enrolment. While students from the Southern African Development Community region represent only 5.5% of total higher education enrolment in South Africa, they constitute a significant 74.3% of the country's international student body (Schoole, 2015). This highlights the prominence of SADC countries as leading sources of international students in South Africa. This is further emphasized by the fact that eight of the top sending countries are from the SADC region, with the top four, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland, sharing a direct border with South Africa. Zimbabwe stands out as the largest student contributor. Beyond the SADC region, Nigeria ranks as the fifth largest sender of international students to South Africa, followed by Kenya in tenth place (Schoole, 2015).

The recent statistics released by the Migration report by Statistics SA (2023) indicate that between 2014 and 2019, South Africa welcomed 672,615 international students across various post-school education institutions. Public Higher Education Institutions proved most popular, attracting 482,114 students, followed by private HEIs with 124,368 students. Private and CET colleges contributed a total of 37,930, respectively. Interestingly, while overall international student enrolment grew, public HEIs experienced a decline of 35.2% (25,693 students) between 2014 and 2019 (Statistics SA, 2023). In contrast, private HEIs saw an 11.5% increase (1,483 students), and private colleges experienced a 20.4% decline (305 students). CET enrolments declined slightly, decreasing by 11.1% (467 students) from 2015 to 2016 (Statistics SA, 2023). Thus, a substantial number of international students, particularly from SADC countries, is directly linked to the experiences of African international students (AIS) at UKZN. With Zimbabwe being the largest source of students, the representation of Zimbabwean students at UKZN reflects broader regional migration patterns. However, this concentration of students from neighboring countries makes them more vulnerable to xenophobic sentiments, as many local South Africans may view these students as competitors for scarce resources such as jobs, scholarships, and academic opportunities.

Despite the significant contribution that international students make to South Africa's higher education system, the decline in enrolment at public higher education institutions could partly result from the hostile environment, including xenophobia, that these students face. This emphasizes the relevance of this study in examining xenophobia at UKZN, where students from SADC countries and other regions play a key role in the university's internationalization but are still subjected to discrimination and exclusion. These experiences of AIS highlight how xenophobia not only affects individual students but also threatens to undermine the positive role they play in South Africa's higher education landscape, limiting their ability to thrive in both academic and social spheres.

South Africa attracted students from diverse countries for educational purposes. Zimbabwe consistently topped the list, accounting for nearly a third (30.4%) of all international students, with a total of 222,162 individuals (Statistics SA, 2023). Namibia followed with 9% (66,186 students), Eswatini with 5% (36,505 students), and the Democratic Republic of Congo with 4.8% (35,137 students) (Statistics SA, 2023). Lesotho and Nigeria also emerged as significant contributors, although their numbers fluctuated over the years. Other countries in the top ten included Zambia, Botswana, Kenya, and Ghana, with the latter showing the lowest participation. Interestingly, the "other foreign nationalities" category, representing students from countries outside the top ten, also exhibited fluctuating patterns, peaking at 40,573 students in 2015 (Statistics SA, 2015). These trends highlight the dynamic nature of South Africa's international student body, with consistent contributions from some nations and fluctuating participation from others. While South Africa attracts international students, the Statistics South Africa Migration Profile Report (2023) needs to be considered alongside the issue of xenophobia, especially concerning African migrants. This study explores how xenophobia, potentially contributes to the reported decline of international student enrolment at public HEIs, and how it impacts these students' lives. Concerns about safety and integration due to xenophobic sentiments can deter prospective students from other African countries. Examining the challenges, coping mechanisms, and recommendations from these students can help create a more inclusive environment at UKZN and inform broader policies to address xenophobia in South Africa's higher education system.

In line with the above views the researcher acknowledges the popularity and dominance of xenophobic attacks and sentiments in national discourses, academic spaces, and at the grassroots levels, thus noting that this has seeped into the institutional settings of higher education. Several scholars have investigated the nature and prevalence of xenophobia targeting students within higher education institutions. Notably, Dominquez-Whitehead and Sing (2015), Tati (2010), Oluwaseun Tella, Nordling (2015), Singh (2013), Muthuki (2010), and Shindondola (2002), Gumbo (2014), and Kanjo (2010) have conducted research exploring this issue within various university settings. For example, Singh (2013) examines the xenophobic practices at the University of Limpopo. She argues that international students' experiences of xenophobic attacks have risen with the broader xenophobic attacks in South African communities. Singh (2013) points out that while international students may not always face physical violence, xenophobic encounters leave them with lasting emotional and psychological trauma.

Shindondola (2002) examines xenophobia in South Africa based on the views and experiences of some international students at Rand Afrikaans University. She argues that factors like skin color, accent, clothing, and even where someone lives can make them targets of xenophobia. Despite its diversity, Shindondola adds that South Africa still has a long way to go regarding acceptance and inclusivity. Muthuki (2010), in her doctoral thesis exploring the experiences of African foreign students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, argues that the concept of "foreignness" has created a rift between black South African students and their counterparts from other African countries. Kanjo (2010) delves into the experiences of African foreign female students at UKZN and how they navigate xenophobia within this context. Kanjo's (2010) study highlights that these female students face a double burden of xenophobia and gender-based discrimination. They are often subjected to verbal abuse, social exclusion, and prejudice based on their nationality and gender.

The study also reveals that these experiences can significantly impact their academic performance, mental well-being, and overall integration into the university environment. The study by Majola (2018) *Perceptions of UKZN Howard College students regarding the 2015 xenophobic attack in Durban, South Africa,* examines student perspectives on the 2015 Durban



xenophobic attacks. The study investigates how students at UKZN Howard College understood the causes of the attacks, their reactions to the violence, and how the events impacted their feelings of safety. Additionally, the research explores student opinions on the government's response to the crisis (Majola,2018). Gumbo's study (2014) aims to understand the experiences of Zimbabwean students studying at UKZN. Gumbo's (2014) findings of his study were that Zimbabwean students at UKZN had both negative and positive experiences. The negative experiences include language barriers, financial challenges, xenophobia, accommodation problems, differential treatment of students, dealing with cultural differences, pressure from sponsors, and obstacles in accessing study permits.

In light of the above views, this study states that while previous studies by Muthuki and Kanjo (2010) examined xenophobia at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, their focus primarily centered on the Howard College campus. This research expands the scope by investigating the xenophobic experiences of African international students at the Pietermaritzburg campus, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the issue across UKZN. As for Gumbo, his study only focused on the experiences of Zimbabwean students at UKZN, while my study covers different African nationalities such as Nigeria, Namibia, DRC, Swaziland, Uganda, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Cameroon. Furthermore, while Kanjo (2010) study covered the intersection of gender and xenophobia, this study delves deeper into this intersectionality by examining the experiences of both male and female African international students. Additionally, while Majola's (2018) research provided valuable insights into student perceptions of the 2015 xenophobic attacks, this study broadens the temporal scope by investigating how xenophobia has manifested at UKZN throughout its history. This research not only documents the xenophobic experiences of AIS but also examines the absence of specific UKZN policies or programs that are aimed at combating xenophobia. The study critically explores how the absence of formal policies impacts AIS and proposes potential institutional interventions based on student input.

This study aims to enhance our understanding of xenophobia by collecting data and empirical narratives from African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). While previous research has addressed the experiences of xenophobia among African international students, there remains a significant need to explore the unique perspectives of those

specifically at the Pietermaritzburg campus. By focusing on a specific campus, the study allows for a more precise examination of the academic and social environments these students navigate, which may differ from those of other campuses or regions. This level of specificity enriches the discourse on xenophobia by highlighting the localised dynamics of exclusion that African international students face. Analysis: This campus-specific focus underscores the importance of studying xenophobia in varied contexts, as local factors such as community attitudes, university policies, and regional politics can shape the nature of discrimination. This approach ensures that the findings are relevant not only to UKZN but also to other institutions with similar contexts, illustrating how xenophobia may manifest differently across educational settings.

Existing literature indicates that international students, particularly those from African countries, often encounter substantial academic and social challenges in their host countries (Ndebele and Ndlovu, 2019). These challenges include language and cultural barriers, lack of social support, discrimination, and insufficient academic and career development resources (Mudhovozi, 2011). Among these, xenophobia emerges as a major obstacle for African international students in South Africa. Previous studies have explored the underpinnings of xenophobia and the attitudes that permeate South African higher education institutions (Kang'ethe and Wotshela, 2016). However, many of these studies have focused on broader societal impacts, often overlooking students' specific academic and social experiences on particular campuses. Thus, by addressing the nuanced challenges faced by African international students, this study brings into focus how institutional practices, academic culture, and social interactions contribute to xenophobia within higher education. It further demonstrates that xenophobia, although rooted in broader social dynamics, has unique manifestations in academic environments that warrant close examination.

Xenophobia significantly affects African international students through structural, societal, institutional, and overt forms. Structural xenophobia includes restrictive immigration policies, complex visa procedures, and lack of institutional support, reinforcing negative perceptions of migrants (Tewolde, 2023). Societal xenophobia manifests in discrimination, stereotypes, and negative public attitudes, often influenced by media portrayals and economic competition (Mabera, 2020). Institutional xenophobia is evident in unfair grading, language barriers, and inadequate academic support at universities, such as UKZN (Otu, 2017). Overt xenophobia

occurs off-campus through violence, verbal abuse, and discrimination in public spaces and healthcare settings (Neocosmos, 2010). This study aims to explore these experiences in depth, highlighting their impact on students' academic performance, mental well-being, and social integration while assessing institutional responses to these challenges.

This study explores the perspectives and lived experiences of African international students at UKZN regarding xenophobia. This contributes to a more nuanced understanding of this issue from the viewpoint of those directly affected, which can inform policies and interventions aimed at fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students in South African universities. The primary focus of this research is to examine xenophobia through the lens of international students at UKZN, critically analysing their personal experiences and the effects of xenophobia on their academic journeys. Additionally, it aims to understand how these students respond to xenophobic incidents and what forms of support are available from governmental or university structures. Therefore, this dual focus on both the experiences of xenophobia and the institutional responses ensures that the study not only documents the problem but also examines the efficacy of existing support mechanisms. Thus, by doing so, it provides actionable insights for improving university policies and government interventions, making the findings particularly relevant for institutional reform and policy development.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

This study states that while there is existing research on xenophobia affecting African international students (AIS) in South Africa, this study offers a unique contribution by focusing specifically on the experiences at the Pietermaritzburg campus of UKZN. This localized focus allows for a detailed examination of how xenophobia manifests in a specific institutional and geographical setting, which may differ from other campuses and regions in South Africa. Furthermore, this research prioritizes the voices and perspectives of the students themselves, capturing first-hand accounts of their experiences and challenges. By doing so, the study uncovers nuances that broader, more generalized studies may overlook. In light of the above, the contemporary context of xenophobia in South Africa necessitates a focus on its evolution post-apartheid. While historical factors stemming from apartheid policies are significant, the intensification of xenophobic sentiments in recent years, particularly in light of economic

challenges and social instability has been highlighted by scholars. Research indicates that xenophobia has escalated, particularly during periods of economic downturn, where foreign nationals are often scapegoated for broader societal issues (Crush and Ramachandran, 2010). This shift highlights the need for nuanced studies that consider the perspectives of marginalised groups, such as African international students, within the broader discourse on xenophobia.

The South African government's approach to migration has evolved significantly since 1994, with a notable trend towards the securitization of migration. This positions migrants as threats to national security and social cohesion, which has been prevalent in South African political discourse (Landau, 2011). Such a perspective often leads to policies that disproportionately target foreign nationals, exacerbating tensions within communities. Furthermore, xenophobic attitudes have been institutionalized within various sectors, including law enforcement and social services, reflecting and reinforcing societal prejudices against migrants (Nyamnjoh, 2006). The experiences of African international students are critical to understanding contemporary xenophobia in South Africa. These students often face unique challenges, including discrimination and social exclusion, which mirror broader societal attitudes toward foreigners (Mlambo, 2019). Major xenophobic incidents, such as those in 2008, 2015, and more recently in 2019, highlight the pervasive nature of these sentiments and the real dangers they pose.

In light of the above views previous reports and studies observe that such an indiscriminate xenophobic attitude stems from the idea that African foreigners are seen to be a threat to South African economic and social life. Crush (2008) states that South Africans perceive foreigners as an economic threat and as people who have come to take their employment opportunities. With such stereotyping, interactions between South Africans and foreigners are often very tense and uncomfortable. The access to already scarce resources such as health services, employment and housing services in the country has led to xenophobic attitudes and hostility between foreign nationals (which include foreign African Students) and locals. Political rhetoric and statements have further fanned these xenophobic sentiments.” For example, according to the online Sunday Times newspaper (2019), former Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba said it was not necessary for SA to apologize to other African countries for the recent xenophobic attacks. Mashaba added that “the country owes an official apology to the million unemployed South

Africans who are today without jobs as a result of billions of counterfeit goods being brought illegally into the country, killing local manufacturing” (Sunday Times, 2019:1). The former Home Affairs Minister Gigaba called on political leaders to desist from making statements that could influence the public to engage in violence. Gigaba said “I have repeatedly called on all leaders irrespective of their political allegiance to desist from making statements that could influence the public to adopt xenophobic attitudes” (Chronicle Zimbabwe, 2016:4). The Chronicle newspaper further reported that Mr. Mashaba, elected on a Democratic Alliance (DA) ticket, was quoted in the South African media, saying all foreigners in the neighboring country were criminals and illegal immigrants. Mr. Mashaba reportedly told “a media conference in Johannesburg that the South African government had opened borders to criminals, but the DA would change all that if it takes over the national government in 2019” (Chronicle Zimbabwe, 2016:4).

The above views from the Chronicle Zimbabwe newspaper illustrate the role of political rhetoric in exacerbating xenophobic sentiments. For instance, former Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba's comments reflect a common narrative among political leaders that scapegoat foreign nationals for the country's economic woes. By framing the presence of immigrants as a direct cause of unemployment and economic decline, Mashaba engages in the form of electioneering that utilizes fear and resentment towards foreigners to gain support among constituents. In my view, this tactic of "othering" not only discriminates against immigrants but also distracts from systemic issues such as unemployment and economic mismanagement. Furthermore, the Afrobarometer (2022) states that Operation Dudula, a movement that emerged in response to perceived threats from foreign nationals, underscores the dangerous implications of such political discourse. Operation Dudula advocates for the removal of undocumented immigrants and has been associated with acts of violence and intimidation against foreign nationals (Afrobarometer, 2022). This movement exemplifies how political leaders can inadvertently (or deliberately) incite public sentiment that leads to xenophobic violence, as seen in the outbreaks of violence in 2008 and 2015.

This study is necessary as political rhetoric can impact the lived experiences of African international students (AIS) at UKZN, as they often become targets of such xenophobic attitudes

within South African communities. The harmful narratives propagated by politicians create an environment where foreign nationals, including AIS, are viewed with suspicion and resentment. These sentiments not only manifest in verbal and physical harassment but also contribute to social exclusion and isolation within university settings and the broader society. African international students at UKZN face hostility not just due to their nationality but because they are perceived as economic competitors or threats to local opportunities, a belief rooted in the scapegoating tactics used by political leaders like Mashaba. In addition, the rise of movements like Operation Dudula further exacerbates AIS's challenges, as the public is encouraged by the political endorsement of such initiatives. The fear of becoming a target of violence or intimidation discourages many African international students from fully participating in the local community, forcing them into self-isolation and heightening their sense of vulnerability. In this climate, xenophobic violence is not only a physical threat but also deeply affects their academic performance, mental health, and overall sense of belonging. This demonstrates the broader societal implications of political rhetoric, as it perpetuates a cycle of fear, exclusion, and violence, which directly impacts the day-to-day lives of AIS at UKZN.

From the aforementioned, the phenomenon of xenophobia is a problematic issue that has affected the social, economic, and political atmosphere in South Africa. Clark (1999) and Crush and McDonald (2002) have discussed how foreigners are victimized and ill-treated by xenophobic attacks. Kanjo (2010) argues that African migrants feel the verbal and sometimes physical sting of rampant anti-foreigner sentiment in South Africa. Thus, this study examines if these xenophobic attacks and anti-foreign sentiments are experienced by African foreign students who study at South African universities such as UKZN. Even though these foreign African students are legally in the country and have the necessary documentation to study in South African Universities, they may experience some form of xenophobic behavior because of their status and identity in the country. The study aims to investigate how the acts of xenophobia impact the lives and studies of African International Students and how they cope or deal with xenophobia in SA. The acts of xenophobia can cause a lot of fear and anxiety and a sense of not belonging to African International Students.

For example, due to fear, anxiety, and discrimination, xenophobia can negatively affect the lives

and studies of African international students in such a way that it is difficult for them to focus on their studies. On the other hand, their family members, like their children, also experience it at school, thus causing a lot of human insecurity for African International Students. The lack of effective institutional support and clear immigration policies exacerbates these challenges, leaving African international students vulnerable to both xenophobic attitudes and actions. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the lived experiences of African international students at UKZN in relation to xenophobia. The lack of effective institutional support and ambiguous immigration policies significantly contribute to the vulnerability of African international students, shaping their experiences of xenophobia in both academic and social contexts. Research indicates that restrictive immigration policies and bureaucratic challenges reinforce negative perceptions of migrants, often framing them as economic threats rather than valuable contributors to society (Tewolde, 2023).

Additionally, inadequate institutional support at universities, including limited academic assistance and exclusionary policies, has been linked to heightened feelings of alienation among African international students (Otu, 2020). However, while existing literature acknowledges these structural and institutional challenges, few studies have specifically examined how they shape African international students' lived experiences at UKZN. This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring how these factors influence perceptions of xenophobia and impact students' academic, social, and emotional well-being. It aims to explore how these students cope with discrimination and social exclusion, the impact of xenophobic attitudes on their academic lives, and the broader implications for their sense of belonging in South Africa. Thus, by examining the experiences of African international students, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary xenophobia and its effects on marginalized communities in South Africa.

### **1.3. Research Questions and Objectives:**

#### **1.3.1 The research objectives of this study are as follows:**

1. Examine the Xenophobic experiences of African international students at UKZN.
2. Examine the reasons for or causes of Xenophobia amongst African international students at

UKZN.

3. To understand the effects of Xenophobia on African international students at UKZN
4. Examine how Foreign African students deal with their experiences of Xenophobia at UKZN.
5. Interrogate relevant policies and codes of conduct in managing and preventing Xenophobia in higher institutions of learning with a focus on UKZN.
6. Present possible policy recommendations and mechanisms that UKZN and the government of South Africa can adopt to avert xenophobia in institutions of higher education and South Africa, respectively.

### **1.3.2 The research questions are as follows:**

1. How have African international students experienced Xenophobia at UKZN?
2. What are the causes of Xenophobia on African international students at UKZN?
3. How have Xenophobic experiences affected African international students at UKZN?
4. How do African international students deal with their experiences of Xenophobia in South Africa?
5. How effective are relevant policies and codes of conduct in managing or preventing xenophobia in South Africa?
6. What policy recommendations and mechanisms can UKZN and the government of South Africa adopt to avert xenophobia in institutions of higher education and the country, respectively?

## **1.4 Research Justification**

The originality of this study is reflected in several key areas. This study explores the dual experiences of xenophobia that AIS encounters both within the university and in the broader South African community. By investigating how the campus and local communities interact to shape these students' experiences, the research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how xenophobia permeates different aspects of their lives. A further point of originality lies in the study's focus on coping mechanisms. While many studies document the experiences of discrimination, this research delves into how AIS students manage and navigate xenophobic attitudes, whether through isolation, self-medication, or other strategies. This provides an



essential and often overlooked dimension to the existing literature on xenophobia. Moreover, the study critically examines the role of institutional support structures in addressing xenophobia, highlighting how these systems either help or fail to support AIS students in their integration and overall well-being.

In addition, by examining discrimination specifically targeting African international students, this study contributes to broader discussions around identity, belonging, and exclusion within South Africa. Furthermore, to ensure a balanced and nuanced analysis, the study incorporates the perspectives of local students, offering a comprehensive view of xenophobia in higher education. Thus, by including both the experiences of African international students and the observations of local students, the research avoids potential bias and highlights the complexities of xenophobia within South African society. This approach not only enriches the discourse on exclusion but also provides insights into how local and international students coexist and navigate the challenges of xenophobia, fostering a more holistic understanding of the issue in institutions of higher learning and the broader societal context.

Xenophobia, particularly in the context of migration, is a critical issue within International Relations (IR), intersecting with debates on migration governance, state sovereignty, and global human rights. While migration is often framed as an economic and political issue, the study highlights how social tensions, national identity, and state policies contribute to exclusionary practices that affect migrant communities. The uniqueness of this study is that it is within the discipline of international relations, and such an investigation contributes to understanding key issues around migration and xenophobia, focusing on African international students. As a researcher, International Relations is my academic discipline, which falls under the International and Public Affairs (IPA) Cluster of the School of Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu Natal (PMB Campus). Khan (2019) describes International Relations (IR) as a branch of political science focused on examining interactions between states, including their foreign policies and the various mechanisms and institutions such as international organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations that facilitate these interactions. In line with the above views, the study by Crush (2022) primarily focuses on xenophobia in South Africa; it is essential to connect this phenomenon to broader themes in IR,

such as migration governance, state sovereignty, and human rights. The rise of xenophobic attitudes can be seen as a response to global migration trends, which are central to discussions in IR. IR helps to frame xenophobia as a reaction to international migration policies and the movement of people across borders. Crush (2022) discusses the South African government's response to xenophobia, which includes denialism and displacement of blame onto migrants. This aspect can be linked to the study of state behaviour in IR, mainly how states manage internal and external pressures related to migration. Thus, analysing the state's role in perpetuating or mitigating xenophobia can provide insights into the intersection of domestic policy and international norms regarding human rights and migration. In addition, xenophobia as a global phenomenon often arises in response to increased migration, which challenges state sovereignty and national identity. In IR, the tension between maintaining control over borders and fulfilling international obligations to protect human rights is a critical issue. States may adopt xenophobic policies as a means to assert sovereignty, leading to conflicts with international norms and agreements regarding the treatment of migrants and refugees.

This study is also unique in connecting the discipline of International Relations (IR) by highlighting the role of African international students within higher education institutions as contributors to fostering positive relations between member states in the international system. The presence of African international students enhances academic and cultural exchange and strengthens diplomatic ties and mutual understanding among nations. The study of IR encompasses a wide range of subjects such as international and regional peace and security, migration, international organisations, nuclear proliferation, globalisation, human rights, economic development, intervention, international financial relations, and international trade relations. By linking IR to the issue of xenophobia, a global phenomenon with far-reaching consequences, the study demonstrates how unchecked xenophobia can damage interstate relations and disrupt harmony within the international system.

Additionally, this study argues that examining xenophobia through the IR lens, particularly as it impacts African international students, offers valuable insights into how policies, international collaborations, and diplomatic initiatives can be shaped to combat this issue. African international

students, as ambassadors of their respective nations, play a pivotal role in fostering cross-cultural understanding, and the discrimination they face has broader implications for diplomatic relations and foreign policy. Therefore, by linking xenophobia and the experiences of African international students to IR, this research contributes to discussions on promoting a more inclusive and tolerant global community, ultimately supporting international cooperation and the development of policies that address discrimination and its effects on global relations.

In addition, this study is significant not only for examining the causes and impacts of xenophobia in South Africa but also for highlighting the positive efforts made by the government and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to combat this issue. This research seeks a more balanced view by acknowledging initiatives to foster inclusivity and social cohesion. This study aims to explore and document the strategies and programs implemented by governmental bodies and NGOs that have made strides in addressing xenophobic sentiments. By including these positive efforts, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted approach needed to combat xenophobia in South Africa. This inclusion enriches the discourse and identifies potential avenues for collaboration and further developing effective anti-xenophobia strategies.

This study highlights the commendable initiatives undertaken by the staff and local students at UKZN who actively speak out against xenophobia. Their efforts raise awareness about the issue and foster a sense of solidarity and community among regional and international students. These students play a vital role in challenging xenophobic attitudes and behaviours by engaging in dialogues, organising awareness campaigns, and promoting inclusivity. The findings of this study encourage the enhancement and expansion of such initiatives. Creating a more comprehensive framework for collaboration between local and international students and university administration is essential to developing effective strategies for combating xenophobia. These collective efforts can contribute to a more inclusive environment within South African universities by fostering a culture of empathy and understanding. Thus, strengthening these initiatives will help mitigate xenophobia on campus and promote broader societal change, cultivating a sense of belonging and security for all students.

Moreover, this research concurs with Gumbo (2014), who states that there has been considerable

research done on international students' experiences globally; however, there is still a gap in research on the experiences of African International students studying in South African universities. This is confirmed by Rajpal (2012), who asserts that there is a lack of research on international students in South Africa. Similarly, as noted early in the background of the study, Muthuki (2010) writes that the transnational migration of students is a vast yet under-researched area. Further, much has been documented about tertiary students from sub-Saharan Africa studying in the Northern developed nations, with limited attention given to student mobility within African countries such as South Africa. Thus, it was essential to conduct this study to fill the gap in research on how xenophobia impacts African International students based on their views and experiences. This study makes a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge on xenophobia by offering a comprehensive and well-documented resource for policymakers in higher education and researchers interested in understanding the phenomenon. While the study focuses on a single campus (UKZN Pietermaritzburg), institutions of higher learning often reflect broader societal dynamics, acting as microcosms where national or global issues, such as xenophobia, manifest. Therefore, the insights gained from this research can provide inferences applicable to other educational institutions and the larger society, offering critical perspectives for policy development and further research on xenophobia in South Africa. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing first-hand information and additional research on the phenomenon of xenophobia as experienced by African international students at UKZN.

### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

This study is underpinned by 11 operational definitions of key terms crucial to its foundation. These carefully articulated definitions serve as guiding pillars, providing a clear and robust structure for the research. Figure [1.1] visually encapsulates these crucial terms, offering a concise overview of their conceptual underpinnings. Each of these 11 working definitions for this study is explained, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the subject matter and fostering clarity and coherence in the subsequent discussions and analyses.

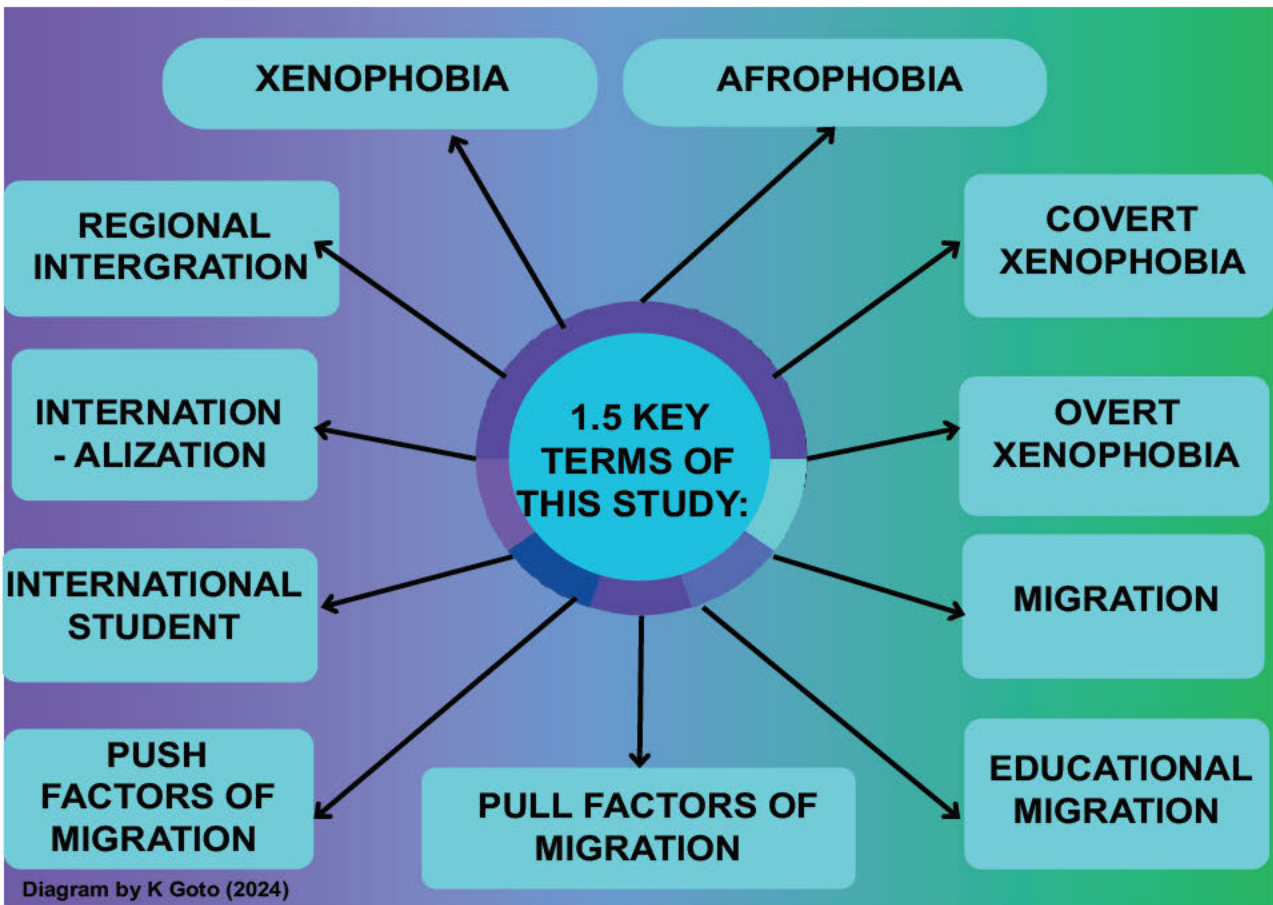


Figure 1.1: Definitions of key terms

**a. Xenophobia**

According to Evans and Newnmam (1998:583), Xenophobia is a crime against humanity that involves aspects such as dislike, hatred, fear, discrimination, distrust, or intolerance of foreigners, often expressed in terms of hostilities and violence towards outsiders. This act involves the exclusion and discrimination of people from a different nationality who experience bias.

**b. Afrophobia**

Afrophobia is based on socially constructed inferiority sentiments towards other blacks, which is a legacy of dehumanizing and oppressive structures of colonial governments, apartheid regimes, and slavery (Momodou and Pascoet, 2013). This sentiment, in the case of South Africa, is projected toward those of African descent and see them as inferior.

**c. Covert Xenophobia**

Coates (2007) defines covert xenophobia as a form of discrimination that is disguised and subtle, rather than public or violent. The author argues that it is not expressed violently but is covered in the fabric of society, and it discriminates against individuals through often evasive or seemingly passive methods (Coates, 2007). These could be done through institutions or policies that indirectly discriminate migrants from nationals. The former, therefore, does not have access to various benefits, services, or opportunities.

#### **d. Overt Xenophobia**

Mandi (2020) posits that overt xenophobia is the most evident type of xenophobia that's more open, obvious, and the easiest to spot. With this kind of Xenophobia, there is a deliberate prejudice or discriminative violent actions directed towards foreign nationals by the local citizens. (Mandi, 2020). These anti-migrant sentiments and behaviours are publicly expressed and shared.

#### **e. Migration**

The term migration denotes the movement of people across geographical borders to establish a new space that could be permanent or temporary (Crush and Williams, 2007). Various reasons for migration include personal, economic, or security reasons. In some instances, migration is forced or voluntary.

#### **f. Educational migration**

Following the above, educational migration is the movement of people seeking better and higher-quality education (Obire, 2020). Various factors warrant this educational migration: better educational opportunities, opportunities for scholarships and bursaries, and the potential to build their skills in new fields and areas.

#### **g. Pull Factors of Migration**

Pull factors draw individuals from their home country to their destination countries. These factors "attract an individual to a certain geographical location with better working conditions, social security, better education, good climate, and booming economy" (Kanayo, 2019:223). These conditions provide a better opportunity for individuals who migrate to these new locations.

#### **h. Push Factors of Migration**

Alternatively, push factors propel individuals to leave their home countries for a different location. These conditions make it difficult for individuals to remain in their home countries thus forcing them to relocate and seek greener pastures. These push factors differ for individuals but generally include bad governments, war, droughts, poverty, and unemployment, which provoke people to migrate to other countries” (Kanayo, 2019:22).

**i. International student**

UKZN (2013) defines an international student as not a national or permanent resident of the Republic of South Africa and consequently requires a permit to enrol at a South African University. For this study, this is the accepted definition of international students.” International students come to undertake degrees and programs of varying lengths.

**j. Internationalisation**

According to the UKZN Strategic Plan (2019:68) internationalization includes “student and staff exchange, international research and collaboration; the offering of joint degrees by universities in different countries; the establishment of campuses by universities outside of their home countries; the growth of satellite learning and online distance education, including online educational institutions; arrangements between countries for the mutual recognition of qualifications; the regional harmonization of qualification systems; and the increasing inclusion of international, intercultural and global dimensions in university curricula.” Building global linkages has become more pertinent and necessary as the world has become more interconnected. Universities have become part of the internationalization agenda, building networks and opportunities and ensuring students can engage in cross-national and international educational opportunities.

**k. Regional Integration**

According to the African Development Bank Group (2018:1) “regional integration (RI) is defined as or refers to “an agglomeration of Member States that cluster based on agreed policies, legal/regulatory frameworks, and institutional arrangements to pursue and implement, within defined territory/territories, common, joint, coordinated or harmonized policies, projects, and programs in a simultaneous, sequential, or phased manner”. The sharing of borders thus warrants consistent and regular cross-border engagement between states and the need to cooperate on various issues.

## **1.6 Structure of Dissertation**

### **Chapter One: Overview of the study**

This chapter gives a general overview of the study by providing a brief background. The Chapter further presents the research problem, questions and objectives, the broader questions to investigate, and the research justification. The chapter concludes by defining the key terms of the study, and it outlines the structure of the dissertation.

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The second chapter focuses on the literature review. The chapter unpacks the different scholarly views on the definition of xenophobia. It also reviews the various areas of related literature on the global context of xenophobia, migration, and xenophobia in the South African context; the major causes of Xenophobia in South Africa; literature on the South African culture of violence; on Xenophobia from the foundation of otherness; on the nexus between xenophobia and Afrophobia; and Xenophobia and Nativism. The literature on xenophobia through the human security lens, literature on the difference between Xenophobia and Afrophobia, and literature on xenophobia in higher education institutions are also discussed and analyzed in this chapter. Furthermore, the chapter links IR as a discipline with International Students and the issue of xenophobia in SA. The chapter outlines the SA immigration policies for international students, the UKZN strategic plan on internationalization, and the UKZN language policy. The chapter concludes by bringing out the positive efforts to combat xenophobia by the SA government, civil society, and UKZN.

### **Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework**

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework. The chapter brings out the different theoretical explanations by scholars to analyze the nature and causes of xenophobia in SA. The chapter unpacks and adopts four theoretical approaches, which are: scapegoat theory, power conflict theory, isolation hypothesis, and biocultural hypothesis, which are the main and recommended theories for this study. The study also highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each recommended theory.

### **Chapter Four: Research Methodology**



This chapter presents a comprehensive outline of the research methodology undertaken to implement the study. This chapter outlines the research philosophy and paradigm and elaborates on the study's ontological and epistemological assumptions by adopting the interpretive and Constructivist paradigms. The study explains the critical reflexivity of the researcher as well as outlines the insider and outsider positionality of the researcher. The chapter defines the term methodology and the study recommends and adopts the qualitative research method to obtain in-depth responses to the research questions. This chapter also presents the data collection plan that the researcher adopts through the use of semi-structured interviews, an interview guide, and outlining the process of transcribing the data. The study also elaborates on the target population and the sampling methods that the study adopts, which are: convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowballing. The study illustrates the ethical consideration using the Four Quadrants of Research Ethics by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021). The chapter concludes by enhancing and ensuring the trustworthiness of the study by showing how the study achieved transferability, dependability, confirmability, credibility, and audit trail. Lastly, the chapter outlines the limitations of the study.

#### **Chapter Five: Presentation of Data findings, Analysis and Discussion**

This chapter presents the research findings using thematic analysis. This chapter combines the presentation of results, analysis, and discussion, and this provides a close reading of the participants' experiences with reference to the wider literature and theories adopted. This chapter aims to present themes from the results, drawing out relevant sub-themes in this section. For this chapter, both the main themes and the sub-themes provide a rich, coherent, and meaningful picture of dominant patterns in the data that address the research objectives and questions of this study. The analysis of data was done using a qualitative interpretive method. The themes were guided by the objectives of the study and the main research questions. Moreover, data was acquired from participants who are students at the University of KwaZulu Natal and participants include local and African international students, as well as a representative from the international office. In the analysis of data, labels with numbers were used as codes to represent participants.

#### **Chapter Six: Presentation of Data Findings, analysis and Discussion**

This chapter is a continuation of the research findings, delving into an analysis of the study's results

based on the perspectives of both local and African international students at UKZN. It addresses research questions 4, 5, and 6, exploring how African international students deal with Xenophobia in South Africa, assessing the effectiveness of relevant policies in managing xenophobia, and presenting policy recommendations for UKZN and the South African government.

### **Chapter Seven: Recommendations and Conclusions**

This chapter concludes with relevant recommendations for policymakers, based on the discussions and analysis of the fieldwork. The chapter outlines possible solutions to combat xenophobia at the government level and institutional level, such as UKZN, and at the African continental level.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

Merriam and Simpson (1984) posit that a literature review helps to conceptualise, justify, implement, and interpret an investigation. In addition, Roestenburg, Strydom, and Fouche (2021), in their book titled *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Professions*, assert that, metaphorically, a literature review is like the roots of a tree, anchoring it firmly to the ground and providing the essential support for its existence and growth. Thus, this study is grounded in existing literature, ensuring its relevance and standing in one's chosen discipline and body of knowledge. In the same trend of thoughts, Neuman (2014) argues that a well-crafted literature review acts as a roadmap for research; it explains the journey of previous studies, revealing how the current project connects to and builds upon the existing knowledge landscape. The literature review offers a synthesis of existing information on a topic, uncovering knowledge gaps and assisting in gaining a thorough understanding of xenophobia in SA based on the views and perspectives of African International and local students at UKZN.

Neuman (2014) further states that, by investigating the results of the relevant studies, the logic and reasoning of the current study are connected to that of the other researchers in the context. Thus, the literature identifies the area of knowledge that the study intends to expand on, such as examining the issue of xenophobia in SA based on the views and experiences of African international students at UKZN. Therefore, the literature review highlights an identified gap and motivation for how and why the study intends to fill the gap, as highlighted in chapter one on the research justification. For this study, the literature review assists the researcher in comparing the results and the findings in existing literature and contrasting the differences between the studies after data collection. Thus, by using literature in this way, the researcher aims to support existing knowledge and showcase new ideas and information about the nature of xenophobia in SA.

In this chapter, migration is one of the fundamental themes in understanding xenophobia, encompassing both internal movements within countries and international migrations across borders. The study reveals that historically, migrations within SA and from neighbouring countries have been driven by various reasons, such as economic opportunities, political

instability, and social conflicts. This study examines educational migration, particularly African international students at UKZN seeking academic opportunities. It highlights how these students face potential xenophobic attitudes and discrimination. Navigating cultural differences, they may encounter hostility based on nationality or ethnicity.

This chapter examines xenophobia through various scholarly perspectives, defining and contextualizing it within South Africa. It reviews global literature, highlighting xenophobia as a widespread phenomenon linked to migration and societal attitudes toward diversity. The study explores the concept of "otherness," where foreigners are perceived as threats to economic security, cultural identity, or national safety. These real or imagined threats fuel anxieties that contribute to xenophobic attitudes and behaviours. The study explores the link between xenophobia and Afrophobia, highlighting how discrimination in South Africa often targets other Africans.

The study examines xenophobia through the lens of human security, emphasizing the protection of individuals and communities from physical, economic, and social threats. It highlights how xenophobia undermines safety, economic opportunities, and social participation, requiring comprehensive solutions. Additionally, the study explores how xenophobia manifests in South Africa, linking it to historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid, socioeconomic anxieties, and identity politics. It also addresses the country's entrenched culture of violence, rooted in systemic inequality, which fuels intolerance, prejudice, and xenophobic attitudes. This study highlights xenophobia in South Africa as a deeply rooted and complex issue influenced by historical, socioeconomic, and political factors. It examines the persistence of xenophobia through a detailed analysis, including a diagram illustrating its causes. The study also explores xenophobia in higher education, revealing discrimination and exclusion faced by African international students and assessing institutional responses to promote inclusivity. Additionally, it links international relations (IR) to these students' experiences, exploring global diplomatic influences on domestic attitudes and policies aimed at mitigating xenophobia.

## 2.2 Migration

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been a constant feature of human history, shaping both sending and receiving countries' social, economic, and cultural landscapes. The movement of people within and across national borders can be driven by various factors, including economic opportunities, political instability, environmental change, and personal or family-related reasons (Mohanty, 2014). The international legal framework for the protection of the rights of displaced persons has evolved, with instruments such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa playing a crucial role in establishing a system of refugee protection (Ache and Majinge, 2010). However, the current migration regimes often fail to adequately address the needs and rights of migrants, creating a "sharp dichotomy between those legally, economically, or socially qualified to embark on safe and regular migration and those not so entitled (Bhabha, 2017).

In this context, some scholars have called for a reconsideration of the "migration panic" that has gripped political leaders and their publics, and a reassessment of the responses that are being advanced (Bhabha, 2017). Instead of framing migration as a "crisis," they argue, we should consider it as a "continuum," and explore ways to facilitate and support human mobility in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all individuals (Bhabha, 2017). A "continuum" within the context of migration refers to viewing migration not as a singular, overwhelming event or crisis but rather as a complex process with varying degrees and forms (Migration Governance Framework, 2016). Therefore, the above views encourage a more nuanced understanding of migration, recognizing it as a constant feature of human society rather than an exceptional or unmanageable phenomenon. This discussion reflects the ongoing tension between migration policies and the realities of human mobility. The legal frameworks aim to provide protection but often fall short of addressing the full spectrum of migrants' needs. This shows that migration is not inherently a "crisis" but a constant process that requires more inclusive and humane approaches to governance.

In line with the above views Martin and Wildren (2002) view cross-border mobility of people as an international challenge for the 21st century. Migration is, therefore, an unavoidable yet important aspect of economic and social life in the 21st century (Kalitanyi and Visser 2010).

Stephen (2007) notes that the borders crossed by people are economic, social, physical, political, and cultural. Maharaj (2023) notes that issues of religious or ethnic discrimination and race mean that citizenship into receiving countries is not always automatic. Palmary (2002) refers to a memorandum of understanding signed between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the South African government, allowing refugees to enter South Africa. Thet (2014), however, maintains that most studies show migration to be influenced primarily by economic factors. Thus, the primary economic factors that motivate migration are classified either as ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors.

According to Kianth (2009), the factors that force a person to leave his or her homeland and go to another place are the push factors. In line with the above views, African international students (AIS) at UKZN are often driven by both “push” factors, such as poor economic conditions and political instability in their home countries, and “pull” factors, like better educational and employment opportunities in South Africa as noted by Thet (2014) and Kianth (2009). Thus, the above views demonstrate how the migration of AIS at UKZN aligns with global migration patterns driven by economic and social factors. One can say that these "push" and "pull" dynamics emphasize the complex motivations behind cross-border mobility. Thus, this implies that migration is not just a reactive process but also a strategic pursuit of better opportunities. Therefore, this also highlights the importance of understanding the broader socio-economic factors influencing AIS migration to South Africa, which could inform more effective policies to support these students.

The standard push factors are poor economic conditions, unemployment, lack of opportunities, and underdevelopment. The common pull factors are better living conditions, opportunities for better employment, better working conditions, higher wages, and adequate infrastructure (Thet 2014; Kianth 2009). Wets (2007) maintains that in the process of migration, both the countries of destination and origin benefit. The country of origin benefits through remittances. Katseli and Xenogiani (2006:48) concur that “remittances are the key mechanisms through which the net gains of migrants are transferred to those remaining at home.” This represents the dominant route through which non-migrants benefit from the migration process. Gigaba (2016) says that migrants from Africa sent back home approximately \$35 billion in 2015, nearly equalling the total

development aid granted to sub-Saharan Africa every year by the OECD. The actual number may be even higher if unrecorded and informal remittances are considered. South Africa is undoubtedly one of the most progressive economies on the continent.

Yet, the impact of socioeconomic factors on local people pushes them to xenophobic tendencies. It is the responsibility of leadership to stimulate consciousness on all critical issues that challenge the economic growth and prosperity of the country. Thus, the above views emphasize the dual impact of migration, showing how it can yield significant economic benefits for sending and receiving countries through remittances. However, it also underscores the vulnerabilities that arise within host communities, particularly in South Africa, where socio-economic challenges may provoke xenophobic sentiments. Thus, this implies that addressing the root causes of these challenges is essential for promoting social harmony and ensuring that the benefits of migration are felt broadly, not just by migrants and their families. In addition, good leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions and fostering an inclusive environment that acknowledges the contributions of migrants while addressing local grievances.

South Africa has a long and complex migration history, both within the country and across its borders. The country has served as a regional, continental, and global destination for migrants, attracting individuals from various geographic origins seeking opportunities for employment and economic advancement (Crush, 2002). The post-apartheid era has witnessed a significant increase in migrants to South Africa, with estimates indicating a rise from approximately 550,000 to 4 million between 1990 and 2000 (Landau, 2011). Irregular migration in South Africa is a complex issue fuelled by push and pull factors. On the one hand, the country's relative economic prosperity and political stability have been significant pull factors, attracting migrants from neighboring countries and beyond. The availability of employment opportunities, particularly in the informal sector, and the reputation of South African universities as hubs of education and research have further contributed to the influx of African international students and workers (Baruwa, 2020). On the other hand, factors such as political instability, economic hardship, and conflict in neighboring countries have driven many to seek refuge and better prospects in South Africa (Marchetti-Mercer, 2009). Scholars such as Marchetti-Mercer (2009) have highlighted the psychological and emotional impact of migration, noting the mental health challenges faced by migrants, including those from other African countries who seek opportunities in South Africa.

As migration patterns intensify, it is critical to consider the toll this takes on the migrants themselves and their families in terms of separation and adaptation to new environments. From my perspective, AIS at UKZN not only faces these personal challenges but also contends with hostile environments fuelled by xenophobia and social tensions. The above views underscore the complexity of migration into South Africa, driven by economic and political dynamics both within and outside the country. The views highlight the double pressures faced by African international students' adaptation to a new environment and dealing with hostile attitudes fuelled by xenophobia. Thus, this implies that the migrant experience in South Africa, especially for AIS, is shaped not only by economic and educational motivations but also by the emotional and psychological challenges of navigating an often unwelcoming environment.

The rapid influx of migrants into South Africa has diversified the population, enriching its cultural landscape (Lurie, 2006). However, this has also contributed to growing competition for jobs, housing, and public services, which in turn has sparked xenophobic attitudes among local populations (Samuel and George, 2002). According to Palmary (2002), South Africa's memorandum of understanding with the UNHCR allowed refugees to enter the country, further complicating local dynamics. The above views are valid in the context of this study, where local students may perceive African international students as competing for limited resources. Migration's socio-economic and political dimensions are echoed in Martin and Wildren's (2002) assertion that cross-border mobility will remain a significant challenge in the 21st century. AIS at UKZN experience this reality as they navigate an environment marked by tension, competition, and discrimination. Despite the benefits of migration, such as remittances (Katseli and Xenogiani, 2006), the presence of large migrant populations has also fuelled resentment, particularly in a context where locals feel marginalized (Gigaba, 2016). I believe understanding migration as a continuum rather than a crisis, as Bhabha (2017) suggested, offers a more nuanced approach to managing these challenges. Thus, the causes of xenophobia experienced by AIS at UKZN can be linked to a combination of historical, economic, social, and political factors. The ongoing competition for scarce resources exacerbates these tensions, the perception of migrants as a threat, and the local population's socio-economic challenges.

In light of the above views, the context of migration in South Africa, shaped by historical, socio-economic, and political factors, is intricately linked to the experiences of xenophobia, mainly as



observed in the experiences of African international students (AIS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The colonial and apartheid history of South Africa has created a socio-political environment where migration is often perceived as a threat. Harris (2001) notes that the transition to democracy did not eradicate xenophobic sentiments but transformed them. This historical backdrop influences how AIS at UKZN is perceived by local communities, often being viewed as competitors for limited resources, which can lead to feelings of resentment and hostility. South Africa's economic landscape attracts migrants, including AIS, who seek better job prospects and educational opportunities.

Landau (2009) highlights that the informal sector particularly appeals to migrants, yet it is also a space where job competition can lead to tensions. AIS may find themselves in precarious positions, competing not only with locals but also with other migrants, which can exacerbate feelings of xenophobia among local populations who perceive them as threats to their economic stability. The significant issue of xenophobia in South Africa often manifests as violence against foreign nationals. Misago et al. (2015) argue that this violence is rooted in social tensions exacerbated by economic hardship and competition for scarce resources. AIS at UKZN may experience this xenophobia first-hand, facing discrimination or hostility from local students or community members who may view them as encroaching on their opportunities.

The urbanization of South Africa has led to increased migration to cities, where many migrants, including AIS, settle in informal or marginalized areas. Maharaj (2023) discusses the need for inclusive policies that recognize the contributions of migrants. However, AIS may struggle with integration into the local community, facing barriers that prevent them from fully participating in social and economic life. In addition, class divisions often complicate the integration of migrants into South African society. Gordon (2015) suggests that socioeconomic status significantly influences attitudes toward migrants. AIS may find themselves navigating a complex social landscape where their status as students does not shield them from xenophobic attitudes, particularly if they are perceived as being part of a privileged class compared to local impoverished communities. The South African government's struggle to develop effective migration policies contributes to the marginalization of migrants, including AIS. Tella and Ogunnubi (2014) argue that the lack of coherent immigration policies perpetuates xenophobic attitudes. AIS may feel the impact of these policies, facing bureaucratic hurdles that complicate

their stay and integration in South Africa.

Globalization has facilitated the increased movement of people, leading to diverse migration patterns. Greenburg (2010) notes that the spatial dynamics of migration reflect broader global trends. AIS at UKZN navigates these dynamics, often encountering opportunities for academic and personal growth and challenges related to xenophobia and social acceptance. Thus, the experiences of AIS at UKZN are deeply intertwined with the broader context of migration and xenophobia in South Africa. The historical legacy of apartheid, economic competition, urbanization, class divisions, and policy challenges all contribute to a complex environment where AIS must navigate their identities and experiences amidst the realities of xenophobia.

### **2.2.1 The South African context of educational migration**

Educational migration, or the movement of students across international borders to pursue higher education, has become a significant global phenomenon. Bernard and Bell, (2018) assert that this trend is driven by the desire for quality education, better career opportunities, cultural experiences, and personal growth. The early 21st century has seen a substantial increase in African international students, as evidenced by International Student Migration (2016), which reported that by 2012, the number of African international students had grown to four and a half million, with an average annual growth rate of nearly 7 percent. Among various migrant groups, such as labor migrants, family migrants, and refugees, African international students are the fastest-growing category (International Student Migration, 2016). These students are typically categorized into two groups: those pursuing full degrees (degree mobility) and those participating in short-term study exchanges (credit mobility) (International Student Migration, 2016). According to International Student Migration (2016), many universities worldwide adopt an entrepreneurial stance towards higher education, employing global strategies to attract African international students and boost their revenue. This trend is referred to as the globalization of international education. Additionally, several governments consider African international students as potential skilled migrants and implement policies to encourage them to stay after finishing their studies. Lastly, students and their families understand the labour-market benefits of acquiring foreign qualifications.

In line with the above views, Ndebele and Ndlovu (2020) note that South Africa has emerged as a notable destination for African international students, attracting a diverse student body. Chien and Kot, (2012) explore the factors influencing educational migration to South African higher education institutions, the benefits and challenges associated with this trend, and the implications for both the students and the host country. One primary factor is the quality of education South African universities offer (Mittelmeier, Rogaten, Sachikonye, Gunter, Prinsloo and Rienties, 2019), recognized for their academic excellence, research capabilities, and diverse range of programs. Furthermore, the country's multicultural environment and the use of English as the primary language of instruction provide an enriching experience for African international students (Mittelmeier et al., 2019).

Voigt-Graf and Khoo (2004) emphasize South Africa's affordability as another factor contributing to its appeal as a study destination. Walker (2020) concurs, adding that South Africa offers a more accessible option for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, given the lower cost of education and living expenses compared to destinations like the U.S. or U.K. Educational migration, the movement of students across international borders to pursue higher education, has become a notable global trend driven by the quest for quality education, enhanced career opportunities, cultural experiences, and personal growth (International Student Migration, 2016). South Africa has emerged as a prominent destination for African international students, drawing a diverse student body worldwide (Ndebele and Ndlovu, 2020). This discussion examines the factors influencing educational migration to South African higher education institutions, the benefits and challenges associated with this trend, and the implications for the students and the host country (Chien and Kot, 2012). Thus, the above discussion demonstrates how South Africa's academic reputation, affordability, and multicultural environment contribute to its appeal as an educational destination. The availability of high-quality education, coupled with economic accessibility, positions the country as a practical and attractive option for African international students. Thus, this implies that South Africa plays a critical role in shaping educational migration patterns on the continent, offering students not only academic advancement but also cultural and social integration opportunities.

Lee and Schoole (2015) agree that South African universities' academic reputation is a significant draw for African international students, with institutions like the University of Cape Town and

Stellenbosch University offering strong research opportunities and reputable programs (Baruwa, 2020). Tati (2010) adds that the developed educational infrastructure in South Africa further enhances its appeal. Baruwa (2020) also highlights South Africa's affordability and availability of scholarships, making it an accessible destination. The cost of tuition, living expenses, and overall cost of living in South Africa are generally lower than in many Western countries, making it a more accessible option for students from developing nations (Lee and Sehoole, 2015). Furthermore, Baruwa (2020) states that the availability of scholarships and funding opportunities from both the South African government and various international organizations enhances the country's appeal as an educational destination.

Similarly, to the above views, Matsumoto (2018) highlights South Africa's role as a regional education hub, attracting students from various African countries. The author discusses how South Africa's relatively high-quality education system and English language instruction make it an attractive destination for students seeking higher education. Mokhantso and Chikanda (2021) examine trends in educational migration, particularly the increasing number of students from African countries. The authors argue that this trend reflects broader socio-economic changes in the region, with students seeking better educational opportunities to enhance their prospects. Meyer and Chikanda (2019) analyse the socio-economic impacts of educational migration, noting that while it can lead to brain drain in the students' home countries, it also contributes positively to South Africa's economy. They argue that the skills and knowledge these students gain can benefit their home countries and South Africa. African international students at UKZN often bring unique talents and perspectives that can enhance the academic community. However, their eventual return to their home countries after graduation can lead to concerns about brain drain as these students take their acquired knowledge and skills back home.

The cultural experience that South Africa offers is another significant draw for African international students (Lee and Sehoole, 2015). South Africa is a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage, vibrant cities, and an array of natural wonders, allowing students to immerse themselves in a unique cultural environment (Baruwa, 2020). The country's multilingual nature, with 11 official languages, also allows students to learn new languages and better understand the local culture (Baruwa, 2020). Additionally, the use of English as a primary medium of instruction in many South African universities is a significant factor in attracting African international

students (Baruwa, 2020). The country's prevalence of English-language education and its history as a former British colony makes South Africa an attractive destination for students seeking to improve their English proficiency while pursuing their academic goals (Lee and Schoole, 2015).

Mokhantso (2020) analyses the impact of educational migration on South Africa's education system. Mokhantso argues that while the influx of international students can strain resources, it also brings diversity and enriches the academic environment. The author calls for policies that can balance the needs of both local and international students. At UKZN, a diverse student body enhances cultural exchange and broadens classroom perspectives. This diversity can lead to a more inclusive learning environment, benefiting local and international students. Similarly, Chikanda (2017) examines explicitly the influx of Zimbabwean students into South Africa's educational institutions. The author notes that Zimbabwe's political and economic instability has driven many students to seek higher education in South Africa, where they perceive better opportunities. This migration benefits the students and enriches South Africa's educational landscape.

Similarly, Meyer (2016) explores the motivations behind educational migration, suggesting that economic instability and lack of opportunities in home countries are significant driving factors. The author posits that students increasingly view education as a pathway to better job prospects and improved living conditions, leading them to migrate to countries like South Africa. The above views of Chikanda and Meyer resonate with the experiences of African international students at UKZN, who often seek quality education and the chance to improve their socio-economic status. The University of KwaZulu Natal is a reputable institution that attracts students from various African nations, reflecting the desire for higher education as a pathway to better job prospects.

On the other hand, Mzangwa (2019) notes the challenges posed by the growing student population, emphasising the strain on infrastructure and support services. Machingambi (2011) and Subotzky (2015) discuss the disparities in success rates among students from different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, calling for equitable policies to address these issues. Kok, Van Zyl, and Chikanda (2018) emphasise the need for immigrant students' integration, with Matsumoto and Ginsburg (2020) advocating for more inclusive policies. Similarly, Kok, Van Zyl, and Chikanda (2018) give a demographic analysis that provides insights into the characteristics of immigrant students in South Africa. The authors emphasise the need for policies

that support the integration of these students into the education system, ensuring that they have access to the same resources and opportunities as local students. Matsumoto and Ginsburg (2020) The authors explore the intersection of migration and education policy, arguing for more inclusive policies that recognise the unique needs of immigrant students. They suggest educational institutions implement support systems to help these students navigate their new environments. At UKZN, there is a growing recognition of the need for policies and support systems that cater specifically to the needs of African international students. This includes orientation programs, academic support services, and cultural integration initiatives that help these students feel welcomed and supported.

One of the key challenges faced by African international students who migrate to South Africa is the issue of xenophobia. Kang'ethe and Wotshela, (2016) state that xenophobia and xenophobic attitudes are prevalent within South African institutions of higher learning, creating a hostile environment for foreign students. Kang'ethe and Wotshela (2016) outline several underlying factors that contribute to xenophobic attitudes within South African institutions of higher learning, including diversity clashes, competition for resources, intercultural competition, culture shock, and poor implementation of internationalization policies. These factors create a hostile environment for African international students, suggesting they may face discrimination, isolation, and challenges in integrating into the campus community. This can significantly impact their academic and social experiences, as they may struggle to adapt to the new cultural and educational environment. The prevalence of xenophobia and negative stereotypes, particularly towards African student-athletes, further compounds the difficulties faced by African international students in achieving academic success and feeling a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, Hall and Posel (2019) examine the complexities of household migration strategies, suggesting that families often make collective decisions about migration based on educational opportunities. The authors highlight that such choices can lead to fragmented family structures, where some members remain in the home country while others pursue education abroad. This fragmentation can have emotional and social implications for families. This fragmentation can exacerbate the challenges faced by AIS as they navigate not only the academic pressures of studying in a foreign environment but also the emotional and social implications of being separated from their families. The sense of isolation and the burden of representing their

families' aspirations can heighten their vulnerability to xenophobia. Moreover, the collective nature of migration decisions may lead to heightened expectations from family members who remain in the home country, placing additional pressure on AIS to succeed. When faced with xenophobic attitudes, these students may feel a dual sense of alienation: from their host community, which may view them as outsiders or scapegoats, and from their families, who may have invested significant resources and hopes in their educational pursuits abroad. Another significant challenge that African international students may encounter when migrating to South Africa is the adjustment to the new academic and social environment.

Mudhovozi, (2011) states that African international students often experience academic and social challenges, such as language barriers, adapting to unfamiliar educational systems and teaching styles, and establishing new social networks and support systems. These adjustments can be particularly difficult for students coming from different cultural and academic backgrounds, requiring them to navigate and acclimate to the unique dynamics of the South African higher education system and campus communities. Effectively addressing these adjustment issues is crucial for ensuring the academic success and overall well-being of African international students in South Africa. In addition, Makhubele (2019) discusses the challenges immigrant students face in South Africa, including language barriers, cultural differences, and instances of discrimination. Makhubele argues that these challenges can hinder the academic success of immigrant students and calls for more inclusive educational policies that address these barriers. The view by Makhubele resonates with African international students at UKZN who experience similar challenges, mainly if they come from non-English speaking backgrounds. These barriers can affect their academic performance and social integration, highlighting the need for support systems within the university to assist these students in overcoming such obstacles.

### **2.3 Defining Xenophobia**

Xenophobia is a complex phenomenon that has been defined and analyzed by various scholars, particularly in the context of South Africa. Muchiri (2016) explains that the term xenophobia originates from Greek, where "xenos" means foreign or strange, and "phobos" refers to fear. Nyamnjoh (2016) provides a South African perspective, describing xenophobia as a strong aversion and animosity towards foreign nationals, often rooted in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences that foster distrust. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2017)

defines xenophobia as a profound dislike of non-nationals by citizens, indicating a general hatred for foreigners. Adjai and Lazaridis (2013) view xenophobia as a socio-psychological and cultural identity issue, where actions based on nationality can manifest violently. Onuegbu (2022) emphasizes that xenophobia involves prejudiced and violent behavior against foreigners, highlighting that it signifies not just hatred but also physical aggression based on nationality. Neocosmos (2008) notes that violent xenophobic actions are often incited by public provocations, economic decline, social exclusion, and national pride, with refugees and undocumented migrants frequently being the primary targets. Everatt (2011) characterizes xenophobia as a harmful and infectious form of hatred towards others, suggesting that it undermines intergroup relationships and poses a threat to societal peace.

Hagensen (2014) emphasizes that xenophobia is deeply rooted in social, economic, and political factors, suggesting that it is not merely a reaction to the presence of foreigners but is intertwined with historical grievances and socio-economic disparities. Similarly, Kinge (2016) describes xenophobia as a manifestation of fear and hostility towards foreign nationals, exacerbated by perceptions of competition for resources. Kinge highlights the international dimensions of xenophobic attacks, indicating that they are influenced by global migration patterns and local socio-economic conditions. Ukwandu (2017) reflects on xenophobic violence as a response to unfulfilled aspirations and socio-economic frustrations among South Africans. He argues that xenophobia is symptomatic of deeper societal issues, including poverty and inequality, which lead to the scapegoating of foreign nationals. Masikane et al. (2020) discuss the dynamics of xenophobia concerning leadership responses and societal attitudes, defining it as a social phenomenon shaped by political narratives and public discourse. They suggest that leadership is crucial in mitigating or exacerbating xenophobic sentiments. Claassen (2017) explains xenophobia through a multilevel regression analysis, identifying it as a result of poverty, relative deprivation, and frustration with the government. Claassen posits that these factors create a fertile ground for scapegoating foreign nationals, perceived as threats to local resources. Misago et al. (2015) argue that xenophobia is a form of violence against foreign nationals stemming from a lack of tolerance and understanding. They emphasise the need for legal frameworks and social interventions to address the root causes of xenophobia.



Crush and Pendleton (2007) further define xenophobia as a fear or hatred of foreigners that can manifest in various forms of violence and discrimination. For this research, the definition by Evans and Newman (1998) is adopted, describing xenophobia as a crime against humanity that encompasses dislike, fear, and intolerance towards foreigners, often resulting in hostility and violence. The definition by Evans and Newman (1998) is particularly fitting for this research because it frames xenophobia not only as a negative sentiment but as a crime against humanity, emphasizing its severe consequences. By defining xenophobia as encompassing dislike, fear, and intolerance, the definition recognizes the multi-dimensional nature of xenophobia, which manifests in various harmful forms, including discrimination, exclusion, and violence. This is especially relevant in the South African context, where xenophobic attitudes have frequently escalated into violent attacks against African foreign nationals. This definition aligns with the lived experiences of African international students at UKZN, who often encounter hostility and social exclusion. Thus, Evans and Newman's definition highlights the gravity of the issue, which is not merely a local problem but a violation of fundamental human rights. The African international students at UKZN experience xenophobia not only in the form of subtle discrimination but also through overt hostility that disrupts their academic and social lives, mirroring the broader patterns of xenophobia described in this definition. Thus, this definition serves as a powerful analytical tool, allowing the research to probe deeper into the experiences of AIS and contextualize their challenges within a broader human rights framework.

### **2.3.1 Global Context of Xenophobia**

This section presents the view that xenophobia is not only limited to South Africa but is a global phenomenon that is experienced in different countries all over the world. Osman (2009) highlights that xenophobia has manifested in both developed and developing countries, indicating that this phenomenon transcends geographical and socio-economic boundaries. Countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Germany, Norway, the USA, Russia, and China, along with South Africa, have experienced xenophobia. For instance, Okeke (2022) argues that the widening economic gap between wealthy and poor countries has led to increased international migration, which, in turn, has triggered xenophobic attacks against migrants. Okeke (2022) discusses the case of Ghana, which was the first African country to gain independence. The country saw a surge in foreign immigrants seeking better opportunities. However, in the 1960s, with rising unemployment and

inflation, the Ghanaian government blamed immigrants for the country's economic issues.

According to Okeke (2022), this led to the introduction of the Aliens Compliance Act of 1969, which forced irregular immigrants to legalize their status within two weeks or leave the country. As a result, approximately 1.5 million people, particularly Nigerians, were deported. Additionally, Okeke highlights that Ghana implemented policies to prevent foreigners from owning businesses. Okeke (2022), further argues that in the 1980s, the Nigerian government passed legislation that resulted in the expulsion of around 1.5 million people, mostly Ghanaians, during a period of high unemployment and inflation. The affected population also included individuals from Cameroon, Chad, Togo, and Benin, many of whom had migrated to Nigeria after the discovery of oil. Nigerian politicians used the economic crisis as an opportunity to scapegoat foreigners, leading to mass deportations (Okeke, 2022). Thus, this implies that xenophobia is not only a South African problem but is deeply rooted in the global context, with similar patterns of exclusion occurring in other African states like Ghana and Nigeria. Thus, the underlying drivers of economic insecurity, political instability, and societal tensions are common threads that trigger xenophobic attitudes and actions across nations. This global perspective underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how migration and economic challenges can ignite xenophobic tensions in different socio-political contexts.

Similarly, Campbell (2017) discusses how the influx of foreign immigrants in Ghana was met with hostility, particularly during economic hardship. Campbell (2017) further argues that the Ghanaian government, facing rising unemployment and inflation, identified immigrants as scapegoats for the nation's economic challenges. This scapegoating led to xenophobic policies and actions against foreign nationals, illustrating how economic difficulties can exacerbate cultural and ethnic tensions. Campbell's (2017) analysis underscores the cyclical nature of xenophobia, where economic crises lead to increased hostility towards immigrants, which in turn can result in discriminatory policies and social unrest. This pattern is not unique to Ghana but can be observed in various contexts where economic instability coincides with rising anti-immigrant sentiments, such as South Africa.

Castles and Miller (2005) state that, during the economic crisis of 2008, many European countries,

such as Greece and Italy, experienced a surge in anti-immigrant sentiments. The crisis exacerbated fears about job security and economic stability, leading to a backlash against immigrants who were often scapegoated for the economic woes. Castles and Miller (2005) highlight that such xenophobic reactions are not merely reactions to the presence of immigrants but are deeply intertwined with broader economic and social anxieties. On the other hand, Mudde (2019) analyzed the rise of xenophobia in the United States, particularly in the context of the 2016 presidential election. He noted that the campaign rhetoric often included anti-immigrant sentiments, mainly targeting Latin American immigrants and Muslims. This rhetoric not only legitimized xenophobic attitudes but also contributed to a significant increase in hate crimes and discrimination against these groups. Mudde (2019) highlighted that the portrayal of immigrants in political discourse often painted them as threats to national security and economic stability, which resonated with segments of the population experiencing economic anxiety. Thus, this implies that political discourse can play a significant role in shaping public attitudes toward immigrants, where fear and economic insecurity are manipulated to justify xenophobia. Thus, this shows how xenophobia can be politically driven, legitimizing discriminatory behaviors within society.

In Germany, Osman (2009) identifies xenophobia's roots in historical events like the Holocaust, where racial intolerance led to extreme violence. Similarly, Zatlin (2018) provides a historical perspective on xenophobia in Germany, mainly focusing on the long-standing tensions between German and Polish communities. He notes that despite efforts to ease border restrictions in the 1970s, which aimed to foster better relations, underlying prejudices persisted (Zatlin, 2018). These prejudices often flared up during times of economic uncertainty or social change, leading to periodic outbreaks of xenophobic violence. Zatlin (2018) highlighted that xenophobia is not a new phenomenon but rather a recurring issue that can be traced through historical events. The persistence of these tensions suggests that xenophobia is deeply rooted in societal attitudes and historical contexts, making it a complex issue to address. Thus, this persistence of xenophobia, despite policy efforts, suggests that the problem is deeply embedded in societal attitudes and historical contexts, just like in South Africa. This, therefore, implies that xenophobia cannot be fully addressed through policy changes alone; it requires a broader transformation of societal values and historical consciousness.

In light of the above views, Erdal's (2016) research highlights the specific experiences of migrants in Norway and the broader Scandinavian context. She examines how economic competition, particularly in times of economic downturn, can exacerbate xenophobic attitudes. Erdal (2016) points out that cultural differences and integration challenges can lead to misunderstandings and tensions between immigrants and native populations. She argues that a lack of knowledge and interaction between different cultural groups often fuels xenophobia. Erdal advocates for policies that promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, emphasizing that fostering relationships between immigrants and locals is crucial to reducing xenophobia.

On the other hand, Tufekci (2017) discusses the role of social media in spreading xenophobic narratives, highlighting how misinformation and harmful stereotypes about immigrants can proliferate online. During the European migrant crisis, social media platforms became breeding grounds for anti-immigrant propaganda, which fuelled public fears and xenophobic actions across several countries. Tufekci (2017) points to the power of social media in shaping public discourse and attitudes towards immigration. The rapid spread of misinformation can lead to increased hostility and violence against immigrant communities, demonstrating how digital platforms can amplify xenophobic sentiments and create a more polarised society.

Similarly, Wodak (2015) focused on the linguistic and discursive practices that contribute to constructing xenophobic attitudes in Europe. She argues that political discourse often employs "us vs. them" narratives, framing immigrants as outsiders who threaten national identity and security. This framing is particularly evident in the rhetoric surrounding the refugee crisis, where immigrants are depicted as burdens on social services or as potential criminals. Wodak (2015) emphasizes that such language not only reflects societal attitudes but also shapes them, creating a feedback loop that reinforces xenophobia. She advocates for critical discourse analysis to uncover these patterns and promote more positive narratives highlighting immigrants' contributions to society.

Goodhart (2017) delves into the cultural and social divides that have emerged in the UK, particularly highlighted by the Brexit referendum. He introduces the concepts of "somewhere" and "anywhere" to describe two distinct groups within British society. "somewhere" are individuals

who have a solid attachment to their local communities and traditional values, often feeling threatened by globalization and immigration. In contrast, "anywhere" is more cosmopolitan, valuing diversity and global connections. Goodhart argues that the phrase "We want our country back" encapsulates the sentiments of the "somewhere," who perceive a loss of national identity and control over immigration. This desire for reclaiming a national identity has been a significant driver of xenophobic attitudes, as these individuals often view immigrants as a threat to their way of life and cultural heritage. Similarly, Kaya (2020) focuses on the political climate in the UK following the Brexit referendum. He explores how populist rhetoric has intensified xenophobic sentiments, particularly among those who feel marginalized by globalization and demographic changes. Kaya (2020) discusses specific incidents of violence against immigrants and the societal implications of rising xenophobia, arguing that the normalization of such attitudes poses a threat to social cohesion and democratic values. He emphasizes the need to critically examine populist narratives and their impact on public discourse regarding immigration and national identity.

The Civil Society Action Committee (2024) wrote a statement in line with the above views. It condemned the recent 2024 rise in racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic riots and attacks that happened in the UK, stating that these events have endangered minority and marginalized communities. They express concern over the increase in targeted hate speech and a crime against migrants, diaspora, and people of color, as well as the lack of government protection for those providing crucial services to vulnerable populations. The Committee criticizes the media for labeling perpetrators as "protestors" and for framing the violence as having "two sides," which they believe legitimizes the attacks and the narratives driving them. They call for government leaders, local authorities, and the media to clearly name and refuse to legitimize the racism and xenophobia fuelling this violence and to offer protection and support to at-risk communities and organizations.

In a similar vein, Human Rights Watch (2024) stated that the recent 2024 xenophobic riots in the UK were sparked by widespread misinformation and rising far-right extremism. The unrest began following the horrific stabbing incident at a dance class in Southport, which triggered rumors that blamed asylum seekers despite the perpetrator being a British national. Human Rights Watch (2024) future stated that the riots fuelled a wave of racially charged protests, with far-right activists

targeting mosques and asylum seeker accommodations. In several towns, such as Rotherham, rioters even set fire to buildings housing migrants. The riots have drawn attention to the toxic role of social media platforms in spreading hate and the broader frustrations in the UK over declining living standards, which extremists have exploited by scapegoating minorities.

In the context of Asian countries such as China, Zhang (2020) examined the rise of xenophobia in China during the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly focusing on the experiences of African nationals. He noted that as the virus spread, state media began to propagate narratives that associated foreign nationals, especially Africans, with the transmission of the virus. This led to widespread discrimination, where individuals faced eviction from their residences, denial of services, and public harassment. Zhang emphasized that such xenophobic attitudes were not only a reflection of societal prejudices but were also exacerbated by government messaging that framed foreigners as potential threats to public health. The situation highlighted deep-seated racial biases and the vulnerability of foreign communities in China, revealing how crises can amplify existing xenophobic sentiments.

On the other hand, Kolesnikov (2018) provided a comprehensive analysis of xenophobia in Russia, particularly towards migrant workers from Central Asia and the Caucasus. He argued that economic instability and high unemployment rates have often led to the scapegoating of these migrant populations, who are frequently blamed for taking jobs from native Russians. Kolesnikov pointed out that the Russian government has, at times, utilized anti-immigrant rhetoric to foster nationalist sentiments, especially during electoral campaigns or economic downturns. This rhetoric often manifests in public discourse and media portrayals that dehumanize migrants, portraying them as criminals or as a burden on social services. Kolesnikov's work underscores the intersection of nationalism, economic anxiety, and xenophobia, illustrating how these factors contribute to a hostile environment for migrants in Russia. Therefore, the above scholarly views have shown that xenophobia is indeed a global phenomenon that is experienced all over the world in different contexts.

In my view, xenophobia remains a complex issue that transcends national borders, manifesting in various forms across the globe. Rooted in economic disparities, cultural tensions, historical

prejudices, and political rhetoric, xenophobia is often exacerbated during times of crisis, such as economic downturns or social upheaval. As noted by the above scholar, the rise of populist movements and the proliferation of misinformation through social media have further entrenched xenophobic attitudes, leading to increased hostility and violence against marginalized groups. Thus, addressing xenophobia requires a multifaceted approach, including promoting inclusive policies, fostering intercultural dialogue, and combating disinformation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, it is imperative for societies to recognize the value of diversity and the contributions of immigrants, working towards a more equitable and harmonious coexistence.

### **2.3.2 Xenophobic experience of African international students in overseas universities.**

Xenophobia is not only prevalent in institutions of higher education in South Africa but it is also experienced in universities across other regions, including Europe and America. The experiences of African international students in overseas universities have drawn substantial attention in the academic field, shedding light on the blend of challenges and opportunities these students face. In overseas universities, African international students often encounter discrimination that is primarily rooted in their race and nationality. This form of prejudice may not always be explicitly labeled as xenophobia but manifests through subtle racial bias, social exclusion, and stereotyping. The scholarly literature shows that African international students frequently encounter challenges such as culture shock, language barrier, and social assimilation, which can significantly influence their academic and personal achievements. However, although studying abroad presents opportunities for personal development and career progression, African international students often face different challenges in their adjustment to universities abroad. The other scholarly views have highlighted that their challenges frequently originate from racial and ethnic affiliations and can result in instances of prejudice, exclusion, and even covert xenophobia.

Research on African international students in the U.S. indicates that they face more challenging campus life adjustments than their host counterparts (Klineberg and Hull, 1979, as cited in Klomegah, 2006). Furnham and Bochner (1986) note that these challenges include loneliness, hostility, alienation, fear, and academic difficulties. Singh (2013), cited in the same study, interviewed 300 international Indian students in Britain and found that African international students struggled with emotional issues, such as loneliness, and academic challenges, primarily due to language barriers. Social adjustment issues were also highlighted, though Singh (2010)

emphasized the diversity within the group and the many variables influencing their experiences, such as age, personality, length of stay, level of study, and the specific university attended.

Cultural differences are often linked to xenophobia among African international students worldwide. Kang'ethe et al. (2016) explain that culture shapes societal attitudes and norms, which may fuel xenophobic reactions to unfamiliar cultures. Furnham (2019) explored the relationship between culture shock and xenophobia, finding that foreign students in Europe faced challenges stemming from culture shock, including feeling unwelcome by host students. Oberg (1960, as cited in Furnham, 2019) describes culture shock as involving psychological strain, loss, confusion in values, and rejection, which contribute to difficulties in adjusting to new environments. Furnham's (2019) study on foreign students in the UK also highlights that language barriers and unfamiliar social norms can hinder African international students' ability to adapt and succeed academically. Communication challenges, both verbal and non-verbal, contribute to anxiety and misunderstandings, further complicating their adjustment to the new cultural environment (Earley and Randel, 1997, as cited in Ward et al., 2001). This friction underscores the broader difficulties African international students face in navigating unfamiliar social and behavioral expectations. One can say that cultural differences and language barriers act as catalysts for xenophobia. Just as African students in Europe and the U.S. experience difficulties due to unfamiliar social norms and cultural expectations (Furnham, 2019), AIS in South Africa also face hostility due to their distinct cultural backgrounds. However, in South Africa, xenophobic reactions are often more pronounced, especially off-campus, driven by socioeconomic tensions. The fear of AIS competing for jobs, university placements, and other resources intensifies the local population's resentment, making xenophobia more visible and hostile compared to the more subtle forms of exclusion seen in Western countries.

Boafo-Arthur (2014) emphasizes that racial prejudice and discrimination are pervasive issues affecting the adjustment of Black African international students in the US. The study highlights that these students often face significant stress due to their racial identity, which is compounded by negative stereotypes about Africa. Boafo-Arthur's work illustrates how these experiences can lead to feelings of alienation and disillusionment as students struggle to reconcile their expectations of an inclusive educational environment with the reality of discrimination. Constantine et al, (2005), in their qualitative analysis of African students from Kenya, Ghana, and



Nigeria, reveal that these African students frequently encounter direct racial attacks and prejudicial treatment from faculty and peers. The study documents incidents such as derogatory comments and exclusion from social groups, which contribute to a hostile academic environment. The authors argue that such experiences not only hinder academic performance but also impact mental health, leading to anxiety and depression among affected students.

Brown's (2008) research on study-related stress among international students in the UK highlights the unique challenges faced by AIS, including feelings of isolation and cultural dislocation. The study indicates that xenophobia manifests in various forms, such as social exclusion and microaggressions, which can severely affect students' well-being and academic success. Brown calls for greater awareness and university support systems to address these issues. Lee and Opio (2011) explore the experiences of African student-athletes and reveals that these students often face discrimination based on their race and nationality. The study highlights how negative stereotypes about Africa can lead to social isolation and hinder their ability to integrate into the campus community. The authors suggest that the intersection of race and athletic identity complicates their experiences as they navigate both the pressures of competition and the challenges of racism.

Zewolde (2023) analyses the experiences of Black African international students in the UK, emphasizing the role of race and racism in shaping their educational journeys. The research provides case studies that illustrate how systemic racism and xenophobia create an uneven playing field for AIS, complicating their academic and social experiences. Brown and Holloway (2008), in their ethnographic study of international postgraduate students, reveal that experiences of racism can significantly hinder social integration and academic success. The authors document specific instances of xenophobia that contribute to feelings of alienation and stress among AIS. Carbado (2002) explores the intersection of race and education, emphasizing how systemic racism impacts the experiences of students of colour. The author argues that xenophobia is not just an individual experience but is embedded in the institutional structures of educational systems.

Owusu-Kwarteng (2021) examines the challenges faced by West African students in UK higher education, focusing on cultural adjustment and academic expectations. These students often experience difficulties integrating into British society, with feelings of isolation and homesickness arising from significant differences in social norms and communication styles. This cultural gap

complicates their ability to form social connections with both local and international students. Academic challenges also play a role, as the UK's emphasis on independent study, critical thinking, and active participation contrasts with the traditional lecture-based approaches common in West Africa. This shift in academic expectations can lead to confusion and anxiety, particularly when navigating unfamiliar assessment methods such as essays and group work. Additionally, some students are hesitant to use support services, which further hampers their academic adjustment. Racism and discrimination also emerge as significant issues, with students reporting experiences of overt and subtle racism, including microaggressions and stereotyping. These encounters negatively affect both their mental health and academic success, often lowering their sense of belonging within the academic community. Owusu-Kwarteng (2021) further links these issues to the legacy of colonialism and the historical relationship between African countries and the UK, calling for more research to fully understand these students' experiences.

Similarly, Neto's (2021) study on African students in Portuguese universities highlights the higher levels of loneliness experienced by Angolan and Cape Verdean students compared to local students, citing financial difficulties, discrimination, and cultural barriers as contributing factors. This study also emphasizes the importance of support services, including counseling and social integration programs, to enhance the well-being of these students. Wu and Hou (2021) explore the challenges African students face in China, where financial constraints, cultural isolation, and legal restrictions severely impact their academic and social lives. Financial difficulties, food insecurity, and lack of supportive social networks are particularly prevalent, often leading to altered aspirations or even dropout. The study introduces the concept of "aspiration on the go," describing how students' goals shift in response to their evolving circumstances.

Therefore, one can say that the above scholarly views discussed in the context of African international students (AIS) in overseas universities offer important insights when aligned with the experiences of AIS at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Both groups encounter xenophobia, discrimination, and other challenges that affect their academic and social integration. However, the contexts of these experiences differ, particularly in terms of racial dynamics, institutional support, and the nature of discrimination. As a researcher, I have observed that in overseas universities, xenophobia experienced by African international students (AIS) largely stems from racial prejudice and cultural misunderstanding. These students are often marginalised

due to their African identity and are subjected to stereotyping, which leads to feelings of alienation. In Western countries, nationalist rhetoric can intensify these issues, reinforcing negative perceptions of Africa as underdeveloped or inferior. This contributes to exclusion and othering. In South Africa, the xenophobia faced by AIS is more directly tied to competition over scarce resources and economic opportunities. The high levels of unemployment and poverty fuel local resentment towards African immigrants, including students, who are seen as competitors for scholarships, university placements, and jobs. This hostility is compounded by broader societal xenophobia, which manifests more overtly in tensions between South Africans and other Africans.

### **2.3.3 Xenophobia in Institutions of Higher Education in South Africa**

Several scholars have explored the nature and manifestations of xenophobia in South African universities, mainly focusing on the experiences of African international students (AIS). Despite variations in their specific focus, several common themes emerge, including scapegoating, covert xenophobia which is subtle and non-violent, institutional failures, and the emotional and psychological toll on students. On the other hand AIS students also face overt xenophobia mainly off campus. Additionally, scholars offer recommendations to address these issues, urging for institutional reforms and cultural awareness initiatives. One significant theme in the literature is the scapegoating of African international students, who are often treated as “others” and blamed for various societal problems. Singh (2013) conducted a case study at the University of Limpopo, where she discovered that foreign students, particularly Zimbabweans, are subjected to xenophobic exclusion and direct attacks. Singh’s (2013) study highlights incidents such as the refusal of postgraduate accommodation for a Zimbabwean student due to her nationality, as well as verbal abuse from a residence manager who linked Zimbabwean students to negative stereotypes. The study suggests that this scapegoating is driven by an increased foreign student enrolment from politically unstable neighboring countries, which fosters resentment among local students.

Similarly, Shindondola (2002) discusses how students with darker pigmentation and foreign accents are often targeted for xenophobic abuse at Rand Afrikaans University. She points out that male foreign students are especially vulnerable to harassment by police and immigration officers, reinforcing the idea that AIS are perceived as threats to social order. Shindondola’s (2002) findings reveal that xenophobic attitudes are closely tied to the legacies of apartheid, where racial

hierarchies continue to influence the treatment of foreigners. In both studies, pigmentation and nationality are used as markers for exclusion and discrimination, perpetuating a cycle of scapegoating that contributes to the marginalization of foreign students. Muthuki (2010) also identifies scapegoating in her research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), noting that South African students often invoke their citizenship when competing for resources. In this context, foreign students are perceived as “stealing” opportunities meant for locals, which fuels xenophobic prejudice. Muthuki’s (2010) findings suggest that this form of scapegoating reflects broader societal tensions over resources, where xenophobia is driven by economic anxieties.

While overt physical violence against foreign students is less common, the studies emphasize the prevalence of subtle, non-violent forms of xenophobia, which can be equally damaging. Singh (2013) notes that African international students frequently face verbal harassment and social exclusion, with foreignness often used as a tool to marginalize them. For instance, students are verbally attacked in lecture halls or refused assistance because they do not speak the local language, which reinforces their sense of alienation. Singh (2013) emphasizes that these non-violent encounters leave emotional and psychological scars on the victims. Muthuki (2010) echoes these findings, arguing that xenophobia at UKZN often manifests in subtle ways, such as exclusion from social activities and name-calling (e.g., “Makwerekwere”). The inability of foreign students to speak local languages, particularly Zulu, creates a communication barrier that further isolates them from local students. This form of linguistic exclusion can have a profound emotional impact, as foreign students feel alienated from their peers and unsupported by their host institutions. Similarly, Maseko (2019) emphasizes the emotional toll that xenophobia takes on students, who often feel like outsiders in their academic environment. His study, which focused on UKZN and Durban University of Technology (DUT), found that social exclusion and derogatory name-calling were common experiences among African international students. Ukwandu (2017), who explores xenophobic violence in South Africa, also underscores the emotional damage caused by xenophobic attitudes within educational institutions. He notes that xenophobia in universities often manifests as verbal abuse and social exclusion, creating a hostile learning environment for foreign students. This aligns with the experiences documented by Singh (2013) and Muthuki (2010), who both highlight the non-violent but deeply harmful nature of xenophobic behaviors within university settings.

Several authors argue that universities, as institutions, have failed to adequately address xenophobia and support international students. Maseko (2019) points out that xenophobia in higher education is not just the result of interpersonal interactions between students but is often embedded within institutional practices. He highlights the role of university staff, including security personnel and administrative staff, in perpetuating discriminatory practices. Maseko (2019) found that 13 out of 14 participants in his study reported experiences of xenophobic attitudes, including barriers to accessing university services and discriminatory treatment by staff members. This institutionalized xenophobia exacerbates the isolation felt by foreign students and can negatively impact their academic performance and well-being. Naidoo (2022) further explores the role of institutionalized xenophobia, noting that it is not only students but also non-national academics who face discrimination and hostility in South African universities. Naidoo (2022) argues that these institutions often lack inclusivity policies, leading to symbolic violence where foreign academics and students are treated as outsiders. This resonates with Maseko's (2019) call for universities to implement more robust policies to combat xenophobia and promote inclusivity.

Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) take a similar stance, arguing that while universities are often perceived as spaces for inclusivity and social justice, they are not immune to the broader societal issues of xenophobia. They emphasize the lack of institutional support for international students, which allows xenophobic attitudes to thrive within academic environments. Their study calls for universities to actively address xenophobia by promoting cultural awareness and creating inclusive policies. Tella (2016) also highlights the role of institutional failures in perpetuating xenophobia, arguing that the lack of understanding and support within universities allows discriminatory behaviors to go unchecked. He suggests universities must take a more proactive stance by fostering tolerance and cultural awareness among students and staff. Similarly, Otu (2012) points out that universities often lack the necessary policies to support the integration of foreign students, leaving them vulnerable to discrimination.

Otu (2017) adds a nuanced perspective by discussing the intersection between race and xenophobia in South African universities. He argues that while the prevailing literature tends to focus on black South Africans as the primary perpetrators of xenophobia, it is important to recognize that anti-

foreign sentiments exist across all racial groups. Otu (2017) highlights that xenophobia is often intertwined with racial tensions, which complicates the experiences of foreign students, especially African students, who may also face racial discrimination. Thus, the above scholarly views also offer recommendations for addressing xenophobia in South African universities. Singh (2013) calls for universities to devise ways of protecting foreign students' rights and promoting tolerance and respect practices. Maseko (2019) advocates for the implementation of a xenophobia helpline, awareness campaigns, and laws that recognize xenophobia as a violation of human rights. Shindondola (2002) similarly recommends that higher education institutions establish clear policies on student visas and financial assistance, as well as provide cultural awareness workshops for students and staff. Naidoo (2022) and Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) stress the importance of creating a welcoming environment that acknowledges and addresses the socio-political factors contributing to xenophobia in higher education.

On the other hand, African international students (AIS) in South Africa face overt xenophobia beyond university campuses, affecting their daily interactions, sense of belonging, and overall well-being. Hara and Mugambi (2021) highlight how AIS encounter verbal abuse in public spaces, often being insulted or ridiculed due to their foreign status. Some students reported experiencing social exclusion, with peers and even instructors displaying biases against them, such as being overlooked for group work or judged based on nationality rather than merit. The study also underscores how xenophobic sentiments extend into the job market, where AIS struggle to secure employment due to prevailing stereotypes that paint them as outsiders or economic burdens. Similarly, Murara (2011) describes various manifestations of xenophobia at the University of the Western Cape, where students have faced derogatory remarks, physical violence, and outright social rejection. Some students reported being verbally harassed in public transport and retail spaces, while others recalled violent incidents, including an alarming case where a student was physically attacked by local youths. The hostile environment contributes to heightened feelings of anxiety and exclusion among AIS, reinforcing their perception of being unwelcome in South African society.

Akande, Musarurwa, and Kaye (2018) further illustrate how foreign students encounter discrimination in social and commercial spaces, including being ignored in shops, treated with

hostility in public services, or mocked for their accents and cultural practices. Some students even reported being physically threatened or pushed in public spaces, reflecting the aggressive nature of xenophobic encounters. Additionally, Sorensen (2012) provides further evidence of overt xenophobia, detailing how AIS are treated with suspicion while using public transportation, disregarded in customer service settings, or even subjected to intimidating conversations implying that local groups are targeting international students for harassment or theft. These accounts collectively demonstrate that xenophobia is not only a societal issue but also a pervasive reality in the everyday lives of AIS, affecting their freedom of movement, social integration, and overall security in South Africa. Such overt xenophobic experiences create an atmosphere of fear and exclusion, further alienating international students and emphasizing the urgent need for policies that promote inclusion and protection in both academic and public spaces.

## **2.4 Xenophobia from the foundation of otherness**

According to Moyo and Mhofu (2020), otherness is socially constructed, whether in South Africa, Europe, Asia, or America, and the political rhetoric they convey through social media is a potent force. They shape the labels we use and to whom they apply. The issue of xenophobia from the foundation of otherness can be understood through the words of Kearney (2003:14) as:

*The experience and interpretation of otherness, or the discernment between others and aliens, which is also a task that concerns our own identity, is not predetermined, but rather we have two choices in this regard (1) to try to understand and accommodate our experience of strangeness, or (2) to repudiate it by projecting it exclusively onto outsiders.*

Similarly, Brons (2015: 70) views othering “as a simultaneous construction of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual and unequal opposition through the identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out-group lacks and/or some 20 undesirable characteristics that the other/out-group has and the self/in-group lacks”. In addition, Staszak (2018:1) defines ‘other’ as “a member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group”. Discrimination is shown in many acts, including the terms used to refer to others, which can diminish their confidence and existence.

Ndebele (2019:19) argues that “to categorize the ‘other’ in South Africa, the term ‘makwerekwere’ is used to construct African foreign nationals living in South Africa.” Ndebele

(2019) further argues that this term used to define the ‘other’ has caused disputes over the years because it is a form of discrimination against black foreigners, and this is observed in everyday lives in communities. Nyamnjoh (2006) states that the term makwerekwere refers to any outsider or stranger who crosses borders “nimble-footed, uninvited and does not seek consent from those who believe to be native to the soil.” Furthermore, Nyamnjoh (2016: 31) adds that the people known as makwerekwere “come in as long-distance traders, asylum-seekers, students, professionals, entrepreneurs, traditional healers, and pastors.” It is evident from the literature on the issue of xenophobia that South Africans are not accepting of outsiders; this observation calls for a stronger and more effective social cohesion effort Ndebele (2019).

Maseko (2022:79) states that “the world is increasingly closing out on ‘others’; different nations and societies are increasingly becoming intolerant of people from other cultures.” Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) argues that the idea of a world without others was the main driving force behind the invasion and plundering of other nations by the colonizers; this was the beginning of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, tribalism, and ethnicity. Maseko (2022) argues that people who believe in the concept of othering believe that the world must be occupied by people of their race, where tribalists believe that only people of their tribe must exist, where patriarchy believe only men should exist, and where xenophobic people believe that only local citizens must exist. Maseko (2022) states that, in short, the world is increasingly intolerant of difference, and the very idea of a universal world is flawed. Thus, for Maseko (2022), in the South African context, xenophobia is premised on the idea that intolerance to diversity and hate has been normalized in society, and this is how differences are constructed; this, in turn, could lead to genocide. For Maseko (2022), there are many ways of dehumanizing human beings; perpetuating violence against a category of people is one of the dehumanizing methods. Maseko (2022:81) states that:

*The Apartheid system produced its own victims and a culture of violence in SA: victims who are more than willing to harm others. Increasing dehumanization and brutalization reproduce more brutes. This is how the apartheid regime produced brutes that we see today. To think in this way is to understand xenophobia in South Africa; it is to understand the normalization of the abnormal. The extent and the willingness to see people harmed because of who they are or to which group they belong is alarming. Such a situation is not a coincidence in South Africa, as the dominant groups (black nationalists), who are a product of a colonial system, are responsible for leading the violence or hate toward other groups in society.*

In light of the above, Maseko (2022) asserts that these groups of black nationalists were trained



by colonialists to be more brutal than their colonial masters. Hence, Fanon (1963) writes about the “pitfalls of national consciousness.” Maseko (2022) adds that genocidal ideas always come with the denial of other people’s humanity. Maseko (2022) highlights that in the SA context, there are black South Africans who feel strongly that foreigners should remain in their own countries and try to sort out the problems of these respective countries, rather than flee them, because South Africa has too many problems of its own, and in any case cannot be expected to solve all the problems of Africa. Therefore, this shows that xenophobia creates a foundation of othering, which results in hate and an increase in intolerance of differences and diversity as Africans.

## **2.5 The nexus between Xenophobia and Afrophobia**

The theme "The Nexus between Xenophobia and Afrophobia" explores the connection between general hostility toward foreigners (xenophobia) and a specific form of this hostility directed at black African foreigners, known as Afrophobia. In the South African context, Afrophobia highlights the unique experiences of African migrants who face discrimination not only because they are outsiders but also due to their race and ethnic background. Gathambiri (2017) discusses the contentious debate surrounding the use of the terms xenophobia and Afrophobia in understanding violence against foreigners. Momodou and Pascoet (2013) focus on Afrophobia in Europe, identifying it as a form of racism where black foreigners become victims of hatred, even by other blacks. They argue that this form of racism stems from a socially constructed inferiority complex shaped by the oppressive structures of colonialism, apartheid, and slavery. Similarly, Dube (2018) emphasizes that Afrophobia, while originally implying fear of Africans, has evolved to represent hatred of fellow blacks, especially within South African society. The above views highlight that xenophobia, particularly Afrophobia, is not merely a fear of foreigners but a deeply racialized form of hatred with roots in historical systems of oppression. The internalized racism among black populations against other Africans is a legacy of colonialism and apartheid, complicating efforts to address this form of violence.

Harris (2002) and Neocosmos (2010) argue that centuries of colonialism and apartheid have had a significant impact on South African society, fostering a culture of hatred towards fellow Africans who came to work in mines and factories. Koenane and Maphunye (2015) believe that this black-

on-black violence results from the restrictive apartheid policies that isolated South Africans from other African cultures. Consequently, many South Africans never learned to appreciate or understand other African nations, leading to hostility and xenophobia. Thus, this view underscores the long-term consequences of apartheid and colonial policies, which created divisions between South Africans and African immigrants. These historical separations continue to manifest in modern-day xenophobia as locals struggle to accept or relate to other Africans.

Tafira (2011) contends that the violence against African immigrants in South Africa should not simply be called xenophobia or Afrophobia but neo-racism, which transcends skin color. According to Tafira, this phenomenon stems from colonized mindsets that struggle to assimilate other Africans into contemporary South African society. The categorization of African foreigners based on their appearance, accents, or cultural behaviors marks them as outsiders. Therefore, the notion of neo-racism presents a deeper understanding of xenophobia, where hostility is not just about race or skin color but about cultural differences and identity. It suggests that the mental and psychological legacies of colonialism continue to affect how South Africans perceive and treat African foreigners.

Gathambiri (2017) discusses how African foreigners are often perceived as the "despicable other," blamed for societal issues such as crime and economic problems, while white foreigners are seen as the "desired other," beneficial to the economy. Harris (2002) and Thakur (2011) also highlight how black foreigners are subjected to dehumanizing treatment due to their distinct appearance and cultural markers, such as accents or darker skin tones. Thus, this contrast in perceptions reveals the persistence of racial hierarchies in South Africa, where African foreigners are vilified while white foreigners are privileged. The remnants of white supremacy influence how different foreign groups are treated, perpetuating xenophobia and Afrophobia among black Africans. Long (2015) argues that the violence against African foreigners is a manifestation of displaced anger in South Africa. He suggests that African migrants become scapegoats for the country's unresolved socioeconomic challenges, particularly issues like unemployment and inequality. Thus, this perspective highlights how Afrophobia and xenophobic violence are often misdirected expressions of frustration with broader social problems. By targeting vulnerable African immigrants, South African society deflects attention from the real issues that need addressing, such as poverty and

lack of economic opportunities.

Gathambiri (2017) notes that the term Afrophobia is controversial, with some anti-racists preferring terms like "anti-black" or "Negrophobia" to emphasize the racial aspect of the discrimination. Others argue that Afrophobia inaccurately implies fear when, in reality, it is hatred or dislike of black foreigners. Thus, the debate over terminology reflects the complexity of xenophobia in South Africa. The way the issue is framed, whether as Afrophobia or anti-black racism, affects both public understanding and policy responses. Clear definitions are essential for addressing the root causes of xenophobic violence effectively. Nyamnjoh (2006) and Matsinhe (2016) argue that xenophobia in South Africa is racialized, with black African foreigners being easily identified by their appearance and cultural differences, leading to discrimination. The use of derogatory terms like "Makwerekwere" further alienates black migrants and reinforces their exclusion. Thus, this racialization of xenophobia shows how deeply entrenched racial and cultural biases are in South African society. The labeling of black African foreigners as outsiders creates a division that fuels xenophobic attitudes and violence, making it difficult for them to integrate into the country.

Duncan (2012) and others highlight the institutionalized forms of Afrophobia in South Africa, where African migrants face discrimination in sectors such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement. Non-African foreigners, such as Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, also face violence, but African migrants bear the brunt of it due to entrenched biases. Thus, the institutionalized nature of xenophobia reveals that the problem is systemic, affecting multiple areas of society. Addressing this requires structural reforms that go beyond individual actions, targeting the broader social, economic, and political systems that perpetuate exclusion and violence against African migrants.

### **2.5.1 Xenophobia through the Human Security lens**

The theme of xenophobia through the human security lens explores how xenophobic attitudes and behaviours are not merely social issues but profound threats to human security. This perspective emphasises that xenophobia undermines the fundamental rights and safety of individuals, particularly those from foreign or minority backgrounds. Viewing xenophobia through the human security framework broadens the understanding of insecurity to include not just physical violence

but also socio-economic and cultural dimensions. Cinini and Singh (2019) discuss xenophobia through the lens of human security, arguing that it is not merely a social issue but a significant human rights concern. They describe xenophobia as manifesting through violent crimes against foreign nationals, including physical assaults, killings, and property destruction. Their perspective emphasises the need for foreign nationals to have access to socio-economic and cultural resources to foster a sense of belonging and security. They advocate for policies promoting inclusivity and protecting the rights of all individuals to enhance community cohesion and reduce tensions. This approach highlights the severity of xenophobia and underscores the necessity of addressing both the immediate violence and the underlying socio-economic factors contributing to it.

Cinini and Singh (2019) further argue that human security is crucial for understanding xenophobia, framing it as a violation of fundamental rights and safety, particularly for foreign nationals. They assert that human security encompasses not only protection from violence and harm but also the assurance of socio-economic and cultural rights. This perspective shifts the focus from viewing xenophobia as merely a social or cultural issue to recognising it as a pressing human rights concern. By applying the human security lens, they highlight the need for policies that address the root causes of xenophobia and ensure that all community members have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for a secure and fulfilling life. This approach advocates for a holistic understanding of security that includes economic, social, and cultural dimensions.

Banda (2014) explores the evolution of the human security concept, initially viewed through a military lens focused on state security and later shifted to emphasize individual well-being. He highlights that human security now encompasses threats from human rights violations, violence, and displacement, in addition to traditional security concerns. Banda's (2014) examination underscores the transition from a state-centric view to one centered on individual well-being, reflecting a broader understanding of insecurity that includes various dimensions beyond traditional military threats. Banda (2014) links xenophobia to human insecurity, particularly in South Africa, where xenophobic violence against African immigrants is seen as a form of human insecurity. He argues that the xenophobic violence of 2008, while notable for its scale, was part of a longer history of xenophobia. Banda (2014) emphasizes that personal security, a component of human security, is closely related to xenophobia, driven by stereotypes and economic anxieties.

His focus on the historical context of xenophobia provides insight into how longstanding prejudices and economic factors contribute to human insecurity, highlighting the importance of addressing both individual fears and broader socio-economic issues.

Bilgin (2003) contends that security has traditionally been associated with states rather than individuals. He argues that while state-centric security measures often serve state interests, they frequently neglect individual security. Bilgin advocates for a focus on human security, emphasizing that governments failing to address poverty and social inequalities contribute to insecurity. This critique highlights the limitations of traditional approaches prioritizing state interests over individual well-being and supports the need for policies addressing underlying social issues to enhance overall security. Edwards and Ferstman (2010) analyze the human security of non-citizens, such as refugees and migrants. They argue that human security should focus on individuals regardless of their legal status within a state. However, they note that restrictive migration policies often leave non-citizens vulnerable to discrimination and insecurity. They highlight that national security initiatives frequently do not extend to non-citizens due to their immigration status. This analysis underscores the vulnerabilities faced by non-citizens within traditional security frameworks and challenges state-centric measures that often exclude these groups.

Graham and Poku (2005) argue that human security threats include tangible issues, such as unemployment and inadequate healthcare, and subjective perceptions, such as fear of crime and xenophobia. They emphasize that xenophobia, particularly toward migrants, poses significant human security risks. Their perspective broadens the concept of human security to include both material and perceptual threats, reinforcing the need to address both economic and psychological aspects of insecurity. Poku and Graham (2005) further note that increased international migration has intensified xenophobia and paranoia, leading to precarious conditions for migrants. They use the example of Iraqi refugees during the Gulf War to illustrate how restrictive policies and human rights abuses exacerbate humanitarian crises. Gomo (2010) argues that xenophobia undermines social order and human rights, particularly highlighting the increased vulnerability of migrant groups, including women who face exploitation and health risks. This discussion emphasizes the severe consequences of xenophobia and restrictive migration policies, reinforcing the need for

comprehensive approaches to address both immediate threats and long-term vulnerabilities faced by migrants.

## **2.6 Xenophobia in the South African Context**

Xenophobia in South Africa is a complex issue deeply intertwined with the country's historical, social, and economic fabric. This section explores how historical injustices, economic disparities, and political rhetoric converge to foster an environment where xenophobia thrives. Several scholarly views have presented a multifaceted view of xenophobia in the context of South Africa, highlighting the enduring impact of South Africa's apartheid history on xenophobia. Shindondola (2003) and Moyo (2020) both argue that apartheid left deep social divisions that have persisted, fuelling xenophobic attitudes. Shindondola (2003) notes that the end of apartheid coincided with a significant influx of migrants from other African countries, but instead of fostering unity, this led to rising xenophobia. Moyo (2020) emphasizes how the apartheid-era social hierarchies and systemic inequalities created fertile ground for xenophobia, as locals view African migrants as intruders. Additionally, Addae and Quan-Baffour (2022) introduce the concept of Afrophobia, a form of racism directed specifically towards African migrants, rooted in apartheid's psychological legacy of fear and mistrust. They argue that dismantling these attitudes requires re-education, promoting a more accurate understanding of multiculturalism. Claassen (2017) also links xenophobia to the socio-economic divides left by apartheid, arguing that the competition for resources exacerbated by these divisions has fuelled resentment against African migrants. Together, these authors highlight the complex historical factors that shape xenophobic attitudes, ranging from entrenched social inequalities to the psychological impacts of apartheid.

In light of the above views, a significant body of literature points to economic competition as a key driver of xenophobia in South Africa. McKnight (2008), Crush (2008), Amisi and Bond (2008), and Makhura (2020) all argue that migrants are often scapegoated during times of economic hardship, particularly in impoverished communities where jobs and housing are scarce. This competition for resources is seen as a trigger for resentment and violence against African immigrants. Landau (2007) and Claassen (2017) highlight that this dynamic is particularly pronounced in black South African communities, where poverty and unemployment are high, leading to hostility towards migrants who are perceived as competitors. Matsinhe's (2016) case

study of the 2008 xenophobic attacks underscores this point, showing how long-standing economic grievances played a central role in the violence. These perspectives suggest that xenophobia in South Africa is closely tied to structural economic inequalities, where migrants are perceived as threats in an already fragile socio-economic environment.

On the other hand, the context of xenophobia in South Africa is characterized by the racialized nature of xenophobia, which is another prominent theme that the scholars revealed. Bouillon (2001), Olukoju (2008), and Warner and Finchilescu (2003) describe xenophobia as “horizontal racism” or “black on-black violence,” where black South Africans direct hostility towards African migrants. Derogatory terms like "amakwerekwere" are used to demean these migrants, further entrenching social divides. Nyamnjoh (2006) contrasts this phenomenon with the ideals of African unity and Ubuntu, particularly given that many African nations supported South Africa during the struggle against apartheid. This disconnect between the ideals of solidarity and the reality of xenophobic violence highlights deep-seated tensions within South African society. Nyamnjoh (2006) suggests that the failure to uphold Ubuntu reflects a broader social problem, where historical oppression has not translated into post-apartheid unity, but rather into new forms of exclusion.

Many scholars attribute the persistence of xenophobia to the role of political leaders and state policies. Choane et al. (2011) argue that the South African government’s failure to deliver basic services has led to frustration among citizens, which is often misdirected towards foreign nationals. Pillay (2021) and Tella (2021) take this argument further by examining how political leaders exploit xenophobic sentiments for electoral gain, using anti-immigrant rhetoric to deflect from domestic challenges such as poverty and unemployment. Hawley (2020) and Hiropoulos (2020) critique the state’s role in shaping public perceptions through policies and media portrayals. They argue that both the government and media reinforce negative stereotypes of migrants, thereby exacerbating xenophobic attitudes. These scholars suggest that political manipulation, coupled with inadequate government intervention, is a major factor sustaining xenophobia in South Africa.

The role of media in perpetuating xenophobia is critically examined by Mthembu (2021),

Hiropoulos (2020), and Goldstone (2019). Mthembu (2021) argues that the South African media often sensationalizes incidents involving migrants, reinforcing negative stereotypes and contributing to public fear. Hiropoulos (2020) extends this critique by analyzing how media narratives frequently frame migrants as threats to national security and social cohesion, further entrenching xenophobic attitudes. Goldstone (2019) highlights the role of social media in amplifying these negative stereotypes but also notes that counter-narratives on social media platforms could help mitigate these harmful perceptions. Collectively, these scholars call for more responsible media reporting that balances the portrayal of migrants and highlights their positive contributions to society.

A number of scholars focus on the specific vulnerabilities faced by African migrants in xenophobic contexts. Singh (2010) and Landau et al. (2005) argue that African migrants are particularly vulnerable due to their limited rights and legal protections, making them easy targets for xenophobic violence. Sibanda (2018) documents the psychological toll of xenophobia on African migrants, noting that pervasive violence and discrimination affect both their physical safety and mental health. Mthethwa (2019) adds a gendered dimension to this discussion, highlighting the specific vulnerabilities faced by female migrants, who often experience gender-based violence exacerbated by xenophobic attitudes. These scholars emphasize the need for comprehensive protection mechanisms and targeted interventions to safeguard the rights and well-being of African migrants in South Africa. Therefore, one can say that the above scholarly views have presented a multifaceted view of xenophobia in the context of South Africa, revealing that it is not merely a reaction to economic competition but is deeply intertwined with historical, social, and political factors. The common themes of financial hardship, racial dynamics, government responsibility, and media influence provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. However, the divergent view, particularly the conceptualization of xenophobia as Afrophobia and the focus on migrant vulnerabilities, suggest that a more nuanced approach is necessary. Thus, addressing xenophobia requires not only economic solutions but also educational initiatives, responsible media practices, and a commitment to inclusive national narratives that recognize the contributions of migrants to South African society.

### **2.6.1 South Africa's Culture of Violence and Xenophobia**



South Africa's culture of violence is a deeply rooted phenomenon, significantly influencing the country's social dynamics and interactions. This culture, characterized by a historical normalization of violence as a means of conflict resolution, has pervasive implications for societal attitudes and behaviors. Masikane (2020) describes South Africa as a notably violent society, a view supported by the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) report (2017), which identifies violent crime and personal security as significant concerns for business operations in the country. Harris (2002) elaborates on this by describing the culture of violence as a situation where violent means rather than peaceful ones often govern social interactions and relations. This perspective is rooted in the apartheid era, where political violence was rampant, and has evolved into a general acceptance of violence as a legitimate means of conflict resolution (Hamber, 1997). The legacy of apartheid, which normalised violence as a tool for political struggle, continues to influence contemporary social dynamics. Although political violence has decreased, there has been a rise in violent crime, reflecting a shift from political to criminal violence (Hamber, 1997). Duncan (2012) supports this view, noting that the historical context of oppression and resistance has contributed to a culture where violence is often seen as an acceptable response to grievances. This normalisation of violence is evident in both interpersonal relationships and broader societal interactions.

The economic and socio-political drivers of xenophobia are another key theme. Matambo and Mhlanga (2020) link xenophobic violence to economic challenges, such as high unemployment and competition for scarce resources. They argue that these economic pressures lead some locals to scapegoat foreign nationals, exacerbating tensions and fuelling violence. Adebajo (2018) supports this view by noting the significant impact of xenophobic violence on the country's identity, contradicting the ideals of unity and inclusivity that were central to the anti-apartheid struggle. Matsinhe (2016) adds that the ideology of "Makwerekwere" dehumanizes foreign nationals and fosters hostility towards them. This xenophobia is often fuelled by economic competition, where locals perceive migrants as threats to their livelihoods, leading to violent outbursts against them. Mangu (2017) further argues that high levels of poverty and unemployment exacerbate feelings of frustration and resentment among the population. These socioeconomic challenges create a fertile ground for violence as individuals and communities

seek scapegoats for their struggles. The competition for limited resources often manifests in violent acts against those perceived as outsiders.

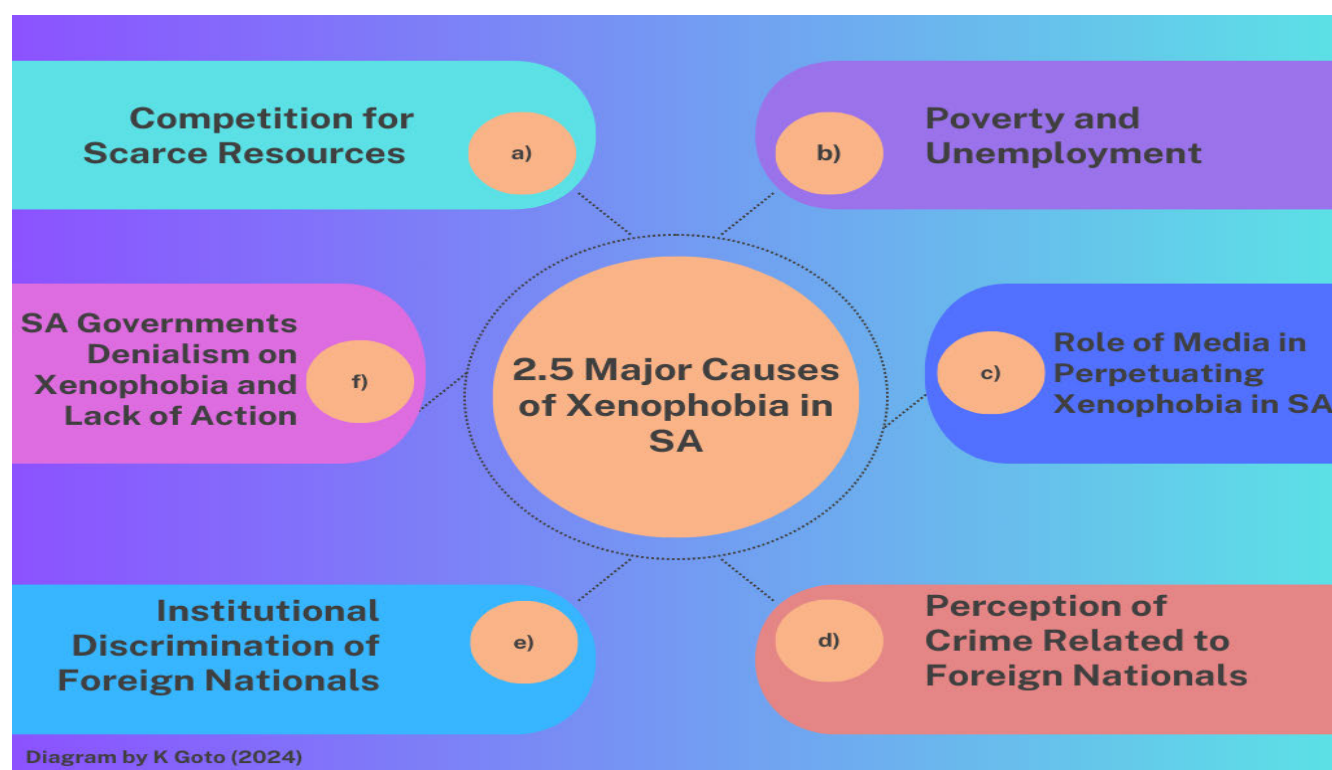
A critical theme emerging from the scholarly views is the gap between official narratives and the lived experiences of xenophobia in South Africa. Hamber (2004) criticizes the 'New South Africa' discourse for depicting xenophobia as an abnormal issue, despite its pervasive presence in South African society. This narrative projects an image of peace and tolerance, while in reality, xenophobia remains a deeply embedded aspect of the social fabric. This discrepancy enables the country to portray itself as harmonious and inclusive while ignoring the systemic nature of xenophobic violence. Crush (2008) highlights how this denialism by the government contributes to a culture of impunity, where the severity and impact of xenophobic violence are minimized. This downplaying of violence fosters an environment where such acts are less likely to be addressed effectively. Additionally, Zuma (2021) points out that political rhetoric often exploits xenophobic sentiments to garner support, reinforcing the culture of violence and complicating efforts to tackle xenophobia. Zuma (2022) further notes that during periods of political uncertainty, leaders may manipulate public sentiment to gain political leverage, leading to heightened tensions and more frequent violent outbreaks. This manipulation exacerbates the issue of xenophobia, illustrating the challenges in addressing violence within the broader context of political and social dynamics.

South Africa's culture of violence is multifaceted, with gender-based violence and community dynamics playing pivotal roles in perpetuating the broader societal issue of xenophobia. Gender-based violence, as Gqola (2008) notes, is deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and systemic inequalities, creating a pervasive culture where violence against women is often normalized. This culture of violence against women intersects with broader societal issues, including economic disenfranchisement and social instability. Similarly, the dynamics within communities significantly impact the prevalence and intensity of violence. Harris (2021) underscores that social cohesion and trust are critical in mitigating violence; fragmented and distrustful communities are more susceptible to violent conflicts. This fragmentation can exacerbate xenophobia, as the lack of social cohesion and trust may lead to increased hostility towards perceived outsiders. Understanding the intersections between gender-based violence, community

dynamics, and xenophobia is essential for addressing the broader culture of violence in South Africa and fostering a more inclusive and peaceful society.

In light of the above views, the scholarly views also emphasize the need for comprehensive and multidisciplinary approaches to combat xenophobia. Muchiri (2016) advocates for policies that address both the social and economic factors contributing to xenophobic violence, suggesting that effective solutions must involve legal, social, and economic interventions. Misago et al. (2015) highlight the importance of community engagement and local governance in mitigating xenophobia, arguing that addressing the root causes of violence is essential for creating lasting change. Singh (2013) reflects on how xenophobia intersects with the correctional system, illustrating the need for policies that promote social cohesion and address the underlying economic disparities that fuel xenophobic sentiments.

## 2.6.2 Major Causes of Xenophobia in South Africa



**Figure 2.1: Causes of Xenophobia in South Africa**

This study notes that there are numerous causes of xenophobia in South Africa. This study further notes that from the diverse collection of potential causes of xenophobia, the study enumerates the

following factors as essential contributors to xenophobic sentiments in South Africa. Figure [2.1] above provides a visual representation elucidating the key causes of xenophobia in South Africa, which include: Competition for scarce resources; Lack of service delivery; Poverty and unemployment; Role of media in perpetuating xenophobia in South Africa; Jealousy stemming from foreigners' perceived success in business and relationships with South African women; Governmental denialism and lack of action on xenophobia; Influx of foreign nationals into South Africa; Institutional discrimination against foreigners; and Perception of crime associated with foreigners. The following sections below comprehensively explain each of these identified causes of xenophobia in South Africa.

***a) Competition for scarce resources***

Lubbe (2008) highlights that many black South Africans have historically been deprived of adequate services, including healthcare, education, and housing. Now, under a democratic government, they are eager to improve their living conditions. However, Lubbe (2008) points out that African immigrants are seen as competing for these resources, putting additional pressure on services like hospitals, schools, and employment. There is a prevailing sentiment in South Africa, both within the government and among the general public, that the economy and infrastructure are unable to meet the demands placed upon them (Lubbe, 2008). Peterson (2022) also identifies competition for scarce resources as the primary reason behind xenophobic sentiments in affected communities.

The Xenowatch report (2021) emphasizes that fierce competition for public services, livelihood resources, and opportunities often leads to tensions and conflicts. Specifically, competition for jobs, housing, healthcare, social grants, and business space between citizens and foreign residents creates resentment and tension (Misago, 2016). In areas affected by violence, when competition for these limited resources involves foreigners, locals view it as unfair and accuse immigrants of taking what rightfully belongs to them (Dodson, 2010). The Xenowatch report reveals that in situations of severe economic hardship and fierce resource competition, citizens often feel entitled to their spaces and resources. They see the competition brought by foreigners as illegitimate, which can lead to efforts to eliminate or minimize their presence (Misago, 2016). Under such circumstances, socio-economic deprivation, whether real or perceived, creates fertile

ground for xenophobic violence.

Peterson (2022) further argues that jealousy has emerged due to the perceived success of African immigrants in sectors where black South Africans were just beginning to gain a foothold. This has been particularly evident in the takeover of township spaza shops or general dealer shops by Somali and Ethiopian immigrants. Within less than a decade, nearly all township spaza shops are now run by foreigners who use more efficient business practices to dominate the market. This has led to widespread dissatisfaction among locals, resulting in looting in major townships (Peterson, 2022). Xenophobic attitudes have also made foreign-owned shops easy targets for criminals who observe the community's discontent. Additionally, Peterson (2022) notes growing animosity, especially from young men, who believe that foreign men are taking South African women, as these women perceive the foreigners to be wealthier.

In light of the above views scholars widely agree that economic deprivation and high unemployment create an environment where locals view immigrants as competitors for limited jobs, housing, and social services. For instance, Crush (2008) and Olofinbiyi (2022) both argue that South Africans, particularly the youth, experience frustration due to unfulfilled economic opportunities, which leads to the perception that immigrants are taking away scarce resources. Similarly, Botha (2012) highlights how the unmet expectations of post-apartheid improvements exacerbate these frustrations, resulting in locals directing their anger towards immigrants, who are perceived as threats to their economic stability. The idea that xenophobia arises from a competition for resources is echoed by Mlambo (2019), who notes that this perception is further intensified by South Africa's high unemployment rates, poverty, and inequality, which create fertile ground for xenophobic sentiments to flourish.

Several authors emphasise that scapegoating immigrants for broader socio-economic issues is a key mechanism through which xenophobia manifests. Tella and Ogunnubi (2014) explain that when locals face economic hardships, immigrants often become scapegoats for these struggles. This is particularly evident in economically deprived communities with the highest pressure to secure limited resources. Gordon (2015) supports this, pointing out that immigrants are often blamed for unemployment and poverty, even when the broader systemic causes of these issues

are ignored. This scapegoating frames immigrants as the source of local economic woes, thereby fuelling resentment and violence against them. The perception that foreign nationals are directly competing with locals for resources such as jobs, housing, and social services is a recurring theme, as illustrated by Masenya (2017) and Biereenu-nnabugwu and Ibeabuchi (2024), who show that poverty and economic marginalization exacerbate tensions between locals and immigrants, making xenophobic violence more likely.

Beyond the economic factors, some scholars, like Kerr, Durrheim, and Dixon (2019), emphasize the historical and political context in which these dynamics unfold. These authors argue that narratives of struggle and liberation from apartheid are often manipulated to justify violence against immigrants, especially when they are portrayed as economic threats. Hiropoulos (2020) extends this argument by showing how public officials and political leaders exploit xenophobic sentiments for political gain. Hiropoulos (2020) argues migrants are frequently scapegoated to divert attention away from broader systemic issues like unemployment and inequality, a tactic that increases xenophobic tensions. This political manipulation complicates efforts to address the root causes of xenophobia, as migrants are unfairly framed as the cause of societal ills. However, some scholars highlight the positive economic contributions immigrants make. For example, Landau and Freemantle (2010) and Gordon (2015) argue that immigrants can stimulate local economies by creating jobs and enhancing market opportunities. However, these positive impacts are frequently overshadowed by the dominant negative narrative that immigrants are "stealing jobs" or taking resources away from locals. While some studies highlight these economic benefits, they are often overlooked in public discourse, which tends to frame immigrants as threats to local livelihoods.

### ***b) Poverty and Unemployment***

A number of scholars agree that poverty and unemployment are significant drivers of xenophobia in South Africa. Biereenu-Nnabugwu and Ibeabuchi (2024), for example, argue that the socio-economic conditions facing black South Africans, particularly the youth, create a highly competitive environment for scarce resources, which fuels social tensions and violence against foreign nationals. They highlight the ongoing high levels of poverty and unemployment, despite government efforts to mitigate these issues through social safety nets, as major contributors to

frustration and resentment that often erupt into xenophobic violence. Similarly, Gordon (2015) emphasizes that poverty and unemployment generate insecurity about economic futures, leading locals to scapegoat immigrants who are perceived as competitors for limited jobs. Gordon's (2015) analysis highlights societal narratives portraying immigrants as "job-takers" intensify negative attitudes and contribute to xenophobic sentiments.

Further reinforcing these points, Mlambo (2019) and Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) underscore how socioeconomic struggles exacerbate tensions between local populations and foreign nationals. Mlambo (2019) points to the high unemployment rate of 27.6% in early 2019, which amplifies resentment towards immigrants, particularly regarding access to jobs and resources. Mlambo (2019) also stresses the importance of government intervention in addressing the root causes of these tensions. Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) add a slightly different perspective by focusing on economic self-interest as a key factor in fostering anti-foreigner attitudes, where locals may feel marginalized and direct their frustrations towards foreign nationals, especially those from other African countries.

Cinini and Singh (2019) echo these findings, emphasizing that economic hardship fosters an environment ripe for xenophobic resentment. However, they add a unique layer by highlighting how the economic success of foreign nationals can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and jealousy among local populations, especially in contexts where economic opportunities are scarce. This underscores the emotional and psychological dimensions of xenophobic violence, not merely its economic roots. Khanyile (2020) and Gathambiri (2017) both emphasise the broader socio-economic context that exacerbates tensions between locals and foreign nationals. Khanyile (2020) focuses on the importance of addressing inequality and unemployment to reduce hostility, while Gathambiri (2017) highlights the intertwining of poverty and unemployment with broader social dynamics that drive xenophobic attitudes. Both scholars suggest that improving economic conditions is essential for fostering social cohesion and mitigating xenophobia.

Thus, while each scholar emphasises poverty and unemployment as central to xenophobic violence in South Africa, there are nuanced differences. Mlambo (2019) focus more on societal narratives and government interventions, while Cinini and Singh (2019) explore how perceptions

of foreign nationals' economic success fuel resentment. Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) focus on economic self-interest, and Khanyile and Gathambiri stress the broader socio-economic context. Together, these studies paint a comprehensive picture of the complex relationship between economic hardship and xenophobic attitudes in South Africa, suggesting that only by addressing the structural issues of poverty and unemployment can xenophobia be meaningfully mitigated

### **c) Role of media in perpetuating xenophobia in SA**

According to Tarisayi and Manik (2023) the language used in the mainstream media contributes to the scapegoat image of migrants in South Africa. 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) views the nomenclature and metaphors utilised by the media as contributing to the scapegoating of migrants. According to Mgogo and Osunkunle (2023:3) in their article titled *Students' perceptions of the influence of media on perpetuating xenophobia in South African universities*, “due to increasing competition among media houses, media has been accused of using provocative language when reporting on xenophobia-related violence in South Africa.” In some cases, extreme headlines with manipulative language are used by some newspapers to achieve more readership (Mgogo and Osunkunle, 2023). McDonald and Jacobs (2008:23) further state that “even though not many studies have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that print media's language has led to xenophobic violence, some researchers and media critics hold that print media's adoption of generalised stereotypes of people from other African countries and the labelling and use of derogative names foster xenophobic discourse.” Similarly, Smith (2021) argues that newspapers are passively consumed in South Africa and help shape reality for readers. Thus, many people in South Africa have relied heavily on print media as a source of news. With the growing concern about print media's biased coverage of xenophobic violence and its misrepresentation of foreign nationals, some researchers have dubbed South African print media as xenophobic (Mgogo and Osunkunle, 2023).

In light of the above views Mgogo and Osunkunle, (2023:3) further argue that “in many cases, the media, print media in particular, has relied on generalised stereotypes to classify foreign nationals



when reporting on crime and violence.” For instance, in many cases, “Nigerian migrants have been classified as drug dealers and smugglers, Zimbabweans as predominantly illegal immigrants and Somalis and Ethiopians as sellers of expired food and products” (Akande et al, 2018:6). In addition, Mgogo and Osunkunle (2023:3) state that “other derogatory names have been used by print media to frame foreign nationals, besides ‘aliens’ and ‘illegal immigrants’ including amakwerekwere, amazayi zayi, amagrigamba and ‘my friend’. To supplement this view, the study borrows from Mgogo and Osunkunle (2023) where some of the newspaper headlines with these derogative names are evident:

*Pretoria Mayor singles out Nigerians as drug dealers and pimps (IOL Online Newspaper, 2017).*

*Alex ‘aliens’ want to go home (Gomo, 2010.)*

*War was declared against ‘my friend’ spaza shops selling expired products (The Citizen Online Newspaper 2018).*

Based on the research findings of Mgogo and Osunkunle, (2023:3) they assert that,

*some participants have pointed out that some local students have used such derogatory names and stereotypes to refer to them. For instance, some students who are of Nigerian origin have been told that they are the sons or daughters of drug dealers or smugglers and that their education fees are funded with that money.*

This points to negative reportage of xenophobia-related violence by the South African print media while compromising the print media’s potential for impartial reportage of xenophobia through constructive news coverage. Furthermore, Mgogo and Osunkunle (2023) note that “it is this representation in media that perpetuates power differences between South African residents and foreign nationals through normalising derogatory reporting.” Thus, symbolic xenophobic violence is perpetuated, which leads to actual violence. Thus, the language used by mainstream media perpetuates stereotyping as well as “othering” of migrants in South Africa. It then follows that due to stereotypes such as migrants as “illegal,” and derogatory names such as amazayi zayi, 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.

In a similar vein, Masuku and Nkala (2023:1) state that “the media’s huge influence comes from

the fact that it's capable of affecting public perceptions." In light of this, Masuku and Nkala (2023) set out to understand how South Africa's print media writes about foreigners and the implications of this representation on local attitudes towards foreign nationals. Masuku and Nkala (2023:1) argue that "in South Africa, immigrants are often scapegoated as the root of socio-economic problems, in the post-apartheid landscape. Black African immigrants, mainly from other African countries, have been negatively stereotyped as 'illegal' and 'job stealers' who are 'criminal' as well as diseased". In addition to the above views, this study states that the rise of social media has also amplified the speed and reach of information disseminated to the general public. Masuku and Nkala (2023) state that false or misleading narratives about immigrants can quickly spread, influencing public opinion and contributing to the polarisation of views and foreign nationals in the country.

Masuku and Nkala's (2023) findings reveal that the media often used language that portrayed foreigners in a bad light and dehumanised them, and this has the potential to trigger violence against the perceived invaders. They found a common trend in the way the South African media describes the immigrant population. For instance, "without incorporating academic or other credible research, there is a loose use of adjectives such as "undocumented" or "illegal" when referring to African foreign nationals. This reinforces the impression that all foreigners are undocumented and illegal" (Masuku and Nkala, 2023:1). Therefore, this shows that the language used in media coverage plays a huge role in influencing public perception. Negative framing of immigration-related issues can contribute to a climate of fear and hostility in South Africa.

In addition, Masuku and Nkala (2023), in their research, highlight the use of imprecise but nonetheless suggestive quantification of the African immigrant population. They argue that "the media frequently used expressions such as 'huge numbers,' 'many foreigners,' 'thousands of immigrants', 'millions of foreign nationals,' 'over 300 illegal foreigners', and a vast number". They also noticed the use of dehumanising which is mostly done through likening African immigrants to non-living objects such as water, cargo or natural disasters that must be controlled. For Masuku and Nkala (2023) often, the movement of foreigners in the country was described using terms like 'massive influx,' 'abnormal influx,' 'flooding to South Africa,' and 'trickling into,' 'roaming free,' 'descended,' 'fled' or 'flocked". In some instances, the threat level was

emphasised by describing the immigrant population as having ‘taken over’ and being an ‘added burden’ to the country (Masuku and Nkala, 2023:1).

Correspondingly, war terms and phrases such as ‘crackdown’, ‘leading the charge’, ‘operation to rid’ and ‘protect porous borders’ were used to signal a response while reinforcing the notion of an impending invasion (Masuku and Nkala, 2023:1). Therefore, this shows that the South African media plays a huge role in perpetuating xenophobia in SA and its influence comes from the fact that it’s capable of affecting public perceptions. Blinder and Jeannet (2018) note that media coverage of immigration provided a foundation for the individual construction of views on the social and political order. Resultantly, it can be argued that the media is instrumental in shaping the negative views and perceptions of foreign nationals in the South. In addition, the media coverage does not give sufficient coverage to positive stories about the contributions of immigrants to society, which creates an unbalanced and negative perception of foreign nationals in South Africa.

### **c) Perception of crime related to foreigners**

A significant body of research points to the perception of crime as a key driver of xenophobia in South Africa. Xenowatch (2021) highlights how foreign nationals are frequently scapegoated for crime, with media portrayals and political rhetoric often depicting them as responsible for increasing crime rates. This perception, rooted in frustrations over economic hardships and the government's failure to address unemployment and poverty, fuels xenophobic sentiments. Xenowatch emphasizes that these negative views toward foreigners are not necessarily based on actual crime statistics but rather on societal narratives that vilify migrants. This view is echoed by White, Blaauw, and Rispel (2020), who discuss how political rhetoric and societal beliefs linking migrants to crime contribute to xenophobic attitudes, particularly in sectors like healthcare. They note that these perceptions lead to discriminatory practices, as healthcare providers reflect the broader societal fears against migrants. This exclusionary behaviour affects the health and well-being of migrant patients, underscoring the societal consequences of such perceptions beyond mere hostility. Similarly, Naidoo (2022) underscores the role of media portrayals and political rhetoric in perpetuating the belief that non-nationals are responsible for crime. Naidoo highlights how these misconceptions lead to the marginalization of foreign nationals, justifying discriminatory practices and violent actions against them. The government’s

failure to dispel these misconceptions only exacerbates the problem, fostering a culture where crimes against foreign nationals are not taken seriously and are often viewed as ordinary criminal incidents rather than manifestations of xenophobia.

Addae and Quan-Baffour (2022) contribute to this discussion by analyzing how foreign nationals are scapegoated for a range of societal issues, including crime, unemployment, and strain on social services. Like Naidoo and Xenowatch, they emphasize the harmful role of government messaging and media portrayals in creating a societal narrative that depicts migrants as threats to national stability. However, Addae and Quan-Baffour also introduce a historical perspective, arguing that these xenophobic perceptions are rooted in South Africa's socio-economic challenges and historical contexts, which are then projected onto foreign nationals. This perspective adds depth to the analysis by linking contemporary xenophobia to long-standing socio-economic grievances.

Onwuegbuchulam in Matambo (2022) similarly discusses the widespread narrative that blames foreign nationals for crime and economic insecurity. They argue that these perceptions, fuelled by media and political rhetoric, lead to increased xenophobic sentiments and justify violence against migrants. Matambo further highlights how this scapegoating creates a false narrative that frames immigrants as the primary cause of crime, reinforcing negative stereotypes and providing a rationale for xenophobic violence. On the other hand, Hagensen (2014) critiques these perceptions, arguing that the association of foreign nationals with crime is often disconnected from reality. His analysis shows that, contrary to the prevailing narrative, immigrants contribute positively to the economy but continue to be blamed for crime. This disconnect between perception and reality creates a climate of fear and hostility that fosters xenophobic violence. Similarly, Solomon and Kosaka (2013) argue that local communities often view immigrants as threats to safety and security, leading to outbreaks of violence. Their research highlights how fear of crime is manipulated to foster xenophobic sentiments, even in the absence of actual evidence linking migrants to higher crime rates.

Thus, across these views of scholars, a clear pattern emerges, which is that the perceptions of crime related to foreign nationals are not only widespread but are deeply rooted in political,

media, and societal narratives that scapegoat immigrants for broader socio-economic issues. While Xenowatch, Naidoo, Addae, and Quan-Baffour emphasize the role of political rhetoric and media portrayals, White, Blaauw, and Rispel explore how these perceptions extend into institutional practices, such as healthcare. The views by Hagensen, Solomon, and Kosaka also challenge the validity of these perceptions, highlighting the disconnect between the actual contributions of migrants and the negative societal views that persist. Together, these works suggest that addressing xenophobia in South Africa requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles the socio-economic roots of these sentiments and the media and political narratives that reinforce them.

#### *d) Institutional discrimination of foreigners*

Institutional discrimination against foreign nationals in South Africa refers to the systemic and entrenched practices within state institutions that unfairly disadvantage non-citizens, particularly those from other African countries. This discrimination manifests across multiple sectors, including immigration, healthcare, education, and law enforcement, where foreign nationals are often treated with suspicion, denied equal access to services, or subjected to biased policies. These institutional barriers perpetuate xenophobic attitudes and reinforce the exclusion of foreigners from full participation in society, contributing to their marginalization and vulnerability. Misago et al. (2015), Harris (2001), and Crush (2008) agree that the apartheid-era framing of foreigners as "aliens" continues to influence contemporary attitudes, with institutions like the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and South African Police Service (SAPS) displaying discriminatory practices. These authors emphasize how this institutionalized xenophobia results in the exclusion of foreign nationals from services and rights enjoyed by South African citizens. For example, Harris (2001) and Crush (2008) both highlight that this institutional bias is evident in how SAPS handles foreigners, often arresting them without giving them the opportunity to provide legal documentation. This practice reflects a deeper institutional problem where foreigners are presumed guilty or illegal, reinforcing the perception of them as "other" and legitimising their exclusion. In my view, this persistent institutional bias against foreigners undermines efforts to build an inclusive, post-apartheid society, as it carries forward the divisive frameworks of the past.

Additionally, several scholars, including Solomon and Kosaka (2013), Mvundura (2024), and White and Rispel (2021), observe that media, political figures, and public institutions stereotype foreign nationals, particularly from other African countries, as criminals or economic burdens. This negative portrayal often translates into discriminatory practices within state systems, including healthcare. In the healthcare context, White and Rispel (2021) and Mvundura (2024) both identify systemic failures that deny foreign nationals equitable access to services, reinforcing the notion of foreigners as "outsiders" unworthy of state resources. This alignment between media portrayals and institutional practices perpetuates xenophobic attitudes at both the societal and systemic levels. While there is broad consensus on the role of institutional discrimination in perpetuating xenophobia, some authors offer different perspectives on the specific areas in which this discrimination manifests. For example, while Harris (2001) focuses on the criminal justice system, noting how SAPS' actions recall apartheid-era oppression, White and Rispel (2021) highlight discrimination within the healthcare sector, where foreign nationals are misclassified or denied care. This difference illustrates the multi-faceted nature of institutional discrimination, showing that it is not confined to one sector but permeates multiple layers of public service.

In education, scholars such as Naidoo (2022), Otu (2017), and Gopal (2013) highlight how foreign nationals, especially academics and students, face barriers to employment and academic success due to their nationality. Otu (2017) and Gopal (2013) argue that foreign students encounter overt and covert forms of discrimination in schools and universities, including biased grading practices, delayed supervision, and lack of support from peers and educators. These findings diverge from the focus on policing and healthcare but reinforce the broader argument that institutional discrimination affects foreigners across multiple sectors. Thus, the common thread across these studies is that institutional discrimination against foreign nationals is a major factor in the perpetuation of xenophobia in South Africa. While different sectors of policing, healthcare, and education experience this discrimination in distinct ways, the root issue is the exclusionary policies and practices embedded in state institutions. In my view, this institutional discrimination not only reflects but also reinforces societal xenophobia. When state institutions treat foreign nationals as lesser or unworthy of full rights and services, it legitimizes broader societal hostility toward them, creating a feedback loop that deepens their marginalization.

*e) SA Government's denialism on xenophobia and lack of action*

The theme of the South African Government's denialism of xenophobia and lack of action explores how the government has consistently downplayed or denied the existence of xenophobia, which has contributed to ongoing violence and discrimination against foreign nationals. Many scholars argue that this denialism, coupled with inadequate responses and a failure to address underlying social and economic tensions, has allowed xenophobic attitudes to persist. Heymen (2013), Landau (2010), Neocosmos (2010), and Desai (2008) argue that the government's refusal to acknowledge the existence of xenophobia, especially during the presidency of Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, has allowed xenophobic violence to persist. For example, Neocosmos (2010) highlights that government leaders failed to show political will to address the issue at its roots, resulting in ongoing violent attacks.

This lack of acknowledgment, according to Desai (2008), has created a dangerous precedent where the violence is either minimized or dismissed as isolated incidents rather than seen as part of a systemic problem. Similarly, Muchiri (2016) adds that the government's framing of xenophobia as mere criminal activity, rather than targeting specific foreign communities, has downplayed the issue and stunted efforts to develop a coordinated response. This framing reinforces the perception that xenophobia is not a societal problem but a by-product of general crime, thereby excusing the lack of a focused intervention. Thus, by categorizing xenophobia merely as another type of crime, the government neglects the opportunity to properly tackle its root causes and develop effective strategies for promoting social unity and safeguarding vulnerable groups. This lack of acknowledgment and targeted response not only weakens efforts to address the issue but also contributes to a continuous cycle of violence and discrimination.

In line with the above views, Olofinbiyi (2022) and Majola (2018) further underscore this denialism by pointing out that key political figures, including former President Mbeki, publicly questioned whether xenophobia even existed, suggesting that the violence was criminal opportunism. This, according to Olofinbiyi (2022), illustrates the deep disconnect between the government's narrative and the lived realities of those affected by xenophobic attacks. This denial is not just passive but actively prevents public discourse on the issue, contributing to a culture of silence around xenophobia. Solomon and Kosaka (2013) contend that the government has

recently begun to recognize the scale of xenophobia; they also note that its responses have been inconsistent and contradictory. Despite acknowledging the problem, government officials have made statements that further stigmatize foreign nationals, labeling them as "aliens" or associating them with illegal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution. Such remarks, as Solomon and Kosaka (2013) argue, reinforce public perceptions that immigrants are responsible for crime and economic stagnation, thereby fuelling xenophobic sentiments.

Similarly, Hewitt, Masikane, and Toendepi (2020) argue that the South African government's denial regarding xenophobia significantly contributes to the issue. They note that officials often downplay xenophobia, framing it as a mere crime, which undermines effective responses and fosters an environment where xenophobic attitudes are deemed acceptable. They reference the former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, who expressed skepticism about the severity of xenophobia, further minimizing the issue. This lack of acknowledgment prevents addressing the root causes and perpetuates violence against foreign nationals. Additionally, the government's failure to implement strong immigration policies and engage in meaningful dialogue about socio-economic challenges exacerbates xenophobia. Thus, this denialism serves to protect the national image but results in inaction on the socio-economic issues fuelling xenophobia.

In addition, Crush (2022) discusses the South African government's approach to xenophobia, highlighting a pattern of denialism and inaction. Crush (2022) states that this denialism is coupled with a tendency to blame migrants and criminals for the violence, rather than addressing the root causes of xenophobia itself. Crush (2022) points out that the government's responses have been largely reactive, focusing on condemning violence after it occurs and proposing measures such as hate crime laws and increased law enforcement. Crush (2022) criticizes these measures as insufficient, noting that they do not address the underlying issues or provide proactive solutions to combat xenophobia. Therefore, Crush's (2022) critique underscores the inadequacy of these measures, which do not offer comprehensive or proactive solutions. Thus, instead of fostering an environment of integration and understanding, the government's strategies reinforce existing divisions and fail to create sustainable pathways for addressing xenophobia.

Khorana (2021) and Tella (2016) share similar observations, pointing out that high-ranking



officials have often been guilty of making xenophobic remarks without facing any significant repercussions. Khorana (2021) criticizes the lack of public reprimand or consequence for officials who make these inflammatory comments, suggesting that this contributes to normalizing xenophobic discourse at the highest levels of government. Tella (2016) adds that figures such as Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the Zulu King have made public statements blaming immigrants for South Africa's socio-economic challenges, further entrenching xenophobic sentiments in society. Laganprasad (2015) and Harris (2002) add another dimension to this conversation, pointing out that the government's reluctance to characterize the attacks as xenophobic is also reflected in its law enforcement and judicial responses. Laganprasad (2015) notes that the government's poor conviction rate for those responsible for xenophobic violence indicates a lack of commitment to addressing the issue seriously. Similarly, Harris (2002) contends that the government's limited action in prosecuting perpetrators reinforces a sense of impunity, thereby allowing xenophobic violence to continue unchecked.

While denialism is a key factor, many authors also argue that the government's inaction in addressing the root causes of xenophobia has compounded the problem. Neocosmos (2010), Majola (2018), and Hiropoulos (2020) all stress that the government has failed to implement proactive measures to combat xenophobia, such as community engagement, public education, or social cohesion initiatives. These authors argue that without addressing the underlying social and economic inequalities that fuel xenophobic sentiments, efforts to curb the violence will remain ineffective. Harris (2002) provides a nuanced view, suggesting that while the government may not have directly caused xenophobic attacks, its mismanagement of immigration has exacerbated tensions between locals and foreign nationals. The influx of immigrants, both legal and illegal, into already impoverished communities has intensified competition for resources, such as housing and jobs. Harris (2002) also points to corruption within key government departments like Home Affairs and the South African Police Service (SAPS), which has allowed immigrants to obtain services and documents through bribery, further heightening local frustrations. These frustrations, left unaddressed by the government, have often been misdirected toward foreign nationals, resulting in violent outbursts.

In line with this, Mundenga (2015) and Abera (2024) argue that the government's lack of a

comprehensive strategy to address xenophobia has left both foreign nationals and local communities vulnerable. They emphasize that the government has failed to protect immigrants from violence and has similarly failed to improve the socio-economic conditions of locals, creating an environment where frustrations fester and manifest as xenophobic violence. Aberra (2024) adds that this inaction perpetuates myths and stereotypes about immigrants, including the idea that they receive preferential treatment, which further inflames anti-immigrant sentiment. While most scholars converge on the idea that the South African government's denialism and inaction have perpetuated xenophobia, some diverge in their views on the extent of government responsibility. For instance, Solomon and Kosaka (2013) suggest that although the government initially failed to recognize xenophobia, it has since made efforts to address the issue, albeit inadequately. They argue that public statements from officials have exacerbated the problem, but they stop short of accusing the government of outright complicity. On the other hand, Neocosmos (2010), Mlambo (2019), and Majola (2018) take a more critical stance, asserting that the government's failure to address the structural and systemic inequalities that drive xenophobia makes it directly responsible for the violence. They argue that the government's negligence in tackling both economic disparities and social tensions is a core factor that enables xenophobia to thrive.

Harris (2002) offers a more systemic view, focusing on structural governance issues, such as corruption and mismanagement, that contribute to the perception that immigrants are taking resources away from locals. While not excusing the violence, Harris suggests that these governance failures have created a fertile ground for xenophobic attitudes to grow, particularly in communities where residents feel marginalized and neglected by the state. In summary, while there is a consensus that the South African government's denialism and lack of effective action have perpetuated xenophobic violence, scholars diverge on the degree of governmental responsibility and the nature of its failures. Some focus more on the rhetoric of denial and its symbolic effects, while others highlight deeper structural issues that fuel xenophobia, including economic inequality, corruption, and inadequate law enforcement responses. By critically engaging with these commonalities and divergences, the literature illustrates the complex role that the South African government plays in the persistence of xenophobic violence.

## 2.7 Linking International Relations Discipline and Xenophobia in South Africa.

As highlighted in 2.4, xenophobia is indeed a global phenomenon as it is happening elsewhere within the international system. This study states that International Relations (IR) as a discipline offers a valuable framework for understanding and addressing the issue of xenophobia. International Relations examines the interactions among states, international organizations, and non-state actors on the global stage. The nature of xenophobia in South Africa, as a cross-border issue, affects the international relations of states. This study states that the nature of xenophobia in SA is an African continental problem where violence and attacks are mostly targeted at black African foreign nationals by the locals, hence the selection of African international students at UKZN as participants of the study. Afrophobia, expressed in many forms across the continent, reduces the possibilities of regional integration beyond policy propositions. International Relations as a discipline links to the issue of xenophobia since the phenomenon is happening at an African continental level, and if the issue is left unchecked, xenophobia can result in an African continental war as witnessed by African states retaliating; for example, in Nigeria, the Nigerian people retaliated and they started burning, and looting shops owned by South Africa such as Shoprite and MTN. Therefore, xenophobia affects the international relations of states and it also affects the efforts for regional integration.

International Relations contribute to the understanding of regional integration and regional institutions. In IR, the study of institutions, regimes, and governance structures is essential for understanding how regional integration organizations are established, how they function, and progress over time. Paalo et al (2022:15) in their article titled *Xenophobia and the Challenge of Regional Integration in Africa: Understanding Three Cardinal Dynamics* argue that, “it is understood that one of the major hindrances to Africa’s regional integration is the phenomenon of xenophobia, which is exacerbated and reinforced by discourses and practices surrounding deep-rooted issues such as colonial political and economic structures, poor political leadership, and overlapping sub-regional membership”. Paalo et al (2022:15) offer “a nuanced analysis of how xenophobia affects regional integration using a three-pronged argument that xenophobia (i) generates new discourses of ‘othering’ or belonging, (ii) promotes perceptions of betrayal and retaliation in foreign policy framing or ad-hoc actions and/or attacks on non-nationals, and (iii) redefines rights of occupancy or territorial belonging.” Therefore, one can say that an examination

of each of these themes reveals a reinforcing relationship between the state and citizens and the multiplier effect on interstate relations in the continent.

International Relations (IR) is an academic field that is a branch of political science that is concerned with the study of relations between states, globalization, the foreign policy of nation-states, and the mechanisms and institutions (such as international organizations (Africa Union), inter-governmental organizations, international and national non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations) through which states interact (Khan, 2019:1). In IR Globalisation is one of the themes which examine how interconnectedness shapes global dynamics. Cultural exchange, facilitated by globalization, can either contribute to a mutual understanding amongst states or exacerbate the problem of xenophobia. Since IR deals with issues of globalisation and the relations between states Onuegbu in Matambo (2022:275) states that “the frictions and fallouts of globalization doubtlessly have given room to a lot of conflicts in twenty-first-century Africa, thus creating not only a huge challenge but also a big role for the African Union (AU).”

Onuegbu (2022) argues that in as much as the frequency of traditional armed conflicts in Africa, including interstate and civil wars, has receded, new variants of tensions have emerged. One of these new tensions is xenophobia, and one country in Africa that has been a major hot spot is South Africa (Onuegbu, 2022). Onuegbu (2022) further argues that, though South Africa is the epicentre of the xenophobic crisis, developments therein have affected the entire continent with the attacks directed at other African nationals and their livelihoods. The point is that xenophobia in South Africa is an all-African problem, a common source of conflict capable of endangering peace, security, development, and international relations between and among states in Africa. Thus, it deserves some collective action at the continental level to address the issue of xenophobia. It is in this context that the role of the AU becomes crucial as an important African institution saddled with the responsibility to promote unity, peace, security, integration, and development in the continent, which is necessary for good relations among states. In addition, the AU not only has a moral obligation but political responsibility to address xenophobia in South Africa as a common African problem. Onuegbu (2022) further states that no doubt, on a state-actor level, South Africa and other countries in Africa affected by the acts of xenophobia thereof have made significant efforts both in response and reactions to confronting the problem.

In light of the views above, Everatt (2011:7) defines xenophobia as “a toxic and contagious

construction of hatred for others.” For Everatt (2011), the contagious nature” of xenophobia brings the question of reprisals into focus. One xenophobic attack in one country may lead to another xenophobic attack(s) in another country (Everatt, 2011). Put in other words, xenophobia brews tensions between and among states, thus affecting international relations among African states. Onuegbu (2022) argues that in this context, xenophobia is understood as a potential source of conflict and conflict in itself, and it destroys the trust that exists between nations. Therefore, xenophobia as an operational concept in this study is understood as acts of violence and maltreatment of foreign nationals by the nationals of the host country based on their nationality in a manner that raises concern beyond the shores of South Africa. Thus, xenophobia attracts condemnation as well as reprisals from the countries whose nationals were the victims of such violent acts.

Leaning on a similar prism, International Relations also deal with issues around regional integration, and regional organizations tend to intervene in conflict situations when elements of peace and security within its geopolitical space are substituted with tension and chaos (Ameh, 2019). IR as a discipline underscores human rights as a foundation of global interactions. Xenophobia often manifests in the maltreatment of migrants and abuse of human rights. On this note, Makinda et al (2016) contend that one of the reasons that compel the AU to intervene in a conflict situation in Africa relates to the question of peace and security of the continent. In a similar vein, IR deals with issues that affect the peace and security among states, such as the issue of xenophobia. Onuegbu (2022), argues that the need to maintain peace and regional stability is a major factor that motivated the AU’s engagement against xenophobia in South Africa.

Onuegbu (2022:276) further states that “the trend of reactions from other African countries whose nationals were attacked in South Africa was already creating some serious tension capable of undermining regional peace.” Onuegbu (2022:277) further states that “those reactions came in the forms of repatriation of nationals from a number of other African states, calling back diplomatic missions, suspension of flights to and from, withdrawal of participation in international forums or summits where South Africa was the host, and reprisal attacks on South African investments”. In other words, the AU considered the incidence of xenophobia in South Africa a huge threat to peace, stability, and human rights in the continent. It is noteworthy that among the high points outlined in the Constitutive Act of the AU (2001), the promotion of peace, security, and human

rights is fundamental.

In addition to the above views Makinda (2016:13) notes that “maltreatment and violent attacks on other Africans in any other African country did constitute not only threat to peace and security but also a gross abuse of human rights capable of igniting a regional conflict; hence, the AU could not be silent as these noble objectives were abandoned in South Africa.” Aside from being a threat to peace and undermining the ideals of African solidarity, resentment and attacks on other African nationals in South Africa, or any other country in Africa for that matter, are a serious violation of international human rights law and constitute a wilful disruption of international migration (Onuegbu, 2022). The xenophobic attacks, therefore, did not just violate the principles of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1986) but other existing international human rights instruments that South Africa was expected to honor (Amnesty International, 2020). As an important African institution that places a strong emphasis on the promotion of human and peoples’ rights, and with the machinery to address same when violated, it was not only morally expedient but also a question of political responsibility that the AU has to rise up to the occasion when and where the rights and freedoms of African citizens were grossly violated. Therefore, one can state that the AU has not just a moral obligation but political and economic responsibility to engage the problem of xenophobia in South Africa as a common African problem. Thus, it has the responsibility and the capacity to be a significant factor in addressing xenophobia in South Africa and in any other country in Africa.

### **2.7.1 Linking International Relations as a Discipline with African International Students**

In light of the above views, International Relations is concerned with relations of nation-states across boundaries. IR addresses international political economy, regional integration, global governance, intercultural relations, national and ethnic identities, foreign policy analysis, development studies, environment, international security, diplomacy, terrorism, media, social movements, and more. For Folarin (2015:1) “IR is a broad discipline that encapsulates the multivariate aspects of man in the global contexts. It is what can be described as a fusion of social science disciplines, as it deals with the basic elements of the social man; the only difference is that it looks at such essentials in relational contexts beyond national borders.” IR explores the experiences of African international students through the lens of migration and transnationalism and it helps to understand the social, economic, and cultural connections that African

international students uphold with their home countries while studying abroad (Ola, 1999). The view is reinforced by Ola (1999) who argues that International Relations are the study of all forms of interactions that exist between members of separate entities or nations within the international system. This study argues that it is important to link International Relations as a discipline with African international students as they move from their country of origin to seek better quality education in other countries within the international system. In addition, IR also applies concepts from security studies in the IR field to investigate the safety and security of African international students and examine how issues such as xenophobia, discrimination, and safety concerns impact the well-being of African international students.

As noted early in the background of the study, understanding student migration in this regard is a critical part of understanding such migration, and the subsequent experiences of African international students is thus important. International Relations are becoming increasingly relevant as the world grows more and more interconnected through trade and commerce, migration, the internet, and social media, and concerns about pressing global environmental problems. A globalized world calls for academics and governments to comprehend these complex interactions, promote understanding, and craft policy and business solutions to meet the challenges of today and the future.

International Relations (IR) theories such as soft power and public diplomacy can be applied to understand how countries use educational exchanges and hosting African international students as a form of cultural diplomacy. IR helps to understand the role of diplomatic relations in facilitating student exchanges and international collaborations in education. It also explores how diplomatic efforts contribute to fostering positive relations between countries through educational initiatives. The factors that have significantly influenced the move towards SA universities by students from the rest of the continent are the close proximity of the geographical region, historical connections, language, the perceived high quality of education, accessibility, affordability, and high employability rate of SA graduates in their home countries.

In addition, Snow (2021) provides a comprehensive overview of the benefits of student exchanges, emphasizing their role in fostering cultural understanding and enhancing diplomatic relations between nations. Through these exchanges, international students serve as informal ambassadors of their home countries, promoting cultural exchange and building goodwill (Snow,

2021). The economic impact is also significant, as international students contribute to host countries through tuition fees and living expenses. This economic interdependence strengthens bilateral ties and opens up opportunities for cooperation in other areas, such as trade and investment. Furthermore, Snow (2021) states that the formation of global networks among students studying abroad facilitates long-term collaboration across multiple sectors, including business, academia, and politics. These networks enhance international relations and cooperation, reflecting the broader implications of educational diplomacy. Countries use educational programs and scholarships as tools to strengthen their global influence, showcasing how education acts as a form of soft power that can lead to long-term partnerships.

However, Snow (2021) also points out several challenges that could hinder the anticipated growth of international student mobility by 2025. She stated that Global health crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, can severely disrupt international travel and education, as seen through the imposition of travel restrictions and changes in health protocols. Additionally, geopolitical tensions, restrictive immigration policies, and economic instability in both host and sending countries may deter students from pursuing education abroad (Snow, 2021). Financial barriers, including rising tuition fees and economic downturns, disproportionately affect students from developing nations, limiting their access to international education.

Moreover, the rise of technology and online education options could significantly reduce the necessity for physical mobility, with many students potentially opting for remote learning instead of studying abroad (Snow, 2021). These factors, while posing a threat to traditional student exchanges, also call for a reassessment of how educational programs can adapt to a rapidly changing global landscape. Thus, Snow's views suggest that student exchanges offer significant benefits by fostering cultural diplomacy, strengthening international relations, and creating global networks. These exchanges enhance economic ties and collaboration across sectors, making international education a key tool for soft power. However, challenges like global health crises, geopolitical tensions, financial barriers, and the rise of online education could limit future student mobility. Thus, these factors imply that both host and sending countries must adapt to maintain access to international education and explore new ways to foster global connections, including through virtual platforms.

A significant factor for most African students is the lower cost of living and lower tuition fees in



South Africa (SA) when compared to those of developed countries. In addition, because of bilateral agreements with SADC countries, SADC students are subsidized at the same level as local students in SA public universities (MacGregor, 2007). However, at UKZN African international students coming from the SADC region are charged 50% of the total tuition fees. According to the UKZN Financial Concession document (2023:2), students from SADC countries will be provided with financial clearance upon: “Payment of at least 50% of the required registration fees and payment of at least 30% of their outstanding debt. The African international students from outside the SADC region are charged 100% of the total tuition and residence fees, which poses a huge financial challenge for these categories of students” (UKZN Financial Concession document, 2023). Thus, managing the international relations between the host country and the other countries where the students are coming from will improve the experiences and some of the challenges that African international students face in institutions of higher education in the host country. Therefore, one can state that linking the discipline of IR to African international students can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the intersection between education, global relations, and the experiences of African international students studying abroad. This interdisciplinary approach improves the relevance and applicability of IR theories to the issue of African international students.

## **2.8 Immigration Provisions for African international students**

According to Gumbo (2014:27), “In South Africa, there has not been a clear policy on African international students as South Africa is still grappling with the need to define internationalization.” According to Kishun (2007), the lack of a clear definition of an African international student is bedeviling the development of a national policy on internationalization in South Africa. Kishun (2007:464) reiterates that “there is almost no reference to the term internationalization in the context or indexes of some of the most relevant policy documents dealing with higher education transformation”. For Gumbo (2014), there is a need for South Africa to adopt a national policy for African international students, which will make it possible for the easy integration of internationalization into all South African Universities.

Kishun (2007) states that there is a need for a comprehensive national policy with respect to the

internationalization of higher education that will integrate policy objectives and strategies in all higher education institution sectors to meet them. It is not far from the truth to reiterate that South Africa is facing developmental challenges some 20 years into democracy. Internationalization of education in South Africa with a recognized policy for African international students can go a long way in averting some of the developmental challenges being faced by South Africa. This above point is highlighted by Kishun (2007), who asserted that if international education is to contribute to the development challenges that South Africa faces, then it should ideally be considered an important part of higher education planning, implementation, and evaluation with an appropriate policy framework in place.

Gumbo (2014:28) further states that “despite the fact that there is no overarching policy in South Africa specifically for African international students, there remains one important policy which affects African international students, which is the Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002.” The most relevant and important section of the Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002 is section 13 which pertains to study permits (Gumbo, 2014). Presented in Table 2.1, the South African Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002, section 13 stipulates that:

**Table 2.1: South Africa Immigration Act for African International Students (2002)**

13. (1) A study permit may be issued to a foreigner intending to study in the Republic for longer than three months by:
  - (a) The Department, as prescribed, or, at the option of the applicant,
  - (b) The Department through the registrar’s office or a designated official of an institution of learning where the foreigner intends to study, provided that such institution—
    - (i) Has been approved by and is in good standing with the Department;
    - (ii) Certifies that it has received guarantees to its satisfaction that such foreigner’s tuition fees will be paid;
    - (iii) Has received the prescribed guarantees that such foreigner will have sufficient means to support himself or herself while in the Republic;
    - (iv) In the case of a minor, provides the name of a person present in South Africa who is, or has accepted to act, as such minor’s guardian while in the Republic;
    - (v) Undertakes to provide a prescribed periodic certification that such foreigner is satisfactorily performing his or her curriculum of study; and
    - (vi) Undertakes to notify the Department when such foreigner has completed his or her studies, or is no longer performing them satisfactorily.
- (2) When so requested by, and after consultation with, the Department of Education, the Department shall determine an ad hoc fee for the issuance of study permits in respect of institutions publicly funded or subsidised.
- (3) A study permit does not entitle the holder to conduct work, provided that—
  - (a) A study permit holder may undertake part-time work for a period not exceeding

the prescribed period, if the permit holder is attending a higher education institution;  
 (b) The work referred to in paragraph (a) may include temporary or full-time work during the academic vacation periods. (c) The Department may, in appropriate cases, authorise the holder of a study permit to conduct work as practical training in a field related to that of his or her studies.

Source: (South Africa Department of Home Affairs, 2014) Immigration Act (No 13 of 2002).

In addition to the Immigration Act of 2002, Act No. 13 of 2002, it is important to highlight the fact that the South African Department of Home Affairs has published the Draft Immigration Regulations 2014. This study focuses on the relevant section 12 of the Draft Immigration Regulations of 2014 which solely focuses on Study Permits. This section stipulates that:

**Table 2.2: South Africa Immigration Act for African International Students (2014)**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <p>12. (1) an applicant for a study visa to study at a learning institution shall, in addition to the submitted Form 8 illustrated in Annexure A, submit:</p> <p>(a) An official letter confirming provisional acceptance at the learning institution and the duration of the course;</p> <p>(b) An undertaking by the Registrar of the learning institution to-</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(i) Provide proof of registration as contemplated in the relevant legislation within 30 days of registration; or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(ii) In the event of failure to register by the closing date, forthwith provide the Director-General with a notification of failure to register;</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(iii) Immediately notify the Director-General when the applicant is no longer registered with such institution; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(iv) Notify the Director-General that the applicant has completed his/her studies or requires to extent such period of study.</p> <p>(2) Subject to section 13(1) of the Act-</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(a) Visas issued for studies at higher education and training institutions shall be issued for the duration of the course, but not exceeding four years;</p> <p>(3) The holder of a study visa at a higher education learning institution learning as defined in section 1 of the Higher Education Act may conduct part-time work for a period not exceeding 20 hours per week.</p> <p>(4) A study visa issued in terms of the Act shall automatically lapse if the holder thereof fails to register or de-registered with the learning institution at any time during the period for which his or her visa is issued or, if any undertakings referred to in sub regulation (1) (b) are not met.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Source: (South Africa Department of Home Affairs, 2014) Final Immigration Regulations (2014)

According to Gumbo (2014) the Immigration Act of 2002 “has done little to attract African international students to South Africa as African international students view this act as stringent and cumbersome in the application of study permits.” According to Kishun (2007:461), “South

Africa's Immigration Act of 2002 ushered in a new era of managing the movement of people, though it is not sufficiently flexible to attract the high-level skills that the country needs." Even the 2014 Draft Immigration Amendment Act is not flexible enough to attract African international students to come and study in South Africa. Muthuki (2010) further substantiates the above point by noting that at the state level, there have been increasingly stringent Immigration controls from the Department of Home Affairs (2014) regarding the following: study permits, visa acquisition and renewal, and repatriation requirements.

## **2.9 University of KwaZulu Natal Policies for Internalisation**

According to the University of KwaZulu-Natal Strategic Plan (2019:68), "internationalization emerges at a critical time in the life of the South African higher education landscape as an important strategic force for transformation with both potential for enhancing learning and teaching, while at the same time possessing some risk to the national higher education transformation agenda". According to the draft framework on the internationalization of higher education in South Africa, promulgated in 2017 by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, the international dimension of higher education has evolved into a central feature of the higher education sector (UKZN Strategic Plan, 2019).

According to the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, the internationalization of higher education reflects globalization and the return of South Africa to the international community (UKZN Strategic Plan, 2019). The UKZN Strategic Plan, (2019:68) further states that:

*It includes student and staff exchange, international research and collaboration; the offering of joint degrees by universities in different countries; the establishment of campuses by universities outside of their home countries; the growth of satellite learning and online distance education, including online educational institutions; arrangements between countries for the mutual recognition of qualifications; the regional harmonization of qualification systems; and the increasing inclusion of international, intercultural and global dimensions in university curricula.*

In addition, the Strategic plan aims to establish a strategic mix of local and African international students and staff, staff and student exchange, international recruitment, joint programs and joint teaching, piloting of programs in new and emerging technologies and trends, international benchmarking, and partnerships. (UKZN Strategic Plan, 2019:68). The approach of the project is once again to build on college and school initiatives emanating from the best- practices found

there and to develop an institutional benchmarking partner. Therefore, The UKZN Strategic Plan (2019) is necessary for the experiences of xenophobia faced by African international students (AIS) because it highlights the university's commitment to internationalization while also acknowledging the risks it may pose. The strategic focus on internationalization at UKZN, including efforts to attract international students and foster cross-border collaborations, positions the institution as part of the global higher education landscape. However, this emphasis on internationalization may also create tensions within the local context, where issues such as xenophobia and national identity can impact how African international students are perceived and treated.

The plan acknowledges that while internationalization can enhance learning, teaching, and collaboration, it may inadvertently challenge national priorities, such as the higher education transformation agenda. In South Africa, where historical legacies of inequality and social exclusion are still prevalent, AIS may face xenophobic attitudes from local students, staff, and the wider society, who might view internationalization as a threat to local opportunities. This tension could exacerbate the exclusion and discrimination experienced by AIS, as the very project intended to foster global integration can be met with resistance and prejudice. Therefore, UKZN's approach to internationalization must address these socio-cultural dynamics to ensure that AIS is not marginalized but supported in their academic and social integration. Additionally, the strategic plan's goals, such as fostering diversity through student and staff exchanges and offering joint programs, should include specific measures to combat xenophobia and promote inclusivity. This would make the internationalization project more equitable by actively addressing the negative impacts that globalization, such as xenophobic backlash, can have on AIS. Ensuring that policies and support systems reflect these challenges would be vital for the well-being of African international students and the overall success of UKZN's internationalization efforts.

### **2.9.1 UKZN Language Policy**

According to Gumbo (2014), “the language policy which was accepted in 2006 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is another policy that affects African international students. In this instance, it affects African international students, many of whom are not familiar with the isiZulu language.”

The Language Policy (UKZN, 2006) focuses on preserving and promoting respect for the language and awareness of multilingualism at the University. It also notes the need to “achieve for isiZulu the institutional and academic status of English and provide facilities to enable the use of isiZulu as a language of learning, instruction and administration” (UKZN, 2006). Gumbo (2014:29), argues that, “the adoption of the Language Policy at UKZN was lauded in some sections of the media, government and the country at large as it was seen as a positive step towards the elevation of the Indigenous languages into the mainstream tertiary institutions as a medium of learning and administration.” This point is supported by Turner (2012) who pointed out that the government language policies and intended implementation plans to rectify the serious decline in the status of African languages in South Africa to date must be lauded and acknowledged.

On the other hand, for Gumbo (2014), the adoption of the Language Policy at UKZN has been met with some criticism, with various scholars criticizing the timing of the adoption of such a policy. According to Turner (2012:33) “introducing isiZulu as a compulsory language course at the level of higher education is already far too late in the learner’s career”. For Gumbo (2014), this point above might be true for African international students who have grown up speaking their own home language, and it is rather difficult for them to learn another language and be able to speak it fluently. Lafon, cited in Turner (2012), reiterates that children learn language naturally by being exposed to them early in a social and family environment. As such, in adults, it is rather hard for them to learn and master a new language that they have not been exposed to when growing up.

Gumbo (2014:29) further states that “language may pose a major problem faced by African international students when they study in a foreign country”. Dzansi and Monnapula-Mapesela (2012) expound that in the studies of African international students so far, language has always been identified as a major problem. Although most universities use English as the medium of teaching, some students come from non-English speaking countries; also, local students tend to communicate in their local language, which presents a problem for African international students. Smith and Khawaja (2011) assert that “second language anxiety is a stressor that interacts with other stressors in both academic and socio-cultural domains.” Smith and Khawaja (2011) further state that in the academic domain, language barriers can impact assignment writing, understanding lectures, oral and written examinations and the ability to ask questions in class. Language barriers can impede African international students’ attempts to make friends and interact with locals (Smith

and Khawaja, 2011).

Kono's (1999) study on African international students from 13 different countries in America found that language and social factors were the most problematic areas. On the contrary, this study argues that the endorsement of the UKZN IsiZulu Language Policy is seen as a positive strategy for elevating indigenous African languages at tertiary institutions such as UKZN. The UKZN Language Policy not only helps the learning of IsiZulu by African international students but also serves as a means for their assimilation and integration into the communities in South Africa. Furthermore, it is posited in this study that the UKZN Language Policy, to a certain extent, offers African international students an opportunity to obtain proficiency in a local language, potentially assisting them in their future endeavors, especially if they pursue employment opportunities in South Africa. Additionally, the study states that the policy is seen as a possible mitigating factor against the likelihood of African international students facing xenophobia in South Africa.

## **2.10 Positive Efforts to combat xenophobia in South Africa**

In order to clearly comprehend the issue of xenophobia in South Africa, this study argues that it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that goes beyond merely examining its negative impacts. While recognizing the harmful effects of xenophobia is essential, it is equally important to highlight the positive efforts undertaken by the South African government, civil society, and institutions like the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) to combat it. By outlining initiatives such as the development of the National Action Plan (NAP) and the roles played by civil society and religious institutions, this research presents a balanced view of the issue. Shedding light on these efforts not only contributes to a more nuanced understanding of xenophobia but also acknowledges the proactive measures taken to address it both in broader society and within educational institutions like UKZN. This dual focus enables a more complete analysis, identifying both the ongoing challenges and the progress made toward fostering a more inclusive and tolerant society in South Africa.

In line with these views, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2019),

launched the NAP in 2019 to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. Vhumbunu, Chikanda, and Dube, (2022) argue that the NAP aligns with the commitments made by member states in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 UN World Conference. According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2019), the NAP reflects a collective belief that since the ills of discrimination and inequality are human-made, they can be eradicated. The NAP was developed through extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including government, civil society, and institutions like Chapter Nine, based on the principles of human rights, equality, and non-discrimination. Vhumbunu et al. (2022) also highlight that xenophobia manifests in different ways, such as victimization based on nationality, brutal assaults, murders, and even mass expulsion. South Africa has witnessed violent episodes of xenophobia, resulting in deaths, injuries, and the destruction of property. The NAP (2019) acknowledges that xenophobia presents a serious threat to human rights and emphasizes the need for collective efforts from the government, civil society, local communities, and community leaders to combat it. Vhumbunu et al. (2022) suggest several methods in this fight, including condemning bias-motivated violence, enacting hate crime laws, strengthening law enforcement, and prosecuting offenders.

Through the National Action Plan (NAP) (2019), the South African government has made efforts to monitor and reduce xenophobic violence. According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2019), the NAP stresses the importance of reaching out to affected communities, reducing fear, assisting victims, and encouraging the reporting of incidents. It further emphasises promoting integration within communities where xenophobia is rampant, reinforcing the message that violence against foreign nationals will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will face legal consequences. This government stance highlights the broader effort to combat xenophobia through policy and engagement with affected groups. However, Vhumbunu et al. (2022) present a more nuanced view, acknowledging that while the government has developed frameworks like the 2012 National Strategy for Developing an Inclusive Society and the 2017 White Paper on International Migration, the actual impact of these policies remains debatable. They argue that while these frameworks aim to manage migration and promote social cohesion, they have often been followed by stricter visa regimes and reduced employment opportunities for foreign nationals, which could exacerbate xenophobic tensions. The balancing act between addressing local unemployment and managing critical skills shortages has led to mixed outcomes,



making the success of these policies in addressing xenophobia questionable.

Misago, Landau, and Monson, (2015) also provide a critical perspective, noting that although the NAP is a formal commitment to combat xenophobia, its implementation has been more rhetorical than practical. They highlight that the gap between the government's acknowledgment of the issue and the tangible policies implemented often focused on restricting immigration, undermines the plan's effectiveness. Like Vhumbunu, Chikanda, and Dube, (2022) and Misago et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of political will and consistent efforts across sectors to make meaningful progress in addressing xenophobia. Similarly, the Xenowatch (2021) report echoes these concerns, stressing that while initiatives like the NAP have positive intentions, their effectiveness is undermined by denialism and lack of political commitment. Officials who downplay the severity of xenophobia hinder the plan's successful execution. The report emphasizes that despite the framework's potential, insufficient resources and inconsistent implementation leave foreign nationals vulnerable to ongoing xenophobic violence. Thus, while the NAP seeks to provide a structured framework to combat xenophobia through policy and legal measures, it must also address the underlying narratives that fuel xenophobic attitudes. By promoting diverse and multifaceted stories, as suggested by Ngozi (2009) the government's efforts can be strengthened, ensuring that both policy and public perception work together to foster a more inclusive and tolerant society.

However, in terms of South African higher education, Dominquez Whitehead and Sing (2015) highlight that international students in South Africa face several significant challenges, including financial difficulties, discrimination, and xenophobia. They argue that the rising cost of living and housing in South Africa often leads to unaffordable accommodation options, pushing some students into overcrowded and unsafe living conditions, described as squalor (Dominquez Whitehead and Sing, 2015). Moreover, the underfunded higher education system struggles to provide adequate support for domestic and international students, exacerbating these financial difficulties. Non-academic challenges, such as social integration and participation in campus life, are also underexplored but remain critical to understanding the overall experience of international students. Although the internationalization of South African higher education has resulted in a steady increase in enrolment, especially from other African nations, there is still limited understanding of the specific challenges these students face within the socio-political and

economic context of South Africa.

On the other hand, Hungwe and Divala (2019) examine the contradictory relationship between the decolonization of higher education and the persistence of Afrophobia. They argue that Afrophobia undermines the goals of decolonizing higher education in Africa. Hungwe and Divala (2019) further argue that the decolonization process is intended to foster non-discriminatory, inclusive practices that embrace the diversity of African higher education institutions. It promotes equality across racial, ethnic, and national lines. Yet, afrophobic attitudes reinforce societal structures of cultural superiority and marginalization. The coexistence of Afrophobia and decolonization efforts within South African higher education reveals a complex dilemma, as afrophobic practices conflict with the ideals of inclusivity and equality that decolonization seeks to advance (Hungwe and Divala, 2019). This tension between the two reveals a fundamental challenge in transforming higher education in South Africa. Thus, the challenges identified in these studies directly apply to the experiences of African international students (AIS) at UKZN. While positive efforts are being made to combat xenophobia on campus, the broader socio-political environment characterized by financial pressures, social exclusion, and conflicting narratives around decolonization continues to shape the lived experiences of AIS. The contradiction between efforts to decolonize higher education and the persistence of Afrophobia creates a complex environment where AIS, particularly those from other African nations, are often caught between promises of inclusion and the harsh realities of xenophobia.

### **2.10.1 Role of civil society organizations in combating xenophobia in South Africa**

According to Ndebele (2019), South Africa has tried to resist xenophobia due to an active and vibrant civil society sector. During the two xenophobic waves, different stakeholders responded in a variety of ways. Amisi et al. (2010) state that during the 2008 attacks in Durban, the short-term solutions were to provide food, shelter, and clothes, while the long-term strategy was to deal with the root causes of the attacks in different but complementary ways. According to Everatt (2010: 25), the 2008 response included “NGOs, social movements, community-based organizations, civics, schools, women’s groups, peace and justice organizations, academics, students, Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith-based organizations, refugee and migrant organizations, school governing bodies, community policing forums, professional associations, and trade unions”.

Furthermore, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) had a vital role in responding to the violence; the organization established an enduring civil society coalition with the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) (Everatt 2010). The author argues that since its establishment, it held community meetings, established branches, and formulated demands around the Constitution. However, SJC lost momentum over the years and lost its initial impetus. Ndebele (2019) further states that, the churches have also had an important role in responding to xenophobia and assisting the affected foreigners. Literature shows an interaction between churches and civil society organizations that liaised with SAPS. Phakhathi (2019) states, “churches provided shelter, food and distributed goods to the affected people while the police provided protection.” When the violence broke out in Cape Town, six camps for those displaced were eventually set up at Harmony Park, Sweetwater, Strand, Silverstroom, Youngsfield Military Base, and Blue Waters, and people were moved to them (Peberdy and Jara, 2011).

On the other hand, Phakhathi (2019) brings a new angle to the fight against xenophobia by analyzing the role of music in fighting against xenophobia through the song titled ‘*Xenophobia*’ by a South African artist called Mthandeni. The song ‘*Xenophobia*’ was released in 2015, and it was sung in IsiZulu language, which is translated below. Phakhathi (2019) uses the themes of the song as a tool for fighting against xenophobia in South Africa. Below are some of the few verses from the song by Mthandeni:

*Singahlukana impela ngokwebala (we may be different in terms of color) Sihlukane impela ngokobuzwe (we may be different in terms of nationality) UNkulunkulu uyasithanda sonke (God loves all of us)*  
*Thina kumele sihlale ngokuzwana (We must live in peace)*  
*Singahlukana impela ngokobuhlanga (We may be different in terms of ethnicity) Sihlukane impela ngokobuzwe (We may be different in terms of nationality) UNkulunkulu wasidala sonke (God created all of us)*  
*Kumele sihlale ngokuzwana (We must live in peace) Niyeke ukubulalalna nodwa (And stop killing each other)*  
*Xenophobia: ukucwasa ngokobuzwe (Xenophobia: discriminating based on nationality) Ngicela nikuyekele (Please stop it)*  
*Ngoba kumele sihlale ngokuzwana(x2) (Because we must live in peace) (Mthandeni song in Phakhathi, 2019:133).*

In line with the above song, Phakhathi (2019:134) states that “in the first part of the song,

Mthandeni states that even though we differ in color and nationality, God loves all of us and therefore we must live in peace with each other.” For Phakhathi (2019) Africans are known to be a very religious group of people in South Africa. Mthandeni uses that knowledge to convince other Africans that God is against acts such as xenophobia (Phakhathi, 2019). Phakhathi further states that Mthandeni also highlights the fact that it is in God’s plans that we were created to be diverse. In a sense, he argues that diversity must not be seen as a problem but as something that is ordained by Providence (Phakhathi, 2019). He also implies that since “God loves all of us, it is possible for us to love each other and to live in peace with each other.” In a sense, Mthandeni appeals to higher authority in the form of God to convince Africans to live in harmony with one another and to stop the problem of xenophobia.

Pillay (2017) argues that churches in South Africa must play a proactive rather than reactive role in the struggle against xenophobia. Moreover, the churches must hold the government accountable for administering its migration policies (Pillay, 2017). Additionally, the churches must lead in efforts to create social cohesion between foreign nationals and local communities. Therefore, the above views reveal that music has the power to transcend cultural boundaries, evoke emotions, and encourage a sense of unity among people. It can be a powerful tool in the fight against xenophobia by promoting understanding, empathy, and appreciation for diverse cultures in South Africa. In addition, religion can also play a significant role in fighting against xenophobia in South Africa, as it often has a strong influence on individuals and communities. Thus, this study states that many religious traditions in South Africa should continue emphasising values such as love, compassion, kindness, and empathy. The churches in South Africa can use their platforms to encourage these universal values and highlight the shared humanity that surpasses cultural and national boundaries in fighting against xenophobia.

### **2.10.2 Positive Efforts to combat xenophobia at UKZN**

According to the UKZN Community Outreach Report (UKZN-COR, 2015) in the aftermath of xenophobic violence that broke out at the end of March 2015, thousands of foreigners fled their homes and had to take shelter in emergency camps. The UKZN-COR (2015:1) further argues that “in that moment of crisis, UKZN Medical students and staff teamed up with representatives of the South African Medical Association (SAMA) and the Islamic Medical Association and Doctors to

assist people who had fled to camps in Phoenix near Durban.” The report indicated that the team, led by UKZN’s Family Medicine Specialist and KZN SAMA Chair, Dr Mergan Naidoo, donated blankets, clothes, and food (UKZN-COR, 2015). Naidoo (2015) states that initially, we planned to provide medical assistance but couldn’t due to the lack of infrastructure she added that the camp was fairly new, having only been established the previous day, and there were no facilities to provide medical screening and care.

However, additional medical help arrived in the form of members of SAMA, local doctors, and volunteers from the Islamic Medical Association, who erected a medical tent (UKZN-COR, 2015). The report also highlights that the UKZN team helped prepare meals for about 3,000 foreign nationals. Naidoo said this was efficiently done and everybody was fed within an hour. Doctors treated scores of patients at the Phoenix camps and also in Isipingo (UKZN-COR, 2015). The report further states that Investec provided water bottles and plastic buckets and paid for pharmaceuticals, while SAMA provided 100 water bottles. The Dean and Head of the School of Nursing at UKZN and Public Health, Professor Busi Ncama, thanked Dr Naidoo and SAMA for the initiative, saying, ‘Universities like ours which are critically engaged with society and have so many African international students, cannot remain on the side-lines (UKZN-COR, 2015).

Similarly, News24 (2015:1) reports that “UKZN- PMB students gathered in their hundreds in 2015 to protest against the wave of xenophobic attacks that brought Pietermaritzburg to a standstill”. News24 further states that “more than 200 students and lecturers rallied together at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Pietermaritzburg campus with anti-xenophobia placards in hand, the group made their way from the library lawn on the main campus, to the commerce section, down to agriculture on Carbis Road and back”. According to the report, one of the organizers, Sandile Kheswa, said “they held the march because they were tired of nobody doing anything to prevent the xenophobic attacks. We think what is happening is wrong. Most foreigners have been in the country for many years. During apartheid, other countries welcomed South Africans, and now when they need us most, we are chasing their people away” (News24:2015:1). The report further added that Pietermaritzburg was plagued with xenophobic violence and thousands of foreigners were left homeless and more than 50 foreign-owned shops were looted (News24, 2015). Therefore, this shows the positive efforts done by both students and lectures at UKZN (PMB Campus) to try

to combat the problem of xenophobia in South Africa.



**Figure 2.3: UKZN Students and Staff join in marching against xenophobia**  
**Source: UKZNDABA ONLINE (2015)**

The above Figure [2.3] shows a picture that was published by the (UKZNDABA online, 2015:1). In 2015 the former UKZN Chancellor, Dr Zweli Mkhize, staff and students joined a march that began at Curries Fountain to show unity against the 2015 xenophobic violence which ravaged KwaZulu-Natal and other parts of South Africa (Hashthibee, 2015). According to Hashthibee (2015:1) “echoing the sentiments of many South Africans, staff and students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal showed their dismay at the spate of xenophobic attacks that spread across the country at the Peace March held in Durban on 16 April 2015”. Hashthibee (2015:1) adds that “as a South African higher education institution whose vision is to be the ‘Premier University of African Scholarship,’ the University needs to collectively rally against such abhorrent crimes against humanity.”

Hashthibee (2015:1) further reports that in a statement issued by Dr. Albert van Jaarsveld, former Vice-Chancellor, and Principal, he urged academics and students to put on their academic regalia to show their support. He said: The University would like to condemn the harm caused to foreign-nationals living and working in our country with the strongest terms”. The University, in conjunction with its SRC, arranged for busses of staff and students to join the march to show their solidarity with those affected by the violence (Hashthibee, 2015). Hashthibee (2015:1) reports that

UKZN Senior academic lecturer Dr Lubna Nadvi said:

*It is essential that members of the academic fraternity are actively engaged in critical social justice issues, and speak out against the xenophobic violence that is unfolding in our midst. While we can teach grand theories and ideas in our lecture halls, the reality is that not far from our classrooms, people are being attacked and murdered just because they are citizens of another country. We cannot remain silent in the face of such an unacceptable tragedy that is wreaking havoc in our communities.*

Thus, Hasthibee (2015) argues that the University embraces the culture and spirit of Ubuntu and fosters a welcoming and supportive environment for its international staff and students wherein diversity is respected and valued. In that light, Hasthibee (2015:1) concludes his report by stating that “the University wishes to reassure all international staff and students of its commitment to ensuring their safety, and also urges all stakeholders to work together in adopting a peaceful environment that embraces and values diversity.” Therefore, the above views show the positive efforts done by the institution, academic staff and students to try and combat xenophobia within the university and beyond. Such efforts should be encouraged and praised as they contribute to a peaceful and tolerant society in South Africa.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has unpacked the different scholarly views on the definition of xenophobia. The chapter unpacked the global experiences of xenophobia in other countries and the global experience of xenophobia in higher education institutions. According to the literature, xenophobia is a global problem that has been experienced in both industrialized and developing countries; it is not Indigenous to any part of the world nor alien to any. The chapter also reviewed the literature on migration and xenophobia in SA, the major causes in SA, and the culture of violence in the country. It examined the literature on xenophobia through the human security lens. The study also highlighted different documented findings and examples of xenophobic experiences in institutions of higher learning worldwide. This chapter linked International Relations as a discipline with the issue of xenophobia and African international students while presenting the documented experiences of xenophobia around the world. The chapter argued that it is important to link international relations as a discipline with xenophobia as African international students move from their country of origin to seek better quality education in other countries within the

international system. Thus, understanding student migration in this regard is a critical part of understanding such migration, and the subsequent experiences of African international students are thus important.

This chapter has also discussed the policies that affect the African international students in South Africa and at UKZN. Detailed outlines of the Immigration Act of 2002 and the Immigration Act of 2014, specifically focusing on the study permit application sections of these acts, were explored in the chapter. This chapter has highlighted that in South Africa, there is a need for the Higher Education Sector and other relevant stakeholders to come up with a comprehensive and integrative national policy document that comprehensively seeks to provide the way forward for internationalisation. The chapter concluded by bringing out the positive efforts to combat xenophobia by the SA government, civil society and UKZN. The chapter argued that in order to clearly comprehend the issue of xenophobia in South Africa it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses beyond merely examining the negative impacts of xenophobia. Furthermore, the chapter presented the argument that while recognising the adverse effects of xenophobia is vital for a thorough understanding of the issue, a researcher should equally underscore the positive efforts undertaken by the South African government, civil society, and UKZN to fight against xenophobia. By outlining the government's initiatives, such as the development of a National Action Plan and the role of civil society and churches in combating xenophobia, the research can offer a balanced view of the issue of xenophobia in South Africa.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

According to Jurgen, Milososk, and Schwarz (2006), as cited in Goto (2014), different academic disciplines adopt distinct theoretical approaches to understanding conflicts. Economists focus on game theory and decision-making, psychologists investigate interpersonal conflicts, sociologists consider status and class conflicts crucial, and political scientists concentrate on intra-national and international conflicts. Anafara and Mertz (2015) explain that theory in qualitative research assists in clarifying one's epistemological stance, selecting a methodological approach, and developing a theory based on research findings. Schurink et al. (2021) describe theory development as an iterative process of inductive reasoning during the analysis phase, moving from specific observations to broader generalizations. Theory building is guided by a conceptual framework that integrates existing knowledge and theory from the literature, the researcher's philosophical approach (ontology and epistemology), the phenomenon under study, the data collected, and new insights gained (Roestenburg, 2021).

Bendassolli (2014) highlights the critical reflexive relationship between the researcher, participants, and the data collected. The researcher's ontology (worldview) and epistemology (beliefs about how research should be conducted), along with existing theories, are essential in positioning and guiding the research. Schurink et al. (2021) emphasize that the theoretical framework is central to the research, while Saldana (2011) describes it as the cohesive element that unifies the research process. A theoretical framework helps qualitative researchers organize and interpret their numerous thoughts, perceptions, observations, reflections, and interpretations, providing focus and direction to their research. In this study, the theoretical frameworks guide the research process from start to finish, linking the literature to the research goals and questions, and informing the research design, methodology, and data analysis. Becker (2017) posits that theory building in qualitative research is an inductive interpretive reasoning process, utilizing a conceptual framework to define concepts, explain relationships between interconnected concepts and constructs, and reveal the meanings people attribute to their experiences.

Phiri (2013) emphasizes that any suitable framework must closely align with the context it will guide and be relevant to the study's objectives. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) describe a theoretical framework as the foundation of research, forming the basis for developing hypotheses. They explain that a theoretical framework reflects one's beliefs about how certain phenomena, variables, or concepts are related, and explains these relationships. The study focuses on four recommended theories, which are the scapegoat theory, isolation hypothesis, biocultural hypothesis, and power conflict theory. The study employs theoretical triangulation, arguing that examining xenophobia through these four frameworks is a strategic approach due to its complexity and multifaceted nature. Xenophobia encompasses multiple dimensions, influences, and manifestations, and using these frameworks allows for a more comprehensive understanding. By recognizing that xenophobia is not a singular phenomenon but manifests in various forms, from individual attitudes to systemic structures, these four chosen theoretical frameworks provide lenses to thoroughly examine different aspects of xenophobia.

In light of the above views, the major reason for choosing these four theoretical frameworks is that the study acknowledges the complex and multifaceted nature of xenophobia, recognizing that no single theory can fully explain this phenomenon, particularly within the unique socio-political context of South Africa. Therefore, this research employs a multi-theoretical framework, drawing upon the strengths of four key theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of xenophobia experienced by African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher acknowledges that each theory has its limitations in explaining xenophobia in South Africa, the strengths of another balance the weaknesses of one theory. Firstly, the reason for choosing the scapegoat theory is that the theory provides a useful framework for understanding the manifestation of xenophobia towards African international students at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) in South Africa. This psychological theory suggests that when individuals or groups experience frustration or dissatisfaction with societal issues, they may displace their anger and blame onto a more vulnerable population, such as immigrants or foreigners (Allport, 1954).

In the context of South Africa, where there have been numerous incidents of violence and

discrimination against foreign nationals, this theory helps to elucidate how the economic, social, and political challenges faced by South African citizens may contribute to the development of xenophobic attitudes and behaviors towards African international students studying at UKZN. By scapegoating these students, who are perceived as outsiders or 'less powerful,' the South African public may be seeking to alleviate their own frustrations, insecurities, and feelings of deprivation, which can have a detrimental impact on the educational experiences and overall well-being of the affected African international students (Crush and Ramachandran, 2010).

Secondly, the reason for choosing the isolation hypothesis is that the hypothesis provides a useful lens for understanding the challenges faced by African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa. This theory is useful for this study as it posits that xenophobia often arises from a perceived threat to social cohesion or cultural identity due to the presence of outsiders or "foreigners" within a community. In the context of South Africa's complex history of apartheid and ongoing efforts at national reconciliation, the Isolation Hypothesis helps to elucidate the persistent tensions around identity and belonging that may contribute to the development of xenophobic attitudes towards these African international students. By emphasizing the role of social boundaries and group identity in shaping perceptions and behaviours towards foreigners, this theory offers valuable insights into the experiences of marginalization and exclusion that African international students may encounter within the UKZN community and the broader South African society.

Thirdly the reason for choosing the biocultural hypothesis is that the biocultural hypothesis offers a multifaceted approach to understanding the complex interplay of factors that contribute to human behaviours, including prejudice and xenophobia. This theory is useful as it suggests that our actions, perceptions, and attitudes are shaped by the dynamic interaction between innate biological predispositions, such as genetic and evolutionary factors, and culturally embedded norms that are acquired through socialisation processes. In the diverse societal context of South Africa, where individuals from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds coexist, the biocultural hypothesis provides valuable insights into how these biological and cultural influences converge to shape attitudes and behaviours toward those perceived as "outsiders" or foreign. In the specific

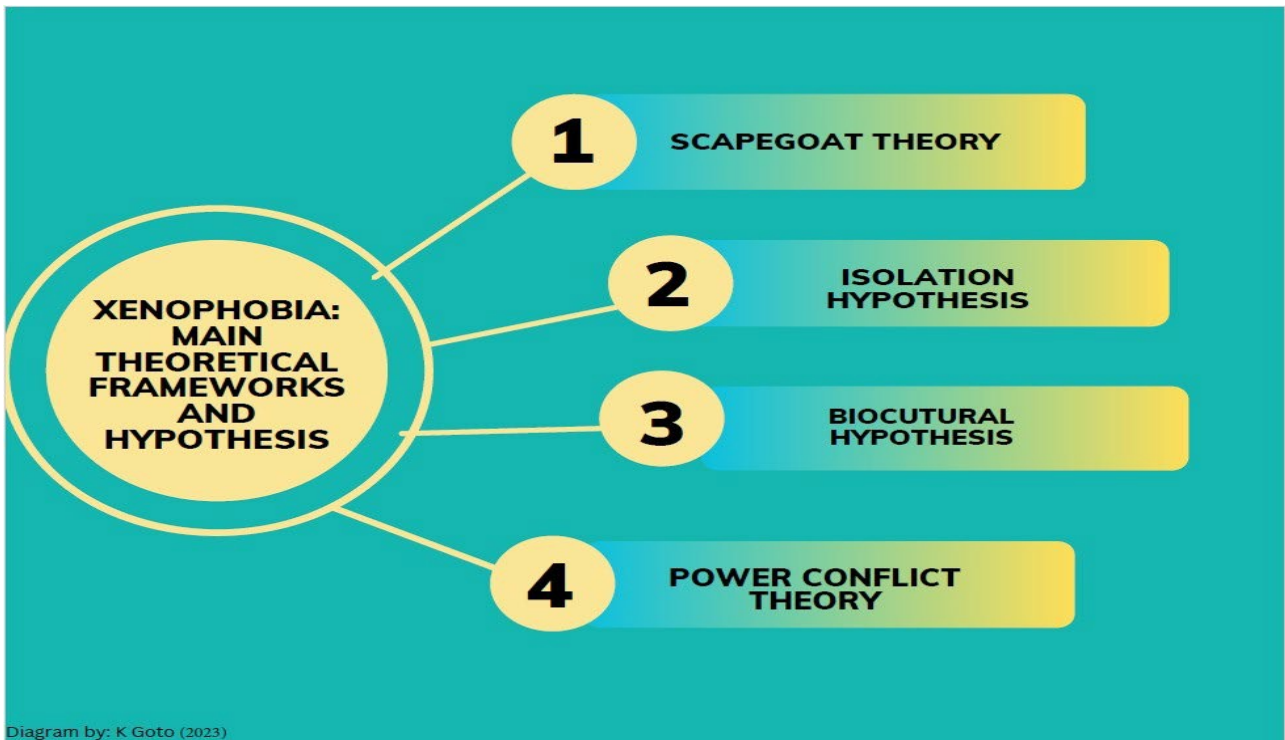
context of this study on xenophobia among African international students at the University of KwaZulu Natal, the biocultural hypothesis becomes particularly relevant. It offers a comprehensive framework for exploring the roots and manifestations of xenophobia within South African society, where issues of identity, colourism, belonging, and power dynamics play a crucial role. By considering the interdependent relationship between innate tendencies and societal norms, this hypothesis helps illuminate how perceptions of cultural difference and social integration influence the experiences and perspectives of African international students facing xenophobia in South African societies.

Lastly, the reason for choosing the power conflict theory is that it examines xenophobia through the lens of power dynamics and social inequalities. This theory is useful for this study as it argues that xenophobic attitudes and behaviours can be exacerbated by economic disparities, unequal access to resources, and perceived competition over limited opportunities. In the context of African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, power conflict theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the challenges they may face. South Africa's history of apartheid and persistent socio-economic inequalities have created an environment where foreign nationals, including these students, may be perceived as threats or competitors for limited resources such as jobs, housing, and social services. This theory suggests that the xenophobic sentiments and discrimination experienced by these African international students are not merely individual prejudices, but are shaped by larger power structures and resource imbalances within South African society. Examining the experiences of African international students through the lens of power conflict theory can offer insights into how these systemic inequalities contribute to their marginalisation and exclusion, ultimately hindering their academic and social integration. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of the theories selected for this study: Scapegoat Theory, Isolation Hypothesis, Biocultural Hypothesis, and Power Conflict Theory.

### **3.2 The main theoretical frameworks for this study**

In exploring the complex issue of xenophobia, it is essential to ground the analysis in robust theoretical frameworks that can provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play. Figure

[3.1] illustrates the primary theoretical frameworks that I have both recommended and adopted for this study: the *Scapegoat Theory*, *Isolation Hypothesis*, *Biocultural Hypothesis*, and *Power Conflict Theory*. These frameworks are crucial as they offer varied lenses through which to interpret the experiences and perspectives of African international students at UKZN. By integrating these theories, I aim to unpack the multifaceted nature of xenophobia, considering not just its immediate impacts but also its broader social and psychological underpinnings.



**Figure 3.1.1: Main theoretical frameworks and hypothesis of the study**

The above diagram is created by the researcher to clarify the underlying causes and nature of xenophobia in South Africa. This study employs theoretical triangulation, which involves examining a social phenomenon from multiple perspectives by using more than one theory or data source. Boeije (2010) explains that theoretical triangulation involves applying more than one theory to interpret the data, as done in this study. The purpose of using theoretical triangulation is to explore the explanatory power of different theories of xenophobia.

The researcher noted that a single theoretical perspective is insufficient to explain the complex nature and causes of xenophobia in South Africa and within higher education institutions.

Therefore, employing multiple theories helps to avoid the limitations of relying on a single theory. Similarly, Smith (1996) suggests that some qualitative researchers see triangulation as a means to strengthen analytic claims and to provide a richer, fuller understanding rather than merely achieving greater accuracy. This view is supported by Australian health psychologist Jane Ussher (1999:43), who uses a jigsaw metaphor to advocate for multi-methods as she states that “only by combining different pieces can we see a broader picture and gain deeper insights into the complexity of our research”. Consequently, in this study, triangulation is used to capture the multiple perspectives or truths related to the topic, rather than aiming for a single correct result (Silverman, 1993). Vhumbunu et al. (2022) highlight those human actions and behaviours are shaped by a variety of factors, including personal attitudes, emotions, ethics, culture, values, authority, hypnosis, genetics, and persuasion, all of which differ from one person or group to another. They also note that group behaviours, such as xenophobic attacks, are further influenced by group dynamics and social psychological principles like conformity, common motives, belongingness, perception, readjustment, change, and power. Therefore, the theories depicted in Figure [3.1], while each theory offers a distinct perspective, the theories intersect and complement each other in explaining the structural, historical, socio-economic, and cultural dimensions of xenophobia.

The isolation hypothesis provides a historical foundation for xenophobia by highlighting how the apartheid-era segregation and international sanctions physically and socially isolated South Africans from the rest of the continent and the world (Addae and Quan Baffour, 2022). This long period of limited interaction created a lack of exposure to African foreigners, reinforcing suspicion and exclusion. Morris (1998) suggests that when a society has no history of incorporating strangers, it struggles to welcome them. This study explains why South Africans, after years of isolation, might view African migrants as outsiders rather than as part of a broader African identity. This historical isolation directly feeds into the scapegoat theory (Dollard et al., 1939), which suggests that groups experiencing economic hardship displace their frustrations onto marginalized groups. Due to their limited historical interaction with African migrants, black South Africans may be more inclined to scapegoat them for contemporary socio-economic struggles, seeing them as competitors rather than as allies. The lack of cultural familiarity (as explained by the isolation hypothesis) exacerbates these tensions, making it easier to project

blame onto foreign nationals.

The power conflict theory further extends this relationship by arguing that intergroup hostility intensifies when competition over limited resources increases (Frederick, 2014). In South Africa, African international students are often perceived as economic competitors for scholarships, jobs, and institutional support. The historical isolation of South Africans meant that, when integration with African migrants eventually occurred, it did so within a context of economic insecurity, reinforcing anxieties over competition. The isolation hypothesis thus explains the foundational ignorance and suspicion toward foreigners, while power conflict theory clarifies how these attitudes are amplified in times of economic strain.

The biocultural hypothesis builds on these perspectives by explaining why foreign nationals are easily singled out and targeted based on physical appearance. Masikane et al (2020) argues that physical and cultural features such as hairstyles, accents, clothing, and vaccination marks act as visible indicators of foreignness, making certain individuals more susceptible to xenophobic discrimination. This complements with the isolation hypothesis by showing that the long-term separation of South Africans from the rest of the continent reinforced the perception of African migrants as fundamentally different. Additionally, the biocultural hypothesis connects to both the scapegoat and power conflict theories by demonstrating how these visible distinctions fuel resentment in competitive socio-economic environments. The perception that African migrants “look different” or “sound different” provides a basis for targeting them as scapegoats or as perceived competitors. Therefore, by integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study moves beyond a singular explanatory lens to present a multidimensional analysis of xenophobia at UKZN. This integrated approach allows for a deeper understanding of how past policies, economic struggles, and cultural perceptions intersect to shape the contemporary experiences of African international students at UKZN.

### **3.3 The Scapegoat Theory**

This study uses the Scapegoat theory as one of its main analytical tools to examine the nature of xenophobia in South Africa based on the perspectives and experiences of African international students at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The scapegoat theory was 1<sup>st</sup> propounded in 1954

by Gordon Allport. In his book 'The Nature of Prejudice' he clearly outlines the Scapegoat theory as a sociological theory that examines prejudice in the context of social transition and change. Harris (2002) has thematically classified the various hypotheses of xenophobia as isolation, biocultural, and scapegoat. Authors such as Addae and Quan Bafour (2022) have also utilised Harris's thematic classifications in their analysis to understand the root causes of Afrophobia and black-on-black racism in South Africa. Scapegoat theory was also articulated by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears in their 1939 work, *Frustration and Aggression*. They proposed that frustration gives rise to aggression, and when the source of that frustration is inaccessible or unchallengeable, the aggression is redirected onto a scapegoat. Thus, the scapegoat theory is linked to the frustration and aggression theory by Dollard et al (1939).

According to Enders (2010), Allport (1897-1967) was a forerunner in the area of personality psychology and did much work specifically in the area of prejudice. She further asserts that his book *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) remains the standard for scholarly work on discrimination (Enders, 2010). Allport considered scapegoating to be an important theory of prejudice, such as xenophobia. Enders states that Allport acknowledged both the psychodynamic approach which argues that the theory was carried down traditionally from the biblical scriptures describing the sin of the tribe being cast out of by a goat.

In this context, negative traits that individuals do not wish to acknowledge in themselves can be projected onto others, thus alleviating their own feelings of shame and guilt. However, Enders (2010) argues that Allport presented a more straightforward model where general external frustrations, which hinder goal attainment, lead to the displacement of anger onto innocent and weaker targets, such as foreign nationals in South Africa. The former is driven by innate impulses, while the latter is driven by external forces. Both the psychodynamic and frustration-aggression perspectives suggest that unwanted traits and aggression are projected onto another target, and both processes are irrational and emotionally driven. The scapegoat theory is linked to the frustration and aggression theory, as individuals who experience frustration and are unable to direct their aggression towards the source of their frustration will instead displace that aggression onto a more vulnerable target or scapegoat. This allows them to release their unexpressed anger



without directly confronting the true cause of their frustration. Allport also noted that it is not always the weakest who are blamed; often, envy plays a role in determining the victim, and a perceived future threat can create a need to scapegoat an individual or group. Allport (1954) also noted that it is not always the weakest who are blamed; often, envy plays a role in determining the victim, and a perceived future threat can create a need to scapegoat an individual or group.

A journal article published by ACCORD in 2011, titled *It's Not Just Xenophobia: Factors that Lead to Violent Attacks on Foreigners in South Africa and the Role of the Government* discusses the scapegoat theory of xenophobia within the context of social transition and change. It argues that hostility towards foreigners in South Africa is related to limited resources such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment, particularly during a period of high expectations for black South Africans (Morris, 1998). A common belief in South Africa is that jobs given to foreign nationals reduce employment opportunities for South Africans, a concern heightened by unemployment rates ranging from 20% to 30% (ACCORD, 2011). However, there is no empirical evidence to support these beliefs, and some migrant work categories have been shown to increase employment opportunities for South Africans (Black et al., 2006).

Many foreigners live in informal urban settlements characterised by poverty, unemployment, and housing shortages, leading to intense competition for limited resources. This may partially explain why black foreign nationals are often scapegoated for increasing poverty and unemployment in South Africa. Immigrants are perceived as opportunists seeking economic benefits (McKnight, 2008). Among African international students at UKZN, local students express frustration and anger, blaming foreign students for occupying on-campus accommodation at the expense of local South Africans, as revealed in the findings chapter.

Durcan (2012) notes that the scapegoating hypothesis suggests xenophobia arises when indigenous populations direct their anger, stemming from various hardships, towards foreigners, whom they perceive as the cause of their difficulties. However, a traditional criticism of this hypothesis is its failure to explain why foreigners, particularly those of colour in contemporary South Africa, are the primary targets of hatred and abuse from the local population (Durcan,

2012). Allport contends that frustrations can lead to prejudice, particularly among disadvantaged individuals, who often identify scapegoats, usually foreigners. Allport argues that foreigners, having little power, are blamed for people's troubles. This displacement of frustration onto convenient targets obscures the actual causes of their anxiety. Hostile attitudes are formed due to unmet promises and limited resources such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment, combined with high expectations during transitional periods (Tshitereke, 1999). Allport also examines the invention of instincts based on one's needs as a natural reaction. Both instincts and needs are theoretical constructs used to explain behaviour, its underlying goals, regularity, and potentiality. Seymour Feshbach supports Allport's arguments with his catharsis media theory, which explores the relationship between media content and violent behaviour. Catharsis is seen as a way in the scapegoating process where people seek to release their frustrations through aggressive actions (Morris, 1998).

Allport defines prejudice as a hostile or negative attitude towards a distinguishable group based on their group membership. Prejudice consists of three components: an affective (emotional), a cognitive (belief), and a behavioural component. Stereotyping is a cognitive generalisation about a group based on traits or characteristics, disregarding individual differences. Discrimination involves unjustified negative behaviour or harmful treatment towards a group based on their membership in that group, such as foreign students. Allport further claims that these components are primarily learned behaviours, although certain personality traits can predispose individuals to them.

The scapegoat theory is particularly relevant when examining the nature and causes of xenophobia in South Africa, based on the views and experiences of African international students at UKZN. This theory defines prejudice as a hostile or negative attitude towards a distinguishable group, in this case, African international students at UKZN, who face various xenophobic tendencies. Supporting these arguments, Enders (2010) suggests that aggressors in the scapegoating process often have distinct personalities predisposed to prejudice, characterised by authoritarian and controlling traits. Such individuals are rigid, inflexible, intolerant of weakness, self-righteous, and judgmental. They strongly believe in punishment for transgressions of

conventional social norms and are suspicious of the unfamiliar, struggling with any changes in their lives. They exhibit excessive allegiance to authority and obedience. This personality type often has difficulty dealing with frustration and taking responsibility for it, leading them to place blame for their difficulties onto others (Douglas, 1995).

Okeke (2022) explains that the scapegoat theory in social psychology is connected to prejudice and discrimination, where individuals express dissatisfaction, frustration, and hostility due to unmet needs. When people encounter obstacles preventing them from achieving their goals, they are psychologically inclined to confront what they perceive as the hindrance. Often, this obstacle is wrongly identified, and foreigners are blamed for these frustrations and difficulties. According to Okeke, foreigners are held responsible for their inability to meet needs and are subjected to various consequences, such as the excessive promotion of native rights and privileges at their expense. Foreigners thus become scapegoats and may face xenophobic violence. Key factors contributing to their plight, such as unemployment, poverty, and failed government policies, are overlooked. In South Africa, foreigners are blamed for societal problems and suffer the consequences. Political figures may make inflammatory statements that label foreigners negatively, contributing to the xenophobic attacks seen in 2008 and 2015. These attacks likely occurred as locals faced persistent unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, with foreigners wrongly blamed for these issues, leading to increased tension and violence (Okeke, 2022). This mentality, similar to the scapegoating of Jews in Germany during the Holocaust, showcases the dangerous consequences of such prejudiced thinking (Okeke in Matambo 2022).

For African international students at UKZN, local students' frustration and aggression are expressed not through violence but through anger and hostile attitudes. Xenophobic tendencies can be categorised as covert or overt. Overt xenophobia is obvious and visible to the public, while covert xenophobia is subtle and disguised. According to Gomo (2010), covert xenophobia is woven into society's fabric, discriminating against individuals through unnoticed or passive methods. Data indicates that African international students mainly experience covert xenophobia, as aggression is not expressed violently as it is in local South African communities. Instead, foreign students at UKZN face non-violent forms of xenophobia, which, although subtle, still

significantly impact them.

In an academic institution like UKZN, violent xenophobia is generally not tolerated, but the frustration-aggression theory, as described by Soyombe (2008), is evident in the xenophobic practices encountered. Perpetrators, aware of their environment and its policies, express their frustrations on unsuspecting foreign students. While these students may not be physical victims of xenophobia, they bear the emotional and psychological scars of these encounters. Douglas (1995) notes that when selecting a victim, a key factor is their difference, whether it be physical, attitudinal, moral, or related to group values. This difference often provokes hostility and aggression. The chosen scapegoat usually has lower social power or influence, is socially isolated, and is easily targeted. Sometimes, the scapegoat may subconsciously volunteer for the role in a self-destructive manner, seeking punishment, ridicule, and social rejection. The scapegoating process emerges from various factors, and the reasons for choosing a scapegoat can vary significantly. However, desperation is a major factor, as the need to survive can drive otherwise civilised people to act in uncivilised ways. Over time, scapegoats may even begin to embody the qualities that stimulate aggression.

Similarly, Enders (2010) explains that scapegoating involves three related concepts: projection, introjection, and projective identification. Projection, in a psychoanalytic sense, involves unconsciously attributing unwanted thoughts and feelings about oneself onto another. This concept can extend to groups projecting onto an individual or society projecting onto a group. Projection is a common defence mechanism, especially in people with certain personality disorders, and is often used to justify prejudice or evade responsibility. Introjection involves unconsciously incorporating another's qualities, values, attitudes, or aspects of their personality into one's own self. This can be a normal process, such as adopting parental values, but can also serve as a defence mechanism in anxiety-inducing situations. Projective identification involves the internalisation of projected qualities through conscious or unconscious interpersonal pressure, causing the receiver to believe and internalise these qualities. This concept, first introduced by Melanie Klein in 1946 within the object relations theory, suggests that the object of projection is used to control or harm it. Although projective identification is considered a primitive

psychological process and defence mechanism, it is also fundamental to more advanced cognitive processes like empathy or intuition.

According to Harris (2002), the scapegoating hypothesis has primarily emerged from sociological theory. This theory places xenophobia within the context of social transition and change, explaining hostility towards foreigners as a result of limited resources, such as housing, education, health care, and employment, combined with high expectations during periods of transition (Morris, 1998; Tshitereke, 1999). In the post-apartheid era, heightened expectations have led to increased awareness of deprivation, resulting in significant discontent and indignation. This environment creates fertile ground for xenophobia to develop and thrive. South Africa's transition to democracy has highlighted the unequal distribution of resources and wealth, making people more aware of their deprivation (Tshitereke, 1999). In this context, people often create a "frustration-scapegoat," targeting foreigners who are seen as threats to jobs, housing, education, and healthcare (Morris, 1998; Tshitereke, 1999). Morris (1998:1125) notes that when a majority group faces economic challenges, they are more likely to feel threatened by minorities, particularly foreigners

Tshitereke (1999) also conceptualises xenophobia in terms of frustration and relative deprivation. Relative deprivation theory suggests that social unrest arises from a subjective feeling of discontent based on the belief that one is getting less than what one feels entitled to. When there is a gap between aspirations and reality, social discontent is likely to emerge (De la Rey, 1991). Tshitereke (1999) explains that violence is not an inevitable outcome of relative deprivation. The anger caused by deprivation and perceived or real threats from immigrants regarding resources frustrates nationals, but it does not directly lead to violence. Political scientist Seegers (1999) notes that frustration breeds anger, but this anger does not always result in violence; it can be turned inward or projected onto non-national minorities as a "frustration-scapegoat." Tshitereke (1999) draws on psychological theories of aggression and frustration to explain the causal link between relative deprivation, xenophobia, and collective violence, forged through scapegoating foreigners.

Relative deprivation theory offers a psychological explanation for scapegoating, interpreting concepts of frustration and aggression as subjective, intrapsychic processes. This theory understands xenophobia from an internal psychological perspective. Similarly, psychoanalytic theory explains scapegoating as a projective and defensive process. However, De la Rey (1991) points out that the causes of social unrest cannot be solely located within subjective perceptions of reality. The search for causes of social action must extend beyond the psychological realm to include its complex relationship with objective social reality. Tshitereke's (1999) psychological interpretation of scapegoating must not be divorced from the socio-economic realities of contemporary South Africa. The psychological process of relative deprivation is based on social comparison at the level of jobs, housing, education, and other resources, leading to the scapegoating of foreigners for perceived threats. Politics, economics, and patriarchy all impact the scapegoating process (De la Rey, 1991).

### **3.3.1 Gaps of the Scapegoat Theory**

This study observes that the scapegoat theory suggests that individuals or groups are targeted and blamed for societal problems, serving as a diversion for more complex issues. This study argues that while this theory can offer insights into certain aspects of xenophobia, especially in terms of finding a target for frustration, the theory has weaknesses. For example, as highlighted in the previous chapter, xenophobia often arises from deeper structural issues such as economic inequality, unemployment, and historical tensions. The scapegoat theory diverts attention from these systemic problems by focusing solely on the immediate act of blaming a particular group. This study argues that South Africa has a complex history marked by apartheid and struggles for liberation. Thus, xenophobia is also influenced by historical legacies, and the scapegoat theory does not adequately consider these historical factors. In addition, xenophobia often involves power dynamics, with the dominant group expressing prejudice against perceived outsiders. The scapegoat theory does not adequately account for these power imbalances and the role they play in shaping xenophobic attitudes. Additionally, Scapegoat Theory primarily focuses on the relationship between the in-group and the scapegoated out-group, neglecting the internal dynamics within the in-group itself. The theory does not fully address how power struggles, internal divisions, or the role of leaders in promoting scapegoating might influence the process.

Furthermore, while Scapegoat Theory can offer insights into past events, its predictive power is limited. It struggles to account for the variability in scapegoating across different contexts and situations, making it difficult to predict when scapegoating will occur or which group will be targeted. Thus, the weakness of the scapegoat theory is covered by the below theories such as the isolation hypothesis, biocultural hypothesis, and the power conflict theory.

### **3.4 Isolation Hypothesis**

The isolation hypothesis, as discussed by Addae and Quan-Baffour (2022) in their article titled: *Afrophobia, 'black on black' Violence and the new racism in South Africa: The Nexus between Adult Education and Mutual Co-existence*, posits that the xenophobia and violence against African migrants in South Africa can be traced back to the historical context of apartheid. This hypothesis suggests that the apartheid regime's discriminatory policies led to the international ostracization of South Africa, which in turn limited the interaction between black South Africans and black foreigners (Addae and Quan-Baffour, 2022).

During apartheid, the influx of black African immigrants was minimal, resulting in a lack of contact and understanding between these groups. The authors note that while there was a significant inflow of white immigrants during this period, black African immigration was severely restricted. This created an environment where black South Africans were largely isolated from their African counterparts, fostering an inward-looking attitude and a lack of familiarity with other African cultures and peoples (Addae and Quan-Baffour, 2022). With the end of apartheid and South Africa's re-entry into the international community, there was a sudden and massive influx of African migrants. This abrupt change led to feelings of hostility and resentment among some black South Africans, who began to perceive these migrants as competitors for limited resources and opportunities. The authors argue that this historical isolation contributed to the development of negative stereotypes and a sense of otherness towards African migrants, which manifested in violent attacks and xenophobic sentiments (Addae and Quan-Baffour, 2022). Furthermore, the authors highlight that the apartheid regime's spatial policies had also encouraged the segregation of different ethnic groups within South Africa, further limiting inter-ethnic contact. The transition to democracy in 1994 allowed for greater movement and interaction, but

the legacy of isolation had already instilled a sense of mistrust and fear towards the African Other (Addae and Quan-Baffour, 2022).

Given the discussions above, Masikane et al. (2020) highlight that the isolation hypothesis places 'foreigners' at the centre of hostility. Duncan (2012) argues that during the apartheid regime, South Africa's borders were isolated from the rest of the continent and the world, largely due to the regime's narrow view that other countries threatened its racist policies and political monopoly. Botha (2012) notes that foreigners represented the unknown to South Africans during this period of isolation. According to the isolation theory, as discussed by Morris (1998), South Africans found differences in national identity to be threatening and dangerous. Consequently, xenophobia is viewed as a result of South Africa's isolation from the international community, particularly from the rest of Africa, during the apartheid era (Duncan, 2012; Harris, 2002).

Xenophobia is thus seen as a consequence of apartheid in South Africa (Morris, 1998). The country's seclusion from the rest of the world during apartheid is considered an explanation for the fear and distrust South African communities have towards foreigners. This theory posits that the freedom experienced within South Africa in 1994 came with the belief that the country must be protected from 'outsiders.' Given South Africa's history, it is understandable that the country needed to prioritise its citizens for transformation and change. However, the closed-door migration policies, slow development, and increasing poverty and inequality have provided a breeding ground for xenophobia. Following South Africa's democratic transition, the Refugee Act took four years to draft and eight years to negotiate. One of the primary reasons for this delay was that the idea of migration created uncertainty among nationals, and immigration was seen as 'undesirable' (Crush, 2008).

Despite the historical resistance towards foreigners, South Africa's democratic and political transition has gradually opened up its borders, leading to increased interaction with unfamiliar foreigners. This shift has exposed South Africans to diverse international influences and encounters. ACCORD (2011) points out that the hostility stemming from the isolation hypothesis is exacerbated by South Africans' limited awareness and empathy towards African foreigners.



They argue that while some South Africans received regional support during apartheid, this assistance mainly benefited elites and exiled activists, leaving many unaware of broader African contributions and fostering isolationist attitudes. Supporters of the isolation hypothesis, like Bouillon (2001), argue that apartheid's legacy of oppression has ingrained a sense of isolation within black South Africans. This societal closure contributes to a reluctance to embrace outsiders, perpetuating a climate of xenophobia (Morris, 2001). According to this theory, societies lacking a history of external interaction or integration tend to resist welcoming strangers, a phenomenon evident in post-apartheid South Africa (Gounden, 2010). Masikane et al. (2020), however, contend that the isolation hypothesis does not fully align with the scapegoating hypothesis of xenophobia, which posits that foreigners are targeted as scapegoats for social and personal frustrations. They argue that this theory fails to explain why foreigners specifically become scapegoats for unemployment, poverty, and other societal issues, emphasizing nationality as a defining feature of such scapegoating.

In contrast, the isolation hypothesis attributes hostility towards foreigners to their perceived foreignness, rooted in South Africa's apartheid-era isolation from the international community. Morris (1998) argues that apartheid insulated South Africans from broader global influences, fostering a sense of unfamiliarity and suspicion towards foreigners. With South Africa's political transition, however, the opening of borders has challenged these historical barriers and integrated the country more deeply into global networks. As South Africa has opened its borders and integrated more deeply into the international community, South Africans have increasingly encountered unfamiliar foreigners. According to the isolation hypothesis, this interaction between previously isolated South Africans and unknown foreigners creates fertile ground for hostility to develop. Morris (1998) suggests that societies with no history of integrating strangers may struggle to embrace them, fostering suspicion and hostility. This suspicion is not only directed outwardly towards foreigners but also reflects an internal isolation within South Africa itself, exacerbated by the strict boundaries imposed during apartheid. Morris (1998) argues that apartheid's emphasis on maintaining boundaries has significantly hindered South Africans' ability to tolerate diversity and difference.

Masikane et al. (2020) expand on this by comparing South Africa's isolation hypothesis with Hobsbawm's (1992) analysis of xenophobia in contemporary European societies. Hobsbawm (1992) views xenophobia as a response to rapid social transition and the erosion of traditional ways of life. He posits that the fear of the unknown, stemming from significant societal changes, fuels xenophobic sentiments and defensive reactions. This perspective resonates with the isolation hypothesis, which situates South African xenophobia within a context of societal change and the unfamiliarity of integrating with the broader world. However, Masikane et al. (2020) note that while these theories elucidate the origins of xenophobia, they do not fully explain why the unknown provokes anxiety or why this anxiety manifests as aggression.

### **3.4.1 Gaps of the Isolation Hypothesis**

While the Isolation Hypothesis, posited by Addae and Quan Bafour (2021) and Harris (2022), offers valuable insights into how intergroup contact shapes perceptions, its limitations must be acknowledged. The hypothesis often oversimplifies intergroup relations, attributing prejudice primarily to a lack of contact while neglecting the complex interplay of historical, social, and political factors (Singh, 2010). The hypothesis tends to overlook the significant influence of power imbalances between groups, failing to explain situations where prejudice persists despite frequent interaction or where positive contact does not reduce prejudice. Moreover, the Isolation Hypothesis tends to treat groups as homogeneous entities, ignoring individual variations in prejudice influenced by factors like personality, personal experiences, and beliefs (Allport, 1954).

In a similar view, the isolation hypothesis fails to recognize that xenophobia frequently involves power dynamics, where dominant groups exhibit prejudice against perceived outsiders. It inadequately addresses these power imbalances and their role in shaping xenophobic attitudes (Human Rights Watch, 1999). By treating foreigners as a uniform category, it misses the nuances between different types of foreigners. In South Africa, xenophobia is not uniformly applied to all foreigners; African foreigners, in particular, are often more vulnerable to violence and hostility (Human Rights Watch, 1998; Human Rights Commission, 1999). The hypothesis neglects to consider the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and social power that can contribute to xenophobia. It also downplays economic competition and the perceived threats to job

opportunities and resources, which are significant drivers of xenophobia. Furthermore, the Isolation Hypothesis overlooks the economic dimensions of xenophobia in South Africa and does not explain how cultural differences, as well as physical and biological characteristics (as suggested by the biocultural hypothesis), can contribute to xenophobic attitudes.

### **3.5 Biocultural Hypothesis**

The biocultural hypothesis, as discussed by Harris (2002), emphasises that certain physical traits such as skin colour, facial features, and clothing can make individuals from specific backgrounds easily identifiable as "foreigners." In the South African context, this is particularly relevant for black Africans, who may be more readily recognised as outsiders. Beyond physical appearance, cultural differences, including language, customs, and social practices, also play a key role in how individuals are perceived. Harris (2002) notes that if a foreigner is unable to speak a local language or practices unfamiliar customs, they may be viewed with suspicion or hostility. For African international students (AIS), cultural differences such as language barriers and unfamiliar social practices can pose significant challenges. As Harris (2002) suggests, if African international students cannot effectively communicate in local languages or adapt to local customs, they risk being viewed with distrust. This cultural disconnect can foster feelings of isolation and exclusion as AIS navigate an environment where their cultural practices are not fully understood or accepted.

The biocultural hypothesis further suggests that these visible and cultural differences make African foreigners especially vulnerable to xenophobia. According to Harris (2002), they are often scapegoated for social problems, such as unemployment or crime, because they are easily identifiable and perceived as "the other." This hypothesis highlights the social dynamics where the unfamiliarity and perceived threat stemming from visible differences can lead to aggression. Harris (2002) argues that this phenomenon is especially pronounced in contexts where economic competition is high, leading locals to feel threatened by foreigners in terms of resources and opportunities.

Tshitereke (1999) connects the biocultural hypothesis to South Africa's social transition,

suggesting that heightened expectations during the post-apartheid era create fertile ground for xenophobia. He argues that visible differences in foreigners can lead to scapegoating, with outsiders being blamed for societal problems like unemployment and crime. Kristeva's (2024) concept of "otherness" is relevant to this hypothesis, as it illustrates how foreigners internalise exclusion and may respond with isolation or hostility. This dynamic contributes to the cycle of xenophobia, where the fear of being excluded leads to the pre-emptive exclusion of others. Supporting this perspective, Human Rights Watch (1998) documents the abuse of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, emphasising that African foreigners are particularly vulnerable to xenophobic violence. Their findings align with the biocultural hypothesis by demonstrating how visible differences make these groups targets of hostility. The Human Rights Commission (1999) also highlights systemic issues that contribute to xenophobia, noting how cultural and physical differences lead to discriminatory practices, particularly against African foreigners.

Hamber's exploration of violence and trauma in South Africa's transition to democracy provides further context for understanding xenophobia. He suggests that the visible differences of foreigners, combined with the cultural and social dynamics of the post-apartheid era, contribute to the targeting of foreigners. Both Hamber (2004) and Hobsbawm (1992) offer insight into how South Africa's transition to democracy influences xenophobic attitudes. Thus, for African international students at UKZN, these dynamics can create a complex landscape in which their identities are shaped by both their foreignness and the historical context of South Africa. This leads to unique challenges in their educational journey, as they must navigate cultural and systemic barriers that make them vulnerable to xenophobia and exclusion.

Masikane et al. (2020) argue that according to the biocultural theory, xenophobia revolves around cultural differences and physical/biological traits such as skin colour, clothing style, and language proficiency. These attributes serve as markers that exacerbate xenophobic sentiments between local nationals and foreigners. Morris (1998) illustrates how Nigerians and Congolese are easily distinguishable due to their physical appearance and accents, making them stand out among other foreigners (Masikane et al., 2020). Nigerians, in particular, often face media scrutiny for involvement in counterfeit goods, while Mozambicans are perceived to introduce unfamiliar

herbs to local healers (Hickel, 2014). Similarly, other nationalities like Somalis, Ethiopians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis are recognized for their distinct physical and facial features (Masikane et al., 2020).

According to Masikane et al. (2020), the biocultural hypothesis explains why African foreigners are selectively targeted by South Africans. It identifies xenophobia as rooted in visible differences, such as physical and cultural disparities exhibited by African migrants in the country (Masikane et al., 2020). Morris (1998) notes that Nigerians and Congolese are easily marked as 'other' due to their physical traits, mannerisms, clothing style, and their inability to speak indigenous languages, which makes them easy targets for scapegoating. This scenario illustrates how biocultural factors like physical appearance and language proficiency contribute to the discrimination faced by Nigerian and Congolese immigrants (Masikane et al., 2020). These identification criteria are similarly applied to Southern African Africans, as evidenced by the methods allegedly employed by the South African Police Service's Internal Tracing Units (Masikane et al., 2020).

In determining whether a person is undocumented, members of the Internal Tracing Units focus on various criteria. Language plays a crucial role, including accents and pronunciation of specific words like 'elbow', 'buttonhole', or the name of a meerkat in Zulu (Masikane et al., 2020:37). For instance, responding 'Sud' African often reveals a Mozambican origin, while Malawians are identified by their pronunciation of the letter 'r' as 'errow'. Appearance is also pivotal in identification efforts, encompassing hairstyle, clothing style, and physical features. Mozambicans, for example, may be distinguished by vaccination marks on their lower left forearm, while individuals from Lesotho are recognized by their attire, such as gumboots, walking sticks, or traditional blankets, along with their distinct Sesotho dialect (Minaar and Hough, 1996:16).

Masikane (2020) argues that these biocultural features hairstyles, accents, clothing, vaccination marks, and physical appearance act as indexical markers or signifiers of foreignness. They visibly denote differences and foreign identity, thereby frequently triggering xenophobic responses. For

instance, a report from the South African Human Rights Commission highlights that a significant proportion of individuals detained under the Aliens Control Act were apprehended solely based on their appearance (1999:21). Similarly, Boullion notes that language barriers and distinctive attire can provoke hostile reactions, as observed among French-speaking Africans in South Africa (1996:10). Understanding physical attributes as indicators of foreignness provides insight into why these features provoke xenophobic actions. Biological and cultural markers significantly influence the targeting of specific groups of foreigners, thereby exacerbating tensions and leading to violent confrontations.

### **3.5.1 Gaps of the Biocultural Hypothesis**

While the biocultural hypothesis provides valuable insights into the origins of xenophobia, it fails to offer a comprehensive explanation for the complex phenomenon, particularly within the South African context. Masikane et al. (2020) argue that attributing xenophobic violence solely to "visible otherness" overlooks the uneven nature of hostility directed towards specific groups, especially Black foreigners. They point out that while biological and cultural factors like language, accent, and physical appearance can distinguish various groups, including white and Asian foreigners, they do not uniformly dictate the intensity of xenophobic attacks. This suggests that reducing xenophobia to biological and cultural differences oversimplifies a multifaceted issue. In South Africa, xenophobia is deeply rooted in historical and structural legacies, as highlighted in Mpfu's (2020) work on the colonial and apartheid roots of nationalist ideologies that perpetuate racial hierarchies and prejudices.

Moreover, Kang'ethe and Duma (2013), in their exploration of post-apartheid xenophobic sentiments, argue that unmet promises of economic opportunity and social mobility fuel frustration and resentment, contributing to xenophobic attitudes. The biocultural hypothesis also overlooks the significant role of power dynamics in shaping xenophobic violence. Akinola (2018) addresses this gap by framing xenophobia through a political economy lens, revealing how competition for resources, economic inequality, and political instability exacerbate tensions between different groups. This perspective underscores that xenophobia is not solely about cultural differences but also about struggles for power, resources, and social status. Thus, while the biocultural hypothesis provides a foundational understanding of xenophobia, it is essential to

move beyond simplistic explanations. Hickel's (2014) examination of the moral economy of witchcraft in South African xenophobia and insights from African migrants' experiences emphasize the necessity of considering historical context, power dynamics, and the unequal experiences of different groups. By integrating these perspectives, we can develop more nuanced strategies to address and combat this pervasive and harmful phenomenon.

### **3.6 Power-Conflict Theory**

Conflict theory, as articulated by Dahrendorf and Collins (2006), traces its origins back to Karl Marx's foundational work in the 19th century. Similarly, Bartos, and Wehr (2002), state that the power conflict theory is primarily associated with sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf who argued that social conflict arises from the differing interests and goals of those in positions of authority (the "command" class) and those who are subordinate (the "obey" class), emphasizing the importance of vertical role differentiation in understanding social dynamics. Marx (1867) posited that capitalism, through its inherent inequalities and exploitation, would sow the seeds of its own demise by fostering class consciousness and economic instability. This theory revolves around understanding how conflicts emerge, evolve, and impact society, focusing on the unequal distribution of resources and power. The theory delineates several factors driving class conflict: economic disputes between classes, the aggregation of masses within specific class positions, facilitated communication among class members, the development of class solidarity (or consciousness), and the potential for revolutionary upheaval. Social stratification, according to Marx, divides society into antagonistic classes characterized by unequal wealth distribution, leading to discontent and revolutionary potential.

In alignment with the power-conflict theory, Okeke (2022) expands on the notion that conflicts arise when the dominant group perceives threats to its power and privileges. Okeke (2022) contends that power serves as a mechanism for protecting and advancing the interests of the dominant in-group. This protection often manifests through strategies such as racism, xenophobia, stigmatization, and hate speech aimed at delegitimizing out-groups. These tactics not only reinforce the existing power structures but also manage societal tensions and maintain the status quo. Furthermore, Okeke (2022) observes that inequalities in resource allocation and

power distribution exacerbate societal tensions, which can be exploited by the ruling or wealthy classes to perpetuate their control over society. Similarly, Sherif (1988) posits that power conflict theory revolves around competition between groups for limited resources, often leading to conflicts fuelled by one group perceiving the other as a threat. Scarce resources form the core of intergroup hostility according to this theory. These conflicts can escalate into physical confrontations, violence, or attacks as groups vie for control over these resources. As competition intensifies, negative stereotypes and prejudices are constructed by the dominant group against perceived competitors, reinforcing their perception of threat and justifying their actions (Tewolde, 2020).

A critical aspect of power conflict theory is the proximity between competing groups. This theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. Scholars studying migration have observed that many South African citizens view immigrants as direct competitors for jobs and other resources, including social and economic opportunities (Mamabolo, 2015). Tewolde (2020) notes that migrants, particularly those from other African countries, are often seen as threats, especially by economically disadvantaged Black South Africans at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy. This perception of threat can escalate into tangible acts of violence, such as anti-foreigner protests and xenophobic attacks (Tshishonga, 2015). For instance, Asian and African migrants operating businesses in impoverished areas might be perceived as exploiting South Africa's economic resources to the detriment of local residents, sparking violent reactions against them.

In light of the aforementioned arguments, Okeke (2022) suggests that the power conflict theory provides an explanation for why politicians often resort to stirring up sentiments and instigating conflicts between groups to maintain their hold on power. These strategies have frequently resulted in xenophobic attitudes and related forms of intolerance. Fabricius (2017) indicates that political leaders have sometimes exacerbated tensions by attributing crimes like prostitution, human trafficking, and drug dealing to foreign nationals, thereby legitimizing attacks against them. Gordon (2015) observes that xenophobia tends to escalate during periods of local economic fragility, such as high unemployment rates, which reached 26.6% in South Africa in the first half



of 2018 (Statistics SA, 2018). For instance, Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba faced criticism for his remarks about undocumented foreigners occupying buildings in the inner city, while Ekambaram (2018) notes former Minister in the presidency Jeff Radebe's comments on foreign ownership of spaza shops in townships, suggesting a need to empower local communities instead.

It is essential to recognize that every theory has its strengths and weaknesses, as highlighted by Odiaka and Oriugu (2017). The power conflict theory, for example, emerged as a strategy to neutralize out-groups perceived as threatening to the dominant group's power and privilege, aiming to safeguard and advance their interests. This theory is particularly apt for analyzing xenophobia, where prejudice functions as a protective mechanism used by the dominant group in a diverse society to maintain its majority position (Odiaka et al., 2017). When this position is perceived as threatened, xenophobic sentiments, expressed as prejudice, are directed towards the perceived threat posed by foreigners (Odiaka et al., 2017). These sentiments serve to alleviate frustrations felt by both dominant and minority groups.

Frederick (2014) posits that the power conflict theory views conflict as a natural and inevitable part of social interactions, particularly within family dynamics and broader societal contexts. The theory emphasizes that social interactions often result in disagreements, making conflict a regular occurrence rather than an exception. According to Frederick, the theory focuses on power imbalances between individuals or groups, asserting that competition for resources and power fuels contention. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of African international students (AIS), who may face xenophobia as a result of competing interests within the university environment. The competition for resources such as educational opportunities, social acceptance, and financial support can create tension between local students and AIS. As Frederick (2014) notes, conflicts frequently arise from social interactions. In this case, local students may perceive AIS as competitors for limited resources, which can manifest in discriminatory behaviour and xenophobic attitudes.

Moreover, the theory highlights power disparities between social groups. AIS often find

themselves marginalized, facing systemic barriers that contribute to their experiences of xenophobia. Frederick (2014) explains that structural inequality refers to systemic differences in power and resources based on social roles or statuses. At UKZN, AIS may struggle with limited access to social networks, support systems, and institutional resources, exacerbating their feelings of exclusion and discrimination. This competition for both tangible resources (like financial aid and housing) and intangible ones (such as social recognition and emotional support) can lead to conflict, fostering misunderstandings and hostility, which further fuels xenophobia.

In a similar vein, Prayogi (2023) outlines that power conflict theory highlights inherent societal conflicts rooted in power and resource inequalities. The theory posits that social structures and institutions are often shaped by the interests of dominant groups, marginalizing others. However, Prayogi (2023) emphasizes that conflict is not merely disruptive but also a catalyst for social change, underscoring the dynamic nature of societal interactions. He argues that conflict can drive significant shifts in social norms, values, and structures. Rather than viewing conflict as purely negative, Prayogi suggests it can foster dialogue, challenge existing power dynamics, and lead to progress and reform. Applying Prayogi's (2023) insights to xenophobia, the conflict can be seen as stemming from perceived threats to resources, identity, and social cohesion. AIS at UKZN may experience xenophobia due to local students feeling threatened by their presence, leading to competition for jobs, social status, and educational opportunities. This aligns with Prayogi's assertion that conflicts arise from differences in interests and identities. However, the experiences of AIS facing xenophobia can also serve as a catalyst for social change. As these students confront discrimination and hostility, their struggles may spark increased awareness and dialogue about race, identity, and belonging within the university. Prayogi's (2023) view that conflict can stimulate discussions challenging existing power structures supports the idea that the challenges AIS faces could promote inclusivity and social reform, ultimately contributing to a more equitable environment at UKZN.

According to Singh (2013:91), the power conflict theory relates to the socio-economic status of individuals and their perception of foreigners as a threat, which fuels animosity. Perpetrators of xenophobia often justify their actions by claiming that foreigners are taking away jobs,

businesses, and economic opportunities (Singh, 2013). Singh (2013) argues that xenophobia is primarily driven by economic factors such as poverty and unemployment, where poorer and unemployed individuals are more likely to engage in xenophobic behavior compared to their wealthier and employed counterparts. However, Singh (2013:92) acknowledges criticism that even affluent individuals can harbor xenophobic attitudes. Nonetheless, the theory emphasizes that, in reality, it is economically disadvantaged who are more prone to xenophobia, a trend observed in historically disadvantaged universities where poverty and political dynamics exacerbate xenophobic tendencies (Singh, 2013).

### **3.6.1 Gaps of the Power Conflict Theory**

The Power Conflict Theory, despite offering valuable insights into power dynamics and social conflicts, has been critiqued for its limitations. One prominent critique is its tendency to oversimplify social stratification by overly emphasizing economic factors and class struggle as the primary drivers (Hariyani, Haque, and Warginata, 2022). This theory has a reductionist approach that fails to account for the multifaceted nature of societal divisions. Societies are composed of diverse interest groups that extend beyond economic class, encompassing factors such as religion, culture, political ideology, and social identity (Hatiyani et al., 2022). Moreover, power can stem from sources beyond economic capital, including social influence, political connections, or cultural dominance. By neglecting these non-economic dimensions, the Power Conflict Theory risks overlooking the complex interplay of factors contributing to social conflict. Another significant limitation is the theory's inadequate consideration of cultural and identity factors. While economic inequalities and competition for resources play a role in social conflicts, focusing solely on economics fails to capture the profound impact of cultural differences, ethnic identities, and historical prejudices (Achem et al, 2022). These factors often fuel the "us vs. them" mentality that underpins many social conflicts (Achem et al, 2022). Therefore, achieving a comprehensive understanding requires moving beyond economic determinism and integrating the intricate dynamics of culture and identity.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter concludes that various scholars have employed diverse theoretical frameworks to

analyze the nature and origins of xenophobia. Social psychological theories like group threat theory, social identity theory, and relative deprivation have been utilized to understand group prejudice, including its manifestations in South African contexts. The study reviewed several theoretical perspectives on xenophobia, focusing specifically on four key theories: Scapegoat theory, Isolation hypothesis, Biocultural hypothesis, and Power Conflict theory, which were deemed most relevant. By employing these theoretical lenses, the study advocated for a theoretical triangulation approach, arguing that xenophobia is complex and multifaceted, encompassing diverse dimensions, influences, and manifestations. This comprehensive approach allows for a deeper understanding of xenophobia as it appears across different levels, from individual attitudes to broader societal structures.

Therefore, xenophobia does not present itself as a singular phenomenon; rather, it manifests in varied forms, spanning from individual biases to institutionalised biases. The chosen theoretical frameworks offer perspectives through which the multifaceted nature of xenophobia can be examined comprehensively. The study also included a diagram (Figure 3.3.1) illustrating these theoretical frameworks. Emphasising the complexity of xenophobia in South Africa and within higher education institutions like UKZN, the study underscored the need for a multifaceted approach to elucidate its underlying causes and nature. Furthermore, the study critically evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of these theories in explaining the nature and origins of xenophobia in both South Africa and higher education institutions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Methodology forms the backbone of any research endeavour, providing a structured and scientifically grounded approach to solving research problems. As Boeijie (2010) explains, methodology encompasses a philosophical and scientific framework that guides the design, methods, and techniques employed from the inception to the conclusion of a research project. This systematic approach ensures that the research is carried out coherently and logically. According to Walliman (2011), research methods are essentially the tools and techniques determined by the chosen research design, playing a crucial role in the data collection and analysis processes. Furthermore, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) highlight that the terms methods and techniques are often used interchangeably when discussing various aspects of research, such as sampling, data collection, analysis, and reporting results.

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study. It begins by explaining the research philosophy and paradigm, offering a detailed account of the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study. The research adopts an interpretive and constructivist paradigm, which acknowledges that individuals construct their reality and knowledge through subjective interpretations and that knowledge is socially constructed. This paradigm provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the complex social dynamics and lived experiences of the participants. The chapter explains the issue of critical reflexivity, shedding light on the researcher's self-awareness and positionality. This section delves into the nuances of the insider and outsider roles of the researcher, emphasizing how these positions influence the research process and findings. By incorporating critical reflexivity, the study ensures a transparent and reflective approach, acknowledging the potential biases and influences the researcher brings to the study.

The chapter then delineates the chosen data collection plan, detailed through a diagram in Figure 4.1. This plan incorporates semi-structured interviews, interview guides, and the Zoom transcription process. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in questioning while ensuring that critical topics are covered. Zoom for interviews and transcriptions offers a practical solution for remote data collection. The interview guides are designed to facilitate in-depth discussions, capturing rich and detailed data from participants. Furthermore, the chapter discusses

the target population and sampling methods in detail. It outlines the rationale behind selecting specific populations and explains various sampling techniques, including convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants who are readily accessible, while purposive sampling targets individuals with specific characteristics relevant to the research. On the other hand, snowball sampling relies on participants to recruit others within their network, which can be particularly useful for reaching hard-to-access populations.

Ethical considerations are thoroughly addressed, guided by the Four Quadrants of Research Ethics by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021). This section outlines the ethical protocols to protect participants' rights, confidentiality, and informed consent. It also discusses the moral dilemmas and strategies to navigate these challenges, demonstrating the study's commitment to ethical rigor. The chapter concludes by presenting a diagram in Figure 4.2, illustrating how the study ensures trustworthiness. The chart shows the measures for transferability, dependability, confirmability, credibility, and peer debriefing. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts; dependability emphasizes the consistency of the research process; confirmability ensures that the participants shape the findings and not researcher bias; credibility involves the accuracy and truthfulness of the data and peer debriefing provides an external check on the research process. Lastly, the chapter outlines the study's limitations, acknowledging the constraints and potential areas of bias that may affect the findings. This section reflects on the challenges encountered during the research process and discusses the implications of these limitations for interpreting and generalizing the results. By transparently addressing the study's limitations, the chapter provides a balanced and critical perspective, enhancing the overall rigor and credibility of the research.

## **4.2 Qualitative Research Method**

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to gather in-depth and personal experiences and perspectives from international and local South African students at UKZN. The rationale for using this method is to logically and qualitatively justify the 'what and how' questions the study seeks to address. Qualitative research is typically associated with interpretive epistemology, emphasizing understanding and meanings (Marshall, 1995). Roestenburg et al. (2021) argue that

a qualitative approach is suited to exploring complex phenomena like xenophobia, aiming to describe and understand these issues from the participants' viewpoints. Qualitative researchers seek to understand complex situations, often engaging in exploratory work and using observations to build theory from the ground up. They employ inductive reasoning, making specific observations and then drawing broader inferences. Once a theme is identified, qualitative researchers may use deductive reasoning to verify or modify it with additional data. They often construct interpretive narratives to capture the complexity of a phenomenon and may adopt a literary or narrative style in their reports. Kumar (2019) identifies several characteristics of the qualitative approach, a flexible, unstructured method for examining complex phenomena. This requires researchers to collect data on the ground, which serves as a central research tool for direct information retrieval through observation, interviews, and documents. Qualitative research describes experiences of events, phenomena, or processes without quantifiable variations. It forms patterns and themes from data, therefore putting the researchers in it by their assertions on how they interpret based on where they come from. They aim to understand social life and the meanings people give their experiences. Therefore, a qualitative approach is an interpretative and holistic method aimed at understanding social life and the meanings people attach to it. It refers to research that elicits participants' accounts of meaning, experience, or perceptions.

The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it allows for an exploration of foreign African students' narrations of their views and experiences, enabling an analysis of how threats are constructed and rhetorically deployed in narratives. Unlike quantitative research, which does not prioritize participants' narrations, qualitative research recognizes participants as active constructors or agents in meaning-making activities through narrative (Tuffin, 2004). This approach facilitates the emergence of detailed data, which can be analyzed for meaning, nuance, and variation (Maykut and Morehouse, 2002). This study employs qualitative research by accessing secondary data on xenophobia, such as books, journals, newspaper articles, and internet sources. Additionally, relevant primary sources, such as public documents released by the South African government and international organizations on the impact of xenophobia in South Africa, are used. Key policy and legislative frameworks reviewed and analyzed include the Immigration Act (2002), the Immigration Regulations of 2014, and Government Notices of 2014 and 2015.

### **4.3 Research Philosophy and Paradigm**

According to Fouche, Stydom, and Roestenburg (2021), philosophy, derived from the Greek term for "the love of wisdom," involves the exploration of knowledge, reality, and human existence, raising questions about our identity, understanding, and experiences of the world. Tartaglia (2011) refers to this as the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. Fouche et al. describe philosophy as the pursuit of knowledge among researchers. In this study, philosophy serves as the framework through which the issue of xenophobia is interpreted based on the perspectives and experiences of international and local students at UKZN. Fouche et al. (2021) suggest that if philosophy represents a general worldview, then a paradigm functions as the framework through which this worldview is understood. Essentially, a paradigm sets the boundaries for understanding and practice, including the ethical considerations associated with these boundaries. Uwizeyimana and Bashcka (2017) highlight that philosophy is inherently multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary, underpinned by a specific paradigm. Popularised by American philosopher Thomas Kuhn, a paradigm is defined as a set of human constructs dealing with fundamental principles, indicating the researcher's perspective and helping to construct meaning from the data.

In this context, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) argue that a paradigm encompasses the abstract beliefs and principles that shape a researcher's worldview and approach to interpreting and acting within that world. For this study, the paradigm serves as the lens through which the methodological aspects were examined, determining the research methods and data analysis. The interdependence of these aspects is evident: the data-gathering style influenced the analysis, the relationship with international and local students at UKZN shaped the data collection, and ethical considerations impacted the type of data gathered. This study adopts the interpretive and constructivism paradigm (explained below in Section 4.3.1), demonstrating the interconnectedness of the research elements and how they collectively address the research questions. In the social sciences, the significance of a paradigm lies in its provision of beliefs and guidelines that drive what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the study's results should be interpreted. Thus, a paradigm aids in constructing meaning from the data grounded in the individual experiences of African international students at UKZN.

#### **4.3.1 Interpretive and Constructivism Paradigm**



This study adopts the interpretive and constructivism paradigms, which share similar views on constructing knowledge. Constructivism is a learning paradigm that suggests knowledge is most effectively acquired through reflection and active mental construction (Mascolo and Fischer, 2005). In this view, knowledge is seen as an intersubjective interpretation, where students engage with the information presented and, drawing from their past experiences, personal perspectives, and cultural context, create their understanding. The term "constructivism" is believed to have evolved from Piaget's and Bruner's (1974) educational theories, with additional roots in the psychological and philosophical developments of the 20th century, mainly through the work of Piaget (1969) and Bruner (1974). A key aspect of Bruner's (1974) view on constructivism is the idea that learning is an active process where learners build new ideas or concepts based on their existing knowledge. In this process, learners actively choose and interpret information, form hypotheses, and make decisions, all guided by their cognitive structure. Piaget (1969) is recognized as one of the pioneering theorists of constructivism. His theories suggest that humans generate knowledge through the interplay between their experiences and ideas. Piaget's (1969) perspective on constructivism has significantly influenced radical constructivism, emphasizing that the individual is central to knowledge creation and acquisition. Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2013) assert that our ways of understanding the world are intrinsically tied to our social context. This study agrees with the constructivist perspective that what we know of the world and ourselves is constructed through various discourses and systems of meaning (Berger and Luckmann, 1967).

To a certain extent, the constructivist paradigm links with the power conflict theory that things like anti-foreigner attacks are examples of how social psychology and group dynamics can create specific forms of collective actions. Constructivism states that individuals and groups construct their understanding of the world through collective experience and interpretation. As part of this vast space for change, the theory focuses on group dynamics, shared motives, and symbolic meanings by stressing that perceptions and attitudes are not absolute but produced through socio-culturally specific norms and power relations. According to constructivism, our beliefs and actions are constructed by various discourses that inhabit us, specifically, existing within social structures of norms and powers that determine how we know things (epistemologically) or view the world.

The constructivism paradigm is essential for this study as it recognizes that reality is socially constructed through individual interpretations and perspectives. As social actors, African international and local students at UKZN construct their understanding of xenophobia based on their experiences, interactions, and observations within South African society. This paradigm allows for examining the subjective nature of their perceptions and experiences. Additionally, as Chapter Two highlights, the constructivist lens permits an exploration of how international and local students perceive the 'other' in South African society. Xenophobia often involves constructing "us versus them" narratives, and analyzing how African international students navigate these perceptions sheds light on the social construction of xenophobia. Thus, unlike the positivist approach, there is no single truth but multiple understandings of social phenomena. For this research, knowledge is viewed as a social artifact, reflecting the social, cultural, moral, ideological, and political views of international and local students on xenophobia in South Africa.

The constructivist paradigm provides a valuable framework for examining xenophobia in South Africa through the lens of African international students' experiences at UKZN. This approach recognizes the subjective nature of experience, acknowledging the influence of personal and cultural backgrounds on perceptions of xenophobia. It emphasizes the role of South Africa's social, cultural, and political context in shaping these experiences while valuing the diverse perspectives and interpretations of xenophobia among students with varying backgrounds and identities. By encouraging reflection on personal experiences and broader social structures, the constructivist paradigm can illuminate the underlying causes of xenophobia and potential avenues for addressing it. Furthermore, it acknowledges that students draw upon prior experiences, both in their home countries and South Africa, to navigate and respond to xenophobic environments.

Tuffour (2017) notes that the interpretive paradigm moves beyond simple description by asking participants to interpret the subjective meaning of their experiences. Researchers within this paradigm must openly acknowledge their preconditions and assumptions, reflecting on how these influence the research process. Roestenburg et al. (2021) add that an interpretive approach focuses on a detailed examination of personal lived experiences to uncover essential themes while reflecting on the researcher's own experiences. Thus, both participants and researchers play active roles in the interpretive process. This paradigm emphasizes the complexity of making meaning as the phenomenon unfolds (Clavier, 2014). The interpretive paradigm is helpful for this study

because it acknowledges that individuals construct their reality through subjective interpretations. In the context of xenophobia, international and local students bring their unique perspectives and experiences, and the interpretive paradigm allows for an exploration of how they interpret and make sense of xenophobic occurrences. This paradigm underscores the importance of context in understanding social phenomena. African international students' xenophobia experiences are within specific cultural, social, and historical contexts, and the interpretive paradigm encourages researchers to explore how these factors influence their interpretations. By adopting this paradigm, the researcher views the issue of xenophobia through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In seeking answers to the research questions, the investigator used participants' experiences to construct and interpret an understanding of the nature and causes of xenophobia among UKZN students.

After conducting interviews and observing the phenomena under study, knowledge about the nature of xenophobia in South Africa and higher education institutions was generated through data interpretation. This process requires contextualisation and subjectivity, explaining the subjective reasons and meanings behind social actions (Humbe, 2020). The contemporary situation of xenophobia in South Africa needs an interpretive reflection style rooted in the everyday lives of African international students. The interpretive paradigm encourages reflexivity, acknowledging the researcher's role in shaping interpretations. The researcher must self-reflect on biases and assumptions regarding xenophobia in South Africa. Understanding how the researcher's positionality influences the interpretation of African international students' perspectives on xenophobia is integral to the interpretive paradigm. This consideration leads to the discussion of critical reflexivity and the insider-outsider positionality of the study.

#### **4.4 Ontological and Epistemological assumptions of the study**

In setting out a framework for research practice, methodology relies on ontology and epistemology assumptions (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). These two words refer to the theories about the nature of reality or being and the nature of knowledge. Each demarcates what can and cannot count as meaningful knowledge and informs the methodology and the process of producing that knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013), in their book titled *Successful Qualitative Research: A Guide for Beginners*, argue that ontology and epistemology are far from

independent of each other, and they lead to particular methodologies and constrain the methods appropriate for research.

Braun and Clarke (2013) define ontology as the relationship between the world and our human interpretations and practices. Ontology determines whether or not we think reality exists entirely separate from human practices and understandings, including the research we conduct, or whether we believe it cannot be separated from human practices. Therefore, knowledge is always going to reflect our perspective. Roestenburg et al. (2021) state that ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of reality and how the researcher sees social reality. For this study, the researcher states that the nature of reality is interpretative and that social reality, like the issue of xenophobia, can be viewed and interpreted by African international students according to their own individual and ideological positions on the matter. The interpretative paradigm provides a valuable lens for understanding the intricate experiences of African international students who might be suffering from xenophobia may be better understood. It underlines that students' reactions are engendered by attitudes, emotions, and their cultural background, not only external threats. The interpretative approach demonstrates that xenophobia is not only a response to the threats from outside but exists as part of their subjective ways of making sense of how we interact and live together. It also explores how these feelings of animosity and alienation are connected to their broader understanding of themselves, their place, and their location in the world.

This analysis method reveals how encounters with xenophobia are interpreted by African international students and incorporated into their self-constructions and reactions to these experiences. Thus, on the ontological level, the knower and the known are interdependent, and the social sciences are essentially subjective, seeing reality as multi-layered and complex; thus, a single phenomenon like xenophobia has multiple interpretations based on the views and experiences of both African international students and local students at UKZN. Therefore, for this research, reality can only partially be understood. We need to rely on multiple methods to construct as much of reality as possible, such as gathering the different experiences of xenophobia of African international students at UKZN.

Ontology can be viewed from a realist and relativist position. Realism assumes a knowable world, comprehensible through research, that the truth (and there is only one) is 'out there' and can be accessed by the appropriate application of research techniques (Roestenburg et al., 2021). In its

most extreme or 'naive' version, it has been referred to as a correspondence theory of truth (Madill, Jordan, and Shirley, 2000), where what we observe is assumed to mirror truthfully what is there. Realism is the ontology underpinning most quantitative research but rarely informs qualitative research. However, this study aligns with relativism, which argues that multiple constructed realities exist rather than a single, pre-social reality or mind-independent truth. We can never get beyond these constructions (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999). Rather than being universal, what is 'real' and 'true' differs across time and context, such as the experiences of xenophobia for African international students, so what we can know reflects where and how knowledge is generated. For example, in Chapter Two of the literature review, the study observes that media in South Africa plays a huge role in perpetuating xenophobia and in shaping the views and opinions about immigrants in South Africa. In line with the idea that reality has multiple constructed realities, Blinder and Jeannet (2018) note that media coverage of immigration provided a foundation for the individual construction of views on the social and political order.

For this study, ontology assists in examining my underlying belief system as a researcher about the nature and causes of xenophobia in South Africa based on the views and perspectives of African international students and local students at UKZN. It helped me to conceptualise the form and nature of reality and what I believe could be known and experienced about xenophobia in South Africa. This was crucial to understanding how I made meaning of the data I gathered. Kivunja (2017) argues that these assumptions, concepts or propositions help familiarise a person with the research problem, its significance, and how they might approach it to contribute to its solution.

Ontology is essential to a paradigm because it helps to provide an understanding of the things that constitute the world as it is known (Scott and Usher, 2004). It seeks to determine the fundamental nature of the foundational concepts that constitute themes we analyse to make sense of the meaning embedded in research data (Kivunja, 2017). Like epistemology, ontology makes the researcher ask essential questions such as: Is there reality in the social world, or is it a construction created by one's mind? What is the nature of reality? In other words, is the reality of an objective nature or the result of individual cognition? What is the nature of the situation being studied? (Kivunja, 2017). The questions used in this study point towards a relativist ontology supported by this study. The study agrees that the nature of reality about the issue of xenophobia is socially constructed

based on people's individual experiences.

With regards to epistemology, on the other hand, Sorensen (2017) states that epistemology stems from the Greek 'episteme' meaning 'knowledge' and is widely understood as the study of knowledge. Braun and Clarke (2013) define epistemology as the nature of knowledge and address the question of what it is possible to know. What counts as expertise determines how meaningful knowledge can be generated (and what it is seen to represent). They argue that (2013) epistemology determines what counts as valid, trustworthy, 'true' knowledge within a community and what is not valid. In a similar vein, Seale (2018:11) states:

*Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with how we know things. What is truth? How can we justify our beliefs? What criteria can we use to decide whether a statement should be believed? These are all epistemological questions and are central to any search for understanding the contribution of social and cultural research.*

In line with the above views, Humbe (2020) states that on an epistemological level, there is no access to reality independent of our minds and no external referent to compare claims of truth. The investigator and the object of study are interactively linked so that findings are mutually created within the context of the situation, which shapes the inquiry. For Humbe (2020), epistemology is concerned with the basis of knowledge: its nature, forms, how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated to other human beings. It focuses on the nature of human knowledge and comprehension that, as the researcher or knower, one can acquire to extend, broaden, and deepen the understanding of the nature and causes of xenophobia in Institutions of higher education and South Africa. Thus, in considering the epistemology of this research, it was vital to consider questions like: Is knowledge of the nature and impact of xenophobia something that can be acquired on the one hand, or is it something that has to be personally experienced? What is the nature of the knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be known? How does the researcher know what he knows? What counts as knowledge? (Krauss, 2005).

In line with Kivunja's (2017) argument, these questions were important in this study because they helped the researcher position herself in the research context for her to discover what else was new, given what was known about the nature, causes, and people's experiences of xenophobia in South Africa. This study relies on data gathered from African international and local students about the nature of xenophobia in institutions of higher education such as UKZN as well as their experiences, so the epistemology is grounded on what Kivunja (2017) calls authoritative

knowledge, so it is a subjective epistemology. There are different epistemological positions, positivist and realist, and the study narrows down to the interpretative constructivist paradigm. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the realist position states that knowledge involves the view that reality exists independently of our thoughts and beliefs. For them, the purpose of science is to uncover and explain that reality. Gathering facts using our senses and knowledge of the world can be formulated into laws that govern the behavior of the phenomena. On the other hand, positivism assumes a straightforward relationship between the world and our perception of it (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It separates the practice of observation; the observer requires a demonstration of reality through the objective collection of data. For positivism, valid knowledge is obtained by applying established scientific methods, which control variables and remove various forms of contamination and bias (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Positivism asserts that authentic knowledge is strictly scientific, derived from rigorous scientific methods and empirical validation (Orla, Willie, and Padraig, 2007). In contrast, this study adopts an interpretive and constructivist approach, which argues that knowledge is socially constructed and acknowledges multiple interpretations of how knowledge is understood.

#### **4.5 Critical Reflexivity**

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe qualitative research as a creative process where the researcher, influenced by their culture, experiences, emotions, and interactions with participants, plays a central role in data collection. Roestenburg et al. (2021) highlight that critical reflexivity involves reflecting on the researcher's role and the research process. Berger (2015) emphasizes that reflexivity requires researchers to acknowledge and take responsibility for their position and its impact on the research setting, participants, and data interpretation. For Luttrell (2019), reflexivity challenges the notion that knowledge production is separate from the researcher and that knowledge is purely objective. It involves not only self-reflection but also an examination of how the knowledge generated through research is shaped by the research process and the researcher's influence.

British feminist psychologist Wilkinson (1988) differentiates between three types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity, which examines how the researcher's values influence their research and the

resulting knowledge; functional reflexivity, which considers how research methods and design impact the research process and knowledge produced; and disciplinary reflexivity, which explores how academic disciplines influence the creation of knowledge. Thus, reflexivity also encompasses the researcher reflecting on the methodological choices and disciplinary location and how this shapes knowledge production. This study employs critical reflexivity, a crucial aspect of maintaining awareness of my biases, perspectives, and potential impact on the research process. The fact that I am a Zimbabwean student researching the experience of African international students about Xenophobia at UKZN necessitated critical reflexivity on my part. Critical reflexivity entails careful consideration of the phenomenon under study and how a researcher's assumption and behavior may impact the inquiry (Watt, 2007). The researcher tried her best to take a neutral position for this study to separate the personal from the judicious use of reflexivity. To avoid bias in this study, I also included the views and perspectives of local South African students about what they think about xenophobia in South Africa. Critical reflexivity assisted in minimizing my own bias to make the research trustworthy. This point is supported by Watt (2007), who suggests that keeping an introspective record of a researcher's work can help them assess their biases, emotions, and thoughts, allowing them to understand how these factors might affect their research.

As an international student, I had to self-reflect on my experiences, cultural background, and identity and how these might influence my perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations of the data collected. I also had to consider how my identity as an international student might impact my relationship with International and local participants at UKZN. Thus, I actively sought feedback from my supervisor and fellow PhD students with different perspectives on xenophobia in South Africa. For example, in 2022, I presented my PhD thesis at a conference in Durban titled South African Association of Political Studies (SAAPS) KZN Regional Colloquium with the theme of the conference Building Sustainable Political and Environmental Landscape in Africa. Presenting my thesis at this conference helped me discuss my research with others. They provided valuable insights and helped me identify any blind spots or biases I overlooked.

For instance, one of the panel members encouraged me to not only look at literature that speaks negatively about xenophobia but also to look at the positive efforts carried out by the South African



government, civil society as well and UKZN in trying to fight against xenophobia (as outlined in Chapter 2.15). This assisted me in getting a balanced view of the study. In approaching my research, I had to constantly question my assumptions and preconceptions about xenophobia in South Africa. I became more open-minded to challenging my own beliefs and expectations about the topic of xenophobia and the experiences of African international students. This openness helped me to have a more nuanced understanding of the issue of xenophobia in South Africa. Thus, I provided a platform for my participants to share their experiences authentically. I avoided imposing my interpretations on their experiences and strived to amplify their voices during the Zoom interviews.

#### **4.5.1 Insider and Outsider Positionality of the Study**

Consequently, Holmes (2020) describes positionality as encompassing both an individual's worldview and their stance on a research task within its social and political context, as noted by Foote and Bartell (2011), Savin-Baden and Major (2013), and Rowe (2014). Insider and outsider positionality focuses on the researcher's perspective or background, including their ontological assumptions about social reality and epistemological beliefs about knowledge. Additionally, Merton (1972) defines the insider researcher as someone with a pre-existing, detailed understanding of the community and its members. The term 'community' encompasses more than just an organization; having deep knowledge does not necessarily imply personal membership (Merton, 1972). Conversely, a researcher is deemed an 'outsider' if they do not belong to the same group as the participants (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Hellowell (2006) notes that an outsider researcher lacks prior familiarity with the setting and the people being studied. Burgess (1984) suggests that being a stranger or outsider in a social setting allows the researcher to maintain a distance and objectively extract information from the research experience.

In this section, the study seeks to understand why a researcher should pay attention to positionality on this insider-outsider continuum. Pedersen and Nikulina (2021) argue that positionality significantly influences researchers' ethical and methodological challenges, highlighting the need to examine positionalities within these dilemmas. They suggest outsiders benefit from a fresh perspective as they approach phenomena with fewer preconceived notions. However, they also note that outsiders may need more in-depth understanding and ability to effect change that insiders possess. Conversely, insiders can access valuable insights that outsiders

might miss, but they must also make a concerted effort to recognize and question the assumptions inherent in the group's practices.

In a similar vein, Merton (1972:15) in Chhabra (2020) states that “in common parlance, an insider researcher has access to and an understanding of the history, culture and social life of a marginal group owing to his/her ‘continued socialization in the life of a group.’” For Chhabra (2020), insider-researchers acknowledge that knowledge is intimately tied to experience. They acquire tacit knowledge from their in-group socialization, align themselves with the group's values, interests, and commitments, and employ sensitivity to achieve empathic understanding (Dwyner and Buckle, 2009). Insider researchers have built a trust surplus therefore, they can secure access to the group quickly (Dwyner and Buckle, 2009). For example, I could access international and local students at UKZN since I am also there. In addition, Chhabra (2020) states that insider researchers can ask difficult questions and acquire thick, authentic descriptions of sensitive phenomena such as xenophobia. For example, I asked all my 33 participants How to strike a balance between foreign nationals and locals in terms of getting job opportunities. In addition, I also asked all the participants this follow-up question: What role does language play in the issue of xenophobia at the University and in SA as a whole? These problematic questions allowed the researcher to acquire knowledge and present authentic views from participants due to my insider status as a fellow student to both local and African international students. Therefore, the insider researcher is considered less exploitative and more empowering as it prioritizes giving voice to the previously silenced perspectives from marginalized groups (such as the African international students at UKZN) (Bridges 2017). All these features cumulatively make insider- research more ethical and valuable for the marginal group and the general society (Bridges 2017).

On the other hand, Merton (1972) argues that although being an insider might seem epistemologically fruitful, there is a persistent threat of individual and group ‘solipsism’ while conducting insider research. Individual solipsism contends that each person has privileged access to their mental states and processes (Fay, 1996). However, researchers must be adequately skeptical, as knowledge predicated exclusively on individual experience could be deemed subjective and unreliable (Fay, 1996). Therefore, researchers should exercise requisite caution while comprehending and interpreting the knowledge claims exclusively from individual experiences. Similarly, group solipsism argues that each group eventually ‘has a monopoly of

knowledge about itself (Merton 1972:). It is problematic because if knowledge and its production are rigidly reduced to the parameter of the group- identity, then we all would be epistemically trapped in our little homogeneous worlds (Fay, 1996) and risk being epistemologically and morally isolated (Bridges, 2001). Therefore, Merton (1972) suggests that the insider researcher has to guard against these individual and group solipsistic pitfalls during data collection and analysis.

Moreover, insiders might need help managing the expectations of the members of the marginal group, wherein they might be interested in data production that is more aligned with their values instead of having empirical fidelity. They might also expect favours in the form of friendship, financial help, and counselling support (Humphrey, 2007). This, in turn, can lead to serious ethical dilemmas (Hellowell, 2006). In addition, insiders possess tacit knowledge of the marginal group and a shared understanding, which might cause them to take the primary issues for granted. Their immersion in group life could cause difficulties in achieving adequate analytical distance (Merton, 1972). Furthermore, being an insider in a group is tricky because there is a pernicious challenge linked to group heterogeneity and intersecting identity (Humphrey, 2007). An insider might have distinctive personal and social features coupled with multi-layered identities, rendering them outsiders in certain respects and insiders in others (Bridges, 2017).

A researcher is considered an 'insider' when they share particular attributes with the study participants. I was more of an insider researcher for this study because I share specific characteristics and experiences with African international students. For example, I am an African international student studying at the same university as them. I was able to relate to some of the issues that African international students noted in the interview, for example, visa challenges, funding issues, and potential xenophobia on and off campus. Being an insider offered me a unique advantage for this study, such as a deep understanding of the participants' cultural context, language, and personal experiences. For example, as a Zimbabwean international student, I understood the cultural context, language, and experiences of Zimbabwean participants in my Zoom interviews. This cultural understanding as a Zimbabwean international student made it easier for the participants to share cultural experiences and challenges with my fellow African international students, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their perspectives.

In addition, with the African international students from other countries such as Nigeria, Kenya,

Cameroon, and Uganda, I gained access and trust from the participants, and this insider status facilitated trust more quickly, as they perceived me as someone who understands their experiences. However, for this research, while I was interviewing African international students from other countries such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, DRC, Uganda, Namibia, and Ethiopia, I also felt like I had an outsider position to some extent because of different cultures, languages, and national backgrounds. While researchers share the commonality of being an African international student, we share different cultural, historical, and national contexts that shape our perceptions and experiences of xenophobia. In addition, the language differences between local and African international students also contributed to my outsider positionality. The study states that while English was a shared communication medium, nuances in language, dialects, and communication styles among African international students from various countries influenced the transcribing dynamics. Thus, I had to be attentive to these language dynamics to communicate effectively and understand their xenophobia experiences in South Africa. Therefore, my outsider position fostered an openness to the diverse perspectives of international and local students. The researcher recognized that my understanding of xenophobia was enriched by embracing the multiplicity of experiences and viewpoints from the participants' varied nationalities.

On the other hand, while I was interviewing the Local students and the representative from the International Officer, who is a South African, the researcher also had an insider and outsider positionality, more like one leg in and one leg out positionality. My insider positionality with local students comes from the fact that I interact with students daily, and I am familiar with the Zulu culture since I have been in South Africa since 2007. My insider status with local students also comes from the fact that we all study at the same university, and just like them, I am aware of the support services that the university provides to students. As an insider researcher, I am also mindful of the nature of challenges that local students face; for example, some come from previously disadvantaged educational backgrounds where they did not have enough facilities at school, lack good writing skills, lack funding, and lack of computer skills thus as a senior student I relate with them. I try my best to assist them with some of their university challenges. As an insider researcher for local students, I have been involved in university jobs such as part-time lecturer for Political Science, Student mentor for first years, and Academic advisor for mainstream students. Thus, the nature of the help I offer to local and African international students made it easy for me to get participants, which helped build trust so that they could freely

share their views about xenophobia.

On the contrary, my outsider positionality was rooted in my status as an international student while they were local participants from the host country. To a lesser extent, at the beginning of the interviews, it felt uneasy to question participants due to the sensitive nature of xenophobia. The researcher observes that being an international student, I brought cultural sensitivity to the study, and this sensitivity was an asset in navigating discussions about xenophobia and understanding the cultural nuances involved. The researcher also observed that Local South African students may perceive me differently based on my international status, potentially impacting the openness and depth of their responses. Thus, I approached my participants with humility, and it was easy to build trust with the local students since they viewed me as someone who was quite helpful to the students' needs without any discrimination. I also made all my participants feel free to share their views without judgment since their names will be anonymous. I emphasized the study's goal, which is to find a solution to stop the problem of xenophobia. Therefore, in navigating my outsider-insider position, I maintained transparency about my background, fostering open communication. I approached the study with cultural humility, contributing to the research findings' validity and richness.

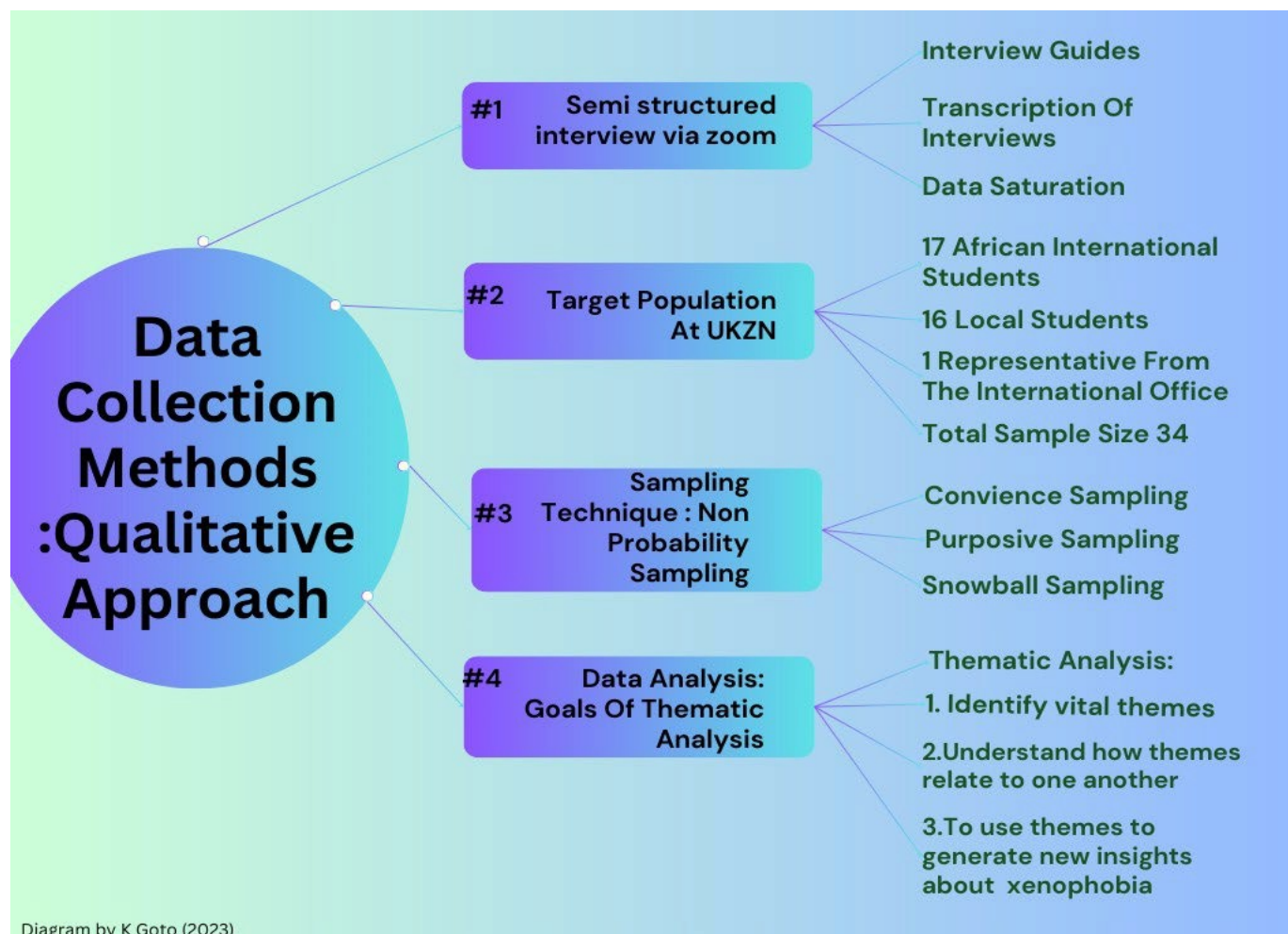
#### **4.6 Data Collection Methods**

According to Curtis (2011), data collection remains crucial in realizing the intention of particular research; it is collecting the story from the subject itself. Wildemuth (2017:22) postulates that data collection refers to the actual collection of research data, which is handled for analysis, interpretation, and dissemination. In social science, data collection refers to collecting information from the subject, where a person narrating their story becomes the scientist of theory. Data collection methods allow the research participants to speak about themselves based on their situation. Seidman (2013) asserts that some social scientists rely on qualitative research methods as a means of data collection because they are interested in people's situations and narratives. According to Zondi (2018), social scientists can become closer to the desired knowledge to get the *qualia* from the studied population. The researcher capitalizes on the recorded *qualia* because they learn to record new constructs and seek a thorough conceptualization of terms and concepts entangled in the provided narration (Zondi, 2018). This is how social scientists collect new

constructs that contribute to building new theories, enhancing existing knowledge, and adding new concepts to the existing body of literature.

This study also utilizes primary and secondary data collection methods to examine the issue of xenophobia in South Africa and higher education institutions. Through the use of secondary data: The study conducted a thorough literature review to understand the existing knowledge, theories, and findings related to xenophobia in South Africa. This involved reviewing academic articles, books, government reports, and Masters and PhD dissertations. Secondary data assisted the researcher in analyzing data from previous studies on xenophobia in South Africa to identify trends, patterns, and key contributing factors. Secondary data also facilitated the examination of news articles, social media posts, and other media sources to gather information on recent incidents of xenophobia, public perceptions, and government responses. The study also reviewed official reports from government agencies, NGOs, or international organizations that provide insights into the government's stance on xenophobia, the policies in place, and their effectiveness.

On the other hand, the study also utilizes primary sources, and according to Sekaran and Bourgie (2016), a primary source is a document or physical object written or created during the time under study. Goto (2014) further states that primary data refers to information obtained first-hand by the researcher on the variables of interest for the specific purpose of the study. In addition, Sekaran and Bourgie (2016) further argue that primary sources are present during an experience or period and offer an inside view of a particular event. This study utilises a primary data collection method. For example, I conducted in-depth interviews with local and African international students to better understand the nature and causes of xenophobia in South Africa and higher education institutions such as UKZN. Combining primary and secondary data collection methods can triangulate information, validate findings, and provide a comprehensive understanding of xenophobia in South Africa. This integrated approach helps to ensure the reliability and validity of this research.



**Figure 4.1: Data Collection Methods of the Study**

The above Figure [4.1] shows a mind map of the data collection methods of this study. The above Figure [4.1] shows how the study uses semi-structured interviews via the Zoom online platform, which allowed the researcher to get the Zoom transcription after each interview. The figure above shows 33 target populations, including 17 African international students, 16 Local students, and one representative from the International Office at UKZN (PMB). The study uses non-probability sampling methods such as convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques. The above Figure [4.1] also shows the data analysis used and the goals of thematic analysis, which the study adopts to generate themes and new insights about xenophobia in South Africa and higher education institutions. The diagram presented above is comprehensively explained in the following sub-topics below.

#### **4.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

This study uses semi-structured interviews, an excellent tool for gathering data on peoples' experiences. It presents the most comprehensive way of generating representations of interviewees' accounts, such as the experience of xenophobia of African international students at UKZN. The methodological assumptions of qualitative interviews rest on the presumption that it is possible to inquire into elements of the social world through talk and develop knowledge through what people say (Mason, 2002). Kvale (2007:1) posits the question: "If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not ask them?" The qualitative interview may take various forms, from open-ended to semi-structured interviews. This study uses the semi-structured research interview technique. As noted above, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 African international students, 16 Local students, and one representative from the UKZN (PMB) international office, with permission and consent from each participant.

The study argues that the in-depth semi-structured interviews are essential for understanding how participants view their worlds. This was arrived at mainly because researchers use semi-structured interviews to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, perceptions, or accounts of a particular topic (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport, 2002). Semi-structured interviews are recognised for their flexibility, which allows interviewers to explore topics in greater depth as new insights emerge during the conversation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Unlike structured interviews, which adhere strictly to pre-determined questions, semi-structured interviews enable researchers to adapt their questions based on the participant's responses, facilitating a more dynamic and interactive exchange (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008). This method is particularly effective for exploring complex and sensitive topics, as it encourages participants to share their experiences and perspectives in their own words, providing rich, nuanced data that can lead to a comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews have numerous advantages. They facilitate the collection of detailed and thick descriptions and the detailed exploration of topics from a smaller sample; participants are actively involved and provide direction to the interview, and you can follow up on verbal and non-verbal communication (Adler and Clark, 2015). The primary disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is that they are time-consuming for both the researcher and the participant (Braun and Clarke, 2013).



Although the semi-structured interview technique has some limitations, such as the responses may be misconstrued or untruthful, the participants may be unwilling to share, and the researcher may ask questions that do not give the desired reactions from the participants (De Vos et al., 2002), the strengths of this interview technique outweighed its limitations, and that was the reason I employed this interview technique. Some of the strengths of the semi-structured interview technique included that it allowed me and the participants much more flexibility and allowed me room to follow up on exciting avenues that emerged in the interview (De Vos et al., 2002). This study did not have face-to-face interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and one has to follow the national guidelines and laws of social distancing. This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Tang (2023:2), COVID-19, short for “Coronavirus Disease 2019, is an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus two viruses.” This virus was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and quickly spread worldwide, leading to a global pandemic that has had far-reaching impacts on public health, economies, education, and the daily life of human beings (Tang, 2023). He further states that the disease primarily affects the respiratory system but can also cause many symptoms, including fever, cough, fatigue, loss of taste or smell, and, in severe cases, difficulty breathing and pneumonia (Tang, 2023). The outbreak of this pandemic has profoundly impacted various aspects of human life, including education. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the transition to digital education, as governments worldwide implemented lockdowns and restrictions on movement to curb the spread of the virus. (Farooqui, Islam, and Zaidi, 2023). This shift has required educational institutions to adopt various digital platforms and tools to facilitate remote learning, such as video conferencing software, online learning management systems, and virtual classrooms. (Farooqui et al., 2023).

Due to lockdown restrictions and the quick shift to remote learning, many students had to conduct their studies from numerous locations, including their home nations. It is important to note that only registered students were interviewed during this period. Some postgraduate students were nearing the end of their theses and chose to return home for personal or logistical reasons, while others were working remotely from off-campus accommodation. The pandemic created an unprecedented educational setting in which adaptability was essential for both students and instructors, shaping the background and data for this study. In addition, the pandemic has been

widely studied, with researchers noting the specific circumstances and challenges that arose globally due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This pandemic had far-reaching impacts on various aspects of life, including public health, economic stability, education, and social interactions (Thakur, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic was particularly disruptive in education, as educational institutions faced closures and were forced to transition to remote learning using online communication platforms such as Zoom and Teams. This transition highlighted issues related to digital access, online teaching effectiveness, and the digital divide (Bozkurt, Karakaya, Turk, and Castellanos-Reyes, 2022). The shift to virtual classrooms necessitated new teaching and learning methods and revealed disparities in educational resources between students and institutions (Bozkurt et al., 2022). In the realm of public health, the pandemic led to unprecedented health challenges, such as the rapid spread of the virus, overwhelmed healthcare systems, and high mortality rates. It prompted global efforts to develop and distribute vaccines, enforce social distancing measures, and adapt to new health protocols. The pandemic also significantly impacted social interactions, as social distancing measures and lockdowns changed how people interact, with increased reliance on digital communication tools.

In addition, the pandemic also brought issues of mental health and social isolation to the forefront as people adapted to new ways of living and working (Bilal, Hysa, Akbar, Yasmin, and Rahman, 2022). Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic created a context of rapid change and adaptation, affecting almost every aspect of society and highlighting the need for resilience and flexibility in response to global crises (Wernli, Clausin, Antulov-Fantulin and Berezowski, 2021). Thus, due to nationwide restrictions and travel limitations at that time, all interviews were conducted remotely via online platforms. The interviews were conducted from the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 to 26 July 2021 in line with the ethical clearance time frame given to the researcher by the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC).

While conducting the interviews with African international students via Zoom, I had to consider different time zones for those students in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya since I was based in South Africa. When scheduling interviews, I ensured that I obtained informed consent and permission to record the interview from the participants before proceeding with the data collection. It was also necessary to confirm that both the researcher and the participants have access to the required hardware (for example, smartphone, Wi-Fi, and good internet connection)

and software to enable interviewing. Before the interviews commenced, I had to confirm with the participants that the specific online platform provides data to be downloaded or recorded to undertake data analysis. The advantages of interviews conducted via online Zoom platforms are that they are convenient, economical, and often facilitate communication about sensitive topics (Braun and Clarke, 2013: 98). However, among the disadvantages of virtual interviewing is that people without access to the internet are excluded; the software packages may compromise confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy; and the potential loss of connectivity may occur during interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013). At times, I had to postpone the interviews as some participants indicated they wanted to study for tests or had assignments due to be submitted. I had to find suitable times when my participants were not busy. The in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted for 1 hour and 30 minutes to get in-depth information from the participants. The other challenge during the Zoom interviews was that I forgot to press record the interview with a local student for about an hour. However, we had to reschedule the interview for another day. To this end, I made sure that after every interview, I wrote down the striking theme and the concepts the participants used, and this method helped me with my data analysis.

#### **4.6.2 Interview guides**

According to Ellis (2016), with semi-structured interviews, you enter interviews with a firm overview of the relevant literature and have prepared numerous open questions. For this study, an interview guide with predetermined questions was used to guide the researcher in conducting the semi-structured interviews. I had to maintain flexibility regarding follow-up questions and the questions' sequence. In line with this point, Nieuwenhuis (2020) suggests that it is essential to maintain a careful balance between giving enough flexibility in an interview to thoroughly explore a topic and obtain answers to set questions while avoiding being distracted by irrelevant details that do not help address the research questions.

Roestenburg et al. (2021) state that each study is unique; therefore, the detail required in an interview guide will be determined by several aspects: (i) your expertise in the sense that a more seasoned researcher may require less detail in an interview guide because you may have mastered the art of probing for detailed and in-depth descriptions; and (ii) the research purpose and the research questions guide you in the topics and issues to be explored as well as the What? How? and Why? Questions to be posed.

For this study, the interview guides were essential tools that helped structure and guide interviews with local and African international students at UKZN. The interview guide helped the researcher maintain consistency across interviews, and I ensured that relevant information was gathered about the research topic. By outlining specific questions or issues related to local and African international students' perspectives on xenophobia, the interview guide helped me to clarify the research objectives; for example, I asked the African international students this research question as outlined in Chapter 1: *What are your personal views and experiences of xenophobia off and on campus?* On the other hand, I asked local students the question: *What ways do you think African international students experience xenophobia off and on campus?* These questions ensured that the interviews were focused and aligned with the overall research objectives of this study. For this study, the interview guide served as a roadmap for the interviewer, helping me keep the conversation focused and engaging. This is particularly important when discussing sensitive topics like xenophobia, as it helps build rapport and trust with participants.

#### **4.6.3 Transcription of interviews**

Roostenburg (2021) states that qualitative researchers generally agree that data generated from interviews should ideally be analysed using transcriptions, not raw audio or video material. Transcriptions, although time-consuming, should ideally be done as soon as possible after each interview. If you transcribe yourself, you can become more familiar with the data set simultaneously (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) further state that should the services of a transcriber be used; it is essential to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. This process promotes authenticity and ensures accuracy. It could also be used to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the data analysis process. I utilised the Zoom transcription for this study, and cleaning up the Zoom transcriptions was not easy. The Zoom transcription was very exhausting and time-consuming for the researcher, and I made sure that I tried to clean up the transcription after every interview. The other challenge with the Zoom transcription is that it did not capture my participants' specific sentences and phrases. In addition, some of the local participants explained specific phrases in IsiZulu that the Zoom transcription could not capture. I had to go back to the Zoom audio and try to understand what the participants were referring to.

However, since I cleaned up the Zoom transcriptions myself, this was an advantage because I became more familiar with the data, I collected from my 33 participants.

#### **4.7 Data Saturation**

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), although some authors provide guidelines for the desired number of individual or group interviews to be conducted in research, the truth is that the data and not the researcher determine the number of interviews. Braun and Clarke (2013) further state that, irrespective of the type of interview implemented, you need to ensure data saturation is achieved as a qualitative researcher. In other words, you should continue with data collection until the point is reached where no new information is generated and where participants' responses become confirmations or repetitions of what has already been established. I initially planned to interview 30 participants for this study, but I continued with the data collection until I had 33 participants. I conducted the Zoom interviews until they reached a point where no new information was generated, and participants' responses became confirmations or repetitive of what had already been established.

According to research experts on qualitative research, Adler and Adler (2011:5), “it is impossible to specify the number of qualitative interviews necessary to complete a project at its inception.” This is a problem, particularly when most project proposals require researchers to state a number. Thus, while many experts agree that saturation is ideal, some give numerical guidance. For example, Adler and Adler (2011) advise graduate students to sample between 12 and 60, with 30 being the mean. This study has chosen a sample size of 34 based on the ideas of Alder and Alder (2011:8), who argue that “30 is the medium size subject pool which offers the advantage of penetrating beyond a tiny number of people without imposing the hardship of endless data gathering, especially when researchers are faced with time constraints.” They state that this is a good round number, particularly if interviews are supplemented with participant observation and narratives such as the xenophobia narratives provided by the African international students and Local students at UKZN.

#### **4.8 Target Population**

According to the 2020 UKZN African international students Office database, there are 2088 African international students at UKZN. Howard College Campus had the highest number of African international students, with 583 students, while Pietermaritzburg Campus was in second place with 569 students. At the PMB campus in 2020, there were 204 female and 365 male African international students. Of 569 African international students at the PMB campus, 543 were foreign African Students, and 26 were from outside the African continent, for example, North America, Asia, and Europe. The target population for this study is African international students from different African countries, from undergraduate to postgraduate levels of study, from three leading colleges at UKZN (PMB Campus): the College of Law and Management, the College of Science and Agriculture, and the College of Humanities. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this study's target population or sample size is 33 participants, 17 African international students 16 Local students, and one representative of the International Office.

For African international students, the study selected 3 Undergraduate participants, 3 Master's students, and 11 PhD students from different Colleges. To have a balanced view and avoid any bias in the study, the study also includes interview questions of 16 local students at UKZN to discover their opinions and perspectives about African international students' experiences of xenophobia at the University and South Africa. For local students, the researcher selected four undergraduate students, 5 Masters Students, and 8 PhD students. The reason for choosing this specific target audience at the PMB campus is that there are more postgraduate students than undergraduate students for African international students. The decision to include more experienced PhD participants in this study was made after considering various factors. For example, many of these students primarily expressed that they had completed their undergraduate studies at UKZN and resided in South Africa for an extended duration. Being exposed to the country's socio-political context for a lengthy period, including the complexities of xenophobia, gave them a deeper and more detailed understanding of the pertinent topics. Due to their extended stay and academic pursuits in South Africa, they provided a more thorough and informed understanding of the difficulties and encounters associated with xenophobia. However, due to their limited duration in the country and having had fewer opportunities to engage with these issues at a mature academic level, they did not have the same depth of insight on xenophobia issues in SA.

In addition, the decision to focus on the experiences of African international at UKZN (PMB campus) stems from UKZN's status as a significant hub for African international students, drawing a diverse population due to its strong academic reputation and high-quality education. Moreover, it is crucial to note that KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has experienced a notable number of xenophobic incidents, particularly in 2015 and 2019, making it an essential area of study for comprehending the dynamics of xenophobia in South Africa. By focusing on UKZN, this research enables an in-depth examination of the experiences of African international students in a region affected by xenophobic tensions.

The study focused on African international students because they are primarily soft targets of xenophobic attacks as compared to foreign nationals from outside Africa (Europe or America), and there is a vast number of reports on black foreign nationals who have been victims of xenophobic attacks more than foreign nationals from outside the African continent. To support this view, scholars such as Dube (2018), Waiganjo (2017), and Mundenga (2015) argue that the xenophobic attacks in South Africa are more afrophobic than xenophobic. Godwin Dube (2018:1) argues that “the term ‘Afrophobia,’ implying fear of the African, has come to mean the hatred of the African other, and is increasingly being used in the literature and popular media to describe the negative attitudes of black South Africans towards black African immigrants.” These negative attitudes towards other Africans are in contrast to the more positive attitudes towards white immigrants from Europe and America. While the research site is UKZN, this study also explored their off-campus experiences. The study also interviewed a representative from the international office since she deals specifically with the issues of African international students. A representative from the international office is critical to African international students as they are mandated to assist students in everything they need while studying at a foreign institution. Chan (2004) sets out some functions of the international office, which include international student recruitment and being the first point of contact for individuals and external organisations interested in international education and international student welfare and support, including services on multi-campus universities (if these are not closely associated with the international office, students can have difficulties with accessing services and the international office loses the critical feedback mechanism gained by close interaction with the students).

## **4.9 Sampling methods of this study**

According to Showkat and Parveen (2017), sampling is the method of selecting a representative subset of the population called a sample, making research more accurate and economical. They argue that “it is the sampling method which determines the generalisability of the research findings” (Showkat and Parveen, 2017:3). This study uses non-probability and snowball sampling methods. Non-probability sampling technique uses non-randomized methods to draw the sample. Showkat and Parveen (2017) state that the non-probability sampling method mainly involves judgment instead of randomization; participants are selected because they are easy to access. They further argue that even though, in some instances, non-probability sampling is a valuable and convenient method of selecting a sample, the method is appropriate and the only method available in some cases. They highlight that a significant shortcoming of non-probability sampling is that the findings established through this method lack generalisability (Showkat and Parveen, 2017). The study employs non-probability sampling methods such as convenience, purposive, and snowball, which are explained below. For this study, the non-probability method is helpful because one can examine the phenomena of xenophobia with the potential to generate valuable insights. The non-probability sample is used to study existing theoretical insights or develop new ones. This sampling method is considered less expensive, less complicated, and easier to apply than its counterpart. Marshall (1995) asserts that a non-probability sample is suitable for qualitative research because it aims at a deeper understanding of complex human issues rather than generalizing results.

### **4.9.1 Convenience Sampling**

According to Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, and McKibbin (2015), convenience sampling is a technique of recruiting volunteer participants who are willing and available to participate in the study. Gentles et al. (2015) further argued that convenience sampling relies not only on the availability of participants and their willingness to participate but also the cases should mirror the characteristics of the population being studied. The convenience sample is sometimes called an accidental or available (Babbie, 2007). This sampling category relies on available subjects- those close at hand or easily accessible. For example, it used to be standard for college and university professors to use their students as subjects in their research projects (Gilligan, 1982). For this study, convenience sampling helped recruit international and local students who were easily



accessible and readily available to me. For example, as a lecturer for BSS4 Political Science, I was able to use my class list for undergraduates and ask those who were available to participate in my study via Zoom. African international students were accessible and available to recruit through the WhatsApp group for African international students, which the president of African international students created. I contacted the African international students via their private WhatsApp numbers and introduced myself and my topic. Those who were willing to participate were added to my list of participants.

However, the convenience sampling technique inherently possesses various limitations. Golzar, Noor and Tajik (2022) state that convenience sampling can introduce biases and systematic errors. Specifically, Golzar et al (2022:74) explain that “convenience samples were contaminated by bias from non-coverage and self-selection. If empirical studies utilize non-probability convenience samples despite succeeding in evading non-coverage and gaining a sampling frame including a random pool of subjects, the researchers most often cannot discharge self-selection since people decide at will whether they fill up the survey or participate in the interview.” Additionally, Alvi (2016) argues that target population categories can be divided into an unlimited number of subcategories that differ significantly from one another, making it difficult for one subgroup to be representative of the whole population. Furthermore, Golzar et al (2022) highlight that while participant variability in a convenience sample can be controlled or measured, researchers studying familiar populations may be tempted to overgeneralize their findings. Thus, to mitigate these limitations, efforts were made to enhance sample diversity by reaching out to students from different academic backgrounds and year levels within the available networks. While recruitment was primarily done through the undergraduate class list and the African international students’ WhatsApp group, students from different disciplines and experiences were encouraged to participate.

#### **4.9.2 Purposive Sampling**

Some authors also call this technique judgmental sampling (Rubin and Babbie, 2017). This sampling is based entirely on your judgment as a researcher in that a sample contains the population's most typical attributes (Adler and Clark, 2008). For Rubin and Babbie (2017), the

judgment of the individual researcher is too prominent a factor in this type of sample. In purposive sampling, a particular case is chosen because it illustrates a specific feature or process that interests an individual study. There must be a justified reason why such a case is selected. Gray (2014) refers to this kind of sampling as typical case sampling, where typical cases are sought and selected for the study. Mertens and Wilson (2012) call this kind of sample purposeful, focusing on the specifics of an individual or case.

This study's participants were purposefully recruited based on their registration at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the Pietermaritzburg campus. For the analysis, I used my judgment to select local and African international students I knew, such as fellow postgraduate students and my colleagues. I chose this group of participants because they would give me relevant and valuable information based on the subject matter. The study's emphasis on foreign African students from various countries, rather than on students from a single nationality, was crucial to exploring experiences of xenophobia across diverse ethnic and national backgrounds. Such an extended approach will enhance our understanding of how xenophobia impacts differently on students from various African countries. Secondly, most postgraduate students were selected because the university has more African international students at the PG level than at the undergraduate level.

#### **4.9.3 Snowball Sampling**

Rubin and Babbie (2017) state that snowballing involves approaching a single participant or case that can provide rich data about the phenomenon being investigated. This person refers you to others with similar experiences and, where possible, preferably more than one other respondent or case (Grinnell and Unrau, 2014). One should select participants until nobody else with those specific characteristics can be found or until data saturation (Sarantakos, 2013). Snowball sampling is also called chain referral sampling; the sample is collected in various stages (Showkat and Parveen, 2017). According to Showkat and Parveen (2017:3), “snowball sampling begins by the collection of data from one or more contacts usually known to the person collecting the data.” Snowball sampling was helpful in this study because at the end of the data collection process (through interviews), I could ask both local and African international students to refer me to other students who would want to participate in my study. These potential respondents were contacted, interviewed, and asked to provide more contacts. This process goes on till the purpose of the

researcher is achieved.

According to De Vos et al. (2002), Snowballing involves approaching a single case involved in the phenomenon to be investigated to gain information on similar persons. According to Muthuki (2010:56), the snowball method is helpful for studies “involving social networks and is therefore effective for people who are likely to be in contact with one another.” This study uses snowball sampling by encouraging participants to identify others willing to participate in the survey. Social networking platforms were used to get participants to come for interviews; for example, WhatsApp was used to locate and identify participants. These participants were contacted directly (not on the group chat) for individual interviews. The platform was not used to discuss the research topic but rather to identify people to come for the online interviews. The WhatsApp group has been created mainly to share pertinent information for African international students, such as scholarships and university events.

However, the snowball sampling technique also has its limitations. Parker, Scott and Geddes (2019:4) notes that "as a network-based convenience form of sampling, it may be viewed negatively for not producing samples that meet the criteria of random samples in the statistical sense. Moreover, the basis for establishing the representativeness of samples may also be questioned." A key issue with snowball sampling is its reliance on a referral process, which can introduce selection bias. Parker et al (2019) further state that the sample may become skewed toward a particular demographic, such as being predominantly female or from the same ethnic background. Additionally, initial participants must be aware of others who fit the research criteria, but their choices are often influenced by their perception of who will be willing and cooperative (Parker et al, 2019). Chaim Noy (2008) highlights that women may be overrepresented in snowball sampling not only due to their higher likelihood of cooperation but also because they may feel social or authoritative pressure to provide referrals.

To mitigate the potential biases inherent in snowball sampling, efforts were made to recruit a balanced and diverse sample of African international students, particularly in terms of gender representation. While snowball sampling can sometimes result in samples that are skewed toward one demographic, the gender balance in this study was relatively well-maintained, with 8 male and

9 female participants. This balance was crucial for minimizing any gender-related biases in the findings and ensuring that the perspectives of both male and female African international students were adequately represented. One strategy used to mitigate gender bias was directly encouraging participants to refer individuals of both genders. After each interview, I specifically asked participants to consider referring both male and female peers from their social and academic networks who might be willing to participate in the study. This approach helped to broaden the pool of potential participants. Thus, by making a clear request for gender diversity and different academic backgrounds (e.g. CHUM, CAES, CLM) in referrals, I aimed to avoid the scenario where the sample might become predominantly one gender, as is often the case in snowball sampling when referrals are made based on existing social networks.

#### **4.10 Data analysis**

The data analysis phase of the research is where the researcher attempts to bring order and meaning to the data collected (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The process involves transforming the raw interview data into what Rubin and Rubin (2005:201) call “evidence-based interpretation.” The analysis entails the search for recurring statements and underlining themes. Each theme is represented by extracts that provide the richest and most in-depth description. According to Roestenburg et al. (2021), The approach to data analysis in qualitative research is twofold: the first involves preliminary data analysis during data collection, and the second involves intensive data analysis. This approach assisted the researcher in dealing with the sheer amount of data created in interview transcripts through collected data, including Zoom audio recordings. Roestenburg et al. (2021) further argue that since researchers can only convey their understanding of their data to their readers by interlinking them with their presentation, writing has now more than ever become an integral part of interpretation and analysis. Thus, according to Roestenburg et al. (2021), one way to make the text understandable to the reader is to include yourself and your perspectives as a researcher in your report writing. Consequently, the text is no longer written in the third and past tenses but increasingly in the first and present person. In this way, you become a character in your narrative. This study uses thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is an intuitive approach to qualitative data analysis that permits researchers to discover patterns across their data. This study uses thematic analysis, which involves identifying and understanding critical themes in the data and how they relate to one another. For this study, themes are overarching categories of

standard information about a research phenomenon of xenophobia, which tells a story about its dimensions.

#### **4.10.1 Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This study adopts a thematic analysis, where the data collected was organised according to emerging themes based on the research questions and objectives. For this study, the themes derived from the data actively construct the patterns of meaning to answer a research question. In short, themes are ‘a patterned response or meaning’ derived from coded data representing overarching ideas embedded within the more extensive data set (Braun and Clarke, 2013). As a result, thematic analysis is an effective qualitative research method for describing data that also involves the researcher's interpretation of the selected codes and construct themes.

The three main goals of thematic analysis are:

- To identify essential themes from the data.
- To understand how themes relate to one another and how they are manifested in the data.
- To use themes to generate new insights about a particular phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is a helpful way to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set. Additionally, due to the straightforward, easy-to-follow processes outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), researchers have suggested that thematic analysis is an ideal analytical method for novice qualitative researchers (Nowell et al., 2017). Roestenburg et al. (2021) state that qualitative research follows a thematic approach to analysis and interpretation to understand the meaning of the innermost experiences of the other. However, Roestenburg et al. (2021) argue that until the publication of Braun and Clarke's (2013) Thematic Analysis (TA) approach, this has not been explicated clearly. Roestenburg et al. (2021:403) further state, "Thematic analysis as an interpretative approach has recently gained recognition and is fast becoming one of the most commonly used approaches in various qualitative research strategies." Broadly described as

identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a data set about the research question, thematic analysis is not within a particular theoretical framework. Regardless of your research philosophy or strategy, it can be used as a qualitative researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2013). As such, thematic analysis is considered a foundational method for analysis that underlines core skills for conducting many forms of qualitative analysis (Nowell et al., 2017: 2). Thematic analysis is also used in the first phases of grounded theory, which remains the most popular strategy for analysing and interpreting qualitative data (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke and Townsend, 2010). As a versatile and flexible method, thematic analysis can be used for both inductive coding (from the bottom up) and deductive coding (from the top down) to reach a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Nowell Norris, White, and Moules, 2017). However, one of its most essential drawbacks lies in its flexibility, which could lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence in developing themes (Nowell et al., 2017).

Roestenburg et al. (2021) state that data from multiple sources are united in the meaning-making process when using thematic analysis. Themes are derived from a systematic, rigorous, analytic coding process rather than pre-existing codes and can be described as an iterative and interpretative method that encourages engagement and reflection. Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, and Braun (2017) state that themes provide a framework for organising and reporting your analytic observations. Thematic analysis strives to reduce the data content to manageable pieces by breaking it up and reconstructing it in a new way. Themes are generated from an iterative and interpretative analytic coding process, encouraging reflection on the one side and rigor on the other. The aim is to unravel and describe participants' perspectives by identifying, analysing, and portraying themes or patterns found in the data (Terry et al., 2017).

For this research, the thematic coding process begins when the researcher familiarises herself with the data and generates an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about the ideas. The analysis of the data began with the transcription of the Zoom recordings from within one year. It involved the production of initial codes from the data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) postulated that “coding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking.” Codes identify a feature of the data that appears attractive to the analyst and refer to “the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the

phenomenon.” Besides, Braun and Clarke (2006) allude to the fact that the coding process forms the basis of analysis as one will organise one's data into meaningful groups. The main themes were identified after perusing the transcribed data word by word and, at the same time, using the University's facilitated codification software, NVivo, a program for qualitative data analysis.

The researcher also used manual thematic coding, which Braun and Clarke (2006:) state that if coding manually, you can code your data by writing notes on the texts you are analysing, by using a highlighter or coloured pen to indicate potential patterns, or by using 'post-it' notes to identify a segment of data. The researcher uses highlighters to identify emerging patterns or themes. This entails “working systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item and identifying interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:18). The researcher also tries to code sentences and phrases as is supported by Blanche and Durrheim (1999:143) who assert that “you might code a phrase, a line, a sentence, a paragraph, identifying these ‘textual bits’ by their containing material that pertains to the themes under consideration.” In coding, the body of data will be broken down into labelled relevant pieces to cluster the ‘bits’ of coded material under the code heading and further analyse them both as a cluster and with other clusters (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2006:143).

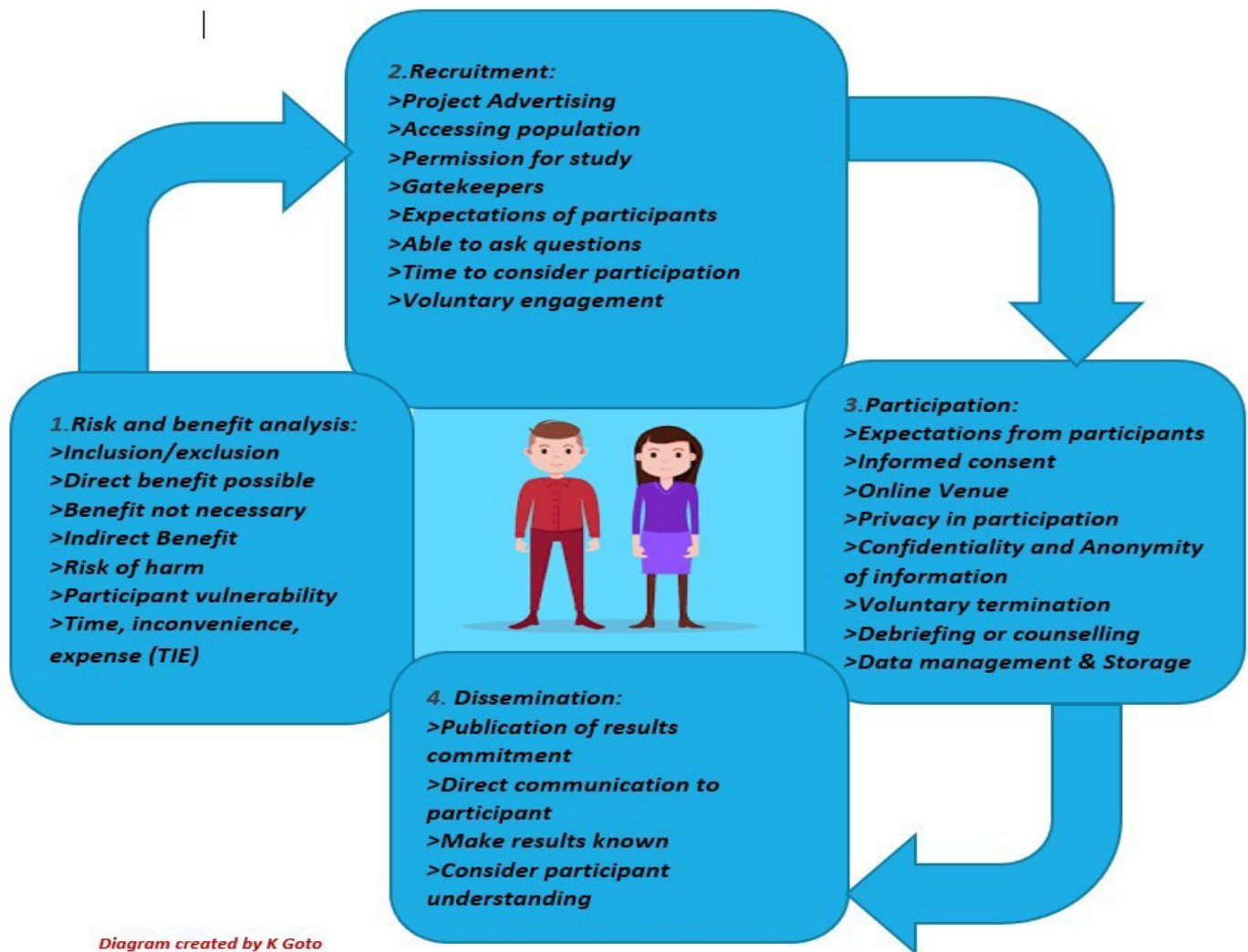
#### **4.11 Ethical Considerations**

According to Roestenburg et al. (2021), research involving human participants, although having a long history, has not always considered the interests of the subjects it intended to investigate ethically. For this reason, they argue that in 1964, the World Medical Association (WMA) formulated the Declaration of Helsinki, which outlines ethical principles for research on human participants, including human material and data (Strydom, 2021). Strydom (2021:117) further asserts that “after several revisions, the current version of the declaration can be described as a modern, state-of-the-art ethical guideline that has had a significant impact on how research is conducted worldwide.” Although the original declaration categorically targeted science researchers and the medical profession, its principles apply equally to social science researchers adopting its ethical principles (Strydom, 2021).

In addition, May (2011) states that ethical research practices in the human services professions, such as psychology and social work, are supported by ethical practice codes that endorse the principle of protection and good practice towards clients. For this research, the researcher aimed to promote sound ethical practice with human well-being as its primary interest. According to May (2011), one should support the notion that the research process should always be based on mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, promises, and well-accepted conventions and expectations between all parties involved in the research projects. Similarly, Babbie (2007) states that “ethical dilemmas in social science research are, however, not always obvious, and researchers often plunge into research without considering possible ethical issues that may already be apparent to others.” Strydom and Roestenburg (2021) assert that ethical issues in social science research are pervasive and complex, related to human interaction and behaviour that is prone to be risky and unpredictable. Thus, the importance of appropriately managing risk and protecting human participants is increasingly recognised in both social and health fields (Strydom, 2021). This study adopts the *Four Quadrants of Research Ethics* framework by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021), a critical ethical consideration for this research project. This framework aims to facilitate the research project management efforts and provides a checklist for sound ethical activities in this research.

According to Strydom (2021), the right of social scientists to study whatever they deem to be of scientific interest is fundamental in a free society and should be promoted. This right implies weighing up the interests of the research participant against the researcher's interests. According to Punch (2014), Social science researchers must be alert to the constraints around their research and the ethical implications of any decisions they make. There is a set of principles that have to be followed when conducting research. Strydom (2021) states that the research Ethics Committee's scrutiny of and feedback about proposed research practices assist greatly in validating proposed research processes and activities that involve other human beings. This study was conducted per professional ethical codes for social science research and the framework policy for ensuring and promoting ethically accountable research at KwaZulu-Natal University. For this study, ethical clearance (see Appendix VI) was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) as part of the protocol required before conducting any interviews.





based on the Four Quadrants of Research Ethics by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:131).

**Figure 4.2: The Four Quadrants of Research Ethics: Source: Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:131)**

The author created the above diagram [Figure 4.2] based on the Four-Quadrant of Research Ethics diagram by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021:131). The diagram highlights the four vital ethical considerations, each with several aspects considered in this study for planning and executing the research project. The four critical areas for consideration start with a risk and benefit analysis, followed by recruitment planning, participation, and the aftermath of dissemination. The four quadrants are interrelated as decisions in that one area influence decisions in the following area. For this study, the aspects in each quadrant were conceptualised, and they represented a useful. The checklist that ensures good ethical research practice. Strydom and Roestenburg (2021) regard this as a participant-centred ethics strategy” because it keeps the participant central to the ethics procedures in research.

Strydom et al. (2021) state that one should describe how ethics will be addressed during research. For Strydom (2021), just writing about ethical principles in a research proposal is insufficient, as it merely shows you have thought about ethics. Strydom et al. (2021) further argue that what is required is an adequate description of *how* one intends to *apply* ethics to a study. For example, what will be done to protect participants during the research must also be adequately described. As part of the informed consent procedure, the researcher explained to the participants via the Zoom meeting that Their views on this interview would be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in the study. Before the interviews, I informed the participants that I would record the information via Zoom, and they filled out the informed consent before the interview and emailed it back to me. I also told my 33 participants that their participation was entirely voluntary. You can choose to participate, not to participate, or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action. Thus, the participants could participate without being forced to; the entire process was voluntary, and I wanted my participants to express their views and experiences without coercion.

#### **4.11.1 Risk and Benefit Analysis**

Quadrant 1 of the above diagram *concerns a risk and benefit analysis*. According to Strydom (2021), this is where the interests and protection of participants are considered. For Strydom et al. (2021), you should start by thinking about the characteristics of the research population and the sample that will be selected. He further states that you should also consider who will be included or excluded from the research (Strydom, 2021). In assessing inclusion and exclusion, Strydom (2021:119) suggests that:

*You should apply the principle of fairness by asking if it is fair to exclude some and include others, what risks are involved for prospective participants, who should participate, and what the implications are if a particular group is excluded. Could their health or psychosocial well-being be harmed in any way while participating in the study? Risks such as loss of social standing, potential exposure to labelling, and discrimination at work are all aspects for consideration. Risks increase if your research deals with particularly vulnerable or marginalized populations, such as offenders, victims of traumatic events, the elderly, HIV and AIDS patients, or clients in a service context. The burden of risk may also be transferred to you as the researcher, who may be held liable if participants are traumatized or harmed while participating.* (Strydom et al, 2021:119)

This study excluded international students from overseas because the goal was to investigate the

unique issues that black African foreign nationals experience in South Africa. The decision was influenced by the widespread belief that xenophobia in the country is more than just a broad hatred toward outsiders; it is frequently particularly afrophobic in nature. Black African foreign nationals are more likely to face overt prejudice, violence, and social isolation than their counterparts on other continents. This is due to a variety of variables, including physical appearance, cultural differences, and South Africa's socioeconomic background, in which black African foreigners are frequently viewed as direct competitors for employment and resources. The exclusion of students from other continents enables a more focused analysis of the experiences of individuals most vulnerable to xenophobic attitudes and behaviours, providing more significant insights into the specific dynamics of xenophobia in South Africa. This focused approach assures that the study may contribute substantially to the conversation on xenophobia by addressing the particular vulnerabilities of black African foreign nationals in South Africa.

In addition to Strydom's ethical considerations, the researcher recognized the sensitive nature of xenophobia, acknowledging that some participants may be susceptible to prejudice and may have endured trauma as a result. As a researcher, I explained the sensitive nature of the topic to my 33 participants, and the researcher took every precaution to ensure that participation in the research would not serve to endanger or jeopardize participants' safety or well-being in any way. For instance, I informed my participants that if any participant needed psychological intervention, I would provide them with information about the Student Support Services. This organisation employs professional psychologists who can assist students in adjusting to university life by providing confidential personal counselling, trauma counselling, and career guidance. We also referred the students to the Child and Family Centre, a psychological well-being centre on the University of KwaZulu-Natal premises. Despite explaining these services to my 33 participants, none of them required personal counselling or trauma counselling.

#### **4.12 Recruitment**

Quadrant 2 concerns participant recruitment. According to Strydom et al. (2021), advertising a project widely to attract participants is necessary to ensure voluntary participation, whether through flyers at a public library or in a waiting room, social media advertisements, or meeting handouts. To Strydom et al. (2021), as the researcher, you must ensure that the advertising

strategy reaches the target population, ensures fairness, and provides an equal opportunity to participate. For this research, I created a poster about my topic and sought voluntary participants for my study. I advertised the poster via the African international student's WhatsApp group, and some students were willing to participate. I also advertised the poster via their private WhatsApp profiles since xenophobia is a sensitive issue. Once a participant expressed an interest in participating, more information was provided via telephone, and a suitable date and time were scheduled for them to do the interview. Strydom et al. (2021) argue that this ensures that prospective participants know exactly what is expected of them. At certain times, data collection can be scheduled directly after these information sessions or when practical or feasible at other times.

Strydom et al. (2021) further argue that a participant information sheet and consent form that can be studied before data collection commences is standard practice. As such, it is essential to note that recruitment can take considerable time. He further advised that it is not accepted practice to control recruitment by subtly coercing people to participate or for the researcher to undertake biased sampling (Strydom et al., 2021). Thus, recruitment can only happen if the necessary permissions are obtained beforehand, and deciding whose consent is required depends on the context and the capacity in which people will participate. In line with the above views, I received the gatekeeper's letter titled: *Permission to Conduct Research* to conduct the study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal University Pietermaritzburg Campus from the Registrar's office (refer to Appendix IV). It was vital for me to get permission from the gatekeeper before conducting my research with Students and the representative from the International Office, and it was one of the most vital aspects of the ethical requirements. De Vos et al. (2002) state that it is essential to gain permission to enter the field that has been decided on, and it is of prime importance to get a study started. Thus, I got the gatekeeper's consent before commencing my study, and the letter reminded me to consider the COVID-19 regulations of social distancing; therefore, all my interviews were conducted via the Zoom online platform.

#### **4.12.1 Participation**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Quadrant focuses on *participation*. Strydom et al. (2021) state that this is the actual action of data collection and connection with participants; venues need to be comfortable, participants enjoy privacy while

participating, and there must be sufficient amenities. For this study, the informed consent was signed by the 33 participants before data collection commenced. Strydom et al. (2021) state that interviews should be conducted in separate rooms with doors that can be closed, and the venue should not be in a place where others can identify participants. This was applied in this study as I conducted my interviews in my study room at home and encouraged participants to find comfortable rooms with good internet connections. The emailed signed forms were saved in a password-protected folder on my laptop because they contain sensitive information. Strydom et al. (2021) also advised that you should also ensure that all stakeholders have signed an agreement to keep the information confidential and that electronic data should be stored on a password-protected computer for the duration of the study or if data is in hard-copy format in a locked cabinet with secure access. Strydom (2021) further argues that data should only be available to the research team or experts (such as statisticians), who must analyze the data and provide relevant reports. All paper-based questionnaires or interview notes must be safely stored, depending on institutional arrangements (Strydom et al., 2021). For this study, the confidentiality of participants was highly maintained, as stated in the informed consent form. Their names were substituted with pseudonyms (for example, respondent LSP and ISP, as noted in Chapter 5) to keep them concealed and anonymous. In line with Strydom's views, data collected was carefully stored and secured in password-protected e-files and will be retained for five years as per the UKZN policy; after that, it will be destroyed.

#### **4.12.2 Dissemination**

The fourth Quadrant of this study is dissemination. Strydom et al. (2021:120) argue that “apart from the responsibility to publish research findings in journals, you also have the responsibility to provide feedback to participants about their participation if they so wish.” Having them agree to this during the consent phase is a good idea. Usually, this implies formulating and distributing a layman's report in simple language that highlights crucial findings (Strydom et al., 2021). This step demonstrates care for and appreciation of someone's participation. Many host organizations require a full report to be distributed to participants, and it is advised to ensure that this happens (Strydom et al., 2021). Before participating in this study, participants were provided with informed consent with the understanding that they would be informed about the results. The participants were told that this study would be published at the University Library and via the Online library resources, allowing participants to access the research outcomes. For this study, dissemination of the research fulfils good ethical conduct by ensuring participants know the research outcomes to which they contributed. Thus, dissemination is a respectful way to acknowledge the time, effort, and contribution of participants, and it demonstrates that their perspectives were valued and that

their involvement had a meaningful impact on the research process. For the researcher, this promotes a sense of agency and recognition among the 33 participants.

#### 4.13 Enhancing the quality of qualitative research



**Figure 4.3: Enhancing the Quality of Qualitative Research**

Figure [4.3] above illustrates key concepts employed to augment the quality of qualitative research. This Figure explains crucial elements such as transferability, dependability, confirmability, credibility, authenticity, and peer debriefing. This study states that these concepts. They are different, but they are all linked in the above diagram as they all aim to enhance the quality of qualitative research. These conceptual components play an essential role in ensuring the credibility of research endeavours and serve as imperative measures for attaining the trustworthiness of this study. The information below shows how these concepts were applied or linked to this study.

##### 4.13.1 Transferability

Transferability refers to a state where the research findings can be applied to different scenarios (Shenton, 2004). Similarly, Roestenburg et al. (2021) state that the “transferability of research findings refers to the extent to which a study's findings can be applied in other contexts and studies.” They (2021) further state that as the alternative to external validity or generalisability in quantitative studies, in qualitative research, you ask whether the research findings can be transferred from one specific situation or case to another. They further add that transferability should not be confused with generalization, as it is against the nature of contextualized, qualitative studies to be generalized. The data findings on the nature of xenophobia in SA based on the views and experiences of international students can be transferred and applied to other universities worldwide. Transferability refers to the importance of building discipline, reflexivity, rigor, and reliability into the inquiry process to enable the study to be used in other settings (Tracy, 2013).

To ensure that transferability is achieved, the study provided a comprehensive methodology that can be used in other studies. The study described the research methods, sampling strategy, and data collection techniques that allow other researchers to replicate the study in different settings. The study achieved transferability by including students from various countries (4 Zimbabweans, 3 Kenyans, 2 Nigerians, 2 Congolese, 1 Ugandan, 1 Ethiopian, 1 Cameroonian, 1 Namibian, 1 Eswatini and 1 Mozambican) who have different cultural backgrounds and who are coming from various academic disciplines. The diversity and data findings from this research may have limited applicability to the broader experiences of African international students in other nations and universities. The study focused on African international students, emphasizing the distinct inhospitable conditions they face in South Africa. As a result of this emphasis, the experiences of these students may only partially reflect the difficulties encountered by African international students from other continents or those in various locations with unique social and cultural dynamics. This limitation emphasizes the importance of being careful when applying the findings to a broader group of overseas students.

#### **4.13.2 Dependability**

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018: 121), “dependability refers to the stability of findings

over time.” Roestenburg et al. (2021) state that dependability is an alternative to the reliability, where you attempt to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon under study and changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. Korstjens and Moser (2018:122) further state that “dependability involves participants’ evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study.” For Korstjens and Moser (2018), dependability includes the aspect of consistency; for example, one needs to check whether the analysis process is in line with the accepted standards for a particular design. This study has achieved dependability by providing a detailed research design that outlines the study's purpose, objectives, and methodology. The study described the procedures used for data collection, including interview procedures. The study achieved dependability by consistently implementing data collection procedures across all 33 participants. I have also documented how data was organized, stored, and analyzed to ensure the process is consistent and dependable.

#### **4.13.3 Confirmability**

Leavy (2018:5) states, “In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the importance of a self-critical attitude towards your preconceptions and the need for continuous reflexivity.” However, confirmability has become less of an issue since the traditional distance between the researcher and the researched has narrowed considerably over the past decades as the notion of involving the participant as a co-researcher in the research process became more prevalent (Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg and Monzó, 2018). Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that confirmability is the degree to which other researchers can confirm the study's findings. Confirmability is “concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination, but derived from the data (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

In line with the above views, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that confirmability concerns the characteristic of neutrality, and one needs to secure the inter-subjectivity of the data.” The interpretation should not be based on your preferences and viewpoints but should be grounded in the data. I achieved confirmability by using the process of critical reflexivity in which I reflected on my biases and assumptions. To avoid any bias in this study, I also included the views and



perspectives of local South African students on the issue of xenophobia in South Africa. I used a reflexive journal in which I wrote down my personal feelings and biases, which helped make this research not biased. In Chapter Two of this study, I also avoided bias by including the positive efforts by the South African government, civil organisations, and UKZN to combat xenophobia. I also made sure that my interviews were flexible and open. I allowed my participants to talk freely about their experiences by asking open-ended and no-leading questions.

#### **4.13.4 Credibility and Authenticity**

According to Roestenburg et al. (2021), credibility is the alternative to internal validity in quantitative research, in which the goal is to demonstrate that the study was conducted in such a manner that the study can match the research participants' views and the researcher's reconstruction and their representation of them. As Tracy (2013) states, the strength of a qualitative study in aiming to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group, or a pattern of interaction will be its credibility. On the other hand, Marvs Open Press (2020:1) states that "authenticity refers to the degree to which researchers capture the multiple perspectives and values of participants in their study and foster change across participants and systems during their analysis." Both credibility and authenticity contain principles that help a researcher measure the rigor with which the results were attained. Credibility and authenticity can be ensured by collecting rich data rather than superficial, low-quality data that offer little potential for analysis (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2018).

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Credibility establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views. The researcher achieved credibility and authenticity for this study by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the findings. I also prioritized participants' views and voices by allowing them to express their experiences in their own words authentically. I used direct quotes and narratives to capture the credibility and authenticity of their views, ensuring that their voices were not distorted or misrepresented. This enhanced the depth of the study, and it increased the credibility of the reported findings in Chapter Five. I also achieved credibility and authenticity by creating a trusting and respectful relationship with my 33 participants. I communicated thoroughly and openly to ensure that participants

felt the same way. Comfortable sharing their views and experiences and approached my participants with cultural sensitivity by understanding and respecting the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of both local and African international students.

#### **4.13.5 Peer Debriefing**

Peer debriefing is another essential strategy to enhance rigor in qualitative studies. This involves using an interpretative session where peers can be a sounding board for new ideas, insights, and hunches gained during the research process. This is an ideal opportunity to refine and discuss the research (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2008). Peer debriefing can also include using peers as external coders to check whether findings are consistent. Peer debriefing allows inquirers to test their insights and expose themselves to searching questions (Anney, 2014). The researcher presented the study in the form of a colloquium where there were colleagues, peers, and academics. Further, the audience was welcome to give feedback on the survey.

For example, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, in 2022, I presented my PhD thesis at a conference in Durban titled South African Association of Political Studies (SAAPS) KZN Regional Colloquium, and the theme of the meeting was Building Sustainable Political and Environmental *landscape in Africa*. Presenting my thesis at this conference helped me to discuss my research with others, and they provided valuable insights and helped me identify any blind spots or biases that I might have overlooked. For instance, one of the panel members encouraged me not only to look at literature that speaks negatively about xenophobia but also to look at the positive efforts done by the South African government, civil society as well and UKZN in trying to fight against xenophobia (as outlined in Chapter 2.15). The research proposal was also reviewed by an internal reviewer who then gave comments and feedback on what was to be changed. The researcher then made corrections based on the audience's comments and suggestions. Feedback from peers assists the researcher in improving the quality of the inquiry's findings (Anney, 2014). In addition, the researcher was consistently under the guidance of a supervisor who provided scholarly advice throughout the research process.

#### **4.14 Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation of this study is that it only examines the issue of xenophobia based on the perspectives and experiences of African international students at the University of KwaZulu Natal (PMB Campus). The research could have been more solid if, for example, it had covered the other 5 campuses of UKZN: Howard College, Medical School, Edgewood, and Westville Campus. However, previous studies have examined the experiences of xenophobia among African international students at campuses like Howard College and Westville, there has been a significant gap in the literature regarding the experiences of students at the Pietermaritzburg campus, which this study aimed to address. Therefore, while this study provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of African international students on the PMB campus, however, one can not generalize these findings across all 5 campuses at UKZN. The other area for improvement of the study is that it only focused on African international students instead of looking at the views and experiences of African international students from different continents, such as Europe, America, and Asia. This decision not to include African international students from other continents was based on the assumption that the nature of xenophobia in South Africa is more afrophobic than xenophobic since black African foreign nationals are more at risk of xenophobia than foreigners coming from Europe or Asia.

The COVID-19 restriction of social distancing was also a limitation for this study since I had to do all my interviews via Zoom. It would have been fruitful to conduct face-to-face interviews to gather and capture the real emotions and expressions of my 33 participants. The study would have been enhanced further if the researcher had compared the views and experiences of African international students at other universities in South Africa. The other limitation of the study was encountered while conducting interviews with students via Zoom; sometimes, I would set up a meeting and remind the participants about the interview, but they would not attend the interview. Some of the technical limitations had to do with Zoom. For example, I initially struggled to set up the recording option on Zoom to allow it to save recordings on the cloud. I had to buy online transcription software for interviews that failed to be transcribed via Zoom.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a comprehensive examination of the research methodology used in

this study. This chapter elucidated the research philosophy and paradigm, explaining the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this research. The study adopted the Interpretative and Constructionist paradigm, which identifies the complex process by which individuals construct their reality and knowledge through subjective interpretations, underscoring the social construction of knowledge. This study has also explained critical reflexivity by shedding light on the researcher's self-reflection and explaining the insider and outsider positionality, which is essential for the study. The chapter highlighted the chosen data collection plan, shown in Figure [4.6.1], which includes the strategic use of semi-structured interviews, interview guides, and the Zoom transcription process.

Furthermore, the chapter expounded on the details of the target population and the sampling methods employed for this study, which include convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowballing, thus allowing for the thoroughly expanded use of each technique. The ethical considerations of this study have been addressed concerning the Four Quadrants of Research Ethics by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021), ensuring the trustworthiness of the research process. The chapter concludes by providing a diagram [in section 4.10.1] that shows how the study enhances and ensures trustworthiness by achieving transferability, dependability, confirmability, credibility, and peer debriefing. Lastly, the chapter outlines the limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research findings from the study, focusing on the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 33 participants. In line with Leedy and Ormrod (1980), this section is crucial as it involves the presentation of findings, including the processing, analysis, and interpretation of data through figures, tables, and selected participant quotes that address the research questions and objectives. Thus, this section should clearly demonstrate a systematic process, allowing others to follow the logic and replicate the study. The goal is to convey the data's competent analysis and what has been discovered, following Boeijie's (2010) assertion that the results section should reveal what was found in the study, distinguishing between the analytical activities and the findings.

Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that the research findings section should begin with an overview of the results, which can be presented as a summary table, model, or figure. This study aligns with their guidance by providing a sub-section for each key theme and analytic pattern, presenting the research findings through thematic analysis in both chapters 5 and 6. The thematic analysis approach enables a comprehensive examination of the participants' experiences and offers a detailed exploration of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. As Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest, the results section begins with a brief description of each theme, showing its application to each participant in the sample. The findings are linked to broader theoretical frameworks and the study's objectives. The analysis involved labelling participants to preserve anonymity, with African international student participants coded as (AISP) and local student participants as (LSP), alongside a representative from the international office labelled as (RIS17).

The chapter begins by exploring why African international students choose to study at UKZN, offering insights into the factors that influence their decision-making. It then contextualises the term xenophobia, breaking it down into sub-themes such as fear, discrimination, hatred, prejudice, and misconception to capture the complex attitudes and emotions involved. A critical examination follows of the xenophobic challenges faced by African international students at UKZN, including

issues like limited scholarships, negative university policies, and blackophobia (black-on-black hatred). The discussion extends to the language barrier, with sub-themes addressing issues in lecture theatres and broader educational settings.

This chapter also explores xenophobic experiences on campus, including conflicts over accommodation and verbal harassment, contrasted with experiences off-campus, such as challenges in public transport and healthcare services. The chapter also examines the emotions evoked by xenophobic acts, such as frustration, disappointment, distrust, and anger. The causes of xenophobia, both on and off campus, are analysed through lenses such as the legacy of apartheid, competition for resources, and the influence of media and political rhetoric. Finally, the impact of xenophobia on African international students is assessed, focusing on academic performance, employment opportunities, and social isolation. The chapter concludes by addressing the factors that have hindered and facilitated adjustment to university life for African international students. This includes challenges such as language barriers, culture shock, financial difficulties, and supportive elements like social groups, quality lecturers, and family support.

## 5.2 Demographics

The first section shows the participants' demographics, including their gender, age, qualifications, nationality, college and faculty for African international students, and the year in which they came to South Africa.

**Table 5.2.1: Demographics of African International Students Participants**

| Name   | Gender | Age | Degree  | Nationality | Which Year did You come to SA? | Which College are you based? |
|--------|--------|-----|---------|-------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| AISP 1 | Male   | 39  | PhD     | Uganda      | 2007                           | CHUM                         |
| AISP 2 | Male   | 40  | PhD     | DRC         | 2006                           | CHUM                         |
| AISP 3 | Male   | 39  | Masters | DRC         | 2012                           | CHUM                         |
| AISP 4 | Female | 50  | PhD     | Zimbabwe    | (Former HC Student) 2002       | CHUM                         |
| AISP 5 | Female | 39  | PhD     | Zimbabwe    | 2014                           | CAES                         |
| AISP 6 | Male   | 27  | PhD     | Zimbabwe    | (Former HC Student) 2012       | CHUM                         |



|         |        |    |                     |            |      |      |
|---------|--------|----|---------------------|------------|------|------|
| AISP 7  | Male   | 31 | BA                  | Zimbabwe   | 2020 | CHUM |
| AISP 8  | Male   | 40 | Masters             | Kenya      | 2002 | CHUM |
| AISP9   | Female | 35 | PhD                 | Kenya      | 2013 | CLM  |
| AISP 10 | Female | 28 | PhD                 | Kenya      | 2019 | CAES |
| AISP 11 | Female | 42 | PHD                 | Cameroon   | 2009 | CHUM |
| AISP 12 | Male   | 22 | Bachelor of Science | Namibia    | 2020 | CAES |
| AISP 13 | Female | 40 | PhD                 | Nigeria    | 2015 | CHUM |
| AISP 14 | Female | 53 | PhD                 | Nigeria    | 2007 | CAES |
| AISP 15 | Male   | 26 | Masters             | Mozambique | 2015 | CLM  |
| AISP 16 | Female | 23 | BA                  | Swaziland  | 2020 | CAE  |
| AISP 17 | Female | 38 | PhD                 | Ethiopia   | 2011 | CHUM |

Table 5.1 shows that there were 8 males and 9 females. 11 are enrolled for PhD while only 3 are doing their masters and bachelors. Hence, most participants are experienced and have much to say regarding the study. Three participants were under the age range of 22-28 years, while the rest were mature students with an age range of 30-53 years old. The table also shows 2 participants from Zimbabwe who were former Howard College (HC) Students who transferred to the Pietermaritzburg Campus (PMB), thus most of their views and perspectives about xenophobia were more in HC than in the UKZN PMB campus. In addition, most of the participants have been in South Africa for more than 5 years, and only 2 participants came in 2020, which means that most of them have either experienced or witnessed xenophobia. Most of the participants are from Zimbabwe, followed by those from Kenya, DRC, and Nigeria, and only 1 each from Cameroon, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, and Ethiopia, which clearly shows that UKZN is a preferred university by people from various countries. It is worth noting that participant AISP12 was the only white African International Student coming from Namibia. The above table also shows that most participants were recruited from the College of Humanities (10 participants), 5 participants each from the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science, and 2 participants from the College of

Law and Management. It is essential to note that these three colleges are the only ones available at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This selection was made to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives across different fields of study at the PMB campus, although this representation is not a representation of the entire university. The College of Humanities was chosen due to its significant enrollment of African international students, leading to a richer understanding of their experiences with xenophobia in a broader societal context. The College of Agriculture, Engineering, and Science and the College of Law and Management were included to capture insights from students in more specialized and professional disciplines, providing a comparative view of how xenophobia affects students differently across academic contexts.

**Table 5.2.2: Demographics of local student participants and a representative of international students**

| Name   | Gender | Age | Degree  | Race  | Province      | Language                             |
|--------|--------|-----|---------|-------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| LSP 1  | Female | 23  | BSSGBE  | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 2  | Female | 31  | Masters | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 3  | Female | 26  | PhD     | Black | Gauteng       | Ndebele                              |
| LSP 4  | Female | 32  | PhD     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu ( <i>Former HC Student</i> ) |
| LSP 5  | Male   | 20  | BSSGBE  | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 6  | Male   | 26  | Masters | Black | Eastern Cape  | Xhosa                                |
| LSP 7  | Female | 24  | Masters | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 8  | Female | 28  | PhD     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 9  | Female | 29  | Masters | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 10 | Female | 26  | BSS     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 11 | Male   | 36  | PhD     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 12 | Male   | 30  | PHD     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 13 | Female | 22  | BA      | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 14 | Female | 29  | PhD     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP 15 | Female | 27  | Masters | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |
| LSP16  | Male   | 32  | PhD     | Black | KwaZulu Natal | IsiZulu                              |



|        |        |    |                                              |       |               |               |
|--------|--------|----|----------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|---------------|
| RIS 17 | Female | 31 | Representative<br>of International<br>office | Black | KwaZulu Natal | Xhosa/Isizulu |
|--------|--------|----|----------------------------------------------|-------|---------------|---------------|

Table 5.2 illustrates local students' demographics, including that of the international office representative. 12 of the participants were black, with 11 females and 5 males. The age range for the local participants is 20 - 36 years old. Most of the participants speak IsiZulu, and they are from KwaZulu Natal. 2 speak Xhosa, and 1 speaks Ndebele. 12 of the participants are enrolled for master's and PhD, which indicates that most have a deep understanding of the university environment and have witnessed xenophobic instances to some extent. 4 of the local participants are undergraduate students, and all my local participants came from the College of Humanities.

### 5.3 Reasons why African international students study at UKZN

The participants presented varied reasons for choosing to study at UKZN. Of the 17 participants, most stated they were referred by friends who recommended UKZN for its fee remission. Some participants wanted to further their studies, while others were drawn to UKZN because it is one of the top universities in Africa, known for its strong research focus. In support of this view, participant AISP13 shared that they had a friend who studied at UKZN and often joked about bringing them to South Africa. Initially, they did not consider studying abroad seriously, as studying in Europe, America, or Canada was more common in Nigeria. However, after researching UKZN and learning that their husband, who visited a friend there and liked the environment, decided to pursue a master's degree at UKZN. The availability of fee remission for master's and PhD programs was a significant motivating factor in their decision.

Similarly, participant AISP14 stated they were influenced by friends who had graduated from UKZN and wanted to study abroad. They chose to study there after learning about the fee remission for PhD students at UKZN. This aligns with the findings of Massey, Alarcon, Durand, and Gonzalez (1990), who assert that friendship networks provide valuable information that helps potential migrants decide whether migration would improve their lives. Participant AISP11 reflected on their experience, stating that they initially studied at the University of the Free State before moving to UKZN. They chose UKZN because, as an international student, they had paid a

significant amount for their Honours degree at their previous university. A friend recommended UKZN for its fee remission, and they decided it was the best option for managing their expenses while studying in South Africa.

In light of the above views, the choice of many African international participants to study at UKZN was strongly influenced by recommendations from friends, highlighting the crucial role that social networks play in shaping educational decisions. Social networks offer reliable sources of information and comfort, and personal relationships usually play a significant part in decision-making procedures for African international Students. Some students chose to study at UKZN rather than overseas universities. This, therefore, emphasizes the competitive scene in global education, in which institutions have to set themselves out to draw students from many backgrounds. The capacity of UKZN to draw students who may otherwise select Western universities points to its developing popularity in Africa. The reference to fee remission from the participants is a motivating element that emphasizes the financial aspect of students' decisions, which is crucial. Many African international students find the cost of education to be a considerable challenge, so providing financial help can be rather significant. Therefore, UKZN's fee remission program is an excellent approach to draw African international students who might otherwise look for more reasonably priced education elsewhere.

This trend is confirmed by the research of Wilkins and Huisman (2011), which found that African international students are often influenced by the recommendations of others with prior university experience. Some participants wanted to further their studies, such as participant AISP1, who chose UKZN to advance their studies in theology, specifically focusing on issues of justice and gender justice within religion. Participant AISP5 shared a similar motivation: they sought an opportunity to further their studies and applied to UKZN when they saw an opening for a master's program. Participant AISP2 had a different path, initially coming to South Africa in search of better opportunities, but in 2009 decided to return to school and enrolled at UKZN.

For other participants, UKZN's reputation as one of the top universities in Africa, particularly in research, was a key factor. Participant AISP9 stated that they chose UKZN because it is known for its research excellence and high rankings. They were attracted to UKZN because of its strong

academic reputation and the opportunity to engage in research. Although the university did not offer a full scholarship, the fee remission and the opportunity to be with their family, as their husband was already studying at UKZN, made it an appealing choice. Participant AISP10 also highlighted UKZN's international reputation for research and the financial relief provided by the fee remission as motivating factors. Participant AISP12 noted that UKZN was the only university in South Africa offering the Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering, and they were eager to leave Namibia for a new challenge in an unfamiliar place.

The above view is supported by the Times Higher Education (2022:1) World University Ranking, which placed UKZN among the top four universities in South Africa and among the top 500 universities globally in 2022. UKZN's dedication to excellence has been consistently recognised, contributing to its strong appeal for African international Students. The above view highlights the critical role that universities play in academic excellence in attracting African international students. In my view, the focus on research excellence indicates that students are not only seeking educational opportunities but are also interested in institutions that offer robust research programs and high academic standards. The strong academic reputation of UKZN aligns with global trends where universities with high research output are preferred by students aiming for advanced educational and professional careers (Times Higher Education, 2022).

For some students, the decision to study at UKZN was influenced by overseas scholarships, the desire to be closer to work, or family considerations. Participant AISP17 explained that they initially came to South Africa to live with their husband, a lecturer at UKZN's College of Agriculture, Engineering, and Science. However, they did not want to remain idle, so they decided to continue their postgraduate studies, making education a significant aspect of their time at UKZN. Participant AISP8 chose UKZN because it was conveniently located near their home and work in Pietermaritzburg. Participant AISP7 noted that many of their friends had started their studies at UKZN, and after conducting research, they found UKZN to be one of the best universities in Africa. Additionally, their scholarship from Singapore, which often sends students to study at UKZN, also influenced their decision. The above views, therefore, show that financial support significantly influenced African international Students' choices, as seen in the cases of participants AISP17 and AISP7. Scholarships and fee remission are significant student drivers, as

noted above, highlighting that financial relief is crucial in decision-making. For example, the scholarship from Singapore played a pivotal role in the decision of participants in the AISP7. Such scholarships are often tied to specific universities or programs, which can greatly influence where students choose to study.

This is consistent with findings in international education research, where financial support mechanisms like scholarships are known to sway students' decisions (Huisman and van der Wende, 2005). The scholarship alleviates the financial burden of studying abroad and endorses the institution as a trusted and valued place of study. This aligns with existing research, underscoring financial aid's importance in attracting African international Students (Wilkins and Huisman, 2011). These views are relevant in understanding the role of financial support that can help universities design better recruitment strategies. Offering competitive scholarships and financial assistance can enhance the institution's attractiveness and address a significant barrier to higher education. Personal circumstances, like those experienced by participant AISP17, demonstrate how personal relationships and family considerations intersect with academic choices. Thus, recognising these factors can help universities offer tailored support for students with family responsibilities or those relocating for personal reasons. This approach can enhance the overall student experience and attract more African international Students. This aligns with Gumbo (2014), who notes that certain countries or regions offer scholarships for students to study abroad, such as the ERASMUS program, which provides opportunities for EU university students to study outside their home countries (Huisman and van der Wende, 2005). According to Sehoole (2015), students from SADC countries are likely to choose South Africa for their education due to its potential to help them secure jobs, its geographical proximity, and its research opportunities. These views highlight the various motivations for students studying at UKZN, revealing a blend of personal, practical, and academic factors that influence their decisions. The desire to pursue education at UKZN, whether through scholarships, proximity to work and family, or the influence of social networks, underscores the university's strong appeal to African international Students.

#### **5.4 Contextualisation of the term xenophobia**

The findings of this study showed that participants provided a wide range of contextualization of the term xenophobia, and they understood it from different angles. It was essential to understand

the participants' understanding of xenophobia, which is the central concept of the study. Most participants describe it as a fear or hatred of people from other countries or cultures. Some described it as the irrational or unjustifiable dislike, distrust, or prejudice directed against individuals or groups perceived as foreign or different from one's cultural, national, or ethnic identity. For the participants, xenophobia can manifest in various ways, including discrimination, intolerance, exclusion, and even acts of violence against individuals or groups perceived as outsiders. The findings also show that xenophobia can be rooted in a range of factors, including economic concerns, cultural differences, historical conflicts, or political ideologies. It often leads to social division, tension, and the marginalization of those who are considered outsiders. Most of the participants understood xenophobia as fear, hatred, and a form of discrimination of foreign nationals by the local citizens of that specific country.

#### **5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Fear, Discrimination, and Hatred**

This sub-theme delves into the interconnectedness of fear, discrimination, and hatred, which are central to the issue of xenophobia. During the research, most participants identified discrimination as a significant driver of xenophobia. It became apparent that prejudice often arises from a sense of dissatisfaction or perceived threat among those who display xenophobic tendencies. Xenophobia, in this context, is characterised by a deep-seated hostility towards foreigners, particularly African migrants who are not South African. For some participants, the term "foreigner" appears to carry more weight when it refers to black Africans, as opposed to individuals from other nationalities, such as Europeans or Americans, making it synonymous with the discrimination and resentment they face from the local population. On the other hand, some participants observed that the root of xenophobia seems to lie in fear of the unknown, especially when it comes to foreign cultures, languages, and traditions. For them, this fear is driven by concerns that these unfamiliar elements may influence or infringe upon their rights, culture, and way of life within the community. Participants frequently discussed how such fears contribute to the discriminatory attitudes and actions that fuel xenophobia, underscoring the intricate relationship between fear, discrimination, and hatred. This was shown when participant AISP5 stated that *xenophobia is fear of a foreign national who is not native to your country, leading to discrimination based on their country of origin*. In a similar vein, participant AISP2 stated that *xenophobia is fear and hatred towards a foreign nation. Essentially, it occurs when citizens of a country*

*harbour hatred for or feel uncomfortable interacting with foreigners.*

Participant AISP11 brings a new angle from the above definitions as she states that:

*When examining xenophobia, it becomes clear that it primarily stems from discrimination. In these cases, prejudice often arises from the dissatisfaction experienced by those who engage in xenophobic acts. Xenophobia is rooted in the resentment felt by local individuals who are frustrated by their inability to achieve their desired quality of life. South African residents, in particular, experience frustration when their systems or institutions fail to meet their needs adequately. This shared dissatisfaction can make individuals feel stagnant in their lives, prompting them to vent their anger on others. Unfortunately, in the context of xenophobia, this anger is often directed towards black foreigners.*

Participant AISP1 understands xenophobia as:

*The fear of those from other countries, mainly through competition for scarce resources and jobs, often leads to tension between people. Initially, I was unfamiliar with the concept of xenophobia, as in my home country, Uganda, we didn't have that kind of term. However, I became aware of it in South Africa, where local South Africans, especially in poorer communities, began expressing dissatisfaction towards people from other countries, particularly those from other African nations. Interestingly, I never heard them complain about Indians, white people, or Chinese individuals; their frustration was specifically directed at black people from other African countries living within their communities.*

In similar vein with participantAISP1, participantAISP17 states that:

*Xenophobia refers to a deep-seated hatred for foreigners, particularly targeting Africans who are not South Africans. The term "foreigner" doesn't seem to carry the same weight when applied to other nationalities, like Europeans or Americans. When I think of xenophobia, what comes to mind is the discrimination and hostility explicitly directed at black Africans by local citizens. In South Africa, this phenomenon is better described as Afrophobia, as the animosity and violence are mainly aimed at black foreign nationals from other African countries.*

Participant AISP4 understands xenophobia as:

*Xenophobia is a form of discrimination based on nationality, often fueled by inequality and misconceptions. I believe that some people see others as unworthy of employment and benefits. Foreigners often possess specific skills that qualify them for certain jobs, which can lead to resentment. Xenophobia arises from ignorance and a lack of understanding of the positive contributions that outsiders can bring to a country. As foreigners, we often arrive with skills and a commitment to contribute, in my role as a lecturer. However, what I've observed about xenophobia is that even those with legal permits are adversely affected by it. People fail to distinguish between legal and illegal immigrants, resulting in both groups facing discrimination and hostility in South Africa.*

The above views of the AIS participants regarding xenophobia it is evident that their views are shaped by personal experiences and contextual factors within South Africa. Each participant offers a unique lens through which to understand the complexities of xenophobia, particularly as it relates to competition for resources, historical context, and societal attitudes. Participant AISP11 presents a compelling argument that xenophobia is fundamentally rooted in discrimination and dissatisfaction among local populations. She posits that the frustration experienced by South African residents, particularly in the face of systemic failures, leads to a misdirected anger towards black foreigners.

This aligns with Tsheola, Ramoroka, and Muzondi's (2015) findings, who argue that structural conditions significantly shape attitudes towards foreigners, suggesting that the socioeconomic context plays a crucial role in fostering xenophobic sentiments. AISP11's perspective highlights the psychological aspect of xenophobia, where individuals project their frustrations onto marginalised groups, thus perpetuating cycles of violence and discrimination. In line with the above views the scapegoat theory suggests that individuals or groups may blame others (often marginalised or vulnerable groups) for their own problems or frustrations (Harris, 2002). This aligns with the sentiments expressed by Participant AISP11, who notes that local populations may misdirect their anger and frustration towards black foreigners due to systemic failures and socio-economic challenges. The idea that South Africans project their dissatisfaction onto migrants, viewing them as the source of their economic problems, is an example of scapegoating.

Participant AISP1 echoes this sentiment by framing xenophobia as a fear stemming from competition for scarce resources. Her observation that the animosity is primarily directed towards black Africans, while other nationalities are largely spared, underscores the racial dynamics at play. This aligns with the concept of 'colour-blind xenophobia' as stated by Telwonde (2019:440), which suggests that xenophobic violence is not solely based on race but rather on perceived economic competition. AISP1's experience as a Ugandan in South Africa adds a personal dimension to her understanding, illustrating how cultural contexts shape perceptions of xenophobia. Participant AISP17 further emphasises the racialised nature of xenophobia, labelling it as 'Afrophobia.' This term encapsulates the specific targeting of black Africans, contrasting with the more lenient attitudes towards Europeans or Americans. This perspective is supported by Dube

(2019), who notes that Black South Africans often do not distinguish between different nationalities when expressing xenophobic sentiments, indicating a broader socioeconomic frustration rather than purely racial animosity. AISP17's view reinforces the idea that xenophobia is not just a fear of the 'other' but a manifestation of deeper societal issues, including historical inequalities and ongoing discrimination.

Participant AISP4 introduces the notion that xenophobia is fuelled by misconceptions and a lack of understanding of the contributions that foreigners can make. This perspective highlights the importance of education and awareness in combating xenophobia. The idea that even legal immigrants face discrimination due to a failure to distinguish between legal and illegal status resonates with the findings of Warner and Finchilescu (2003), who argue that xenophobia often stems from ignorance and misinformation. AISP4's role as a lecturer positions her uniquely to advocate for the positive contributions of migrants, suggesting that fostering understanding could mitigate xenophobic attitudes. Thus, the participant's views collectively illustrate that xenophobia in South Africa is a complex phenomenon influenced by socioeconomic conditions, historical context, and racial dynamics.

Similarly, the local participants shared views that aligned closely with those of the African international students (AIS) when defining xenophobia. Both groups recognised xenophobia as more than just overt acts of discrimination, highlighting the subtle, everyday experiences of exclusion, stereotyping, and prejudice. Some of the local participants expressed that xenophobia arises from a fear of foreigners, mainly when their culture, language, and traditions are unfamiliar, leading to concerns about their potential influence on local rights and lifestyles. In addition, some local participants described xenophobia as an expression of hatred or mistreatment toward people from other countries, and this shared understanding of xenophobia reflects the broader societal challenges faced by foreign nationals, whether through direct interactions or in navigating perceptions within the society. This is indicated when participant LSP10 stated:

*Xenophobia is the irrational fear or hatred of people from other countries or cultures. It manifests as unjustified dislike, distrust, or prejudice against those perceived as foreign or different. This prejudice can take various forms, including discrimination, intolerance, exclusion, and violence. Factors such as economic issues, cultural differences, historical conflicts, or political ideologies often fuel xenophobia. Its consequences include social division, tension, and the marginalization*



*of those considered outsiders. Addressing xenophobia requires promoting tolerance, diversity, and cross-cultural understanding, while also tackling the underlying causes of such negative attitudes.*

Participant LSP8 stated that *I believe xenophobia stems from the fear of foreigners, especially when you're unfamiliar with their culture, language, traditions, and way of life. This fear arises because when they behave in ways you don't understand, there's a concern that their actions might influence or infringe upon your rights, culture, and lifestyle within your community.* In line with this view, participant LSP2 shared that *xenophobia is an expression of hatred or mistreatment of people from outside the country. It manifests at various levels, whether in communities, universities, high schools, or preschools—essentially, it's pervasive across South African communities.* Participant LSP1 stated that *xenophobia is a form of discrimination or hatred towards foreign nationals other than South Africans. It's a form of hatred and discrimination outside of South African people towards other Africans.* In line with the above definition, participant LSP3 stated that *I believe xenophobia involves discriminatory treatment of people from other countries, where their rights as humans are degraded simply because of their different nationality.* Participant LP6 added that *xenophobia in South Africa is an open attack on foreign nationals, involving the torture of foreign nationals, burning of their homes, and both emotional and physical abuse.*

The above definitions of xenophobia provided by local participants reveal a multifaceted understanding of this issue, echoing the sentiments expressed by AIS participants. These definitions highlight the irrational fear, prejudice, and discrimination faced by foreign nationals in South Africa, reflecting broader societal attitudes and the complex interplay of various factors that contribute to xenophobic sentiments. Participant LSP10 articulates xenophobia as an "irrational fear or hatred" of individuals from different countries or cultures. This aligns with Koenane and Maphunye (2015), who emphasize that xenophobia is not merely an attitude but a violent practice that results in harm to others. The irrationality of such fear often leads to unjustified dislike and distrust, which can escalate into more severe forms of discrimination and violence (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh, and Singh, 2005). In addition, the definition by Evans and Newman (1998), as the chosen definition for this study, characterizes xenophobia as a crime against humanity that involves dislike, fear, and intolerance toward foreigners, resulting in hostility and violence. This definition can be linked to the participants' views above. It encapsulates the severity of xenophobia as not just a social issue but one that violates fundamental human rights. This chosen definition underscores the pervasive impact of xenophobia on the lives of AIS, as reflected above in the participants' accounts of discrimination, fear, exclusion, and violence in the South African context.

Participant LSP8's assertion that xenophobia stems from unfamiliarity with foreign cultures and languages resonates with the views of Nyamnjoh (2006), who argues that cultural differences can exacerbate tensions between locals and foreigners. This fear of the unknown can lead to a perception that foreign nationals threaten local rights and lifestyles, a sentiment echoed by Jacobsen (2014), who notes that economic competition often fuels xenophobic attitudes. Participant LSP2's observation that xenophobia manifests at various levels of communities, universities, and schools reflects the findings of Osman (2009), who highlights the widespread nature of xenophobia in South African society. This pervasive attitude can create an environment where discrimination becomes normalised, affecting the social fabric of communities.

Participants LSP1 and LSP3 emphasise that xenophobia involves discrimination and the degradation of human rights based on nationality. This aligns with the work of Dryden-Peterson (2022), who discusses how xenophobia not only marginalises foreign nationals but also limits their access to opportunities and resources, reinforcing their outsider status. Participant LSP6's definition of xenophobia as an "open attack" on foreign nationals, including torture and emotional abuse, echoes the findings of Gopal (2013), who notes that foreign learners often experience physical and emotional violence. This highlights the severe consequences of xenophobia, which can lead to trauma and long-lasting psychological effects on victims (Seedat, Baw and Ratele, 2010). Thus, the collective definitions provided by participants indicate that xenophobia leads to social division and tension within communities.

#### **5.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Prejudice and Misconception**

Other participants have a different perspective on how they understand the term xenophobia. This is evidenced by their views on xenophobia as a prejudice and misconception. Participant AISP10 believes that xenophobia is *"the prejudice that South African citizens make you experience the unkind and arrogant treatment by the mere fact that you are a foreigner and not a South African citizen."*

On the other hand, according to participant AISP6:

*My understanding of xenophobia is that it represents a distorted perception or misconception. Essentially, it reflects a lack of understanding or acceptance of people from outside one's own community. Recently, the term "xenophobia" has been applied more broadly to label anyone who*

*is not part of the dominant ethnic group in a given area. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), individuals who are Sotho, Xhosa, or Venda may face similar hatred and discrimination as foreign nationals, despite being South African. This indicates that xenophobia is not only directed towards non-South Africans but can also target other local ethnic groups that are perceived as different from the predominant group.*

In line with participant AISP6, participant AISP13 also understands xenophobia as labelled against anybody who is not part of the predominant ethnic group of the specific provinces.

Participant AISP13 states that:

*In the South African context, xenophobia can be understood as a fear or dislike of those who are not from South Africa or even those from different regions within the country. I recall a conversation with a woman from the Eastern Cape who felt like a foreigner in KwaZulu-Natal and experienced similar discrimination as international migrants. Xenophobia, therefore, often targets those from outside the local area or from other countries. This fear and dislike can show up in various ways, such as mistreatment, neglect, or even open aggression and violence.*

Xenophobia in South Africa is a complex issue rooted in distorted perceptions and misconceptions, extending beyond foreign nationals to include intra-national discrimination. Participants AISP6 and AISP13 highlight that individuals from different South African regions, such as those from the Eastern Cape in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), can also be perceived as outsiders. The biocultural hypothesis suggests that xenophobia is based on visible differences, including physical and cultural disparities, which apply to both foreign nationals and local ethnic minorities, such as the Sotho and Venda people in KZN. This reflects broader societal discrimination where those outside the dominant ethnic group face exclusion. For African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, this intersection of xenophobia and local ethnic tensions compounds their challenges. Masikane et al. (2020) argue that visible ethnic and cultural markers contribute to discrimination, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems to address both international and local prejudices.

On the other hand, participant LSP4 brings a different angle to the definition of xenophobia as she equates xenophobia to Apartheid segregation as she states:

*I see xenophobia as a form of apartheid but within the same race. To me, it's not much different from apartheid, except that it occurs among people who share the same skin color since we're all Africans. It raises the question of why we are fighting and harming each other. Essentially, xenophobia is about locals segregating foreign nationals, and to me, it's just another type of apartheid.*

Participants describe xenophobia as fear, hatred, and discrimination against foreign nationals, manifesting in exclusion, intolerance, and even violence. It is driven by economic concerns, cultural differences, ethnic tensions, and political ideologies, leading to social division and marginalization. Their views align with Nyamnjoh (2006), who defines xenophobia as detest and fear of foreigners, and Crush and Pendleton (2007), who highlight public animosity, violence, and discrimination. The Power Conflict theory explains xenophobia as arising from competition over scarce resources, while the Isolation Hypothesis links it to apartheid-era segregation and distrust of outsiders. Some participants extend xenophobia to tribalism, where even fellow South Africans face exclusion based on cultural differences. This mirrors apartheid-era exclusion but is now practiced by black South Africans against other black Africans, driven largely by economic fears. Addressing xenophobia requires promoting tolerance, cross-cultural understanding, and tackling its root causes.

## 5.5 Experiences of Xenophobia

This section aims to answer the 1<sup>st</sup> objective and research question as highlighted in Chapter 1. The question states that: *How have African international students experienced Xenophobia at UKZN?* This section also aims to answer the broader issues to be investigated in the study, for example, to find out if these African international Students have faced xenophobia off campus. Most participants highlighted that they had experienced or witnessed it on and off campus. It's important to note that these experiences can vary greatly depending on specific circumstances. Below are some of the views on how they have experienced xenophobia categorized in different themes highlighting the experiences on campus, off campus, and emotions invoked by xenophobia. Table 5.3 shows the main and sub-themes of the xenophobic experience on campus based on the experiences of African international Students and based on the views and observations of local student participants.

### 5.5.1: Table of Main themes and sub-themes of the Xenophobic experiences on campus

| THEME NO: | MAIN THEME:                                     | SUB THEME:                                                         |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | Limited access to job opportunities and funding | Limited access to scholarships for African International Students. |

|                                                                                              |                                                                                        |                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2                                                                                            | Negative UKZN policies which does not facilitate integration                           | Blackophobia (black to black hatred) and the issue of Othering                    |
| 3                                                                                            | Language Barrier                                                                       | Language Barrier in the Lecture Theatres                                          |
| 4                                                                                            | Physical appearance and skin colour                                                    | White Students face less xenophobia than AIS                                      |
| <b>Positive experience of the campus Environment by African International Students (AIS)</b> |                                                                                        |                                                                                   |
| 1                                                                                            | Positive experience on campus                                                          | Campus as a safe space for AIS than the xenophobia experienced off campus         |
| <b>Xenophobic experience on campus: views and observations of Local Students at UKZN.</b>    |                                                                                        |                                                                                   |
| 1                                                                                            | AIS blamed for taking campus job opportunities and bursaries meant for local students. | AIS blamed for taking accommodation or campus residence meant for local students. |
| 2                                                                                            | English accent                                                                         | Bad English accent and pronunciation by African foreign lecturers                 |
| 3                                                                                            | Discrimination and Stereotyping                                                        | The issue of name-calling, ill-treatment, and bullying                            |

### 5.5.1 Main theme 1: Limited access to job opportunities and funding

This theme highlights the challenges faced by African International Students (AIS) regarding job opportunities and funding. AIS participants observed that even with advanced qualifications, such as a Master's degree, they often encounter barriers in securing campus jobs or funding opportunities compared to their local counterparts. For instance, one participant noted a situation where a local student with an honours degree was given a Master's degree campus job, whereas a foreign national holding a Master's degree was overlooked. This disparity underscores the broader issue of limited access to job opportunities and funding for AIS, reflecting a systemic preference for local candidates despite the higher qualifications of some foreign students. Participant AISP13 stated:

*On campus, I experienced issues related to policies on funding and employment. When I arrived in 2016, I was already a qualified English teacher and applied for a job, but I didn't secure any*



*position for about five years. Regarding funding, I often saw advertisements for scholarships, but they typically specified that only South African nationals or permanent residents were eligible. To me, this seems xenophobic because most funding opportunities are reserved for South Africans. Foreign nationals might receive only 5% of the funding, which I believe is insufficient; it should be based on merit.*

Participant AISP9 stated:

*Students are generally fine in class on campus, and I haven't experienced discrimination there. However, when applying for jobs, such as tutorials, I felt discriminated against. There were instances where job postings explicitly stated they were for South Africans only. You wouldn't get the position even if you applied as a non-South African. I recall applying for a job where my application was initially sent to spam, and it was only when a white friend of mine, who was in charge of the module and had encouraged me to apply, intervened that my application was considered. This showed me that locals often do not want to hire foreigners. I had to fight for these opportunities, while locals were preferred for positions.*

Participant AISP11 stated:

*On campus, I experienced a disparity in pay for lecturing assistant jobs. For instance, I was paid 7,000 per month while a South African colleague, finishing her Master's degree at the time, received double that amount. This seems like institutional discrimination. Outside the university, while I haven't personally faced xenophobia, I've witnessed others experiencing it. For example, people might refuse to communicate in a foreign language and resort to calling someone "Makwerekwere," which is derogatory. This reflects the xenophobic attitudes some people have outside campus.*

The views expressed by participants AISP13, AISP9, and AISP11 highlight significant issues related to xenophobia and discrimination faced by foreign nationals within the academic environment at UKZN. Their experiences reveal systemic barriers that not only affect their academic and professional opportunities but also reflect broader societal attitudes toward foreigners in South Africa. Participant AISP13 articulates a clear sense of exclusion from funding opportunities, which are predominantly reserved for South African nationals. This aligns with the findings of Neocosmos (2008), who argues that institutional policies often reflect xenophobic attitudes by prioritising local citizens over foreign nationals. The perception that funding should be merit-based rather than nationality-based is echoed in the work of Valji (2003), who emphasises the need for equitable access to resources for all students, regardless of their nationality.

AISP9's experience of discrimination in job applications, particularly the explicit preference for South African candidates, underscores the barriers that foreign nationals face in securing

employment. This reflects the sentiments expressed by MacGregor (2009), who discusses how local biases can manifest in hiring practices, leading to a preference for South African candidates even when qualifications are comparable. The reliance on a local connection to have an application considered further illustrates the systemic nature of these biases, as noted by Adjai and Lazaridis (2013), who highlight the challenges faced by migrants in accessing employment opportunities. The pay disparity experienced by AISP11 raises concerns about institutional discrimination within the university. The observation that a South African colleague received significantly higher pay for similar work points to inequities that can arise in academic settings. This is consistent with the findings of Otu (2017), who discusses how foreign academics may face challenges in recognition and remuneration compared to their local counterparts. Such disparities can contribute to feelings of alienation and undervaluation among foreign staff, as highlighted by Otu (2017), who argues that economic inequalities can exacerbate xenophobic sentiments.

AISP11's account of witnessing xenophobia outside the university, including the derogatory language used towards foreigners, reflects the pervasive nature of xenophobic attitudes in South African society. This aligns with the work of Harris (2002), who notes that xenophobia often manifests in everyday interactions, creating an environment where foreign nationals feel unwelcome. The use of terms like "Makwerekwere" serves as a reminder of the social stigmas attached to being a foreigner, reinforcing the need for greater awareness and sensitivity towards cultural diversity. The experiences shared by these participants also highlight the resilience required to navigate an environment that can be hostile or unwelcoming. AISP9's reliance on a local friend to advocate for their application illustrates the importance of social networks in overcoming barriers, a theme explored by Babbie (2007), who emphasizes the role of community support in the experiences of migrants.

### **5.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Limited Scholarships for African International Students**

The theme of limited scholarships for African international students highlights the challenges and inequities these students face in securing financial support for their education. Despite their growing numbers and contributions to academic institutions, African international students often encounter barriers to accessing scholarships and funding opportunities. This scarcity of financial aid impacts their academic success, exacerbates financial stress, and hinders their ability to engage

in their studies fully. The disparity in scholarship availability between local and international students underscores ongoing issues of equity and inclusion within the academic landscape. This is shown when AISP4 states that:

*On campus, I can say that xenophobia is prevalent among professionals. If you are not South African, you may face discrimination. Scholarship opportunities are often only available to South African students. For example, in my first year at university, students were informed about a funding opportunity, but it was only for South African students. A guest lecturer from Sweden asked me why I was not applying, and I told her that I was not a South African. She advised me to apply as long as I was registered at UKZN. I applied and submitted my application in front of the guest lecturer. There was a time when I had to replace someone who went on short leave for about six months. I worked for only two months before being asked to stop because I am a foreigner, and the person on leave was asked to return. Students sometimes want to be taught in isiZulu while the module is written in English, which is also a form of discrimination. I was also told that we couldn't be considered for a lecturer position because they wanted a South African, even though I had a Master's degree and the position was given to someone still pursuing their Master's degree.*

African international students face institutional discrimination in accessing job opportunities, funding, and scholarships in South African universities. Sehoole (2015) highlights that these students struggle to secure financial support and often experience social exclusion from classmates. Professor Chaya Herman's research at the University of Pretoria further reveals that limited bursaries are available for African international postgraduate students, despite their research benefiting South Africa. This aligns with the power conflict theory, which suggests that competition over scarce resources leads to hostility and negative stereotypes against perceived threats (Sherif, 1988; Tewolde, 2020). Participants expressed concerns over campus job and scholarship restrictions favoring South African students, contributing to a sense of exclusion at UKZN. Addressing these issues requires revising institutional policies to promote fairness, inclusivity, and equitable access to opportunities for all students, regardless of nationality.

### **5.5.3 Main theme 2: Negative UKZN policies which do not facilitate integration.**

A notable theme among African international students (AIS) is the challenge posed by UKZN policies that do not facilitate their integration into campus life. Some participants have pointed out how these policies contribute to a sense of "othering," where international students are seen as separate from or inferior to their South African peers. For example, AIS are often required to pay for medical aid and cover 100% of their fees upfront, while local students may have more



flexible financial arrangements. This financial disparity significantly burdens international students and reinforces their sense of marginalization. Additionally, there are issues related to the side-lining of AIS on campus, which further exacerbates their feelings of exclusion. These policies and practices contribute to a perception of being treated as "the other," neglecting African international students' specific needs and challenges. This was shown when participant AISP2 stated:

*I have never personally experienced covert xenophobia on campus, but some issues might appear xenophobic due to the university's policies, which create an "us vs. them" dynamic. Negative policies contribute to student conflicts over resources and hinder integration between local and international students. For instance, the International Student Office organizes orientation trips exclusively for international students without involving locals, which divides students and fosters othering. International students are also told not to stay in university residences, as they might be closed at the end of the semester, limiting their chances to build friendships with local students. Additionally, international students must pay 100% of their fees upfront, while locals only pay registration fees, reinforcing the divide. They are also required to have medical aid despite the availability of campus clinics. These practices, although rooted in national policies, reflect a lack of university-level advocacy for exceptions and contribute to the marginalization of international students.*

The above view by participant AISP2 is in line with Maseko (2022:79) as he states that "the world is increasingly closing out on 'others'; different nations and societies are increasingly becoming intolerant of people from other cultures". According to Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008), the idea of a world without others was the main driving force behind the invasion and plundering of other nations by the colonisers; this was the beginning of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, tribalism, and ethnicity. Participant AISP2 describes a lack of personal experiences with xenophobia on campus but points to the institutional policies and practices at UKZN that contribute to a sense of "othering" between local and African international students.

The above view highlights that what might be perceived as xenophobia could be attributed to negative UKZN policies, which create divisions and which does not foster integration. As highlighted by participant AISP2, the mention of an orientation tour exclusively for African international students and the restriction on staying in university residences shows instances where policies unintentionally foster a sense of separation at UKZN. In addition, the requirement for African international students to pay full fees upfront, distinct from local students, further reinforces this divide. The participant contends that UKZN policies contribute to side-lining the issues faced by African international students, reinforcing the notion of "us vs them."

In addition, the above view from participant AISP2 reveals the importance of addressing institutional policies to promote inclusivity and bridge the gap between local and international student communities at UKZN. In a similar vein to participant AISP2, Schoole (2015:2), in his findings, argues that African international students are an essential source of income for local South African institutions. “Their tuition fees and additional levy are sometimes double the amount that local students pay. Research by the Academy of Science of South Africa shows that African international students tend to finish their PhDs faster (in about 4.5 to 4.6 years) than their local counterparts (who take an average of 4.9 years)” (Schoole, 2015:2). For Schoole (2015) the quicker the completion rate for a post-graduate degree, the more the institution benefits from government subsidy and this applies whether the student is local or international. Thus, it is essential for UKZN to review its policies and allow all students to pay their fees on a monthly basis or on a semester basis without requesting full upfront payment of fees like in the case for African international Students.

#### **5.5.4 Sub-theme 1: Blackophobia (meaning-Black to black hatred) and the issue of othering**

Participant AISP2 further explained the nature of xenophobia in South Africa as he introduced a new concept of blackophobia to the study. For participant AISP2, the nature of discrimination that exists in South Africa is not xenophobia because, for the participant, xenophobia means fear, attack, and hatred of foreign nationals, *but not all foreign nationals are experiencing it. For example, foreigners from America, Asia, and Europe hardly face xenophobia in South Africa.* The participant also rejected Afrophobia and stated that the discrimination that exists in South Africa is not Afrophobia as well because, in Africa, we have White and Indian Africans who hardly experience Afrophobia. However, the participant stated that the nature of xenophobia that exists in South Africa is blackophobia which is black-to-black hatred and the competition for scarce resources and jobs, especially on campus. Participant AISP2 further highlighted how white African international Students are treated better than African international students. For example, the participant worked at the Housing department at UKZN, and he gave an example of how white African international Students were even picked up at the airport, which was different from black African foreign students. The Participant AISP2 stated that:

*As a resident assistant at UKZN, I noticed a huge difference in how incidents were handled*

*depending on the student's background. We had exchange students from America, and when a white exchange student's laptop was stolen, the response from the Student Housing and International Student Office was overwhelming. The entire university residence was disrupted as every room was searched for the laptop. What struck me was that this level of concern and action was not extended to black African international Students, many of whom also had their laptops stolen but received little to no assistance. In the case of the American exchange student, the International Student Office took it upon themselves to resolve the issue, even going so far as to have the university replace the stolen laptop. It was clear that this student was treated with extra care simply because he was an international exchange student from America, while black African students were not afforded the same level of support.*

The above view highlights a significant issue of unequal treatment among African international students at UKZN, based explicitly on nationality. The incident described where a white American exchange student's stolen laptop prompted an intense response from the university, while similar incidents involving African international students did not demonstrate the influence of a student's country of origin on how the institution treats them. In the context of International Relations (IR), power dynamics between states often play a crucial role in how individuals from those states are perceived and treated. According to realist theory in IR, states are the primary actors in the international system, and their relative power and influence shape global politics (Hobson, 1997). Realist theory emphasizes the importance of state power and the competitive nature of international relations, where more powerful states exert influence on global policies and how their citizens are treated abroad. Realist theory in (IR) emphasizes the role of state power, national interest, and the inherently competitive nature of international politics (Waltz, 1979). Realists argue that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no central authority above states, leading to a self-help system where states must rely on their own power to secure their interests and survival. (Morgenthau, 1973). The modern realist theory was more formally articulated in the 20th century, particularly by Morgenthau (1973), who is often credited as one of the founding fathers of realism.

In his seminal work *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau (1973) outlined the principles of political realism, focusing on the concept of interest defined in terms of power (Morgenthau, 1973). Realist theory emphasises that more powerful states, such as developed countries, are better

positioned to protect and promote their interests globally, which often results in their citizens receiving preferential treatment abroad. This dynamic reflects the broader power hierarchies in the international system, where the influence of a state can directly affect how its nationals are perceived and treated in other countries (Waltz, 1979). Thus, developed countries like the United States generally hold more power and influence on the global stage, which often translates into preferential treatment for their citizens when they are in foreign countries. This is evident in the incident at UKZN where a white American exchange student received an exceptional level of assistance when his laptop was stolen, compared to the less responsive treatment given to black African international Students who faced similar situations. The university's reaction can be seen as a reflection of the broader power dynamics where students from powerful nations are perceived as more valuable or deserving of protection due to their country's status in global politics. This preferential treatment aligns with the notion of "soft power," a concept introduced by Keohane and Nye (1972), which refers to the ability of a country to attract and co-opt rather than coerce. Universities, as extensions of their countries' influence, often seek to maintain positive relations with institutions from more powerful nations, like those in the United States, by ensuring that their students have favourable experiences. Such efforts can be part of a broader strategy to strengthen academic partnerships, secure funding, and enhance the university's reputation on the global stage.

Furthermore, the disparity in treatment also reveals the extent to which nationality, rather than race, influences student experiences at UKZN. While racial discrimination is a well-recognised issue, this case highlights how nationality can serve as an additional layer of inequality, with students from less powerful, underdeveloped countries facing marginalisation not only in broader society but also within academic institutions. This dynamic perpetuates existing global inequalities and challenges the principle of equal treatment in higher education, suggesting that efforts to address discrimination must also consider the influence of international power relations. Thus, by favouring students from powerful nations, universities like UKZN may inadvertently reinforce the very global hierarchies that contribute to the marginalisation of students from underdeveloped regions. Addressing these disparities requires a critical examination of how international relations shape institutional policies and student experiences, ensuring that all students, regardless of their nationality, receive equal treatment and support.

The above findings are similar to those of Shindondola (2002) and Gumbo (2014), that European, Chinese, and American students are not treated like black foreign students. According to Gumbo's (2014:63) findings, "of the 15 participant participants, 11 (73, 3%) felt that they were treated differently compared with other African International Students from the first world countries, such as those from Europe, America, and Asia". Gumbo's (2014) study further shows that the fact that the majority of the participants felt they were treated differently from other African international Students gives the impression that African international Students are being categorised according to nationality and race. This indicates that one's country of origin determines how one is treated at UKZN. This view is also highlighted in Chapter Three of this study when Soudien (2008) argues that at universities, foreign students or African international students (as they are commonly called) are further classified according to race, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. Soudien (2008), states that students from different social backgrounds (race, gender, ethnicity, nationality) experience, and negotiate membership of campus life differently. Clearly, university students are not exempt from the xenophobic behaviour that has been occurring in South African communities (Soudien,2008). Thus, participant AISP2 introduces the concept of "blackophobia" as a distinct form of discrimination in South Africa, distinguishing it from xenophobia and Afrophobia.

### **5.5.5 Main theme 3: Language barrier**

Most African international students (AIS) identified the language barrier as one of the most significant challenges they faced during their time at UKZN. This challenge not only affected their social integration but also impacted their academic and administrative experiences. For many AIS, the expectation that they should speak the local language, particularly IsiZulu, created a sense of alienation. When AIS attempted to communicate in English, they often encountered indifference or even reluctance from staff, making it difficult for them to access essential services or resolve issues related to fees, registration, and international student services. This language barrier hindered their ability to fully participate in both academic and extracurricular activities, contributing to feelings of exclusion and frustration. This is shown by participant AISP6 who was a former Howard College Student at UKZN who transferred to the PMB Campus, thus his experience was more at Howard College as he stated that;

*African international students have often been side-lined, particularly concerning campus issues. They do not receive prompt assistance, partly because when they approach staff and speak English, they encounter reluctance or indifference. At UKZN, for example, there is an assumption that if you are Black, you should speak IsiZulu. This has led to many African international Students facing difficulties, especially in offices dealing with fees, international services, and applications. They are often met with surprise or a lack of urgency when speaking English. In one instance at the School of Built Environment, an administrator displayed strong xenophobic tendencies, causing African international students to receive no help unless they went through the School Dean.*

According to AISP6, African international students often encounter reluctance or indifference from staff when communicating in English. This issue is exacerbated by the assumption that Black students should speak IsiZulu, leading to difficulties in administrative interactions related to fees, international services, and applications. For instance, an administrator's xenophobic behaviour at the School of Built Environment demonstrates how deeply ingrained xenophobic attitudes can affect the support and services provided to international students. This experience highlights a systemic issue where African international students face institutional barriers and prejudice, impacting their academic and administrative experiences at UKZN. In addition, Makhanya and Zibane (2020) suggest that language barriers are a major obstacle in academic settings, particularly in a multilingual country like South Africa. This is evident in AISP6's experience, where language differences influenced interactions with both staff and peers. The assumption that Black students should speak IsiZulu reflects a cultural expectation that fails to acknowledge the linguistic diversity of the student body. This view is consistent with findings by Hurst (2014), who emphasises the need for targeted language support at South African universities.

Hurst's (2014) research indicates that language barriers can significantly hinder students' ability to access essential services and support, which aligns with AISP6's experiences. Mutambanengwe (2012) also provides insight into how language barriers exacerbate challenges for migrants, including access to services, which supports AISP6's observations about the reluctance of staff to assist English-speaking African international students. Therefore, the participants' views imply that addressing language barriers is crucial for improving the experiences of African international students at UKZN. It suggests a need for systemic changes, including enhanced language support to help African international students navigate administrative and academic challenges.

In a similar vein to participant AISP6, participant AISP5 believes that campus is a safe space and the students are much more open-minded than off campus. This shown when AISP6 stated that

*On campus, xenophobia is relatively minimal, and people tend to be more open-minded compared to off-campus environments. Personally, my main challenge has been language barriers. Despite having a similar skin colour to South Africans, discrimination arises when it becomes clear that I speak a different language, especially if it's not native to South Africa. This often leads to negative attitudes and social exclusion. For instance, during a recent job interview, I suspect I was overlooked because I don't speak Zulu. Despite feeling that I performed well, the preference for Zulu-speaking candidates likely impacted my chances.*

The above views are in line with Smith and Khawaja (2011) who argue that African international students fail to make friends with local students because of language barriers. Participants, particularly AISP5, noted that while xenophobia is less pronounced on campus, it is a major issue off-campus. AISP5's experience of being denied a job for not speaking Zulu illustrates how language barriers limit opportunities and social integration. This aligns with Dzansi and Monnapula-Mapesela (2012), who found that language is a key challenge for international students. These experiences connect to the biocultural hypothesis, which explains how cultural and biological factors interact to shape human behavior. Barry (2001) and Linton (1936) emphasize that cultural norms, such as language, influence stress responses and social experiences. The exclusion faced by African international students due to language differences reflects both cultural biases and the stress of adaptation. Addressing these barriers requires fostering inclusive environments that accommodate linguistic diversity to enhance social and academic integration.

#### **5.5.6 Sub-theme 1: Language Barrier in the Lecture Theatres**

Similarly, an AIS participant highlighted the language barrier experienced within lecture theatres. They mentioned that despite lectures being conducted in English, there were instances where lecturers or students would switch to IsiZulu, making it difficult for non-Zulu speakers to grasp the content fully. This created additional challenges for African international students, who already faced academic pressures, as they struggled to keep up with discussions and engage fully in the learning environment. This was shown when participant AISP7 mentioned the language barrier in lecture theatres:

*On campus, especially from most of my friends. Even here, where I stay with them, most of them are foreign nationals, and foreign students complain about the language issue, especially in*

*lecture theatres. Sometimes lecturers will forget that African international students are present, and instead of explaining concepts and theories in English, they start to explain things in IsiZulu while there are students who don't understand the language; I feel this is a form of discrimination. The lecturers don't think about those who do not understand the Zulu language and how foreign students will understand what was learned in class. So basically, foreign students feel out of place honestly because you can't express yourself fully in English and don't understand what the lecturer is saying.*

Participant AISP8 stated:

*On Campus, people change their language very fast just to exclude international students. So, if you want to alienate somebody, you just speak another language. Lord, this xenophobia is everywhere in South Africa. On campus, even when you're in the payment queue for fees, There was a time when I was making a payment there. So, you are in the queue just inquiring about something. So, you know on the inquiry desk, they ask you, oh, you are an international student, from which country? So, everybody knows you're not South African, you're from Kenya. Then, the people you are seated around with immediately start to ignore you and start talking their language. Then you just know, I, I'm excluded. However, on campus, it's minimal; it's not something that I'm used to as compared to off campus. Maybe I tend to get used to it, and it's become a usual way of life.*

The findings reveal that language barriers remain a significant challenge for African international students at UKZN, affecting their academic experience and social integration. Participants expressed frustration with the use of IsiZulu in lecture theatres, administrative settings, and informal interactions, often leading to feelings of exclusion. Participant AISP7 described how lecturers sometimes switch to IsiZulu without considering the presence of non-Zulu-speaking students, making it difficult for them to fully grasp the course material. Similarly, findings of Gumbo (2014) when he states that other than language being used to exclude and discriminate against foreign students, it also affected their academic progress as highlighted by 1 of the participants in Gumbo (2014:52) findings who said that “I came to a point that I was no longer attending classes because I told myself why I should attend class when I did not hear anything”. This is consistent with the literature in Chapter Two, as most of the literature highlights that foreign students are affected academically by language barriers. The impact was such that the participant chose not to attend because the lecture for one of her modules was being held in isiZulu (Gumbo, 2014).

The UKZN Language Policy (2006) was introduced to promote multilingualism and elevate IsiZulu to the same institutional and academic status as English. While this is a commendable step toward preserving indigenous languages, it presents challenges for African international students



who have had little or no prior exposure to IsiZulu. Smith and Khawaja (2011) highlight that language barriers can cause academic stress, impacting students' ability to understand lectures, complete assignments, and engage in discussions. This aligns with participants' concerns, demonstrating that while the intended goals of the policy are positive, its implementation lacks a support structure for non-Zulu speakers.

The UKZN's policy framework suggests that while the IsiZulu Language Policy aims to foster inclusivity, it does not adequately address the realities faced by African international students. The policy does not provide structured support, such as language transition programs or alternative academic accommodations for students who struggle with IsiZulu. Furthermore, there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure that lecturers consistently teach in English when non-Zulu-speaking students are present. As a result, the policy while promoting linguistic inclusivity in principle ends up exacerbating exclusion for certain student groups.

At a broader level, the language challenges experienced at UKZN reflect larger socio-political dynamics in South Africa. Language has historically been tied to identity and belonging, and its use in institutional spaces can reinforce nationalistic and exclusionary attitudes. The findings suggest that language-based exclusion at UKZN mirrors xenophobic sentiments in broader society, where linguistic differences can be used as a basis for discrimination. This aligns with Dzansi and Monnapula-Mapesela's (2012) argument that language barriers are a persistent challenge for international students, particularly in countries where local languages are strongly tied to national identity.

In line with the above views from the African international students, the local students had their own views and observations of the experiences of xenophobia of African international students. Similar to the above views of participant AISP7, participant LSP1 outlined how lecturers teach in IsiZulu forgetting that they are African international students in the lecture theatre. This is illustrated by participant LSP1, who stated:

*On campus, some lecturers speak in isiZulu, which isn't accommodating for students who don't understand the language. In some lectures, they mix IsiZulu and English, claiming it's necessary where English doesn't fit, but this isn't inclusive. There's also a language barrier between students and foreign lecturers. While we all speak English, differences in pronunciation, accents, and dialogue can lead to miscommunication and frustration on both sides.*

Participant LSP2 added:

*I think language is a significant issue, especially for new students, whether they're undergraduates or at the master's or PhD level. If someone speaks Zulu, and you don't understand it, you're excluded. This issue extends beyond campus, and it's not just about xenophobia; I think it's more about Afrophobia, as students from places like Germany or China aren't affected, but African students are.*

The above challenges surrounding language dynamics on campus paint a picture of the complexities African international students face in their academic interactions. The issue extends beyond mere linguistic differences, encompassing a lack of accommodation and understanding from some lecturers who predominantly use IsiZulu, potentially excluding those unfamiliar with the language. The attempt to bridge the gap by mixing IsiZulu and English, while well-intentioned, is perceived as less than accommodating. Moreover, the observation of a language barrier between students and foreign lecturers, despite a common use of English, highlights the subtleties in pronunciation and accents that contribute to miscommunication. This misalignment in linguistic nuances, compounded by differing communication styles, creates an environment where frustration emerges from both South African and foreign students. This portrayal underscores the importance of fostering inclusive language practices within academic spaces, promoting effective communication, and mitigating the challenges posed by linguistic diversity to enhance the overall educational experience for all.

### **5.5.7 Main theme 1: Physical appearance and skin colour**

The theme of physical appearance and skin colour was a significant point of discussion. A white participant observed that white students tend to experience less xenophobia compared to African international students (AIS). On the other hand, AIS participants shared their experiences of facing physical xenophobic attacks, which they believe are directly linked to their skin colour and physical features. Local participants also acknowledged that AIS are easily distinguishable due to their physical appearance and skin colour, which often makes them more vulnerable to discrimination. Additionally, local students have observed that some AIS resort to dressing like South Africans in an attempt to blend in and avoid being singled out as foreigners. Below are the views of the participants.

#### **5.5.7.1 Sub Theme: 2: White Students face less xenophobia than AIS**

Participant AISP12 stated:

*As a White Namibian student, I do not face xenophobia at all, whether on or off campus, because people think I am a white South African. My accent is like Afrikaans and some people think that I am South African. Xenophobia is more on black people because they don't speak the local languages because they are the same colour as them.*

Participant AISP12, a White Namibian student, reveals that he rarely experiences xenophobia because he is perceived as a white South African rather than a foreigner. His experience highlights that xenophobia in South Africa primarily manifests as black-on-black discrimination rather than hostility towards white foreigners. His Afrikaans-like accent and appearance contribute to this perception, suggesting that linguistic and cultural differences play a crucial role in determining who is vulnerable to xenophobia. This perspective aligns with Koenane and Maphunye (2015), who argue that black-on-black xenophobia stems from apartheid-era policies that limited South Africans' exposure to other African cultures and languages. As a result, many South Africans failed to understand the economic and political struggles of neighbouring countries, fostering hostility toward African foreign nationals. This insight underscores the racial and cultural dynamics of xenophobia in South Africa, where black African immigrants face greater exclusion and discrimination than their white counterparts.

On the other hand, participant AISP3 shared his experience of his friend who experienced a physical xenophobic attack due to his skin colour and appearance. This was shown when participant ISP3 stated:

*My experience off campus has been very bad because you never know who will protect you and who will attack you. In 2015, while I was in Durban heading into town with a group of friends, we didn't realise that xenophobic attacks were happening at that time. We saw people running away, and one of our friends, who was a bit darker and taller than the rest of us, was attacked. We tried to defend ourselves by throwing stones at the attackers. They targeted my friend because his darker skin made it obvious that he was a foreigner, and they threw a stone at him when he refused to cooperate with them about visas.*

According to Masikane et al (2020:36) “the bio-cultural theory maintains that xenophobia functions around cultural differences, as well as physical and biological characteristics such as skin colour, clothing style and the inability to speak an indigenous language”. These are all markers that promote xenophobia between local nationals and foreigners. Morris (1998) gives an example of Nigerians and Congolese being easily identifiable from other foreigners because of their physical being and their accent (Masikane et al, 2020). Nigerians are also singled out in the press

for being involved in the sale of counterfeit goods, whilst Mozambicans are said to bring exotic herbs that local healers do not know (Hickel 2014). Other nationalities that have distinguishable physical and facial features are the Somalis, Ethiopians, Pakistanis and people from Bangladesh (Masikane et al,2020). Masikane et al (2020) further argues that the biocultural hypothesis of xenophobia explains the asymmetrical targeting of African foreigners by South Africans.

In a similar vein, local participant LSP7 observed that African international students are often singled out and easily identified based on their skin color and physical appearance. This distinct visibility makes them more vulnerable to xenophobic attitudes and behaviours. Participant LSP7 noted that the physical differences between African international students and local South Africans often lead to immediate assumptions about their nationality, contributing to their experiences of exclusion and discrimination. This heightened visibility can make it challenging for AIS to blend in or avoid unwanted attention, further exacerbating their sense of alienation and insecurity. This is evident when participant LSP7 stated that:

*They are looked down upon wherever they go, and it's just unfair treatment they experience in all these spaces just because of where they're from. It's mostly due to the language they speak. But I think Africans do not look the same. You can often tell where someone is from by their facial structures because, you know, certain people have a specific kind of nose, or you know that Somalians have a bigger forehead. So, you see these characteristics in different African people where you can guess that this person is from a specific area or could be from there. It's visually their face, the way they speak, or their home language.*

Participant LSP7 highlights the complexities of identity, perception, and discrimination faced by African migrants, particularly in relation to physical appearance and language. This perspective aligns with the biocultural hypothesis, which suggests that both biological and cultural factors shape human behavior and social structures. The participant's assertion that Africans are "looked down upon" reflects broader issues of xenophobia and socio-political marginalization, as discussed by Khan (2007). Language barriers further contribute to exclusion, reinforcing the findings of Moris and Bouillon (2001) that language serves as both a communication tool and an identity marker, leading to stereotyping and discrimination. LSP7's observation that physical traits are used to identify and categorize people connects to Solomon (2003) and Landau (2009), who argue that appearance-based discrimination fosters xenophobic attitudes and social exclusion. Similarly, Stalker (2001) highlights how stereotypes based on nationality and ethnicity contribute to unfair

treatment.

The participant's experiences align with Amisi and Ballard (2005), who note that migrants often face systemic barriers to integration. However, LSP7's ability to articulate these challenges also reflects resilience, a theme explored by Crush and Williams (2005) in their research on migrant identity navigation. Addressing these issues requires initiatives that promote dialogue and cross-cultural understanding to reduce xenophobic attitudes and foster inclusivity in South African society.

Similarly, local participant LSP5 observed that some African international students dress like South Africans to avoid being recognised as foreigners. They do this to blend in and reduce the risk of facing potential negative experiences or discrimination. This is evident when participant LSP5 stated that:

*My observation is that when they go outside, they try their best not to be identified as foreigners, trying to fit in as if they are South Africans. They are afraid that if they are identified as not being South African, something might happen to them. But from my observation, some of them, not all, are uncomfortable when they are outside the house. They often want to dress like South Africans, and you rarely see them wearing Zimbabwean clothing or anything distinct. It seems they don't feel comfortable. For instance, if you compare a Zimbabwean born here with someone who just recently came here, the one who was born here is more comfortable than the one who recently arrived. Those who just came here don't feel like they belong, while those born here do feel like they belong and are used to South African living.*

The observation made by local participant LSP5 highlights the complex dynamics of identity, belonging, and fear among foreign nationals in South Africa, particularly Zimbabweans. Their observation that foreigners modify their appearance to blend in reflects Berry's (1997) concept of cultural adaptation, where individuals adopt assimilation strategies to avoid negative treatment. This aligns with Essed's (1991) discussion of how marginalised groups experience heightened vulnerability in hostile environments, leading to social exclusion and suppression of cultural identity. LSP5's distinction between South African-born individuals and recent arrivals connects to Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, which suggests that a strong sense of belonging affects social integration. The reluctance of newcomers to wear traditional Zimbabwean clothing can be understood through Hall's (1990) notion of cultural identity, where individuals feel pressured to conform to dominant cultural norms to avoid discrimination.

The fear and discomfort experienced by Zimbabwean migrants can also be linked to the psychological effects of xenophobia, as outlined by Mastroiello et al. (2016), which include anxiety and a diminished sense of self-worth. The biocultural hypothesis, which examines the interplay between biological and cultural influences on human behavior, further explains this phenomenon. As Gonzalez et al. (2010) argue, both genetic factors and cultural contexts shape social interactions, meaning that physical appearance and cultural perceptions of belonging directly impact how migrants navigate South African society.

#### **5.5.8 Main Theme 1: Positive Experience of the Campus Environment by AIS**

The sub-theme of the positive experience of the campus environment at UKZN highlights the uplifting aspects of university life for African international students (AIS). Despite facing challenges, some AIS reported positive experiences that significantly contribute to their overall well-being and academic success. These experiences often include supportive interactions with peers and faculty, engagement in cultural activities, and access to resources that foster a sense of belonging and integration. By focusing on these positive elements, this theme underscores the resilience and adaptability of AIS, as well as the role of the campus environment in enhancing their educational journey. While this study has highlighted the challenges these students face, including xenophobia, presenting a balanced view of their experiences is essential. The study states that among the 17 African international student participants, 7 reported not encountering any xenophobic experiences or witnessing such behaviour on campus. These participants expressed a sense of safety within the university environment, contrasting their perceptions of heightened xenophobia in off-campus settings. This was shown when participant AISP3 stated:

##### **5.5.8.1 Sub theme 1: Campus as a safe space for AIS than the xenophobia experienced off campus**

*My experience on campus is excellent. It's a place where I feel safe because most of the attacks I have seen and experienced have been off campus. Off-campus people don't have the heart of a human being, even towards women, which I didn't appreciate because we are all human, on campus I feel safer than in other places because when xenophobia happens, I find safety and comfort on campus because I get information from my friends on campus, about any xenophobia incidents for*

*me to be careful.*

The above view expressed by the participant regarding their experiences on campus highlights a significant contrast between the safety and support found within the university environment and the challenges faced off-campus, particularly concerning xenophobia. Participant AISP3 emphasises the sense of safety and comfort experienced on campus, noting that it is a refuge from the xenophobic incidents that occur off-campus. This aligns with Gumbo's (2014) findings, where students reported feeling supported by their peers and the university community. The presence of friends and a network of fellow students provides a crucial layer of protection and information, allowing them to navigate potential threats more effectively. This sense of belonging and security is vital to their positive experiences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

In a similar vein, participant AISP1 stated:

*For me, xenophobia is not experienced that much on campus because we get to attend workshops, classes, and things like that. It was not something you could hear or see, and most people on campus are also more enlightened, so they are also engaging in education and pursuing specific goals. So, it wasn't so much of an issue on campus. However, I experienced xenophobia off campus, where you find people in communities who are also salvaging to survive in a way, especially in townships. That's where you would find it more hectic.*

Participant AISP10 stated:

*Within the campus, you do not get to experience xenophobia because there are other foreigners there. Off-campus is where you mostly experience xenophobia when you are living as a resident, traveling to town or the surrounding areas. You experience it in different levels depending on how you are exposed and other factors.*

Participant AISP1 points out that xenophobia is less prevalent on campus due to the educational environment and the shared goals of students. This reflects Gumbo's (2014) observation that the university setting fosters a more inclusive atmosphere, where students from diverse backgrounds can engage with one another. The educational workshops and classes mentioned by AISP1 contribute to a culture of understanding and respect, which is essential for mitigating xenophobic attitudes. The positive experiences of forming friendships and engaging in intercultural learning at UKZN further support this notion, as highlighted by Chimucheka et al, (2019), who noted that such interactions enhance personal growth and understanding of cultural differences.

Both AISP1 and AISP10 highlight that xenophobia is more pronounced in off-campus settings, particularly in communities where individuals may be struggling to survive. This mirrors the challenges faced by Gumbo's (2014) participants, who also reported negative experiences related to xenophobia outside the university. Acknowledging these external challenges underscores the importance of the supportive environment that UKZN provides, allowing students to thrive despite the difficulties they may encounter in broader society. As Singh (2013) also noted, the experiences of international students are often shaped by the social dynamics of their host communities, which can exacerbate feelings of isolation and discrimination. Therefore, the participants' experiences suggest that the university environment not only offers safety but also equips students with coping mechanisms to deal with xenophobia. Sharing information about incidents and seeking support from friends on campus is crucial for their emotional well-being. This aspect of community support is echoed in Gumbo's (2014) findings, where maintaining connections with family and friends was identified as a key factor in helping students cope with their challenges.

In a similar view to African international Students, some of the Local Student participants did not witness or observe any xenophobia on campus for African international students. For example, according to participant LSP11:

*OK, I think that for most foreign students' campus is like a safe space even though there is within the campus, it's sort of less because of the type of people that you find at university where you find people who are well, people who are getting an education or higher education, so the people of a certain level of thinking, right. When they go outside of campus, right then, they encounter those who are perhaps not as well informed or not haven't been integrated. They haven't had an opportunity to mix with foreigners. So, when they go out of campus that cultural exclusion might be more extreme than it is on campus.*

Participant LSP5 stated that On Campus, all the students are fine, and we are all welcoming, but I think a part of them feel like they don't belong there.

Participant LSP15 stated that:

*I can't think of something xenophobic, or its synoptic acts happening on campus because I think highly of students who exist within the campus. So yeah, and most of our foreign African students that I have encountered are male students rather than female students. They are because they are always in soccer matches and they are well, you. I've never taken time to think about this and actually to look at it closely, hence why I say on campus, I don't think they like I've never heard anything.*



In light of the above views from both Local and African international students I also asked the representative from International Office if African international students face xenophobia. This was the response from participant RIS17:

*It's not entirely impossible for them to find themselves in such a situation. However, in my honest opinion, among the group of migrants in the country, African international students are among the least likely to be affected by xenophobia. This is because xenophobia often revolves around the scarcity of jobs, and these students are primarily focused on studying rather than working. Most instances of xenophobia are centred on livelihood issues. If international students were part of the job market, they might be at greater risk of encountering xenophobia both on and off campus. However, as students who are solely focused on their studies, the risk is considerably lower compared to those who are employed or engaged in business. For example, if someone runs a salon or business that competes with local establishments, they might face more significant risks of xenophobia.*

The above statements offer varying perspectives on the existence of xenophobia towards African international students on campus. Participant LSP5 acknowledges a sense of welcoming among students on campus but points out that some African international Students may still feel like they don't fully belong. Participant LSP15, while not personally witnessing xenophobic acts on campus, notes that most foreign African students encountered are male and often involved in soccer matches, and highlights the need for closer examination. The response from the international office representative (RIS17) provides a broader context, suggesting that, while not impossible for African international students to face xenophobia, their status as students rather than job-seekers or business competitors may reduce their vulnerability. RIS17 emphasises that xenophobia tends to center around issues of livelihoods, such as job scarcity, making African international students, primarily focused on studying, less likely targets. These perspectives collectively underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of the experiences of African international students on campus, with factors such as gender, activities, and economic roles contributing to the nuanced understanding of xenophobia.

## **5.6 Xenophobic Experience on Campus: views and observations of Local students at UKZN**

The theme of xenophobic experience on campus examines the perspectives and observations of local students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) regarding xenophobia faced by African international students (AIS). This theme explores how local students perceive and respond to incidents of xenophobia on campus, shedding light on their awareness of the

challenges faced by AIS and the broader implications of these experiences. By incorporating local students' views, this theme provides a nuanced understanding of the campus climate and highlights the role of the university community in addressing and mitigating xenophobic attitudes and behaviors.

### **5.6.1 Main Theme 1: AIS blamed for taking jobs and bursaries meant for local students**

One of the significant aspects of xenophobic sentiment on campus, as expressed by local students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), revolves around the perception that African international students are taking away opportunities meant for locals. These views are rooted in concerns that international students are being unfairly favoured in terms of jobs and bursaries, which some local students believe should be reserved for South African citizens. This belief contributes to tension and resentment, as local students feel that their economic and academic prospects are being undermined by the presence of international peers. The idea that African international students are "taking jobs and bursaries" reflects broader anxieties about competition for limited resources, exacerbating xenophobic attitudes and leading to a less inclusive campus environment. This is shown when participant LSP12 stated:

*Let's start with on-campus experiences. I think the main issue they face academically is being accused or blamed for taking bursaries meant for local students. This is one of the most significant forms of xenophobia they encounter. For example, if a bursary like the NRF is awarded to a deserving international or African foreign student, there will often be accusations and resentment directed at that student. The same applies to jobs on campus. If an African foreign national student is hired in any department, unjust accusations and xenophobic attitudes arise, with claims that they are taking our bursaries and jobs. These xenophobic acts, while not extreme, are present and have never been properly addressed.*

In light of the above view, a Journal article published by ACCORD in 2011 titled: It's not just Xenophobia: Factors that lead to violent attacks on foreigners in South Africa and the role of the Government argues that Scapegoat is a sociological theory of xenophobia which is seen within the context of social transition and change. Rejection of or hostility to foreigners in South Africa is related to limited resources, such as housing, education, health care and employment, in a period marked with high expectations, especially for black South Africans (Morris, 1998). A common belief in South Africa is that "every job given to a foreign national is one less job for a South African, and this is exacerbated by the unemployment rates, currently in the range of

20–30%” (ACCORD, 2011:12). Yet, no empirical evidence can support these beliefs, and some categories of migrant work have been shown to actually increase employment opportunities for South Africans.

### **5.6.2 Sub Theme 2: AIS accused of taking accommodation or campus residence meant for locals**

In addition to the academic and employment challenges faced by African international students, local students have also expressed concerns about campus accommodation. A prevalent issue is the accusation that African foreign students are taking up residence spaces that local students believe should be reserved for them. This perception has contributed to a growing sense of resentment and tension, further complicating the campus experience for African international students. This is shown when participant LSP12 stated:

*There is a notion that African nationals are facing xenophobic attitudes, particularly around campus, where they are often accused of taking spaces meant for local students. I remember that in the past two years, there has been a housing crisis in Scottsville, where there aren't enough on-campus university residences. This crisis has led to situations where students struggle to find accommodation. If, for example, an African student is granted a university residence, there can be a xenophobic response, with accusations that they are taking spaces while local students are left without places to stay. This issue is prevalent both on-campus and off-campus. In Scottsville, where there is a housing and residence crisis, you find that some communes accommodate African foreign students. This, in turn, sparks a xenophobic attitude, with some locals feeling that these students are taking up communes while they have no places to stay. These xenophobic attitudes are especially noticeable at the beginning of the year during the residence crisis and strikes. When these strikes occur, one of the issues often raised is the lack of available residences, which is then framed with a xenophobic attitude, claiming that foreign African nationals are being given university spaces while local students are left without."*

The above view from participant LSP12 is in line with research by Schoole (2015:2), as he states that finding accommodation was a particularly fraught area for our participants. One student said: “Accommodation is a huge problem, with discriminative rental practices by some rental agencies... who require an upfront rental payment for the whole year if you are a foreigner while locals are on a month-to-month payment plan and this bind and forces you to stay [for the whole year].” Schoole (2015) argues that African international students in South Africa are perceived as competitors for scarce resources, including jobs, accommodation, and funding, which fuels resentment from local students. This perception aligns with broader xenophobic sentiments, where foreigners are accused of taking opportunities away from South Africans. Additionally,

many migrants live in informal settlements marked by poverty and unemployment, intensifying competition for resources and reinforcing the scapegoating of black foreign nationals as the cause of economic hardships (McKnight, 2008).

At UKZN, African international students are specifically blamed for occupying on-campus residences at the expense of local students, leading to frustration and hostility. Durcan (2012) links this phenomenon to the scapegoating hypothesis, which suggests that xenophobia arises when local populations redirect their anger over economic struggles onto foreigners. However, a key criticism of this hypothesis is that it does not fully explain why foreigners particularly black migrants bear the brunt of this hostility in contemporary South Africa.

### **5.6.3 Main Theme 2: English Accent**

#### **5.6.3.1 Sub theme 1: Bad English accent and pronunciation by African foreign lecturers**

In examining the observations and views of local students at UKZN, another sub-theme that emerges is the perception of African foreign lecturers' English accents and pronunciation. One of the local participants has observed and expressed concerns about the way some African foreign lecturers speak English. These concerns often revolve around the accents and pronunciation of the lecturers, which some local students perceive as difficult to understand or less authoritative compared to native English speakers. This perception can impact the students' attitudes towards the lecturers and, in some cases, contribute to broader issues of xenophobia and bias within the academic environment. The view of LSP8 reveals the underlying issues related to language, accent, and the broader implications for intercultural interactions on campus. This is shown when participant LSP8 stated:

*Language barriers often arise because we expect African foreign lecturers to speak English without any accent. Even though South Africans speak English with an accent, we automatically assume that foreign lecturers should pronounce words the same way we do. When they don't, we tend to make fun of them. Sometimes, this leads to the use of terms from Nigerian movies, like "chineke," and making rude comments. I can personally relate to this issue. During my third year, many students wrote a petition to remove a Nigerian lecturer because they had difficulty understanding him due to his accent and pronunciation. Despite the lecturer's content being clear, students' ignorance led them to gather signatures to have him removed, and it was successful. Another issue I encountered was the perception that many academic jobs are given to foreign PhD students. Some also raised concerns about potential bias in grading, suggesting that a Nigerian lecturer might be*

*biased when marking South African students. However, I found it difficult to understand how bias could affect all students uniformly.*

Participant LSP8 highlights issues of language barriers, accent biases, and discrimination against African foreign lecturers in South Africa. The expectation that these lecturers should speak English without an accent, despite the linguistic diversity among South Africans themselves, reflects deep-seated prejudices. This bias leads to ridicule and exclusion, exacerbated by derogatory cultural references. Harris (2002) discusses the biocultural hypothesis, which explains how cultural and biological differences contribute to social marginalization, reinforcing discrimination against foreign nationals. A notable example is a petition to remove a Nigerian lecturer due to difficulties in understanding his accent, illustrating how language biases can overshadow academic expertise. Instead of focusing on the lecturer's knowledge and teaching quality, students fixated on his accent, leading to his unjust removal. This aligns with Dzansi and Monnapula-Mapesela's (2012) findings that language significantly impacts the perception and treatment of international academics. LSP8 also notes biases in hiring and grading, with some students assuming that foreign lecturers might grade unfairly due to their nationality. However, Smith and Khawaja (2011) argue that language barriers contribute more to exclusion than actual bias. Hurst (2014) emphasizes the need for language support in South African universities to address such challenges and promote fair treatment of non-native English-speaking lecturers.

#### **5.6.4 Main theme 1: Discrimination and Stereotyping:**

Discrimination and stereotyping are significant challenges African international students face at UKZN, as highlighted by one of the local students, Participant LSP10. This theme encompasses various issues, including discrimination based on nationality, race, and ethnicity, which often manifests as verbal harassment and microaggressions. The fear of reporting such incidents also contributes to increased isolation and social exclusion. Participant LSP10's observations underscore the critical need for effective measures to address these problems and create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment. This shown when participant LSP10 stated that:

*Well, foreign African students face discrimination or stereotyping based on their nationality, race, or ethnicity. They are subjected to negative stereotypes or assumptions about their background and abilities, which can lead to exclusion or marginalization. On and off campus, students may encounter verbal harassment and microaggressions, which are subtle, often unintentional, forms of*

*discrimination. These range from offensive comments to exclusionary behavior. Foreign African students experience unequal treatment in various aspects of campus life, such as housing, academic opportunities, and social activities. This can make it difficult for them to fully engage in the university experience. Some foreign African students struggle to find suitable housing, as landlords or roommates discriminate against them due to their nationality or race. Discrimination in the job market can make it challenging for foreign African students to secure part-time jobs, internships, or post-graduation employment opportunities. Xenophobia can result in foreign African students feeling isolated and excluded from social circles, which can impact their mental well-being and overall college experience. I have observed that due to fear of reprisal or a lack of trust in the system, some African international students are hesitant to report xenophobic incidents, which can perpetuate a cycle of discrimination within the university.*

Participant LSP10's view underscores the multifaceted discrimination faced by foreign African students in South Africa, closely aligning with the scapegoat theory. This theory suggests that foreign African students are unfairly blamed for societal problems, contributing to negative stereotypes that marginalize them as "others." LSP10 highlights how discrimination manifests not only in overt acts but also through subtle microaggressions, which can have a cumulative and detrimental impact on students' mental well-being, leading to feelings of alienation. The participant's mention of exclusion from social circles and unequal treatment in housing, academics, and job markets reflects systemic discrimination, reinforcing the scapegoat theory. This type of discrimination is often fueled by economic hardships or social instability, with foreign students unfairly blamed for the struggles of local populations. Scholars like Claassen (2008) argue that the perception of "undeserved access" to resources can exacerbate xenophobic behavior.

LSP10 also highlights that the fear of reprisal or distrust in the reporting system prevents foreign African students from addressing incidents of xenophobia, perpetuating a cycle of discrimination. This reluctance is compounded by a culture of silence rooted in the legacy of apartheid, as well as cultural and linguistic barriers. These challenges contribute to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and isolation among African international students, and hinder effective policy development. To address these problems, institutions need to improve trust in reporting mechanisms, protect victims, and foster an inclusive environment where all students feel safe and supported in reporting discrimination.

### 5.6.5 Sub-theme 1: The issue of name-calling, ill-treatment, and bullying

A significant sub-theme observed by local participants is the issue of name-calling, ill-treatment, and bullying. This sub-theme highlights the prevalence of derogatory language and hostile behavior directed at individuals, particularly those perceived as different due to their nationality, race, or ethnicity. Participants reported instances where such negative treatment undermines the dignity of those affected and contributes to a hostile and unwelcoming environment. Name-calling and bullying reflect deeper issues of discrimination and prejudice, impacting the well-being and sense of inclusion among AIS.

Participant LSP6 stated: *Well, I think through ill-treatment by either the community or other students on campus and also the communities they reside in, they're ill-treated, maybe due to their languages or being treated differently.*

Participant LSP7 stated that:

*it would probably be just interactions with other students on campus. Being made fun of, I see that many people feel comfortable using slurs and hurtful words against other African students. And maybe sometimes it's not being treated fairly by a lecturer just because you're from another country. That would be on and off campus; I guess their daily lives are probably filled with experiences from other black people, so yeah.*

Participant LSP4 stated:

*OK, I think they can get bullied on campus. They get bullied verbally and called names in a hidden way (makwerekwere and maziyizayi). I've also seen that if a girl is dating a foreign national, then that guy will be told to break up with the girl immediately. They will say now; you're taking our women, they also get bullied because, most of the time, their IQ is excellent. They're very, very smart. So to run the place, they also help other people with their assignments.*

Ndebele (2019) and Nyamnjoh (2016) discuss the term "makwerekwere," which is used in South Africa to refer to African foreign nationals, often in a derogatory manner. This term has sparked disputes due to its discriminatory nature and its role in marginalizing black foreigners. According to Nyamnjoh (2016), "makwerekwere" refers to outsiders, such as traders, asylum-seekers, students, and professionals, who cross borders without permission from locals. The experiences shared by participants LSP7 and LSP4 highlight the challenges faced by African international students, both on and off campus. LSP7 mentions verbal abuse and unfair treatment from other

students and lecturers, often based on nationality, indicating a lack of respect and fairness in the academic environment. LSP4 elaborates on the bullying and verbal abuse experienced by African international students, including derogatory terms like "makwerekwere" and "maziyizayi." The participant also notes social pressures, such as being told to end relationships with local partners due to unfounded accusations. While African international students are acknowledged for their intelligence and academic help, these positive aspects are overshadowed by the discriminatory pressures and expectations placed on them.

### **5.7 Xenophobic experiences off campus: Views and experiences of AIS**

This section provides an in-depth exploration of the xenophobic experiences that African international students (AIS) encounter in off-campus settings. While campus life may offer a relatively safer and more inclusive environment, many students have reported facing significant challenges and hostility once they step outside the university's gates. These off-campus experiences often include discrimination, verbal abuse, and social exclusion rooted in xenophobic attitudes from local people. This section reveals how these encounters affect students' sense of safety, belonging, and well-being. The study focuses on the day-to-day interactions of AIS in places such as public transportation, shopping centers, and other communal spaces; we aim to uncover the lived realities that AIS faces. Through their personal experiences, we better understand the broader societal tensions that contribute to these xenophobic experiences and their impact on the student's academic and social lives.

#### **5.7.1 Main Theme 1: Xenophobic attitude when taking public transport**

This sub-theme examines the xenophobic attitudes observed by local students and experienced by African international students when using public transport. Local students have noted the discomfort and fear that foreign students face, particularly regarding their freedom of speech and movement. African international students often experience these issues first-hand, with the language barrier playing a significant role in their interactions. Miscommunications due to different languages and accents can lead to misunderstandings, which often escalate tensions. Participants shared that these factors create an atmosphere of unease for African international students, making them feel unwelcome or even threatened in public transport settings. This theme



underscores the intersection of xenophobia, language barriers, and the basic freedoms of movement and expression, highlighting the importance of fostering a more inclusive and understanding environment in public spaces. This is shown when participant AISP1 stated:

*First of all, it was not easy for me to move around because you never know how people are going to react when you take public transport. When you speak English on public transport, it's easy for people to detect that you're a foreigner, and immediately, the attitude of those in the combi changes to the point where they don't even want to touch your money and pass it on to the conductor. Unfortunately, there was always a fear that something bad might happen; for example, one or two people might leave the combi and then follow you. They could say, 'This person is not from here,' and then they might attack you. So, it created a lot of discomfort in terms of freedom of speech and freedom of movement.*

Participant AISP13 also indicated that xenophobia in public spaces, especially in combis, is a nightmare.

*If you can't speak the language, you can't tell them where you want to get off, so you have to be very careful because you are surrounded by locals, and anything can happen. We are always afraid to speak because the moment we do; they will realize that you're a foreigner.*

Participant AISP3 stated:

*I kept quiet in the kombis and taxis because I was afraid of being attacked, especially when they said 'Kwerekwere.' I stay silent to avoid being noticed. The most frustrating thing is when you speak to someone in an English shop, and they respond in Zulu. Even though they can tell from your accent that you don't understand Zulu, they continue speaking it. When you tell them you don't understand, they say, 'This is South Africa, this is KwaZulu-Natal, and you should speak Zulu.' One person even asked me how long I had been in South Africa, and when I responded, '80 years,' she said something in Zulu.*

The experiences shared by participants AISP1, AISP13, and AISP3 highlight the pervasive nature of xenophobia in South Africa, particularly in public spaces like transport and residential areas. These narratives reveal a complex mix of fear, social exclusion, and cultural barriers faced by foreign migrants. AISP1 expresses fear when using public transport, where speaking English often provokes hostility from locals, reflecting Neocosmos's (2008) view that xenophobia is rooted in socioeconomic anxieties and perceived threats to local identity. AISP13 describes public spaces as a "nightmare," reinforcing the uncomfortable climate of hostility, while AISP3 highlights language barriers as a major factor in exclusion, with locals insisting on speaking Zulu despite the foreigner's struggle.

The pressure to assimilate linguistically leads to marginalisation, as noted by Adjai and Lazaridis (2013). AISP3's coping strategy of remaining silent on public transport to avoid attention reflects the concept of "strategic silence" (MacGregor, 2009), where individuals protect themselves by withholding expression. While this survival tactic mitigates risk, it also perpetuates xenophobia by allowing discriminatory behavior to continue unchecked. The participants' stories emphasize their desire for community and belonging, which is often thwarted by xenophobic attitudes, highlighting the need for inclusive practices to help migrants integrate. These experiences underscore the complexity of xenophobia, calling for immediate policy reforms to protect migrant rights and ensure equal access to resources. Additionally, there is a need for greater cultural understanding, as many negative attitudes stem from misconceptions about migrants, particularly in public spaces. Addressing these issues could foster a more inclusive environment for all individuals, regardless of their background.

Similarly, local students have also observed xenophobic attitudes directed at African international students (AIS) when they use public transport. These observations include witnessing the discomfort and exclusion that AIS often experiences, such as being ignored or treated with hostility by drivers and passengers alike. Local students have noted how AIS are remain silent or reserved to avoid drawing attention to themselves, fearing that speaking up, especially in English or a foreign language, might provoke negative reactions or even aggression from those around them.

This is shown when Participant LSP15 stated:

*I've noticed that foreign people in taxis tend to be more reserved and quieter. In taxis, people usually chat, but they remain silent. You only see them when they're talking on their phones; you can tell they're not South Africans. They don't want to be noticed, so they keep to themselves.*

Participant LSP14 stated:

*I've seen it with taxi drivers. I have experienced not very good treatment, especially here in KwaZulu-Natal. You must know the language because taxi drivers will never speak to you in any language other than isiZulu. You might try to communicate with the driver, asking to be dropped off at a specific place, and the driver will respond in a dismissive or unfriendly manner, unlike how I've seen them treat white people, Indians, or Coloureds, who speak English. You can see the difference in how they treat you.*

Participant LSP9 stated:

*It is horrific every morning because I take public transport to the university, and most of the time,*

*foreign nationals also commute to school or work. You might find that they're trying to communicate in Zulu but struggle with the language, and people just assume they should be able to speak it. Even if it's clear from their attire that they're not local, people will still converse with them in Zulu. The public transport workers are not considerate and often find it irritating to speak English. They just want to communicate in their home language and don't care if you understand. I see the discrimination.*

The observations from local participants highlight significant issues of xenophobia and cultural exclusion faced by foreign nationals in South African public transport. Participant LSP15 notes that foreign individuals tend to be more reserved in taxis, likely as a coping mechanism to avoid drawing attention due to perceived hostility. LSP14 points out language barriers, particularly the dismissive treatment of non-Zulu speakers by taxi drivers, which reflects a systemic bias that favors certain racial and linguistic groups. Similarly, LSP9 emphasizes the expectation for all individuals to speak isiZulu, regardless of their background, further excluding those who cannot speak the language.

These experiences align with the biocultural hypothesis, which suggests that both cultural practices and biological factors shape behavior and social dynamics. The observations resonate with the work of scholars like Adjai and Lazaridis (2013), who discuss the pervasive nature of xenophobia in public spaces, and Valji (2003), who describes the "othering" process that marginalizes migrants. Otu (2017) and Neocosmos (2008) further highlight that covert xenophobia is deeply embedded in South African society, contributing to an environment where foreign nationals feel unwelcome. Thus, these observations underscore the challenges of language barriers, discriminatory treatment, and cultural insensitivity in public transport.

### **5.7.2 Sub-theme 1: African foreign nationals expected to speak isiZulu based on the number of years lived in SA**

In exploring the linguistic challenges faced by African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), one significant sub-theme that emerged is the expectation for foreign nationals to speak isiZulu, particularly after residing in South Africa for several years. Many participants shared that they frequently encounter situations where their ability to communicate in isiZulu is assumed, primarily based on their stay in the country. This expectation adds a layer of pressure. It often contributes to feelings of exclusion or inadequacy, especially for those

without the opportunity or resources to learn the language. This is shown when participant AISP10 stated that:

*Off-campus is where you mostly experience xenophobia when you are living as a resident, traveling to town or the surrounding areas. You experience it at different levels depending on how you are exposed and other factors. One instance was when I was going to Durban, when I was coming back, I wanted to be dropped off by hayfields, but when I tried to talk to the driver in English, he started saying he did not understand (while saying it in English) then I asked the person next to me to please explain that I want to be dropped off by hayfields, then the person I was talking to also said that she does not understand English. The other experience is when someone says something in Zulu, and you don't understand, they will brush it off like they said nothing. They assume you have been here for a long time, and you should now be able to speak their language.*

AISP10's experiences can be analyzed through scapegoat theory, which suggests that marginalized groups are blamed for broader societal issues, such as unemployment and crime. The participant's struggles with language, particularly not being fluent in Zulu, led to their scapegoating, with frustrations projected onto them as foreigners. This aligns with Otu's (2017) idea that anti-foreign sentiments often stem from local grievances misdirected at outsiders. The isolation hypothesis also applies, as AISP10 felt excluded from social interactions due to language barriers, exacerbating feelings of alienation.

The expectation for foreigners to speak Zulu is a barrier to integration, reinforcing a cycle of exclusion and disconnection, which can hinder both social and academic integration. This highlights the need for initiatives promoting language learning and cultural exchange to help foreign migrants feel more included. The experiences also reflect the ongoing effects of apartheid, with foreign migrants viewed with suspicion, as described by Adjai and Lazaridis (2013). Xenophobia in South Africa, according to Neocosmos (2008), often stems from local economic and social anxieties, further fueling hostility toward migrants. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge historical grievances and work towards social cohesion, promoting an inclusive environment that values cultural diversity rather than demanding assimilation. Efforts should focus on celebrating multiculturalism, where different languages and cultures are respected and integrated into the social fabric.

Participant AISP9 stated:

*The moment someone speaks to you in Zulu and you don't respond, you can immediately tell from their facial expression and tone that they are displeased. The next question is usually, 'How long*

*have you been in South Africa?' If you make the mistake of telling them you've been here for years, they often respond with, 'But why can't you speak Zulu? If you are in our country, you should communicate in Zulu.' They can be rude and cold-hearted towards foreigners, especially in shopping centers and malls. For example, when you go to a place like Checkers and are served by the cashiers, if they speak to you in Zulu and you can't respond, you can sense their attitude change.*

Participant AISP14 stated:

*Off-campus, when I was at the airport in South Africa, the person checking my Nigerian passport was highly annoyed and said, 'Oh, there's another one,' even though the university had granted me admission. That was when I realized that some South Africans don't like foreigners. On buses, I was always scared, pretending to be asleep so people wouldn't notice I was a foreigner. People immediately looked at me at the market as if I wasn't human. I genuinely thought I was going to be killed that day on the bus; the people were older than me, and it felt like being in a lion's den when they discovered I was a foreigner. Even my medical insurance was restricted in many ways, and most bursaries were only available to South Africans. When I applied for a visa to finish my studies, they delayed and denied the letter for my visa renewal.*

Participant AISP9 highlights the social consequences of not speaking Zulu, illustrating how language serves as a cultural marker that can lead to exclusion. The expectation to speak Zulu reflects a societal priority on local identity, with language acting as both a tool for inclusion and exclusion. The participant's experience with cashiers changing their attitude when they couldn't respond in Zulu underscores how non-verbal cues and language shape social acceptance. This supports the biocultural hypothesis, which suggests cultural differences can lead to marginalization. Proficiency in the local language, particularly Zulu, is a social expectation in South Africa, and not speaking it can result in exclusion.

Participant AISP14 shares an encounter with xenophobia at the airport, where a dismissive comment about their Nigerian passport reflects societal disdain for foreigners. This aligns with Cross and Johnson's (2008) assertion that international students can provoke insecurity in locals, leading to xenophobia. The participant's fear of being identified as a foreigner in public spaces further illustrates the psychological toll of xenophobia, creating a sense of danger and vulnerability. The metaphor of being in a "lion's den" captures this precarious situation, emphasizing the constant threat foreign nationals face. Systemic discrimination, such as limited access to medical insurance and bursaries, exacerbates these challenges. This reflects Gumbo's (2014) findings on the difficulties international students face in accessing resources, impacting their well-being and academic success. Therefore, these narratives highlight the complex

intersection of language, xenophobia, psychological well-being, and systemic discrimination, pointing to the urgent need for inclusive policies and support for foreign nationals.

### **5.7.3 Main theme 3: Xenophobic attitude in the healthcare sector**

The theme of "Xenophobic Attitude in the Healthcare Sector" reveals significant challenges faced by African international students (AIS) when accessing medical services. Participants highlighted experiences of xenophobia at public clinics and hospitals, where they encountered discriminatory attitudes and poor treatment from healthcare professionals. This negative interaction often leads AIS to avoid seeking medical help from formal healthcare facilities, opting instead to self-medicate at home. This reluctance to engage with the healthcare system underscores a critical barrier to accessing necessary health services and reflects broader issues of discrimination and exclusion within institutional settings.

Participant AISP13 stated that:

*Outside the campus, I would start with the public clinic. We are afraid to go there because the moment they see your passport or greet you in the local language and you don't reply, their expressions change, and you can feel the difference in their body language. Secondly, when you go to the malls, especially places like Checkers and Woolworths if they greet you and you don't respond in Zulu, it becomes a problem. You can see their faces change. Those bold enough will ask why you are here if you can't speak Zulu. Sometimes, when people ask us for directions, and we respond in English, it becomes a problem. You can see the anger. Going downtown or to the CBD is always a nightmare.*

Participant AISP13 expresses the pervasive fear and anxiety that African international students experience when navigating public spaces, particularly healthcare facilities and shopping centres. This fear is rooted in the anticipation of xenophobic reactions based on their perceived foreignness, which is exacerbated by language barriers. The participant's observation that "the moment they see your passport or greet you in the local language, and you don't reply, their expressions change" highlights the immediate shift in social dynamics when individuals are identified as outsiders. This aligns with the findings of Zihindula and Meyer-Weitz (2017), who discuss how medical xenophobia manifests in healthcare settings, where refugees often face discrimination and hostility from healthcare workers due to language barrier. The above participant's experience can be analysed through the lens of scapegoat theory, which posits that marginalised groups are often

blamed for broader societal issues, leading to their dehumanisation and mistreatment. According to authors like Dollard et al. (1939), scapegoating occurs when individuals or groups project their frustrations onto a convenient target. The participant's mention of being questioned about their presence in South Africa if they cannot speak Zulu reflects this scapegoating dynamic, as it suggests that their inability to conform to local language expectations makes them targets for resentment and hostility. As a researcher, I find the participant's view striking because it reveals the subtle yet profound ways in which xenophobia operates in everyday interactions. The participant's description of the "change" in expressions and body language is a powerful reminder of how non-verbal cues can communicate exclusion and hostility. It underscores the emotional toll that such experiences take on African international students. The fear of being judged or confronted in public spaces can lead to isolation and alienation, further compounding the challenges they face in accessing essential services, including healthcare.

Participant AISP1 stated:

*My experience in accessing public services was challenging, particularly regarding healthcare. Going to public hospitals and interacting with local staff was a source of anxiety for me. I often felt genuinely afraid of what might happen, as I was aware that many of the healthcare workers might have been ideologically influenced by propaganda suggesting that foreigners are depleting the country's healthcare resources. This environment, where people are derogatorily referred to as "Makwerekwere," strips away their human identity and makes it easier for them to be mistreated. Consequently, it was extremely difficult for me to visit hospitals, and I frequently resorted to self-medication out of fear of encountering potentially hostile nurses and staff.*

According to Participant AISP4:

*Outside the campus, I faced discrimination at the hospital. I once got sick and was admitted while unconscious. When I woke up, I asked where I was in English, and the person who responded did so in Zulu with a very harsh tone. I was too scared to ask any further questions. Fortunately, the machines I was connected to alerted a doctor, and he came to speak with me kindly. I stayed in that hospital for two months. While the doctors were good, the nurses were unwilling to speak English. They only began to take better care of me after my family provided them with something. It is also said that if you use a passport at hospitals, you may be told to bring an affidavit from the police the next time you seek treatment. This makes people afraid to go to public hospitals, fearing they might receive the wrong medication.*

The experiences shared by Participant AISP1 and Participant AISP4, both African international students, provide critical insights into the challenges they face in accessing healthcare services in South Africa. Their narratives reflect the broader context of medical xenophobia on Congolese

refugees, as discussed by (Zihindula and Meyer-Weitz 2017), and highlight the unique struggles that foreign nationals encounter, which their status can compound as foreigners in a country grappling with xenophobic sentiments. This is shown in Zihindula and Meyer-Weitz's (2017:4 62) findings when one participant recounted, *"I was denied treatment simply because I could not speak IsiZulu and the nurse sent me home"*. This lack of communication affected the relationship with healthcare workers and had negative implications for treatment management.

Participant AISP1 expresses anxiety when interacting with local healthcare staff, fearing mistreatment due to the stereotype that foreigners are a burden on resources. This fear aligns with scapegoat theory, where marginalized groups are blamed for societal problems, leading to discrimination. The derogatory term "Makwerekwere" dehumanizes foreigners, making them more vulnerable to mistreatment, and deterring African international students from seeking necessary medical care. In my view, it is evident that the fear of encountering hostile healthcare workers can lead African international students to avoid seeking medical attention altogether, opting instead for self-medication. This behaviour jeopardises their health and reflects a broader systemic issue where the healthcare system fails to provide a safe and supportive environment for all individuals, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds. The anxiety expressed by participant AISP1 underscores the urgent need for healthcare workers to receive training on cultural sensitivity and the importance of treating all patients with respect and dignity, regardless of their nationality. Participant AISP4's experience further illustrates the challenges faced by African international students, particularly language barriers, which lead to feelings of isolation and fear when interacting with healthcare staff. The reliance on family support for proper care exposes inequities in the healthcare system, where access to care depends on social resources rather than being a basic right.

Local students have also observed xenophobic attitudes in the healthcare sector, where African international students are treated differently due to language barriers and cultural differences. These observations underscore the pervasive nature of xenophobia, extending into critical sectors like healthcare, with serious implications for the well-being of affected individuals. This shown when participant LSP12 stated:

*Yes, in those areas and communities, mainly because of that incident with the Minister of Health in Limpopo, for example, they said they would deny healthcare services to foreign nationals, claiming they are 'taking over our clinics,' to quote her. There is a xenophobic attitude even in the*



*public service, particularly in rural areas. If you go to rural areas, you'll find foreign nationals who often use crafts and do things with their hands to make a living. Despite this, there is still a xenophobic attitude that they are here to take our jobs, even though most of the things they are selling are items they have made themselves skills that even many South Africans do not have.*

Participant LSP3 stated:

*I've witnessed this recently when it comes to healthcare. I remember that there was also a student from Malawi who was sick when I was sick. This person wasn't my friend; it was someone I met because we were both unwell. We were both transferred to the hospital in Edendale to see a doctor. I remember when we got there, the treatment was different. They wanted your documents, ID, and everything before they saw you. Because you're a foreigner, you couldn't get treatment without them. That's what I saw, and I guess it was discriminatory in a way because someone could be dying, and what they're worried about is their documentation. The student didn't have their documents; they only had their student card because we were both students. This is a public hospital, and we already had a referral letter from the doctor at school. Why do we always need to carry our documents wherever we go? But when we got there, we found out that for them to open a file for you to get treatment in the hospital, they want your ID, proof of residence, and all of that.*

Participant LSP14 stated:

*Yes, I have seen this at the clinics. Foreign nationals are attended to in a different way than locals. It even asks, 'Why are you here as a foreign national using South African resources when you don't even pay taxes?' Those kinds of remarks are common. Even when you find a clinic that does attend to foreign nationals, that clinic often gets a reputation for catering mostly to foreigners and not to locals, which can create conflict even in taxis.*

The observations made by local participants reveal significant issues of xenophobia and discrimination against foreign nationals in the healthcare sector. Participant LSP12 describes an incident where healthcare services were denied to foreign nationals, reflecting the belief that they are a burden on public resources, which is a common theme in xenophobic discourse. This aligns with the biocultural hypothesis, which suggests that historical grievances and current economic pressures contribute to the perception of foreign nationals as competitors for limited resources.

Participant LSP3 shares an experience of a Malawian student facing discrimination in a public hospital due to lack of documentation, highlighting systemic barriers and cultural biases that prioritize citizenship over humanitarian concerns. Similarly, LSP14 emphasizes that foreign nationals are often seen as taking jobs and resources from locals, fueling resentment and economic competition. This perception, rooted in in-group favoritism and out-group hostility, is explained by the biocultural hypothesis, which suggests that cultural narratives shape how individuals perceive others and their place within the social hierarchy.

The legacy of apartheid continues to influence attitudes towards foreign nationals, with locals viewing them as intruders rather than contributors. This historical context, combined with resource scarcity, creates conflict and reinforces a zero-sum mentality where one group's success is seen as another's loss. The biocultural hypothesis underscores how such conflicts are exacerbated by cultural narratives framing resource allocation as competitive rather than cooperative.

#### **5.7.4 Sub-theme 1: Xenophobia at the Maternity Ward**

In a similar vein, Participant AISP9 shares their experience of xenophobia at the Maternity Ward, highlighting the challenges faced by African international students in accessing essential healthcare services. This participant recounts feeling marginalised and mistreated during their visits to the hospital, where negative attitudes from healthcare workers created an environment of fear and distrust. This shown when participant AISP9 stated:

*Off-campus, xenophobia is also very real. I can start with my first experience when I went to deliver my first baby. Yoh, I shed tears. Some nurses there are very rude to foreigners not just me, but all foreigners. They even ask things like, so you guys get pregnant in your country and then come to South Africa to give birth because we have free maternity services here?' Some go as far as questioning, 'Why did you come to South Africa? And if you're here, why are you giving birth here? You should wait until you go back to your country to give birth. I found it rough in the healthcare sector, especially for vulnerable mothers in pain. Some were given beds, but I was sitting next to my baby's crib daily until one lady asked, 'Why are you sitting here? I see people who came yesterday have beds.' I told her I didn't know. When they spoke to me in IsiZulu, I couldn't respond. There was a girl who even stood up for me; she said, 'No, this is not fair.' It was bad. I was advised to report some of the nurses, but I chose not to because my baby's health was my priority, and I didn't want to get into any fights. In the health sector, I went through a lot with my daughter, and all this discrimination was from Zulus, not whites or Indians, but from black South Africans. However, when you meet white people, they are often the ones standing up for us foreigners.*

In line with the above experience, the Scarlabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA 2023) highlights barriers faced by migrant women in accessing maternal healthcare in South Africa, such as language barriers, lack of documentation, and medical xenophobia. These challenges are exacerbated by stereotypes and negative attitudes from healthcare providers. Participant AISP9's experience in the Maternity Ward exemplifies these issues, where she faced rudeness and discrimination from nurses, particularly due to her status as an African international student. This reflects a broader pattern of xenophobia, where foreign nationals are treated as

burdens on the healthcare system.

AISP9's experience is compounded by language barriers and a lack of appropriate medical aid coverage, as many international students opt for affordable plans that do not cover essential services like hospitalization or maternity. This situation reflects the scapegoat theory, where foreign nationals are blamed for societal issues like strain on public resources, leading to further discrimination. Despite facing hostility, another patient's solidarity highlights the potential for marginalized groups to support one another. The participant's decision not to report the nurses' behavior due to fear of conflict underscores the power dynamics in healthcare settings. Furthermore, the observation that black South Africans were more likely to discriminate, while white individuals were more supportive, illustrates the complex racial dynamics within xenophobia in South Africa, suggesting that socio-economic and historical contexts influence how support and discrimination play out.

### **5.7.5 Main theme 5: Use of Derogatory Terms and Name Calling**

Participants AISP5 and AISP8 highlighted the pervasive issue of derogatory terms and name-calling experienced by African international students, shedding light on two specific sub-themes: name-calling at school (primary and secondary schools) for foreign African children) and name-calling and derogatory terms (makwerekwere and amazayi zayi) in South African Communities. Participant AISP5 recounted experiences of name-calling in both primary and secondary schools, where foreign African children faced derogatory labels. This form of bullying not only impacted their self-esteem but also contributed to feelings of isolation and exclusion within the school environment. Participant AISP8 provided insights into how derogatory terms such as "Makwerekwere" and "Amazayi zayi" are commonly used in South African communities to refer to foreign Africans. These terms are employed in various contexts, including public spaces and community interactions, further alienating foreign nationals and reinforcing negative stereotypes. This is shown when participant AISP5 stated:

*Another issue is that my daughter sometimes struggles at school, even though she can speak a little bit of Zulu. At one point, she mentioned that during a class discussion about not wanting foreigners, her classmates started saying that "Makwerekwere" or "AmaZayi zayi" should go back to their countries. She asked them how they expected her to feel during such a discussion when she was present. They responded that they were not referring to her and that she was different. It's situations like these that make it difficult for her to fit in, especially because of the language barrier.*

*Even at church, the Zulus tend to gravitate towards each other, while Kenyans, Nigerians, and other foreign nationals prefer to make friends with others from their own countries. There is a lack of unity even at the church level.*

In a similar vein, participant AISP8 stated:

*I enrolled my kids at school, but because maybe of talking in English. So, they are told straight in their face, you don't know Zulu, do you? And they are called names like makwere-kwere. So, they came home about the incidents at school and about the bad word, they didn't know what it meant. The locals feel superior to other African nationals more like a superiority complex. So, they feel like people from other African countries are a bit lower than them.*

The above experiences shared by participants AISP5 and AISP8 provide a poignant insight into the challenges faced by foreign learners in South Africa, particularly in relation to xenophobia, social integration, and the impact of language barriers. Their narratives reflect broader societal attitudes and cultural dynamics that contribute to the marginalisation of foreign nationals. Participant AISP5 highlights her daughter's struggle to fit in at school, despite her ability to speak some Zulu. The derogatory terms "Makwerekwere" and "AmaZayi zayi" used by her classmates during discussions about foreigners illustrate a hostile environment that alienates non-South Africans. This aligns with Gopal (2013), who notes that foreign learners often experience emotional and physical exposure to xenophobia, which significantly affects their sense of belonging and self-esteem. The participant's observation that Zulu speakers tend to cluster together while foreign nationals gravitate towards their own communities underscores the lack of integration and unity, even in social settings like church.

Participant AISP8's account reveals a similar theme of exclusion, where children are openly ridiculed for their inability to speak Zulu. The assertion that locals feel superior to other African nationals reflects a deeply ingrained sense of ethnocentrism. This superiority complex fosters an environment where foreign nationals are viewed as inferior, exacerbating feelings of alienation and discrimination. This phenomenon is supported by the work of Crush and Ramachandran (2010), who argue that xenophobia in South Africa is often rooted in socioeconomic competition and cultural misunderstandings. The participant's mention of children not understanding the derogatory terms used against them highlights the insidious nature of xenophobia, as it is perpetuated without the awareness of those who are affected. Thus, the above views reveal broader societal attitudes towards foreign nationals, suggesting that xenophobia is not just an individual

issue but a systemic problem rooted in cultural dynamics and socio-economic factors. This implies that addressing xenophobia requires a comprehensive approach that involves education, community engagement, and policy changes to foster inclusivity.

Similarly, local participants also observed the use of derogatory terms and name-calling directed at African international students (AIS). They noted instances where locals would refuse to pay for goods and services provided by foreigners, using derogatory terms like "Makwerekwere" and "Amazayi zayi" to demean them. These observations highlight the pervasive xenophobia in South African communities, where such offensive language and discriminatory behavior are commonly used to alienate and marginalize AIS. This was shown when Participant LSP15 stated:

*When they are passing by, derogatory terms are used about them. From my experience in the community, especially when South Africans are alone, they make those remarks and create names for foreigners. When a South African encounters a foreigner, they might not be openly hostile, but it happens behind closed doors. It's like they express their true feelings when they are not directly confronted.*

Participant LSP14 stated:

*What I usually notice is the name-calling. Foreigners are given derogatory names, such as 'Makwerekwere' and 'Amazayi zayi,' which are very insulting. You hear this, especially from those who run small shops in rural areas or townships. My friends sometimes don't know how to pronounce foreigners' names and simply refer to them as 'My friend'. There are also many Zimbabweans selling items on the street. They go from house to house, but often their items are stolen or they face disrespect. For example, if you want to buy something and don't have money, they might give it to you with the promise that you'll pay later. When they come to collect the money, it can become a problem, with people making excuses or claiming there's no money, even when they do have it. This undermines their business and contributes to a negative perception. However, it's also worth noting that foreign nationals in South Africa are often recognised for their superior skills compared to locals, especially in areas like plumbing, woodwork, and other handicrafts. For instance, in my neighbourhood, we know that foreign nationals are better at fitting tiles, cupboards, and gates. They are preferred for these jobs over locals.*

The observations from Participants LSP15 and LSP14 provide a detailed insight into the complex interactions between South African citizens and foreign nationals, particularly concerning xenophobia. LSP15 notes the derogatory term "Makwerekwere" used to describe foreigners, a label that dehumanizes them and reinforces in-group favoritism while fostering discrimination against out-groups. This aligns with Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, which posits that individuals derive part of their identity from group affiliations, leading to prejudice against out-

groups. The tendency to express such hostility discreetly reflects a societal reluctance to challenge these biases publicly, as explained by Goffman's concepts of "front stage" and "back stage" behavior.

Participant LSP14 connects name-calling and disrespect towards foreigners, particularly Zimbabweans in trade, to economic competition. Locals often view these foreigners as economic threats, which reinforces Mkhize and Makau's view that derogatory terms arise from perceived competition for opportunities. Crush and Ramachandran highlight that this economic marginalization fosters negative perceptions of foreign nationals, who are sometimes seen as exploiting local resources. Despite xenophobic sentiments, LSP14 acknowledges the valuable skills that foreign nationals bring, complicating the narrative and supporting Maharaj's assertion that they can be both scapegoated and appreciated for their economic contributions.

LSP14's observations also reflect power conflict theory, indicating that competition for limited resources can lead to conflict. The derogatory language noted by LSP15 serves as a means for South Africans to assert dominance and exclude foreigners from economic opportunities. Coser's conclusions imply that competition can incite hostility towards perceived threats, while the derogatory labels maintain social hierarchies and power dynamics. Dahrendorf emphasizes that social conflict often emerges from power struggles, which is evident in the described interactions. LSP14's experiences of disrespect faced by foreign nationals in business transactions illustrate how economic marginalization can heighten tensions, reflecting Maharaj's findings that foreigners are frequently viewed as economic adversaries, thus intensifying discrimination.

### **5.8 Xenophobic experiences off campus: Views and observations of local students**

The theme of xenophobic experiences off campus through the observations and views of local participants. When addressing this issue, local students mentioned several sub-themes, including concerns about South African women bringing foreign men into local communities, the prevalence of Afrophobia, and the concept of self-hate among Black people. Additionally, participants linked these xenophobic attitudes to the lingering effects of apartheid history. Other sub-themes included discomfort with foreign African foods, particularly issues with how these foods are prepared and the unfamiliar smells, which some locals found problematic. These insights reveal a complex range

of factors contributing to xenophobia beyond the university setting.

### **5.8.1 Main theme 1:SA women bringing foreign men in SA communities**

A local participant highlighted the theme of South African women bringing foreign men into their communities. This often sparks xenophobic attitudes and tensions, as these relationships are sometimes viewed with suspicion or resentment by local residents. The presence of foreign men in these communities, especially when connected to local women, can lead to increased hostility and xenophobic behaviour, further complicating social dynamics and integration efforts within the community. This is revealed when Participant LSP9 stated:

*Since I moved to a new area in the township, we initially had houses in the township where we were staying. We sold those houses in the suburbs. One time, I was in a taxi going to town, and this old man said that the people living in this area can't even pronounce their surnames because they are not from here. He then proceeded to say, "Yeah, it's these women." He was obviously referring to South African women who are bringing these people to live in this area. And I'm thinking, "Oh, so now we can't really work, earn money, and come here without being associated with having kids with these people so they can financially provide for us." I found that quite disturbing, especially coming from an old gentleman who was probably over 65. It shows a mentality that young South African women who stand out and give access to foreign nationals, particularly men, are now being judged for dating or marrying them. That's what he said, and I found it hurtful because it implies that South African women are unable to build beautiful houses on their own. Secondly, he's basically telling us that if we have a relationship with someone who is not of the same nationality, we are somehow betraying the country.*

The local female participant's insights reveal the intricate relationship between identity, gender, and xenophobia in South Africa, particularly in interactions with foreign men. Her experiences indicate the societal pressures and prejudices prevalent in multicultural settings, emphasizing how xenophobia is often linked with gender dynamics. The old man's comments suggest a tendency to blame women for perceived threats from foreign men, echoing findings by Sigsworth et al. (2023) that migrant women face increased scrutiny for their relationships with foreigners, viewed as a betrayal of national identity.

The assertion that women rely on foreign men for financial stability illustrates broader economic anxieties and the perception that migrants threaten local resources, a concern highlighted by Crush and Ramachandran (2010). This stereotype undermines the autonomy of South African women

and complicates social cohesion in a diverse society. Landau (2011) notes that local fears about foreign presence can lead to challenges in integrating migrants, fostering exclusionary attitudes. Moreover, the expectation for women to avoid engaging with foreign men reflects traditional gender roles. Mohanty (2014) points out that women are often judged more harshly than men in cross-cultural contexts. The participant's emotional response underscores the psychological burden of societal judgments, which can lead to stigma and isolation, as discussed by Bhugra (2004). Therefore, the highlighted experience emphasizes the need to challenge harmful stereotypes associated with relationships between South African women and foreign men, advocating for an inclusive understanding of personal choices that transcend national boundaries rather than viewing them as societal betrayals.

### **5.8.2 Main theme 2: Afrophobia and Self-hate of black people**

A local participant discussed the sub-theme of Afrophobia, highlighting the issue of self-hate among black individuals. This participant observed that internalised racism and negative self-perceptions often manifest within black communities, leading to self-hatred and further complicating the dynamics of xenophobia. This self-hate can exacerbate feelings of alienation and contribute to a broader atmosphere of Afrophobia, where both external prejudices and internalised biases impact the well-being and social integration of black individuals. This was shown when participant LSP14 stated:

*They would never find South Africans treating white people, Chinese, or Indians the way they treat fellow Africans. To me, this always points to self-hate. When we talk about Africans, we are referring to people across colonial borders that were not created by Africans. Yet, when white people mistreat South Africans, we are often afraid to speak out. For instance, during the looting in Phoenix in 2021, no one said anything about the mistreatment by Indians because there is a fear of speaking out against them.*

In line with the above view from Participant LSP14, Chamisa (2021) argues that the violence often labeled as xenophobia in South Africa should be understood as Afrophobia, highlighting that these attacks primarily target black Africans based on their race and country of origin. This creates a detrimental cycle of hatred and conflict within communities, fostering tension among people. Chamisa points out the irony of Afrophobia, questioning why Africans would harbor fear or hatred towards one another, particularly when they already feel unwelcome both in foreign lands and



within Africa itself. Similarly, Dube (2018) notes that Afrophobia reflects a fear of other Africans, evolving to signify hatred towards fellow Africans. This black-on-black violence stems from the apartheid era's restrictive policies, which limited South Africans' opportunities to engage with other nations.

The concept of self-hate, as expressed by LSP15, can be analyzed through the isolation hypothesis, which suggests that systemic oppression leads marginalized individuals to internalize negative stereotypes about their own identity. This internalization can result in alienation and hostility towards other Africans, as highlighted by Fanon (1967), who discusses how colonial oppression results in feelings of inferiority.

LSP15's observation regarding the fear of addressing the mistreatment of non-Africans can be linked to a perceived lack of solidarity among marginalized groups, creating a sense of isolation. The historical context of apartheid and current socio-economic disparities contribute to vulnerabilities that discourage collective action and reinforce divisions within marginalized communities. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) emphasizes the need for intra-African solidarity to counter the effects of colonial legacies and empower collective efforts. One can say, the lack of unity among marginalized groups can weaken collective responses to issues like xenophobia and discrimination, undermining social cohesion and hindering meaningful change. LSP15's insights underscore concerns about the ability of South Africans to unite against shared challenges amidst existing internal divisions and fears of reprisal.

### **5.8.3 Main theme 3: Apartheid History**

Participant LSP14 highlighted how the historical context of apartheid continues to influence contemporary attitudes and fears toward white people. Participant LSP14 discussed how the legacy of apartheid has instilled a deep-seated fear and mistrust of white individuals among some black South Africans. This historical backdrop of racial segregation and discrimination has left a lasting impact, contributing to ongoing apprehensions and biases that affect interactions with white people today. The effects of apartheid, therefore, shape current perceptions and social dynamics, reflecting how historical injustices can perpetuate fear and mistrust across generations. This shown when participant LSP14 stated:

*It is a historical issue that has ingrained the belief in white superiority over black people. This deep-seated mindset makes it difficult for South Africans to treat white people the same way they treat other Africans. This psychological issue reflects a broader self-hatred among South Africans, which may stem from a history of being taught to view themselves negatively. Consequently, xenophobia often manifests as Afrophobia, revealing a lack of care for fellow Africans and a warped sense of self-worth. South Africans may have been conditioned to respect white people excessively, despite the historical oppression they have faced from them. This fear and respect are misplaced, as we often criticise other Africans for taking jobs and not understanding our language, while we overlook the commonalities between African languages. For example, there are many similarities between languages like Shona and Swahili compared to the differences between South African languages and those of other regions.*

The view expressed by local participant LSP14 highlights the complex interplay of historical, psychological, and sociocultural factors that contribute to the phenomenon of xenophobia in South Africa. Central to this perspective is the assertion that the belief in white superiority is deeply ingrained in South African society, a legacy of the apartheid regime that institutionalised racial hierarchies. This historical context is crucial for understanding contemporary attitudes towards race and ethnicity, as the apartheid policies created a lasting impact on the collective psyche of the nation. Harris (2002) discusses how these policies fostered a legacy of racial division and mistrust among different ethnic groups, which aligns with the isolation hypothesis that posits limited inter-group contact as a catalyst for xenophobic sentiments.

Furthermore, LSP14's observation regarding the psychological impact of systemic oppression reveals a troubling internalisation of negative stereotypes among South Africans. This internalised self-hatred, as articulated by Frantz Fanon (1967) in "Black Skin, White Masks," illustrates how colonised individuals may adopt the values of their oppressors, leading to diminished self-worth and identity. The notion that xenophobia manifests as Afrophobia underscores the idea that the discrimination faced by African immigrants is rooted in a broader context of racialised identity politics. Tafira (2011) argues that the violent attacks on African immigrants by black South Africans represent a "new racism," highlighting the complexities of intra-African relations and the need for a nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

LSP14 also points to the misplaced respect and fear of whiteness that permeates South African society, suggesting that marginalised groups may idolise their oppressors despite the historical oppression they have faced. This phenomenon complicates the social fabric, as it leads to a

devaluation of fellow Africans. Biko (1978) emphasises the importance of black consciousness and the rejection of the inferiority complex instilled by colonialism, advocating for a revaluation of black identity that can counteract these harmful dynamics. Moreover, the participant's critique of language and cultural differences highlights a critical aspect of cultural identity. The failure to recognise the similarities between African languages, as opposed to the differences among South African languages, can exacerbate xenophobic sentiments and reinforce a sense of otherness. Mamdani (2001) argues for the recognition of shared cultural and linguistic ties among Africans to foster unity and combat xenophobia, suggesting that a more inclusive narrative is essential for social cohesion. The isolation hypothesis further elucidates the historical context of Afrophobia, positing that the apartheid regime's policies led to limited interaction between different ethnic groups, fostering an inward-looking attitude among black South Africans. Crush (2000) discusses how these spatial policies restricted inter-ethnic contact, resulting in a lack of understanding and empathy towards African immigrants. This historical isolation has contributed to the current dynamics of Afrophobia, as the ingrained beliefs about racial superiority and inferiority continue to shape social interactions.

### **5.9 Emotions Evoked by xenophobic acts based on the views and experiences of AIS and based on the observations of local students at UKZN**

The theme of emotions evoked by xenophobic acts explores the varied emotional responses experienced by African international students (AIS) and observed by local students at UKZN. Participants highlighted several vital sub-themes. Fear and anxiety were prevalent among AIS, stemming from the uncertainty of being targeted or mistreated due to their nationality or ethnicity, leading to heightened stress. Frustration emerged as another significant response, particularly when AIS faced barriers in accessing services or integrating into the community, often coupled with unfair treatment. Many expressed disappointment and discrimination when encountering biased behavior, undermining their expectations for a fair and inclusive environment. The sense of distrust and vulnerability grew as xenophobic acts eroded trust and left AIS feeling unsupported and insecure in their interactions. Emotional responses such as anger and sadness reflected the deep hurt and frustration from being subjected to xenophobia, highlighting the personal toll of such discrimination. Finally, most local student participants observed a pervasive sense of not belonging and feeling isolated for many AIS who struggle with feelings of alienation

from the local community. These sub-themes collectively illustrate the profound psychological impact of xenophobia on AIS, affecting their overall well-being and sense of inclusion.

### **5.9.1 Main Theme 1: Fear and Anxiety**

While I interviewed the students, the sub-theme of Fear and Anxiety emerged strongly from the experiences of African international students (AIS) and the observations of local participants. In my view, many AIS reported a constant sense of unease, fearing xenophobic incidents both on and off campus. Thus, this anxiety affected their ability to feel safe and included in the academic and social environment, leading to isolation and mistrust. Local participants also observed and recognised this fear from AIS, acknowledging that the unpredictability of xenophobia contributes to a pervasive sense of insecurity and emotional distress among AIS. Both perspectives highlight the deep emotional toll that fear and anxiety take on international students' overall well-being.

Participant AISP9 stated:

*I feel uncomfortable, filled with fear and anxiety. Of course, when you're not happy, when you feel threatened, you just can't be satisfied. There's also the issue of visa delays for students, which seems to be another xenophobic tactic to frustrate us, so we leave. A student is supposed to renew or extend their visa, but the process is delayed. If you don't have your visa on time, your bank account is closed until you can update it. Everything is done through the bank. So, when they close the bank account, what do they expect the person to eat?*

Participant AISP7 stated:

*I feel very scared, and you're afraid of doing anything, especially off-campus. For example, this is my third degree at UKZN. I earned most of my degrees in Zimbabwe, and my university experience is different. Back home, I felt free, and people weren't xenophobic towards foreign students. I enjoyed my university studies to some extent, but here, there's always the thought in my mind that this is not my home. I'm in a foreign land, and there's this constant xenophobia. What if I do something, and they don't like me for it? What if I do this, and they pull the xenophobia card on me? So, we are never at ease as foreign nationals in South Africa. It's stressful, and there's a real fear. Another thing that makes it worse is that I don't feel like there are enough support groups at the university for foreign nationals. We are on our own.*

Furthermore, AISP3 stated:

*I always feel terrible when I reflect on the situation. How come people in Africa are not able to understand the situation where they are coming from? People talk about the spirit of Ubuntu, but it seems most people don't truly understand it. They talk about it, but they don't grasp its real*

*meaning. For me, we should first understand what Ubuntu is before talking about it. As Africans, we should be guided by respect and brotherhood.*

The local students were also asked: "What emotions do you think xenophobia evokes in African international students?"

Participant LSP1 stated:

*Fear is the umbrella for everything else. It brews anger and discomfort. The main feeling is just fear, fear for your life because you don't know if you could encounter trouble, like a group of drunk students off-campus. They'll hear you speak and realise your accent isn't from here. Then they might say, 'Speak our language, what are you doing here?' They could easily beat you up just because you're not South African. It's mostly fear and anger at being judged for not being from here. I'm sure it makes you angry, thinking, 'Why would you treat me as less than human just because I'm not from where you are?' Even though we're the same people as Africans, we should all be united, but we're not. So, yeah, it's mostly fear of the unknown because anything could happen at any time.*

Participant LSP8 stated:

*A sense of fear arises if something goes wrong. For example, if there's a group of Nigerians and local students, mostly the Nigerian students will get blamed if anything happens simply because they are foreigners. Certain things are associated with them. Another emotion is the lack of acceptance, as they feel judged for how they speak, not for their intellectual ability. Discrimination can even start with something as simple as food. For example, Nigerian food has a particular smell that we're not used to, so we judge it and dislike the smell.*

Participant LSP9 stated:

*Foreigners come to this country prepared to live a little differently, but they find themselves subjected to discrimination. These acts of violence can erupt at any time, so there's a constant sense of insecurity. They live in constant fear.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*Foreign African international students can feel anger, sadness, and frustration. Experiencing discrimination and prejudice can lead to feelings of anger and frustration. Foreign students feel angry at those perpetuating xenophobia, and the ongoing experiences can be emotionally draining, leading to sadness or even depression. This can make African international students feel isolated and demoralized.*

Participant LSP11 stated:

*I think xenophobia causes much anxiety among them because we all want to feel welcomed in any space. Participant LSP14 shared a similar sentiment: I've had a chance to ask them, but obviously,*

*I was cautious about touching on sensitive issues. I remember in 2015, during the xenophobic attacks around Durban, some of my friends would make jokes about it, but you could see it didn't sit well with them. You know, when someone says, 'It is what it is,' but their expression shows it's not something they're comfortable with. They have these fears. They might even think I'm asking because I want to attack them too. It's unfortunate and scary. Just imagining myself in their shoes, walking around and not knowing what's going to happen next, feeling unwelcome, is a frightening feeling.*

The sentiments expressed by the above participants collectively highlight the pervasive feelings of discomfort, fear, and anxiety experienced by African International Students in South Africa. For example, AISP9 outlines the practical challenges, such as visa delays, that contribute to insecurity and hinder the student's ability to access essential services like banking. AISP7 delves into the psychological toll of studying in a foreign land, where the constant awareness of potential xenophobic incidents creates stress and fear. Additionally, AISP7 laments the lack of sufficient support structures for foreign nationals within the university. Participant AISP3 emphasizes the contradiction between the ideals of Ubuntu, a concept rooted in African philosophy emphasizing respect and brotherhood, and the lived experiences of African international Students facing xenophobia. These statements collectively underscore the multifaceted impact of xenophobia on the well-being, sense of belonging, and academic pursuits of African international Students in South Africa.

In line with the above views, Klomegah (2006) argues that “African international Students experience a more difficult adjustment to campus life than host students. Amongst the problems they encounter are loneliness, hostility, alienation, fear, and difficulties in academic performance. African international Students also tend to suffer from more physical complaints than host students, which Ward (1967) (as cited in Ward et al., 2001) saw as a case of “foreign-student syndrome,” which suggests that African international Students tend to somatize their problems. However, African international Students have also been found to suffer from psychological issues, such as depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety (Berry et al., 1987, in Ward et al., 2001).

### **5.9.2 Sub-theme 1: Frustration, Disappointed and Discrimination**

The sub-theme of frustration, disappointment, and discrimination was another issue in the experiences of African international students (AIS) and the observations of local participants. In

my own opinion, AIS frequently expressed frustration and disappointment over their treatment, feeling let down by the lack of support and understanding from both peers and institutional bodies. I observed that discrimination was a common thread amongst the AIS, manifesting in various forms such as unfair treatment and exclusion, which exacerbated their feeling of frustration. On the other hand, local participants also observed that these emotions are prevalent among AIS, recognizing that the ongoing discrimination contributes to their overall sense of disillusionment and discontent. This theme underscores AIS's deep-seated challenges in navigating their academic and social environments. This was shown when participant AISP4 stated:

*I feel disappointed because in my country, my neighbors are foreigners from all over Africa, and our government gave everyone houses, even if they were foreigners or of a different race. I feel disappointed that South Africa fails to recognize that they are hurting fellow humans. I also feel discriminated against because I cannot use the resources, and I have to pay a large amount of money for medical aid, even though I don't use it all the time. I also feel judged because people from this country just put you in your corner and exclude you as if you don't exist, even if you are good at what you do.*

Participant AISP10 stated: *It annoys me when the attacker can speak their language, so let me speak my language too.* Participant AISP14 stated: *It makes me feel sad, discriminated against, and hated when I did not commit any crime.*

Participant AISP13 stated:

*If acts of xenophobia come from someone in a position of authority, I just feel disappointed. This person ought to know better and be educated. If this person is educated and still acts this way, it's disappointing because you'd expect education to change someone's mentality to a broader worldview. But if it's coming from someone who isn't educated, then I just feel sorry for the person. Sometimes it's anger, other times disappointment, and sometimes it's like, 'you know what? Just get out of here.' So many emotions. When I talk about fear, like I told you, I'm afraid to go to public clinics. There's that fear that you don't know what to expect from whoever you meet. There's also that general fear of going out and being in a crowd, knowing I'm in a foreign country where people have these views about foreigners, and you never know what might happen. And for me, there's a fear of speaking because the moment I say something, people know my accent, and they know I'm a foreigner. So, for me, it's those three things.*

In a similar vein, these are the observations of local students. Participant LSP7 stated: *I wouldn't know because I'm not an African foreign student, but I'm pretty sure it would be frustration, anger, and confusion because it doesn't make sense. It just doesn't make sense.*

Participant LSP12 stated:

*I think they're hurt because we are Africans. You wouldn't expect that in an African country, you would be subjected to discrimination by your fellow African brothers and sisters. If you get a*

*bursary, there will be accusations that you didn't fairly earn it. If you're looking for a place in the university residence, they'll accuse you of taking spaces that should go to South Africans. And if you get a job at the university, there are accusations in the corridors that foreigners are taking over our jobs.*

The statements from participants collectively reveal a range of emotions in response to xenophobia. AISP4 expresses disappointment that South Africa, unlike their home country, fails to recognize the shared humanity among diverse residents and describes feeling discriminated against and judged, especially when excluded despite competence. AISP10 reveals annoyance and a desire to assert their right to speak their language in the face of xenophobic attacks. AISP14 articulates feelings of sadness, discrimination, and hatred, emphasizing the injustice of being targeted without having committed any crime. AISP13 experiences a complex mix of emotions, including disappointment and sorrow when acts of xenophobia come from educated individuals who should know better, and fear that manifests in reluctance to engage with public spaces or speak in public due to concerns about negative reactions to their foreign status. These statements collectively underline the multi-faceted emotional impact of xenophobia on individuals, ranging from disappointment and fear to anger and the desire for a sense of belonging.

### **5.9.3 Sub-Theme 2: Distrust and Feeling Vulnerable**

The sub-theme of distrust and feeling vulnerable explores the profound impact of xenophobia on African international students (AIS), as reflected in their experiences and observations. One AIS participant described a heightened sense of vulnerability and distrust, particularly following incidents of xenophobic violence. They expressed concerns about their safety and the reliability of those around them, feeling that their security was compromised. In my view, this underscores how xenophobic acts contribute to an environment of fear and suspicion. Additionally, a local student participant observed that such feelings of distrust and vulnerability among AIS significantly hinder their ability to engage fully and comfortably within the university community. This observation highlights the critical need for measures that address these emotional and psychological challenges. One of the participants was able to recall some instances when xenophobia happened and how it affected him, as evidenced by participant AISP6:

*I'll give an example of 2015 when it happened here in Durban. I was here at Howard. I remember it was quite sad. It was very sad because you were seeing people being hunted, beaten, and*



*humiliated, basically because they were not speaking the language. I can't really say it was because they were foreigners. I also felt vulnerable because I did not know the people I was staying with, whether they were going to betray me or not. I even started having trust issues towards the people within the residence because I thought some of these people bringing these things were their brothers. So, what would stop them from betraying me to their brothers if their brothers were doing it? I felt vulnerable and mistrustful, like I started trusting less, you know. But my main issue was the people I was with, no matter how much I knew that these people would never do anything to me—we were brothers at res. But because the people doing these things were their brothers, what separated them? Was it because they were in residence, or could it be something else?*

In a similar vein, these are the observations of a local student, as Participant LSP10 stated:

*Xenophobia can make African international students distrust people from the host country or be reluctant to engage with local communities, which normally hinders the cultural exchange experience. In addition, some students may feel helpless in the face of xenophobia, especially if they perceive that there are limited avenues for seeking support or justice on or off campus.*

In line with the above views, communication barriers in the form of language and social norms can hamper African international students' ability to acculturate and pose a great barrier to academic success, which is usually one of the key objectives of African international students (Kim, 1995, in Ward et al., 2001). While language barriers are self-explanatory, social norms refer to the different socially acceptable ways in which people interact, from non-verbal language such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions to how people express emotions and address one another (Earley and Randel, 1997, in Ward et al., 2001). Thus, anxiety, misunderstanding, and friction can arise due to communication problems and a lack of knowledge of the social and behavioural skills of the new environment (Ward et al., 2001).

#### **5.9.4 Sub-Theme 3: Anger and Sadness**

The sub-theme of Anger and Sadness captures the profound emotional impact of xenophobia on African international students (AIS). In my view, the frequent reports of anger and sadness among AIS highlight the deep sense of injustice and isolation they experience due to discrimination and prejudice. These emotions are often fuelled by the harmful effects of xenophobic actions. Local student participant LSP15 reflects similar sentiments, acknowledging that fear, anger, and sadness are prevalent among AIS. I observed that these views collectively underscore the significant emotional toll that xenophobia exacts on these students, affecting their overall well-being and academic experience. This was indicated when participant AISP1 stated:

*Having studied Southern African history and political science, I understood how interconnected we were in the fight against apartheid. It was a wake-up call to see how people reacted. I felt like*

*it was a misdirection of anger by local South Africans. As an African international student, I felt sad and angry that people were hurt and lost their lives under a misguided ideology. More should have been done by the authorities to control xenophobia through sensitisation and education. I was concerned and frustrated that the situation continued unchecked when it could have been prevented.*

Participant AISP5 stated:

*I feel anger at the fact that people think we should be in our own country while they don't know the circumstances back home. You are misunderstood, and they don't know that you have left family back home, and it is painful for the children experiencing isolation from the students at school, making their own groups. Friendships are hard for the kids, and they end up standing outside the friendship groups at school. I also feel disappointed because I expect us to help each other. We do research together on how to live together, considering we have documents to live in South Africa. I also feel sad because some people are killed because of xenophobia, and our kids have to live in fear.*

Participant AISP8 stated:

*Xenophobia makes me angry but also sorry because I understand them and their history. Things are not okay in the country, and there are many foreigners around, so you become an easy target. The locals think you are better than them and ask themselves, 'Why did you come here if you are better than us?' Sometimes I get sad and irritated, even angry. I understand why they behave that way. Times are tough; there is so much poverty and unemployment. Things are not okay. So, you end up just being an easy target. They wonder, 'How are you better than us? And if you are better, why did you come here in the first place?' At least you understand them, and apartheid history plays a part as well. What is happening here is different from Kenya. Kenyans love foreigners too much, but we don't love each other as Kenyans.*

Participant AISP15 stated:

*I feel a bit sad because if people come together, things will change, but it requires a lot of work and shared resources to change Africa. Africa needs to create opportunities for people instead of just giving money and not hurting each other.*

Participant AISP16 stated:

*Honestly, it's not a nice thing. Sometimes you just feel like you should have stayed in your own country and studied there, especially when you interact with South African students. They feel like they own everything. You feel sad sometimes and feel like you should have stayed in your own country. I regret coming here sometimes.*

In a similar vein, these are the observations of a local student, as Participant LSP15 stated:

*It's fear, anger, and guilt, in a way. So, it's fear and anger and guilt because they don't come to South Africa. After all, it was their number one choice. It was because of circumstances. I think when they are experiencing xenophobia and hearing stories of xenophobia, they feel guilty for choosing to come to this country. I think all that guilt and fear play a role. Most of them are very*

*reserved when they are among South Africans, compared to when they are among other foreign students on campus. Anger plays a part because most of the things people say aren't true. They aren't understood or given a chance to exist freely. That creates anger. I also think it's a fear of hatred towards South Africans because of their experiences.*

The perspectives of African International Students (AIS) regarding xenophobia in South Africa reveal a complex mix of emotions, including anger, sadness, and frustration, as well as feelings of disconnection from local society. Participant AISP1 emphasizes the shared history of African nations in the fight against apartheid and notes the irony of local South Africans directing their anger towards foreign nationals, often scapegoated for larger socio-economic problems. This aligns with the arguments of Kang'ethe and Wotshela (2015) advocating for educational initiatives to combat xenophobia. Participants AISP5 and AISP8 highlight the personal impact of xenophobia, particularly the isolation felt by foreign students, which resonates with findings by Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) about foreign students feeling unwelcome. AISP8 also points to the socio-economic struggles of locals, suggesting that poverty and unemployment foster a competitive mindset, leading to hostility towards foreigners.

AISP15 calls for cooperation and resource-sharing among African nations, reflecting the notion of unity as vital for addressing continental issues, as supported by Solomon and Kosaka (2011). Meanwhile, AISP16's regret about studying in South Africa signifies deeper feelings of alienation, echoing the sentiments expressed by local student LSP15 regarding the fear and guilt of foreign students. The emotional distress stemming from societal rejection is discussed by Tirivangasi and Mugambiwa (2016). Thus, the students' accounts present a nuanced understanding of xenophobia rooted in historical context and personal experiences that underscores the necessity for educational programs and community-building initiatives to foster mutual understanding between South Africans and foreign nationals. As a researcher, I share these sentiments, recognizing the potential of collective histories and struggles to create a more inclusive academic environment.

#### **5.9.5 Sub-theme 4 A sense of not belonging and feeling isolated**

The sub-theme of a sense of not belonging and feeling isolated reflects the emotional challenges faced by African international students (AIS) as observed by local students. This sense of exclusion is a significant aspect of the AIS experience, as it underscores their struggle to integrate into the

campus community. From my observations and the insights shared by local student participant LSP12, it's evident that AIS often feel disconnected and marginalised, contributing to their overall sense of isolation. As a researcher, I noticed that many local students observed a sense of not belonging and feeling isolated among African international students (AIS), despite the AIS students themselves not explicitly mentioning these feelings, suggests several underlying issues such as AIS students may internalise these emotions, influenced by cultural norms around discussing personal feelings or fear of stigmatisation. This was shown when participant LSP2 stated:

*In most cases, for example, my friend, she's from Nigeria. She regrets coming to South Africa, especially when the attacks were very high. She said almost every day that she regrets coming here. Even though she came to do her honours and master's, her main priority was her health because she needed eye surgery, which couldn't be done in Nigeria. So, she had to come to South Africa, get a study permit, and then be able to have the surgery. So yeah, it was more like regrets about coming here. And the feeling of not belonging. They don't feel like they belong here. There is fear, and it even limits their movement. They want to be where they feel comfortable, surrounded by other foreign nationals or maybe people from their countries. They just avoid being in areas where they will be surrounded by locals.*

Participant LSP4 stated: *It evokes fear. It also evokes hatred. I think it affects how they view themselves as people. Like, 'Oh my goodness, we don't belong here.' It's a feeling of not belonging because they're told to return to their country. So, it's fear, hatred, and a sense of not belonging.*

Participant LSP5 stated: *No sense of belonging. They are not okay deep down. Since we are all Africans, just because we are from different countries doesn't make us different. We are one nation, so I think it does affect them. It's not nice seeing people from your country being killed just because they don't belong here.*

According to Ward et al. (2001), many terms and models have been used in the literature to try to understand the psychological impact that migration has on one. A term that has been extensively used is “culture shock” which was initially coined by Oberg (1960) (as cited in Ward et al., 2001) to imply that the experience of a new and unfamiliar cultural environment causes one to experience a negative or unpleasant surprise or shock, resulting in confusion, a sense of not belonging, disorientation and anxiety. The term, however, has been redefined and reworked by many researchers. For example, in contrast to Oberg, Ward et al. (2001) see one's reaction to culture shock as being more active than passive in the way one deals with change. One can, therefore, say that it is essential for institutions to provide resources and support for students who experience

xenophobia and actively work to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their background or nationality. Additionally, raising awareness about the harmful effects of xenophobia and fostering intercultural understanding can help combat these issues on and off campus.

### **5.10 Causes of xenophobia on and off campus based on the views of both local and African international Students.**

Understanding the causes of xenophobia, particularly within the context of African international students, is essential for creating a more inclusive environment. Insights from both local and international student participants reveal a range of factors that contribute to xenophobic sentiments. A significant concern is the tendency to scapegoat foreign nationals during economic hardships and social unrest, with many viewing them as responsible for issues like unemployment and crime. Such scapegoating creates an atmosphere of alienation for African international students, who often find themselves unjustly marginalised despite their positive contributions to the community.

Historical factors, particularly the legacy of apartheid, also influence xenophobic attitudes. Many local students acknowledge that the deep-rooted divisions left by apartheid foster mistrust and project frustrations onto foreign nationals, who are seen as symbols of change threatening the status quo. Additionally, competition for limited resources intensifies resentment towards foreigners, especially in economically disadvantaged areas where unemployment is high. Emotional responses such as jealousy regarding the perceived advantages foreign students have, along with negative portrayals of foreign nationals in the media related to crime, further complicate relationships between local and international students. Concerns about governance and weak border control also contribute to these feelings, as some locals perceive undocumented immigrants as threats to their safety. Addressing these interconnected causes is vital for providing support to African international students and promoting inclusivity on and off campus.

#### **5.10.1 Sub-theme 1: Foreigners as scapegoat**

One significant theme that emerged from the experiences of both African international students

(AIS) and local participants is the idea of African foreigners being targeted as scapegoats. This theme highlights how African foreign nationals, in general, are often unjustly held responsible for broader societal issues, such as unemployment, crime, and limited resources. The tendency to target foreigners reflects deeper underlying frustrations within the local community, which then manifest in negative attitudes toward AIS. Both AIS and local participants have noted how this dynamic contributes to xenophobic sentiments, fuelling tensions and further isolating international students from the broader society. Participants were asked whether foreign Africans are easily blamed for certain things, and they had this to say:

Participant AISP6 stated:

*Yes, they are scapegoats, like when someone says your job should have been given to a local. Some will say, 'We had our brothers who finished studying some time ago, and you just finished now and have a job, our brother or sisters could have had that job.'*

Participant AISP9:

*That is obvious, that's true. I can say that is the obvious thing behind their failure. You know, if someone is failing or has indulged in drugs, you find the parent blaming foreigners. They say foreigners are the ones bringing drugs. Even though we are students, we are foreigners outside there. We are above the age of children, so when they see us, they see drugs, and we are blamed for bringing drugs into the country. They also blame us for the lack of jobs, even though locals are given priority. Nowadays, it's evident that we only get jobs based on critical skills.*

Participant LSP1 stated:

*Yes, it happens a lot. There have been protests over the years, with South Africans requesting that foreign nationals be kicked out. They talk about students or fellow lecturers who are unemployed and how there are a lot of foreign national lecturers in the country, and they are the reason locals aren't hired. South Africans also feel that foreign nationals have taken over their businesses, such as spaza shops and small shops in town. South African men tend to resent other African nationalities because they feel like they are 'spoiling our women.' Most South African women I've heard of who are dating foreign nationals don't want to go back because the treatment is not the same. So, the South African men feel like foreigners are taking their women, giving them money, and that the women don't want to date locals anymore because they are seen as stingy. Then, they call the women gold diggers. Foreigners are also blamed for drugs, human trafficking, high unemployment rates, hijacking buildings, and informal settlements. They get blamed for a lot.*

Participant LSP5 stated:

*No, the blame is not on students; it's on those who have shops and spazas and those who work in Shoprite and Checkers. Those who are domestic workers. Some South Africans feel like they are taking their jobs, but as for students, I don't think that is the case.*

Participant LSP11 stated:

*I don't feel like other foreigners, like those coming from Europe or Latin America, who come to universities experience the same treatment as African foreigners. I think it's seen as something exciting when someone from Germany comes to study here. But when it's an African, I don't know, maybe because there are so many people who feel like they are taking their space. But there's a duality, and they tend to suffer more xenophobia than foreigners from other parts of the world. Others are welcomed warmly, while those from Africa are treated in a way that's not good.*

Participant LSP11 goes on to say:

*It's Afrophobia, and it's a tough one because I think that at the core, somehow, somewhere, there's much African unity like the realisation that, as Black people, we are going through the same issues no matter where we are in the country, you know. So, in a sense, there's much goodwill and ubuntu, and some of the leaders, you know, have been very proactive in pushing such messages.*

Also, participant LSP10 elaborated:

*The historical divisions and tensions can contribute to xenophobic attitudes, as some individuals may view foreigners as competition for limited resources or opportunities. High levels of unemployment and poverty in South Africa can create a sense of competition for jobs, housing, and social services. Foreign nationals, including African immigrants, are sometimes blamed for economic challenges, leading to xenophobic sentiments. Political leaders and parties may exploit xenophobia for their agendas, using inflammatory rhetoric or scapegoating foreign nationals as a way to divert attention from other issues. This can exacerbate xenophobic attitudes and incidents. Xenophobia often thrives in environments marked by social tensions and inequalities. Lack of access to quality education, healthcare, and other essential services can contribute to frustration and resentment, which can be directed at foreign nationals. Misconceptions and stereotypes about foreign nationals can persist due to insufficient awareness and education. Without proper information and dialogue, negative perceptions may prevail.*

The views expressed align with the Scapegoat Theory, which asserts that frustration among disadvantaged individuals often results in prejudice, with foreigners becoming convenient targets for blame. Allport (1954) notes that foreigners, lacking power, are unfairly held responsible for broader societal difficulties, and this displacement of frustration helps conceal the real sources of anxiety. Hostile attitudes typically arise in contexts of unmet expectations related to critical resources such as jobs and housing, particularly during times of economic transition (Morris, 1998; Tshitereke, 1999). According to the theory, individuals create scapegoats to justify their frustrations about deprivation and poverty. For example, participant AISP6's acknowledgment of foreigners being blamed for job losses exemplifies this. Moreover, Morris emphasizes that when majority groups experience economic insecurity, they are more prone to view minorities, especially foreigners, as threats.

Relative deprivation, highlighted by De la Rey (1991), suggests that perceived inequalities can spur social unrest, as participants feel unfairly targeted despite being innocent victims in the socio-economic landscape. The historical isolation of South Africa contributes to these xenophobic attitudes, as seen in participant LSP11's remarks on the differential treatment of African compared to non-African foreigners due to cultural unfamiliarity. Hobsbawm (1992) discusses xenophobia as a reaction to rapid societal changes, compelling participant LSP10 to attribute historical tensions to contemporary xenophobic feelings. Kristeva (2024) notes that experiences of alienation from being foreign can exacerbate tensions within the African community, with participant LSP11 citing instances of Afrophobia, demonstrating a complex identity dynamic. Additionally, the political exploitation of xenophobia is noted, where leaders leverage these sentiments to distract from pressing issues, thus worsening tensions and reinforcing negative stereotypes. Therefore, the participants' insights reveal that xenophobia in South Africa stems from interwoven socio-economic frustrations, historical isolation, and scapegoating of foreign nationals. Effective solutions must adopt a multifaceted approach that considers the historical, social, and economic contexts driving these prejudices.

#### **5.10.2 Sub-theme 2: Isolation History of Apartheid**

The sub-theme of isolation linked to the history of apartheid emerged from both African international students (AIS) and local student participants. In my view, this theme reflects how the legacy of apartheid has left deep social divisions, contributing to the isolation of African foreign nationals. The historical segregation and systemic inequalities created by apartheid continue to influence social dynamics, leading to the exclusion of foreign students, who often feel disconnected from the broader local community. Local participants also acknowledged that the remnants of apartheid's exclusionary practices still shape relationships and attitudes toward outsiders. This is shown when participant AISP1 stated:

*I understand that South Africa comes from a history where people were not allowed to move freely. They did not travel much except for their comrades fighting for the country's freedom. These comrades had the opportunity to go to other countries in exile. Post-apartheid, people from other African countries came in, and of course, they were involved in business, education, and other trades. As time progressed, I think resources started dwindling, things began to change, and there was also an influx of people from other African countries and other parts of the world. People*



*started realising that the number of foreign nationals was increasing daily. Now, they are almost competing in terms of population. So, they realised these foreigners became 'the other.' Who are these other people who are beginning to take over our area, our businesses, jobs, and resources?*

Participant AISP17 stated:

*I think the colonisers, I mean, white people, also play a role in this xenophobia issue. The South African economy is mostly handled and managed by white South Africans. So, white South Africans fuel xenophobia silently and strategically so that Black Africans and Black local South Africans continue to fight each other. In contrast, they continue to manage the economy and remain rich in South Africa. The apartheid history of South Africa contributes a lot to the culture of violence and the xenophobic tendencies that are witnessed in South Africa.*

In a similar vein, the local students believe that colonisation and apartheid history contributed to the causes of xenophobia, as participant LSP1 stated:

*I believe that the socioeconomic conditions that resulted from colonisation and apartheid have never been addressed, and that's the issue. The TRC, for example, was formed, and the main reason or aim of the TRC was to address these socioeconomic issues that resulted from apartheid. It stands for Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), formed in 1996. Besides the issue of amnesty, where those involved in the apartheid system had to come forth and tell the truth, the main aim was to address the imbalance.*

Duncan (2012) argues that under the Apartheid regime, South Africa's borders were isolated from the rest of the continent as well as from the world, mainly because the apartheid regime had a narrow view that other countries threatened its racist policies and its imposition of a political monopoly on South African society. Botha (2012) points out that foreigners represented the unknown to South Africans during the isolation period. According to the isolation theory, as noted by Morris (1998), South Africans found differences in national identity to be threatening and dangerous. Xenophobia is a result of South Africa's isolation from the international community, and in particular, the rest of Africa during the apartheid era (Duncan 2012; Harris 2002). Here xenophobia is seen as a consequence of apartheid in South Africa (Morris, 1998). The seclusion of the country from the rest of the world in the apartheid era is taken to be an explanation for the fear and distrust that South African communities have towards foreigners. According to this theory, the freedom felt within South Africa in 1994 came with the ideology that the country must be protected from "outsiders." In light of South Africa's history, it is reasonable that the government needed to put its citizens first in line for transformation and change.

### 5.10.3 Sub-theme 3: Competition of scarce resources

The theme of competition for scarce resources was prominently discussed by both AIS and local student participants. In my view, this theme highlights how competition for limited resources such as jobs, housing, and social services often fuels tensions between African foreign nationals and locals in the communities. AIS and local students observed that high levels of unemployment and economic hardship exacerbate feelings of competition, leading to xenophobic attitudes and conflicts over access to these resources. Both groups noted that the perception of foreigners as competitors for these limited resources can deepen divisions and contribute to a sense of hostility and exclusion. This was shown when participant AISP1 stated:

*Mainly, job opportunities that foreigners occupy make some xenophobic people jealous. The communities are not oriented to share and interact with each other, which leads them to separate into their own small groups of foreigners and South Africans. Another major cause of xenophobia is competition for scarce resources, which makes people disgruntled when they see opportunities taken over by individuals from other countries, especially those of African origin. Shops and other businesses owned by Chinese and people from other places were never attacked; the focus was mainly on people of African descent. It became a matter of targeting the weaker ones, looking for those they could easily take advantage of, rather than addressing the main causes of xenophobia, which were the acquisition of resources. Sometimes, there is a sense of jealousy when people see foreigners who came here and started small businesses that have grown and are doing well. Some people feel uncomfortable with that. This sense of not being well-socialised contributes to the 'us vs. them' mentality. This division is a recipe for disaster and contributes to the problems we face.*

Participant LSP11 stated:

*I think it's not just one factor. The lack of resources plays a role. If you go to a government hospital and see many foreigners there, you, as a South African, might automatically think that these services should be for South Africans first. The feeling is that, because there aren't enough resources, foreigners seeking medical treatment or education are blocking access for South Africans to these services.*

In line with the above views, Lubbe (2008) notes that African immigrants are seen as competing for limited resources, straining the economy and its infrastructure. Peterson (2022) identifies this competition as the primary reason for xenophobic feelings in affected communities. The Xenowatch report (2021) supports this view by highlighting that tensions arise from the struggle between locals and foreigners over essential services and opportunities. Participants in the study expressed feelings of jealousy and resentment towards foreigners, viewing them as rivals for employment and resources. Valji (2003) emphasizes that economic strain and inadequate

government services exacerbate these sentiments, mirroring the participants' experiences of resource deprivation. Dodson (2010) reinforces that conflicts often stem from local perceptions of competition for jobs and services, as evidenced by Participant LSP11's mention of foreigners occupying space in hospitals.

Piper and Charman (2016) further explore the economic dynamics in townships, indicating that competition can incite violence among local and foreign shopkeepers. Neocosmos (2010) ties these tensions to the historical legacy of apartheid, suggesting that an "us vs. them" mentality persists as economic competition undermines social cohesion. Media portrayals, as highlighted by Harris (2001), also paint foreigners as threats, particularly targeting African nationals for broader frustrations, while non-African foreigners remain less affected. The participants' insights reveal a deep-rooted relationship between socio-economic realities, historical contexts, and media narratives that distort perceptions of foreigners. To address these sentiments, community engagement is crucial. Initiatives promoting dialogue and collaboration could help humanize the "other" and foster solidarity, ultimately counteracting the divisive "us vs. them" mentality. Nyamnjoh's (2006) concept of "othering" illustrates how limited resources can amplify feelings of discomfort and division, highlighting the need for a multifaceted approach to mitigate xenophobia in South Africa.

#### **5.10.4 Sub-theme 4: Poverty and unemployment**

African International Students (AIS) highlighted poverty and unemployment as key factors contributing to xenophobia in South Africa. The AIS participants pointed out that the high unemployment rates and widespread poverty create tensions between locals and African foreign nationals, as some South Africans perceive foreigners as competitors for scarce resources and job opportunities. These economic struggles often fuel resentment and can lead to xenophobic attitudes and actions, impacting the daily lives and sense of security among AIS. This shown when participant AISP2 stated:

*I believe that xenophobia can stem from factors such as poverty and unemployment. In South Africa, where poverty levels are notably high, there is a tendency among some individuals to associate foreigners with a threat to their limited resources. The prevailing perception is that these newcomers are encroaching on local territory and competing for scarce opportunities. The country's substantial unemployment rate exacerbates this sentiment, as locals might feel less compelled to resent foreign competition if more job opportunities were available.*

Participant AISP2 further stated:

*Furthermore, the complex and often confusing policies of South Africa contribute to the issue. The country aspires to excel in many aspects but struggles to implement policies effectively. This mismatch between policy intent and execution is particularly evident in the treatment of refugees. Instead of providing proper resources and support, refugees are sometimes confined to camps, reflecting a lack of understanding and mismanagement. The involvement of citizens in policy understanding and implementation is crucial, yet there appears to be a lack of public participation, especially regarding refugee policies. Another contributing factor to xenophobia involves economic disparities and competition among businesses. Established businesses may feel threatened by smaller shops run by foreigners, especially in townships where residents were accustomed to shopping in well-established malls. The influx of entrepreneurs from cities like Dar es Salaam, Harare, and Kinshasa, who were previously active in the informal sector, can ignite tensions as locals perceive them as encroaching on their economic space. This economic rivalry, rather than a deep-seated hatred for foreigners, may prompt attacks aimed at removing competition and reclaiming economic opportunities.*

Participant AISP7 stated:

*Unemployment affects many locals who are not employed; some of them are graduates but still cannot find work, which leads to resentment when they see foreigners working. If the economy were better, things would improve. Additionally, criminal activities committed by illegal foreigners also contribute to xenophobia. Regarding the lack of exposure, I always say it's their nation, so they do whatever they want. As foreigners, we should behave ourselves and mind our own business. Comments like 'South Africans are lazy and don't want to work' fuel these attacks.*

The above views are similar to views of the power conflict theory in chapter 3 as Singh (2013:91) states that “the Power Conflict theory relates to the socio-economic status of individuals and the perceived threat from foreigners that induce animosity.” Often perpetrators of xenophobia state the following as reasons for their attack: ‘They (foreigners) take our jobs’, ‘They take our business’, they rob us of economic opportunities. According to Singh (2013), Power Conflict Theory attributes xenophobia to economic factors like poverty and unemployment, where poor and unemployed people are more likely to engage in xenophobic practice compared to rich and employed people. A criticism of this theory is that rich and employed people are also xenophobic. For Singh (2013:92), what is crucial to this theory is that in reality, it is the poor and unemployed that are more likely to engage in xenophobia. At historically disadvantaged universities, where most of the poorer students are found, they display similar survival characteristics as that of the surrounding poor communities. Poverty and politics play a role in xenophobia in such an environment (Singh, 2013).

### 5.10.5 Sub-theme 5: Jealousy and anger

AIS participants identified the sub-theme of jealousy and anger as one of the significant drivers of xenophobia in South Africa. These feelings arise when locals perceive that foreign nationals are succeeding or taking away opportunities they believe should be reserved for them. I believe this resentment is rooted in economic challenges, leading to frustration directed at AIS, which may appear to prosper despite these hardships. This observation was echoed by a local student participant, further supporting the idea that jealousy and anger contribute to xenophobic attitudes. This is indicated when participant AISP5 stated:

*Jealousy leads to fights and blaming others for the issues going on. Unemployed people may find something to do just because they are not working. Uneducated people have anger that is wrongly directed at foreigners. Lack of exposure to other countries and cultures means they don't know the world and only think that South Africa is the whole world.*

Participant AISP16 stated:

*The first cause of xenophobia is people not wanting to accept you in their own country. People will just hate you because you're not South African. Unemployment is one of the causes; many South Africans are unemployed in this country. However, you will find foreigners working in hospitals and offices. This angers South Africans, and I understand their anger. It's just that they do not know that we all have chances to apply for jobs. Xenophobia also starts because of issues like foreigners getting employed while South Africans are not.*

Participant LSP2 stated:

*There is a large number of illegal immigrants, which is a serious problem. Their large numbers bring instability to our communities and businesses. Even if a person was not going to start such a business, like a tax shop or anything, they will always feel offended. I don't know if it's jealousy or something else, but they will always feel offended if a foreigner succeeds.*

The above views are in line with the Scapegoat theory in chapter 3 of this study as Okeke (2022) states that “Foreigners become the scapegoat and may be subjected to xenophobic violence. The main factors that are responsible for their predicament, such as unemployment, poverty, and failed government policies, are overlooked (Okeke, 2022). Okeke (2022) further argues that in South Africa foreigners are blamed for all the societal evils and suffer the consequences. Political bigots can make sentimental insinuations that label foreigners as such. This may explain the increase of xenophobic attacks in 2008 and 2015 probably, the locals started to experience unemployment, poverty, and homelessness.

These experiences were blamed on foreigners by some misguided minds, which led to increased

tension in South Africa and xenophobic attacks on those perceived to be foreigners (Okeke, 2022). The causes of xenophobia, as highlighted by Participants, appear rooted in socio-economic factors and a lack of exposure. Participant AISP16 suggests that unemployment plays a significant role, with frustrated and unemployed South Africans directing their anger towards foreigners who secure jobs, perhaps due to perceived competition for limited opportunities. A lack of understanding about equal chances in employment applications exacerbates this tension. Additionally, Participant LSP2 emphasizes the issue of illegal immigration, pointing out that the large number of undocumented immigrants contributes to instability in communities and businesses. This perceived competition and potential resentment, whether due to economic factors or immigration concerns, contribute to the emergence of xenophobia in the country.

#### **5.10.6 Sub-theme 6: Perceptions of increased crime related to foreign nationals**

The sub-theme of perceptions of increased crime related to foreign nationals emerged in conversations with African international students (AIS) and local students. In my view, this perception contributes significantly to the strained relationships between locals and AIS. Some local students, as well as members of the broader community, believe that foreign nationals are responsible for increasing crime in South Africa. This belief, often generalised, fuels mistrust and leads to the stigmatisation of foreigners, making it harder for AIS to feel safe and accepted within their host communities. These perceptions, even when not grounded in fact, can have a lasting impact on how foreigners are treated socially and institutionally. This shown when participant AISP13 stated:

*I will start with the foreign nationals; some allegations are true and have a valid reason. For example, if you leave your country and come to someone else's country and deal drugs, that's not okay. Although some allegations are true, others are exaggerated and overgeneralised. Another cause is the South African government and the governments of other countries. South African leaders started to bring up these narratives about foreigners because they knew it was a popular topic. They do so because they want to gain followers and votes. The governments of our countries as well. I don't think they care about the welfare of their nationals in other countries because if they did, there would be political and economic understanding between countries. They would say, 'You cannot treat our people like this.' In South Africa, there is unemployment and poverty, but that is not an excuse for them to go and kill someone.*

Participant LSP2 stated that:

*I think there's a large number of illegal immigrants, which is a serious problem. They just increase*

*in number, and that brings instability to our communities and businesses. Even if a person wasn't planning to start such a business, like a tuck shop or anything, they always feel offended. I don't know if it's jealousy or something, but they always feel offended if a foreigner succeeds.*

In line with the above view, HSRC (2008:34) argues, “There is a perception in areas where xenophobic attacks occur that foreigners commit a crime and can get away with it because they do not have legal documents.” Foreigners are perceived to be behind crimes, such as theft, fraud, rape, and drug dealing, in South Africa (Bond, Ngwane and Amisi, 2008). Hagensen (2014: 16) states that “there are stereotypes that exist in South African society that Nigerians are drug dealers and pimps and that hijacked cars are taken to Mozambique”. There is also a perception that immigrants can bribe their way out of persecution, and they purchase legal documents through corrupt officials in the Department of Home Affairs. Participant AISP13 provides another perspective on the causes of xenophobia. Acknowledging that some allegations against foreign nationals might be valid, such as involvement in illegal activities, they caution against overgeneralization and exaggeration. The statement points out the role of South African leaders and governments in shaping narratives about foreigners, emphasizing how politicians exploit the topic for popularity and votes. The Participant calls for greater attention to the welfare of nationals abroad, suggesting that a lack of political and economic cooperation between countries contributes to the problem. The statement also highlights that while unemployment and poverty exist in South Africa, these conditions should not serve as justifications for violence against foreigners.

#### **5.10.8 Sub-theme 7: Lack of Awareness and Education**

Four local student participants highlighted the sub-theme of lack of awareness and education, reflecting the role that limited exposure and understanding play in fuelling xenophobic attitudes. Many locals are not fully aware of foreign nationals' diverse cultures and backgrounds, leading to misconceptions and stereotyping. A lack of education about other countries and limited knowledge of global issues contribute to the fear and mistrust of foreigners. This lack of awareness often manifests in ignorance about the benefits of cultural diversity, resulting in a reluctance to accept and integrate foreign nationals into local communities. This is shown when participant LSP10 stated that:

*Misconceptions and stereotypes about foreign nationals persist due to insufficient awareness and education. Without proper information and dialogue, negative perceptions may prevail.*

Participant LSP 11 stated:

*It's misinformation and not taking the time to distinguish between or classify one entire cultural group or one group of human beings. If I know of a Nigerian, for instance, that sells drugs, then I say all Nigerians sell drugs, you know?*

Participant LSP3 stated that:

*Lack of understanding of the internal structures in the country. Remember, this building in Joburg got burnt, and then it was inhabited by foreigners. But see, let's go back to the root cause of who the building belongs to. And OK, they say yes, it was hijacked by foreigners. But what was the South African police doing when this was happening? You know. So it's a lack of understanding of the internal structures, which means you must understand something at the root cause, not at surface value. Also, people make judgments which are not research-based and based on facts. They just take everything at face value."*

Participant LSP1 stated that:

*We are taught this spirit of ubuntu, and we are people who practice Ubuntu, who accept other tribes and people of other places who are different from us with love and respect. But I don't know. I feel like the colonization also diluted our Ubuntu, but it's uneducated of other cultural practices and tribes outside of our own. It's also a sense of entitlement from South Africans that they just feel like everything belongs to them and nothing else in this country should live or be shared with other countries. So it's lack of education, a sense of entitlement.*

The above Participants highlight different aspects contributing to xenophobia in South Africa. Participant LSP11 points to misinformation and a lack of effort to distinguish between individuals within a cultural or national group. Stereotyping based on the actions of a few is identified as a key issue. Participant LSP3 emphasizes the importance of understanding internal structures to avoid making superficial judgments. The example of a building in Joburg being burned and inhabited by foreigners underscores the need to delve into root causes rather than accepting surface-level explanations. Participant LSP1 connects the issue to the erosion of the ubuntu spirit, attributing it to colonization and a lack of education about cultural practices and tribes outside one's own. The sense of entitlement among South Africans is also identified as a factor contributing to xenophobia. Overall, these statements emphasize the need for accurate information, understanding internal dynamics, and addressing issues of education and entitlement to combat xenophobia.



### 5.10.9 Sub-theme 8: Lack of Exposure

The sub-theme of *Lack of Exposure* emerged from the views of three African international student (AIS) participants and the observation of one local student participant. In my opinion, a significant factor driving xenophobia is the limited exposure many South Africans have to life beyond their borders. AIS participants emphasized how locals are often unfamiliar with other African countries and cultures, leading to misunderstandings and false assumptions. This lack of exposure results in narrow perspectives, making it difficult for locals to appreciate the experiences and contributions of foreign nationals. Expanding this exposure could foster greater cultural understanding and reduce the tensions often linked to xenophobia. This shown when participant AISP9 stated that:

*Lack of exposure is the major issue. This is a significant problem because once people expose themselves to the world and experience life outside South Africa, xenophobia is less likely to occur. Additionally, politicians play a big role in this. Unemployment is not a problem unique to South Africa; it exists everywhere. Even if foreigners leave, unemployment will remain because if people are unwilling to work, they will complain when asked to do tasks. If someone starts frowning and complaining, do you think the employer will keep them? For me, the main issues are the lack of exposure and the role of politicians.*

Participant AISP9 further stated that:

*Regarding lack of exposure, many South Africans are unaware of life outside South Africa because they are not open to learning about other countries. For example, many South Africans don't even know where Kenya is or it is in Africa. They are not interested in learning about other places. If they knew that people in different countries were living well and being treated well, they might be more accommodating. However, they tend to believe that South Africa is their home forever. They need to think beyond South Africa. Politicians incite xenophobia by claiming that foreigners are responsible for unemployment. The opposition often uses this to criticize the government and push for foreigners to leave, which is harmful.*

Participant AISP16 stated that:

*I realize that most South Africans are not exposed to what is happening worldwide or even within their own country. For example, I am part of a WhatsApp group that posts job adverts for my qualifications. Still, my South African friends, who are studying the same qualifications, are unaware of this group. They wonder how I know about these opportunities when I am not from this country. There is a significant lack of exposure among South Africans.*

In a similar vein, local students believe that colonization and apartheid history contribute to the causes of xenophobia. Participant LSP14 stated that:

*The major cause of xenophobia is the differences that were created, which are mainly illusory. As*

*Africans, there is not much difference between us. I realized this when I came to the university because my previous environment did not expose me to how other Africans are. The media also plays a significant role, rarely presenting positive stories about foreign nationals. Media stereotypes and negative portrayals contribute significantly to xenophobia.*

The statements highlight the theme of lack of exposure as a significant contributing factor to xenophobia in South Africa. Participant AISP9 emphasizes that many South Africans lack exposure to the world and often don't even know about other African countries, reinforcing a limited worldview. The sentiment is echoed by AISP16, who points out that locals may not be as informed about job opportunities and other aspects of the country as foreigners are. Politicians are identified as playing a significant role in fuelling xenophobia by blaming foreigners for unemployment, creating a divisive narrative. Additionally, Participant LSP14 mentions the influence of media in perpetuating negative stereotypes about foreign nationals, contributing to misconceptions and illusional differences. The common thread in these statements underscores the importance of exposure, education, and challenging stereotypes to address xenophobia in South Africa.

#### **5.10.10 Sub-theme 9: Lack of integration and political leadership**

The sub-theme of lack of integration and political leadership was highlighted by most African international students (AIS) participants and observed by local student participants. I believe the challenges associated with this sub-theme reflect a broader issue of inadequate integration efforts and ineffective political leadership. AIS participants pointed out that limited integration into local communities exacerbates feelings of isolation and misunderstanding. Concurrently, local students observed that political leaders often fail to address these issues effectively, sometimes even perpetuating xenophobic attitudes through their rhetoric or policies. Strengthening integration initiatives and fostering more responsible political leadership could help bridge community gaps and mitigate xenophobic sentiments. This shown when participant LSP15 specified that:

*Operation Dudula promotes xenophobia because I feel that people in South Africa aren't politically educated. It doesn't allow people to learn or be open-minded about things and to look at things realistically. It creates a gap because education is essential, and how it creates division seems intentional. If people in South Africa begin to understand what is happening in Africa as a whole, I think the political dynamics of this country will change immensely.*

Participant AISP11 further stated that:

*In South Africa, political factors are one of the causes of xenophobia. For example, in 2015, a prominent leader in KZN, who was also a politician, said something that sparked and inspired xenophobia. I can't remember what he said, but indeed it is the politicians who perpetuate xenophobia through their campaigns and the messages they pass on to people. Most people don't think about whether what is said is right; they follow blindly. For example, the ANC also perpetuates xenophobia, like what happened with Operation Dudula, where a group of people removed foreigners from taxis and hospitals. So, both directly and indirectly, they perpetuate xenophobia. Social media also perpetuates xenophobia and becomes a challenge because it is a space that cannot be controlled. Social media circulates bad videos and misinformation sometimes.*

Participant AISP6 stated that:

*In South Africa, yes, it's your politicians. People like Kenny Kunene, Gayton McKenzie, Mashaba, and the Home Affairs minister. They take news wherever and post it on Twitter, invoking sentiments where they say we need to hate foreigners because of ABC due to their narratives or agendas. Then we had an organisation called Dudula, which also promotes hatred and xenophobia in SA.*

Participant AISP7 stated that:

*I think politicians in South Africa promote xenophobia. For example, Gayton McKenzie always talks badly about foreigners, saying they must go. During his campaigns, he always says that he will chase every foreigner away when he comes to power. He always blames unemployment on foreigners. Politicians don't differentiate between legal and illegal foreigners, so they are fuelling this hatred. I also think that politicians are not doing enough; even the ruling party is not taking any action to stop xenophobia. Social media also perpetuates xenophobia to a larger extent, as some people are not concerned about the impact of their words.*

Participant AISP9 stated that:

*Politicians are also xenophobic. You can hear it when they speak; they have bitterness towards foreigners. For politicians to win the hearts of the common people, they have to give them what they want. So, they incite xenophobia because they want something from the people, such as votes. Even if their promises are not feasible, they will incite them to gain votes. Once they are in government, they may not fulfil their promises. For those who are xenophobic, they get a platform to incite further.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*Insufficient efforts to integrate foreign nationals into local communities can lead to isolation and mistrust. This lack of integration can contribute to xenophobic attitudes. Some foreign nationals, like any population, may be involved in criminal activities. Isolated incidents involving foreign nationals can be sensationalised and used to stoke xenophobia. South Africa, like many countries, experiences internal and international migration as people move to cities and regions with more economic opportunities. Rapid urbanisation and population movement can sometimes lead to tensions between established residents and newcomers. Negative portrayals of foreign nationals in*

*the media can perpetuate stereotypes and contribute to xenophobic attitudes. Some individuals may fear cultural change or perceive foreign nationals as a threat to their cultural identity.*

Participant LSP15 stated:

*I think the lack of political education among the people of South Africa contributes to xenophobia. There is a lack of jobs, and foreign nationals often have skills that are beneficial in this country, skills that South Africans do not have. This creates a clash because many South Africans do not see the value in these jobs, such as growing vegetables, cleaning yards, being nannies, or building houses. When foreigners take these jobs, some South Africans perceive it as a threat to their own job prospects, even though they were not previously interested in those jobs. This frustration, combined with the state of the economy and politics, contributes to xenophobia. The lack of education and insufficient government action exacerbate these issues.*

Participant AISP3 stated:

*Lack of good leadership contributes to xenophobia. If a leader does not speak the truth, the followers will act according to what the leader says. Ignorance of the people and the history of African unity contribute to xenophobia. People do not understand why foreigners are seeking refuge in South Africa, nor do they understand the problems foreigners face. The high unemployment rate in South Africa leads to jealousy when people see foreigners working and themselves without jobs, which can result in attacks on foreigners out of jealousy.*

Participant AISP5 stated:

*Jealousy and frustration lead to fights and blaming foreigners for the country's issues. Unemployed people may direct their anger at foreigners due to a lack of exposure to other cultures and an unawareness of the broader world. They only focus on South Africa and not the global context.*

Similarly, participant AISP3 said:

*Lack of good leadership is a factor. If leaders do not tell people the truth, they will not understand the real issues. People are ignorant of the history of African unity and the situations driving people to seek refuge. They also do not understand what is happening in other countries. High unemployment leads to attacks on foreigners, as people might think that if foreigners were not there, they could have those jobs. Jealousy also contributes to xenophobia.*

The above participants' views on the lack of integration and poor political leadership in South Africa highlight a multifaceted combination of socio-economic factors and political dynamics that fuel xenophobia. Participant LSP15 emphasizes the importance of political education in combating xenophobia. The assertion that "people in South Africa are not politically educated" suggests that a lack of understanding of political dynamics contributes to xenophobic sentiments. This aligns with the views of Pillay (2017), who argues that education and awareness campaigns are essential

in addressing xenophobia. Without a well-informed populace, individuals may be more susceptible to manipulation by political leaders who exploit fears of foreigners for their gain.

Participants AISP11, AISP6, and AISP7 point to the role of politicians in perpetuating xenophobia. They argue that political figures like Gayton McKenzie use anti-foreigner rhetoric to gain popularity and votes. This reflects Tella and Ogunnubi's (2014) scapegoating theory, which posits that powerful groups blame vulnerable populations for societal issues, thereby diverting attention from systemic problems like unemployment and inequality. Politicians, in this context, become agents of division rather than unity. The participants also highlighted the influence of social media in spreading xenophobic sentiments. AISP11 notes that social media can circulate misinformation, which exacerbates tensions. This observation is supported by Crush (2008), who discusses how media portrayals can shape public perceptions of immigrants, often negatively. The rapid dissemination of inflammatory content can create an environment where xenophobia thrives.

Participant LSP10 points out that insufficient integration of foreign nationals leads to isolation and mistrust, which are fertile grounds for xenophobia. This notion is echoed by Harris (2002), who identifies isolation as a key aspect of xenophobia. When communities do not engage with newcomers, stereotypes and fears can flourish, leading to hostility. The economic context is crucial in understanding xenophobia. Participant LSP15 mentions that foreign nationals often possess skills that South Africans do not, creating a perception of competition for jobs. This aligns with Botha (2012), who argues that heightened expectations for economic improvement can lead to frustration and hostility when those expectations are not met. The competition for scarce resources, particularly in a context of high unemployment and inequality, can exacerbate xenophobic attitudes.

The historical context of apartheid continues to influence contemporary attitudes. Participants suggest that the violent struggle for freedom has left a legacy where violence is seen as a viable means to address grievances. This perspective is supported by Field (2017), who notes that the

unique characteristics of xenophobia in South Africa are shaped by its historical context, including the protectionist tendencies that emerged during apartheid. The power conflict theory posits that social tensions arise when groups compete for limited resources and power. This theory is relevant to the participants' views, as they highlight how political leaders exploit economic anxieties to gain support. Misago (2015) argues that local political players often organize violence against foreigners to consolidate power and authority, illustrating how political dynamics can exacerbate xenophobic sentiments. Thus, one can say that the participants' views reveal that xenophobia in South Africa is deeply rooted in a combination of poor political leadership, lack of integration, and socio-economic challenges. I have observed that political figures do play a significant role in shaping public attitudes, often using xenophobia as a tool for political gain. The lack of political education and awareness among the populace further complicates the issue. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, community engagement, and responsible political leadership to foster a more inclusive society.

#### **5.10.11 Sub-theme 10: Role of Media in perpetuating Xenophobia**

The sub-theme of the role of media in perpetuating xenophobia was emphasized by most African international students (AIS) participants and noted by many local student participants. In my opinion, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and can significantly influence attitudes toward foreign nationals. AIS participants observed that negative portrayals and sensationalist reporting contribute to a skewed perception of foreigners, fueling xenophobia. Similarly, local students recognized how media coverage often highlights conflicts or issues involving foreigners in a way that reinforces stereotypes and fear. Addressing the role of media is essential in promoting more balanced and constructive narratives that support integration and mutual understanding. This was shown when participant AISP1 stated:

*Social media, like now, can be one of the factors because most people have access to it. So, it's highly likely that if you post something, it will spread quickly and reach everyone fast. If a person posts something with hate speech or a xenophobic attitude, they could easily misinform people on social media. Mainstream media is also used by politicians to fuel xenophobia with their political statements.*

Participant AISP2 stated:

*Media promotes everything in the 21st century. Social media promotes both the good and the evil, especially with the rise of fake news. Social media is used to spread different types of messages some positive, some negative. These platforms allow anyone to say anything because we haven't been able to censor what people post or talk about. I'm going to add politicians to this issue. In South Africa, there is a problem with policy implementation. Politicians here have failed to differentiate between government policies and ruling party policies. All policies should be implemented by the government, but they are not done properly.*

*I'm going to give you a very simple example: the Zimbabwean lady who was sick in a Limpopo hospital. The Health Minister in Limpopo made a statement that, as a professional medical doctor, she shouldn't have made. Even as a politician, she shouldn't have made that statement because of the state-to-state agreement between the Zimbabwean and South African governments, particularly regarding the bilateral relationship between ZANU PF and the ANC. That's why the Secretary-General of ZANU PF, in his statement, called her ignorant, saying she does not know the policies that have been discussed. If an MEC at the local or provincial government level does not understand these policies, it's a problem. Some government officials and politicians get into certain positions without knowing the necessary details, so they make statements about things they don't understand. These statements fuel negativity on social and mainstream media.*

Similarly, LSP11 discussed how social media plays a role, as participant LSP11 stated:

*Well, social media is a place where you can have a fake name and not be held accountable for what you say, so it becomes a 'safe space.' Some people are even paid on social media to make certain things trend. For example, the hashtag #PutSouthAfricansFirst can sometimes be good, but often it ends up excluding and dividing people, like Trump's 'America First.' We understand this is their country, so their interests should be advanced, but at what cost? There needs to be a balance, a moderate approach. Social media is a place where people can perpetuate hateful utterances, knowing they won't be held accountable or that it will be difficult to hold them accountable. Social media perpetuates xenophobia. Moreover, if something happens in Johannesburg like foreign nationals being told to leave, it can spread to other provinces through social media, even without a clear understanding of the issue.*

Participant AISP13 stated:

*Social media is number one in perpetuating xenophobia or anything because it's instantaneous and has wide coverage. When somebody posts something, and you look at the comments, that's where you really get to understand what people are thinking about the issue. I see it a lot in the comments of South Africans and in the things, they post on social media; there are very hateful things about foreigners' things said by people you'd expect to know better. For example, when Operation Dudula started, it seemed like 90% of South Africans on social media supported it, saying that what they were doing was fine and that they should get rid of all the foreigners.*

In a similar vein, local students believe that the media shapes people's perceptions and perpetuates xenophobia in South Africa. This is highlighted when Participant LSP1 stated:

*It's also how the media has presented foreign nationals to us growing up. For example, there's this*

*TV channel, Channel 152. Growing up, I feared foreign nationals because of the movies they showed, particularly Nigerian movies, which often depicted extreme witchcraft and evil. The media is responsible for how we view foreign nationals. It has portrayed them negatively, associating them with witchcraft, theft, and drug consumption negative stereotypes all around. In those Nigerian movies and others, I just don't remember the names, but I grew up thinking foreign nationals were not good people. The media taught me to stay away, to run, run. When a lot of them started migrating down here, they were somehow affiliated with the high rates of crime, and the media continued to blame them. That shapes how communities and societies view them. If a community is conservative, anything unfamiliar becomes scary, and they judge it and try to distance themselves from it. For example, if you go to a place where there are Zulu people, you can't just speak any language that's not their own. They will automatically judge and mistreat you because you're not one of them. So, how communities view foreign nationals is also a contributing factor.*

Participant LSP4 stated:

*Social media is 100% a major perpetrator of xenophobia because we tend to generalise. Social media is very influential. You don't know if something is true or false, but it's circulating. The words people use and the things they say are very impactful. That's why I say xenophobia feels the same to me when I watch Sarafina and see those things, it's the same.*

Participant LSP3 stated:

*I think social media contributes because when someone posts online, they share their opinion, which is often one-sided and not backed up by facts. Nothing posted on social media is peer-reviewed, so people take it at face value without understanding the full context. It spreads lies and misinformation, which creates a false image and incites violence. When people post things out of hate for foreigners, it fuels xenophobia and violence.*

Laganprasad (2015:4) supports the participant's assertion that the general attitude of denial of the problem by the government has shown a lack of leadership in combating the problem. Up until recently, the government has labelled attacks against foreigners as opportunistic crimes and did not want to label them as xenophobic. The shockingly poor conviction rate of those perpetrating these attacks has demonstrated the government's lack of interest in the matter (Laganprasad 2015:4). Furthermore, high-ranking officials who have expressed inflammatory xenophobic sentiments have not been publicly reprimanded. These irresponsible statements have helped fuel the negative sentiment against foreigners (Khorana 2021).

In line with the above views, Singh (2010:15) argues that "African foreigners are considered relatively easy targets of xenophobia since they have few rights, little means of recourse and are sometimes easily distinguishable targets due to the clothes they wear, their distinctive physical features and their lack of proficiency in an indigenous language". Singh (2013:99) further argues that while "African international Students' experience of xenophobia mainly takes a non-violent



form, they bear the emotional and psychological scars of xenophobic encounters”. According to Mullaly (2010:60) “almost all oppressed groups suffer systematic violence simply because they are subordinate in the social pecking order”. This violence not only includes physical attacks but also harassment, ridicule, and intimidation, all of which serve the purpose of stigmatising group members (Mullaly, 2010). According to Singh (2013), “open acts of xenophobia within communities are widely reported and more visible; xenophobia amongst students is subtler and can only be uncovered by establishing the individual experiences of students who are willing to share these experiences”. Singh (2013) further pointed out that university students are not exempt from the xenophobic behavior that has been occurring in South African communities.

On the other hand, Shindondola (2002) examines xenophobia in South Africa based on the views and experiences of some African international Students at the Rand Afrikaans University. She further argues that in South Africa, one’s pigmentation, accent, dress code and place of residence determines whether you will become a victim of xenophobia in South Africa. Shindondola (2002), in her summary of findings, states that xenophobia is alive and well in South Africa, and some people in South Africa do not welcome diversity. Being an international student means no protection from prejudice and abuse, especially if you have a darker pigmentation.

## **5.11 Impact of Xenophobia on African international Students**

Xenophobia can have a significant and often negative impact on foreign African students who are studying in countries where they face discrimination and hostility. This section aims to answer the research objective and research question 3 found in Chapter 1, which states: How have xenophobic experiences affected African international students at UKZN (refer to Chapter 1)? The impact of xenophobia on these students can be both immediate and long-term, affecting various aspects of their lives. Below are some of the key impacts from the participants.

### **5.11.1 Sub-theme 1: Academic Performance**

The sub-theme of academic performance emerged from the views of African international students (AIS) participants and was also observed by local student participants. In my view, the impact of xenophobia significantly affects the academic experiences of AIS students. They

reported that xenophobic attitudes and discrimination can create an environment of stress and distraction, hindering their ability to focus on their studies. Local students similarly noted that the challenges faced by AIS students, including safety concerns and exclusion, often translate into difficulties in maintaining academic performance. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring all students achieve their academic potential in a supportive and equitable environment.

This is shown when participant AISP3 stated:

*It demoralises me and gives me more stress, causing me to lose focus on my studies. It shifts my focus from academics to worrying about staying safe from xenophobic attacks.*

Participant AISP2 stated:

*It affects their academics because if there are protests and everything, whether on campus or off campus, they would not be able to attend classes, and it would limit their movement. You can't go to the library, or even to Checkers freely, because you are scared. For example, some bursaries might be strictly for South African students. I don't know if that's still the case. This creates constant fear because they can't express how they feel or share their opinions about certain things.*

Similarly, local students share this view, as Participant LSP2 stated:

*It obviously affects their academics because if there are protests, whether on or off campus, they cannot attend classes, and it limits their movement. They can't go to the library or even to Checkers freely because they're scared. For example, some bursaries might be exclusively for South African students I don't know if that's still the case. This also creates a constant fear, preventing them from expressing their feelings or opinions about certain issues.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*African international students feel pressured to excel academically, especially when coming from an educational system with different expectations, which can be overwhelming. Feeling isolated from local students and communities can hinder their social integration and overall adjustment.*

Participant LSP12 stated:

*I think it negatively affects them because if an African foreign national is performing well academically and deserves a merit certificate or bursary, there will be accusations. If they receive good marks from lecturers, there's a xenophobic attitude that they're getting preferential treatment. It's even worse if the lecturer is also a foreign national then it's like they're getting preferential treatment just because they're foreign. I believe this impacts them negatively because of the perception that they don't deserve the bursaries or awards due to their hard work but are given them because they're foreign nationals. This attitude creates the false impression that they're being favoured by lecturers, which has a negative effect on them.*

The above views collectively highlight the negative impact of xenophobia on the academic experiences of foreign nationals in South Africa. Participants, including AISP3, AISP2, and LSP12,

express how xenophobia leads to stress, fear, and a lack of focus on studies. The constant threat of xenophobic attacks and protests creates an environment where attending classes, utilising resources like libraries, or expressing opinions freely become challenging for foreign students. Additionally, concerns are raised about the unequal distribution of opportunities, with some bursaries perceived as strictly reserved for South African students. This perception, as indicated by LSP12, creates an atmosphere where high academic achievements by foreign students may be wrongly attributed to preferential treatment rather than their hard work, exacerbating the negative impact on their academic journeys. Overall, these statements underscore the far-reaching consequences of xenophobia on the educational pursuits and well-being of foreign nationals in South Africa.

### **5.11.2 Sub-theme 2: Social Isolation**

The sub-theme of social isolation was highlighted by African international students (AIS) participants and observed by local student participants. In my view, the impact of xenophobia extends beyond academic challenges to affect students' social experiences. AIS students often experience feelings of exclusion and loneliness, as xenophobic attitudes can create barriers to forming connections with local students and communities. Local students' observations align with this, noting that the social isolation of AIS students often stems from a lack of integration and understanding, further exacerbating their sense of alienation. Addressing social isolation is essential for fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students. This is shown when participant AISP10 stated:

*It makes me have less confidence to socialize and contribute to a conversation. I also have difficulty asking for help because I know how they will act towards foreigners, and it is also hard for me to help without knowing the language.*

Participant LSP11 stated:

*It's difficult to adjust to a new space. If you find that the new space is unreceptive to you, it causes much anxiety. To do well in your studies, you need to be calm and able to think in class. But if you are accompanied by anxiety and feelings of not being wanted, like people don't want you there, it will impact you.*

Similarly, local students share a similar view, this is shown when participant LSP7 stated:

*It makes it difficult for them to make friends with people from South Africa. The strong groups will probably only consist of people from their own country because they feel more comfortable in that space. It is a safer space for them, if we're being honest because we don't know how xenophobic*

*some South Africans are behind closed doors. So, it's safer to be in friendships with people from your group or people who understand what you're going through, which limits their exposure to more diverse groups. Friendships likely consist of South Africans and people from other places in South Africa, which is quite diverse. It also impacts their dating life and relationships. When certain stereotypes are placed on a group, or there are notions about a group, it affects how many people will want to pursue them.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*Negative experiences of xenophobia can influence a student's perception of the host country and its people, potentially affecting their willingness to build positive cross-cultural relationships in the future. Xenophobia can hinder the cultural exchange experience for both foreign African students and their local peers, depriving everyone of the benefits of intercultural interaction.*

Participant LSP5 stated:

*It builds a sense of hatred towards South African students or people because they have seen their people being attacked just because they are foreigners. They may feel like they are at war, and some of them may feel like they have to retaliate.*

Participant LSP4 stated:

*It doesn't allow them to learn more or find more opportunities in this country because they are focused on getting good grades, graduating, and leaving. It prevents them from expanding their horizons and networking more. From what I know, between 2018 and 2021, they didn't socialize much; they just worked and studied. I think this may have affected their mental health a bit because they can't go to shisa nyama (local restaurants) in the townships due to the fear of not being South African. This impacts their mental health and social skills.*

There are many factors that can be seen to contribute to the problems that African international Students encounter, such as social support, cultural differences, social relations, language, and social norms. African international Students may be alone in the new environment, establishing social relations and social support are seen to play a key role in their psychological adjustment to the new culture (Ward et al., 2001). For example, a study on Greek students in the U.K. found that high levels of culture shock were related to low levels of social support (Pantelidou and Craig, 2006). There has been debate as to what type of support is more important, whether it is the source, the quality, or the quantity of the social support (Ward et al., 2001). Social support can come from fellow compatriots (which may allow for the common understanding of cultural values), from other African international Students, or from host national or local students (Ward et al., 2001). Bochner (1982) suggests that the optimal form of social support in order to acculturate and learn and acquire the social norms of the new environment whilst still maintaining the culture

of origin is to have frequent contact with students in all three categories.

## **5.12 Factors that have hindered adjustment to University for African international Students**

The main theme of factors that have hindered adjustment to university for African international students emerged from the perspectives of African international students (AIS) participants. This theme encompasses various challenges that affect their ability to acclimate to university life. AIS students frequently encounter obstacles such as cultural differences, language barriers, social exclusion, and institutional shortcomings, all of which significantly impact their overall adjustment and integration into the academic environment. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing targeted support strategies to improve their university experience and foster a more inclusive campus environment.

### **5.12.1 Sub-theme 1: Challenges with visa applications and medical aid cover**

The sub-theme of challenges with visa applications and medical aid cover emerged from the central theme of *Factors that have hindered adjustment to university for AIS*. This sub-theme highlights AIS students' difficulties regarding visa regulations and medical aid coverage, which can significantly affect their academic and social integration. They face several complications in securing or renewing visas and obtaining adequate medical aid can lead to additional stress, financial strain, and interruptions in their studies, further exacerbating their adjustment challenges. Addressing these issues is vital for improving their overall experience and ensuring they receive the support needed to thrive at university. This is shown when participant AISP4 stated:

*The ZEP impacted my application for my study permit because there was this waiver, and we were told to stop. Until now, I have been stuck, and you have just applied in hopes of getting accepted. This has hindered me. As a foreign student, the resources available are limited, so you can have difficulty adjusting.*

Participant AISP9 stated:

*I also faced visa challenges. When your visa expires, you can't do much—you can't even get campus jobs, although you can register for your studies with a visa receipt of application. Participant AISP10 stated: The slow visa renewal process makes adjusting to university challenging, making*

*it hard to focus.*

Participant AISP13 stated:

*Visa applications are a significant hindrance for me. The visa issue is like a nightmare. For example, my husband's visa is an unaccompanied spouse visa. He decided to get off my visa last year and applied for his own, but nothing has been done about his visa for almost a year now. Similarly, I applied for my children's visas last year, and nothing has been done. It's going to be a year without their visas. Visa challenges are very disruptive, and unfortunately, nobody seems to be addressing them, especially the authorities at UKZN, who can't even advocate effectively for their African international students.*

Participant AISP13 further stated:

*The Home Affairs policies are a hindrance to foreign nationals in South Africa. When we first started this process, if you finished your PhD or even a Master's degree in South Africa, you could apply for a critical skills visa, which would enable you to work and, after your PhD, automatically qualify for permanent residency. But now, all of those provisions have been removed by the Department of Home Affairs. This creates obstacles for students and limits their career expectations and future plans.*

Participant AISP16 stated:

*My visa process was quite frustrating. I had to wake up at 4:30 to stand in long lines. They would often tell you to come back the next day, and you would spend the whole day waiting. It was very frustrating. Although my situation was resolved relatively quickly, I remember waking up around 3 AM to get to the visa office in Swaziland. It felt like too much just to be allowed into the country.*

Similarly, the representative of international students was asked about the complaints or challenges their office had received from students regarding their stay at the university.

Participant RIS17 stated:

*Students often have problems with their visas, including long turnaround times at Home Affairs, which unsettles them. I am grateful that the Home Affairs Department and the university understand that it's never the student's fault. They allow students to register and continue their studies using a renewal receipt, and for students still outside the country, they permit remote studies until the adjudication process is completed. This way, students are not stopped from engaging in teaching and learning. Previously, there was an issue with banks freezing accounts, but that has improved. However, the major problem now is that students without valid visas cannot take up student jobs. Although they can register and continue studying, HR departments may require a valid permit for payroll.*

The challenges African International Students (AIS) face regarding visa applications for study permits are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with systemic issues within South Africa's immigration framework. The above insights from AIS participants highlight the significant

barriers that hinder their academic and personal experiences. Participant AISP4's experience with the ZEP (Zimbabwean Exemption Permit) illustrates how sudden policy changes can disrupt the visa application process. The uncertainty surrounding the waiver and the inability to secure a study permit reflect the broader implications of immigration regulations on students' academic journeys. Muthuki (2010) emphasises that such policy shifts can create an environment of instability for foreign students, making it difficult for them to plan their futures.

Participant AISP9's statement about the inability to secure campus jobs due to visa expiration highlights a critical issue faced by AIS. The restriction on employment opportunities affects their financial stability and their integration into the university community. According to Dzansi and Monnapula-Mapesela (2012), the lack of access to employment can exacerbate feelings of isolation and hinder academic success. Participant AISP10's mention of the slow visa renewal process complicating their adjustment to university life underscores the psychological toll of navigating bureaucratic hurdles. This sentiment is echoed by Smith and Khawaja (2011), who found that international students often experience heightened stress and anxiety due to administrative challenges, which can detract from their academic focus.

Moreover, participant AISP13's account of the prolonged visa application process for her husband and children illustrates the emotional strain that visa issues can impose on families. The inability to reunite with loved ones can lead to loneliness and frustration. Harrison and Peacock (2010) note that such familial disruptions can significantly impact the well-being of international students, further complicating their academic experiences. The participant's comments on removing provisions for critical skills visas by the Department of Home Affairs (2014) reflect a broader trend of tightening immigration policies that can limit career prospects for AIS. Altbach (2004) discusses how restrictive immigration laws can deter international students from pursuing their studies in certain countries, ultimately affecting their long-term plans and aspirations. Participant AISP16's description of the frustrating visa application process, including long wait times and early morning queues, highlights the inefficiencies within the Department of Home Affairs. This aligns with findings from Cross and Johnson (2008), who argue that bureaucratic obstacles can create a hostile environment for international students, making them feel unwelcome and undervalued.

The representative of African International Students (RIS17) acknowledges the university's efforts to accommodate students with expired visas by allowing them to register and continue their studies. However, the ongoing challenges with employment due to visa issues indicate that while some support exists, significant gaps remain. Gumbo (2014) emphasises the need for universities to advocate more effectively for their international students, ensuring they have access to the resources and support necessary for their success. Thus, the views expressed by AIS regarding the challenges of visa applications for study permits reveal a complex interplay of policy, bureaucracy, and personal experiences. As an AIS student, I can relate to the AIS participants as the systemic barriers they face hinder their academic pursuits and impact their emotional well-being and future aspirations. I believe addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from both the university and the Department of Home Affairs to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for international students.

In line with the above views, participant RIS17 mentioned the challenges that students face with regard to paying for their medical coverage. Participant RIS17 state:

*Well, some students complain about having to be on medical aid even though they are rarely sick, and the year goes by without them using it. Others complain that they don't have the money. Unfortunately, it's a requirement for students on a study visa, though not for those on other types of visas. During their admission to the university, students usually declare that they will be able to cover these costs and levies. The university tries to get the best deals for students by vetting medical aids and selecting options that are both budget-friendly and offer comprehensive benefits. Comp-Care and Momentum Health are typically recommended because they provide the best balance of affordability and coverage. When medical aid is cheaper, it often lacks comprehensive coverage, which is crucial. You don't want a student to fall ill or face issues and find that their medical aid cannot cover their care.*

Participant RIS17 further stated that:

*African international students need to understand that the requirement for medical aid is not an institutional decision but a government directive. The Immigration Act stipulates that anyone holding a study visa must have concurrent medical aid. This is a government law, and the university must comply with it. The best the university can do is to find a medical aid plan that is both reasonable and comprehensive.*

The views expressed by the representative of the international office at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) highlight several critical aspects regarding the requirement for medical aid for international students, particularly those from Africa. Participant RIS17 notes that some students



express dissatisfaction with the requirement for medical aid coverage, particularly when they feel it is unnecessary due to their health status. This sentiment reflects a broader concern among international students about the financial implications of studying abroad. Many students may already be facing significant financial challenges, and the additional cost of medical aid can exacerbate their financial strain. This situation raises questions about the accessibility of higher education for international students, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Participant RIS17 emphasises that the requirement for medical aid is not an institutional decision but a directive from the government, specifically the Immigration Act. This distinction is crucial as it underscores the limitations of the university's authority in this matter. The representative aims to alleviate students' frustration toward the institution by clarifying that the university must comply with government regulations. This highlights the need for better communication and understanding of the regulatory framework governing international students. The university's proactive approach to vetting medical aid options and recommending providers like Comp-Care and Momentum Health demonstrates a commitment to supporting international students. By seeking out budget-friendly plans that still offer comprehensive coverage, the university is attempting to balance the financial constraints faced by students with the necessity of having adequate medical coverage. This effort reflects an understanding of the student's needs and a willingness to advocate for their best interests within the confines of existing regulations. One can say that, the statement from participant RIS17 emphasises the importance of educating African international students about the medical aid requirement.

Understanding that this is a government mandate rather than an institutional choice can help students navigate their expectations and frustrations. This educational component is vital for fostering a sense of agency among students, as it empowers them to make informed decisions regarding their health insurance options. In addition, the challenges faced by international students regarding medical aid requirements may also point to a need for broader advocacy at the institutional and governmental levels. As a researcher, I suggest that universities engage with policymakers to discuss the implications of such regulations on international students' accessibility to education. Thus, by advocating for more flexible policies that consider the diverse financial

situations of students, institutions can contribute to a more inclusive educational environment.

### **5.12.3 Sub-theme 4: Financial challenges**

The sub-theme of Financial Challenges highlights the significant financial difficulties that African international students face, impacting their ability to adjust to university life. Issues such as tuition fees, living expenses, and other costs can create substantial stress and hinder their academic performance, social integration, and overall well-being. Addressing these financial constraints is essential for supporting AIS students in their successful adjustment and overall success at the university. This is shown participant AISP9 stated:

*My issue is financial. I never managed to get funding. Funding is available for research and publication, but obtaining it from your supervisor or the university is not easy. Lack of finances makes it difficult to manage home expenses. Most scholarships are intended for local students, making it difficult for foreigners to access them. Even if they apply, they often do not receive them. Fee remission is available, but you still need to cover living expenses, which makes it difficult because you can't study on an empty stomach. You can't conduct research on an empty stomach, and applying for on-campus jobs, which are the only ones available, becomes a nightmare, especially if you have a family.*

Participant AISP14 stated:

*Factors that hindered me include limited access to information that could make college life easier and the requirement for foreigners to pay the full amount before studying.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*African international students generally face financial difficulties, including high tuition fees and living expenses, which add stress and distractions to the adjustment process.*

Participant LSP13 stated:

*African international students face financial challenges and are not subsidised because they are foreign nationals. The university does not consider that not all African international students are wealthy, and there are not enough jobs to support them.*

The sub-theme of financial challenges faced by African international students (AIS) is a significant barrier to their academic success and overall well-being. Participant AISP9 articulates a common frustration regarding the accessibility of funding for research and publication. The assertion that funding is primarily available for local students underscores a systemic bias that disadvantages foreign students. This aligns with the findings of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), who noted that international students often encounter barriers in accessing financial support, which can hinder

their academic pursuits. The participant's experience reflects a broader trend where international students are often left to navigate a complex funding landscape with limited resources.

The financial strain described by AISP9 extends beyond tuition fees to encompass living expenses. The participant emphasises the impossibility of studying effectively without adequate financial support for basic needs, such as food. This sentiment is echoed by LSP10, who notes that high tuition fees and living costs contribute to stress and distractions during the adjustment process. According to Perkins and Neumayer (2014), financial stress can significantly impact students' academic performance and mental health, suggesting that the financial challenges faced by AIS are not merely logistical but also psychological. Participant AISP14 highlights the limited access to information that could facilitate a smoother transition to college life. This lack of information can exacerbate financial challenges, as students may be unaware of available resources or support systems. As noted by Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014), information asymmetry can lead to unequal opportunities for international students, further entrenching financial disparities.

The requirement for foreign students to pay the full tuition amount upfront, as mentioned by AISP14, poses a significant barrier. This policy can create a financial burden that is difficult to manage, particularly for students from less affluent backgrounds. LSP13 reinforces this point by stating that the university does not recognise the financial diversity among African international students, leading to a lack of support for those who are not wealthy. This situation reflects the findings of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), which indicate that financial barriers are a critical factor influencing the decision-making process of international students. The limited availability of on-campus jobs, as mentioned by AISP9, further complicates the financial landscape for AIS. The participant's experience of applying for jobs while managing family responsibilities highlights the intersection of financial and personal challenges. According to a study by Jackson (2017), international students often face restrictions on their ability to work, which can exacerbate their financial difficulties and limit their ability to support themselves and their families.

The effect of these financial challenges can lead to significant stress and distraction, as noted by LSP10. This stress can hinder academic performance and overall student satisfaction. Research by Perkins and Neumayer (2014) supports this notion, indicating that financial difficulties can lead to

lower academic achievement and increased dropout rates among international students. Therefore, the financial challenges African international students face are multifaceted and deeply intertwined with their academic experiences. The barriers to funding, high living expenses, lack of information, upfront tuition payment requirements, and limited employment opportunities create a challenging environment for these students. Thus, addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes increased access to funding, better support systems, and policies that recognize the diverse financial backgrounds of international students. However, while increased access to funding could ease financial burdens for international students, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of existing financial aid structures, such as NSFAS, which is restricted to South African citizens. Given that tertiary education institutions are already struggling with sustainability due to high reliance on NSFAS, alternative funding mechanisms such as partnerships with private organizations, targeted international student scholarships can be explored to support diverse financial backgrounds without overburdening existing systems.

### **5.13 Factors that have facilitated adjustment to University for AIS**

The main theme of *factors that have facilitated adjustment to university for AIS* explores the elements and strategies that have positively contributed to the smoother integration and successful adaptation of African international students at the university. This theme encompasses various support systems, resources, and personal experiences that have helped these students overcome challenges and enhance their overall university experience. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective support mechanisms further to aid the adjustment process for African international students.

#### **5.13.1 Sub-theme 1: Good resources and conducive learning environment**

The sub-theme of Good Resources and Conducive Learning Environment highlights the positive impact of having access to quality educational resources and a supportive learning atmosphere. For many African international students, having access to well-equipped libraries, modern technology, and a conducive study environment has played a significant role in easing their adjustment to university life. This supportive academic infrastructure not only enhances their learning experience but also contributes to their overall well-being and academic success. This is shown when participant AISP9 states:

*UKZN provides a conducive environment and good learning resources. These resources include access to library materials and the internet, as we receive data every month from the university. Additionally, when my computer crashed, my supervisor provided me with a laptop, which I am still using. The university offers everything a student might need to facilitate their studies.*

Participant AISP16 stated:

*All my lecturers were welcoming and supportive. I had no issues adjusting to everything except for the challenges with insurance coverage. Overall, the support from my lecturers and residence staff was positive.*

Participant LSP12 stated:

*Positive factors that facilitate adjustment include the opportunity to have jobs. This is one positive aspect because students can adjust better when they can work. Also, the university provides facilities and resources that aid in adjustment.*

The experiences shared by participants AISP9, AISP16, and LSP12 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) highlight the supportive environment for international students. AISP9 underscores the availability of essential learning resources, such as library materials and internet access, which aligns with Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) findings on the significance of educational resources for student satisfaction and academic success. AISP16 emphasizes the positive interactions with faculty, indicating that supportive lecturers improve international students' adjustment and satisfaction, as noted by Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014). The provision of resources, like laptops for students in need, reflects the university's dedication to academic support, paralleling Perkins and Neumayer's (2014) research on how institutional resources enhance student well-being.

LSP12 points to job opportunities as beneficial for adjustment, supported by Jackson (2017), who emphasizes that employment aids financial stability and community integration. Additionally, LSP12 mentions the role of university facilities and services in easing the transition, echoing Bodycott's (2009) research on the impact of comprehensive support services. Thus, the participants' experiences suggest that UKZN offers a positive atmosphere for international students, with supportive staff, adequate resources, and employment opportunities contributing to their successful acclimatization.

### **5.13.2 Sub-theme 2: Social Groups**

The sub-theme of social groups reflects the importance of social integration for African international students, as observed by local students. Engaging with social groups and forming friendships within the university can significantly ease their transition. Being part of supportive peer networks and social communities helps in building connections, reducing feelings of isolation, and creating a sense of belonging, which are essential for a smoother adjustment to university life.

In a similar vein, the local students also share a similar view as Participant LSP1 stated:

*Programs are available for foreign students to help them adjust to university life. Some universities offer programs that build a community for foreign national students, helping them to support each other and become familiar with the university and the community. There are also clubs where foreign students can unite and support one another.*

Participant LSP2 stated:

*The university offers counselling services for new students and social groups for foreign nationals to interact, express their feelings, and find comfort. Religion also plays an important role, whether you are Islamic or Christian. Foreign nationals often prefer a small community of their own, which makes everything easier for them.*

Participant LSP4 stated:

*There are societies on campus, and foreign nationals have their own societies. This helps them adjust because they meet not just people from Nigeria but from other countries as well. These societies often organize events and cultural activities that remind them of their shared experiences. However, I have noticed that African foreign nationals sometimes receive less favourable treatment than white nationals in residence halls.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*The university offers support services to all students, such as orientation programs, academic advising, and counselling, significantly aiding in students' adjustment.*

The above views statements from the participants highlight various support mechanisms available to foreign students at universities, as well as the challenges they face. Participant LSP1 highlights the significance of community-building programs for foreign students, reflecting Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) assertion that social support networks are critical for international students' integration and reducing feelings of isolation. LSP2 mentions the availability of counselling services and social groups, emphasizing the importance of mental health support for international students, as noted by Ihuoma (2023), who identifies unique stressors such as cultural adjustment and homesickness affecting students' well-being. LSP2 also discusses the role of religion in providing comfort and fostering community, a point supported by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015), who indicate that religious affiliations can help international students find a familiar

cultural context. Participant LSP4 mentions the existence of cultural societies that connect students from diverse backgrounds, which aligns with Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) findings that suggest such societies are vital for emotional health and social integration. However, LSP4 also raises concerns about systemic inequalities in how African foreign nationals are treated compared to white nationals, which Mok et al. (2015) indicate can lead to marginalization and exclusion.

LSP10 emphasizes the importance of orientation programs and academic advising, supported by Perkins and Neumayer (2014), who argue that structured orientations help students manage academic expectations and utilize institutional resources. The insights from these participants underscore the complex nature of adjustment for foreign students, highlighting the need for academic, social, and emotional support as outlined by Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014). Overall, while the literature acknowledges various resources provided by universities to assist in adjustment, it also points to ongoing issues of inequality and cultural differences that require continued attention and improvement in support services.

#### **5.14 Do African international Students receive the same services the University provides?**

The question is: *Do African International Students Receive the Same Services the University Provides?* explores whether African international students have equal access to the resources and support services offered by the university. This theme examines the extent to which AIS are provided with the same level of academic, administrative, and welfare services as their local counterparts, highlighting any discrepancies or areas where they may experience differential treatment. This is shown when participant AISP1 stated:

*Yes, because the university makes the same provisions for all people, whether foreign or local citizens. If it's scholarships and so on, they are also based on merit and some bursaries. These can be targeted depending on who is offering the money and for what purpose. However, if there are scholarships, they mainly look at merit. It doesn't matter whether the student is foreign or local unless those scholarships are offered by certain organisations and are targeted in a specific way.*

Participant AISP8 stated:

*Yes, they do because I can use the services freely and comfortably. If I want to use the computer labs, I can do so. I haven't experienced any discrimination. As long as your card is working, you can enter.*

Participant AISP4 stated that: *Yes, they do, very much.* Participant AISP6 stated that: *Yes, they do. You just present your student card. They don't ask you anything, but as long as you're registered, you're fine.* Participant AISP10 stated that: *Yes, they do receive the same services provided by the university.* Participant AISP12 stated that *I have not been underserved at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The only problem is that bursaries are only for South Africans.* Participant AISP13 stated that: *yes if you're talking about services like the campus clinic and support services on campus. Every student receives the same. You can go to the ICS, and they sort you out.* Participant AISP17 stated that: *Yes, they do. To my knowledge, I've never seen a place within the University that says 'for South Africans only.' Every student receives the same services at UKZN.*

Similarly, most local students also share similar views as they believe that all students, including African International students, receive the same services as local students. This shown when Participant LSP6 stated:

*Yes, I believe so. Foreign nationals actually get opportunities from the university. They receive equal opportunities. Teaching is equal; everyone is allowed to attend. There's no exclusion based on skin color or nationality. I think everyone is treated equally.*

Participant LSP7 stated: *Yes, we all have access to the facilities if you have your student card.*

Participant LSP10 stated:

*Yes, foreign African students do receive the same services provided by the university as domestic students. Universities such as UKZN often have policies and guidelines in place to ensure that all enrolled students, regardless of their nationality or background, have access to the same academic, administrative, and support services.*

The views expressed by the participants regarding the services provided to African international students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) reveal a generally positive perception of equality in access to university resources. The responses indicate that both international and local students believe that the university offers the same services to all enrolled students, regardless of their nationality. Below is an analysis of these views, supported by relevant literature. The consensus among participants, both international and local, is that services at UKZN are accessible to all students. For instance, Participant AISP1 emphasises that scholarships and bursaries are merit-based, suggesting that the university's policies are designed to promote fairness and equality. This aligns with the findings of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), who argue that equitable access to educational resources is crucial for fostering an inclusive academic environment. Participants like AISP8 and AISP6 highlight their comfort in using university facilities, such as computer labs, without experiencing discrimination. This reflects a supportive environment that encourages



participation from all students. According to Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014), a welcoming atmosphere is essential for international students to thrive academically and socially.

While many participants affirm equal access to services, AISP12 points out that bursaries are primarily available to South Africans. This highlights a potential area of inequality that could affect the financial stability of international students. As noted by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), financial support is a critical factor influencing the decision of international students to study abroad. Local students, such as LSP6 and LSP10, echo the sentiments of their international peers, asserting that foreign students receive equal opportunities. This shared perspective fosters a sense of community and collaboration among students, which is essential for a harmonious campus environment. According to Lee and Green (2016), positive intergroup relations can enhance the overall educational experience for all students. The overall positive feedback from both international and local students indicates a level of cultural integration at UKZN and these perspectives highlight a mix of opinions regarding the equality of services for international and local students at UKZN, with some acknowledging potential disparities in scholarships and bursaries.

On the other hand, some students, both local and African foreign students, believe that African international students do not receive the same services at UKZN. This shown when Participant AISP5 stated:

*No, foreign students don't get funds, and foreigners have to pay for medical aid, which makes South African students more advantaged than foreign students. For example, I don't think we get NASFAS, which is first for South Africans. Even if you don't have permanent residence, you don't get funding. So financially, no, we don't get the same. We also need to pay for medical aid, which is very expensive. As a student, unequal access is mostly on financial support with accommodation. I never really experienced student accommodation.*

Participant AISP7 stated that:

*Not in terms of scholarships. For example, the university does not really award scholarships to performing students who are foreign nationals. My friend and I looked into this, and we couldn't see any foreigner being awarded a scholarship. It seems like foreign students are just here to learn, and the university doesn't care. Foreign students need to be awarded scholarships to motivate them to excel academically. I've been almost at the top of my class but have never received a scholarship for best-performing students.*

Participant AISP11 stated that:

*Generally, they don't. You have to pay international student fees, medical aid, and half of your tuition upfront, which makes it quite strenuous. South Africa is a society where, as a student, you end up surviving by doing tutoring and other jobs within the university. It's not like the Western world where students can work at McDonald's and other places because McDonald's jobs here are for locals only.*

Participant AISP14 stated that:

*I don't think so because most funds and bursaries are only for South Africans. South Africans don't need medical coverage, whereas foreigners need to pay for medical insurance, which doesn't even cover all injuries and illnesses.*

Participant AISP15 stated that:

*The services are different depending on the situation, but overall, I don't think they are. Some payments, like medical insurance, are unequal compared to South Africans. There should be a choice to pay for medical insurance or not, and there should be refunds if you have never used your medical aid.*

In a similar vein, some local students believe that African international Students do not receive the same services as local students, as Participant LSP11 stated:

*I would say that universities are institutions run by people, and if those people hold negative perceptions about foreigners, it's likely that the services foreigners receive will be inferior. As long as humans are behind the institutions with such views, it affects the institution itself. I've heard from friends who are foreigners that some professors are xenophobic. If influential or powerful individuals are xenophobic, it's likely that they will provide inferior services to foreign students. Academic staff and those teaching must also be educated to handle diversity, as biases they are unaware of may be perpetuated in their teaching.*

Participant LSP5 stated that:

*They are excluded from participating in political activities on campus. I have never seen them participate in SRC elections.*

Participant LSP14 stated that:

*I don't think they receive the same equal services. African international students need a lot to succeed at the university. For instance, they have to have medical aid or insurance, which affects their treatment. Administrative services may favour South African students.*

Participant LSP15 stated that:

*No, I don't think so. They don't get funding like we do, and while SRCs are meant to represent students, they are more focused on local students than African international students. When foreign students have problems, it's harder for them to relate to the SRC because it's locally student-centred. There were discussions about foreign national students earning more than South African*

*students in tutoring, particularly in politics, leading to debates about whether they were hired because of their hard work or other reasons. This was a significant issue.*

The above views expressed by both African foreign students and local students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) highlight significant disparities in the services and support available to foreign students compared to their South African counterparts. The financial challenges faced by AIS are underscored by Participant AISP5, who notes the lack of access to funding such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) available to South African students. This aligns with the findings of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), who discuss how financial barriers can deter international students from pursuing education abroad, emphasizing the need for equitable funding opportunities.

As mentioned by multiple participants, the burden of medical aid costs on foreign students reflects a broader issue of healthcare access for international students. Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014) argue that the financial implications of healthcare can significantly affect the attractiveness of a study destination, particularly for students from developing countries. Participant AISP7's observation about the lack of scholarships for foreign students resonates with the work of Perkins and Neumayer (2014), who highlight that scholarship availability is often skewed in favour of local students, which can demotivate high-achieving international students and affect their academic performance.

The challenges foreign students face in securing employment, as noted by Participant AISP11, reflect systemic barriers in the South African labor market. Mokgatlhe (2023) discusses how international students often encounter restrictions limiting their ability to work, exacerbating their financial struggles. The perceptions of xenophobia among academic staff, as mentioned by Participant LSP11, point to a critical issue of institutional bias. Durokifa and Ijeoma (2017) argue that negative perceptions of foreign students can lead to discriminatory practices within educational institutions, affecting the quality of services they receive. Participant LSP5's comment on excluding foreign students from political activities on campus highlights a lack of representation. Ihuoma (2023) emphasized the importance of inclusive governance structures in universities that consider the needs of all student demographics, including international students.

The assertion by Participant LSP14 that administrative services may favor South African students suggests a systemic issue within university operations. Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) discuss how administrative practices can inadvertently marginalize international students, leading to unequal access to resources and support. Participant LSP15's observation about the SRC's focus on local students indicates a disconnect between student governance and the needs of foreign students. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015) argue that effective student representation is crucial for addressing the diverse needs of the student body, including those of international students. Therefore, the views expressed by participants reveal a complex interplay of financial, administrative, and social factors that contribute to the unequal treatment of African international students at UKZN. Thus, addressing these disparities requires a concerted effort from the university to implement more inclusive policies and practices that recognize and support the unique challenges international students face.

### **5.15 Conclusion**

In conclusion, Chapter 5 of the research presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings using thematic analysis, focusing on the experiences of African international students (AIS) with xenophobia at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). This chapter is the most extensive, integrating data processing, analysis, and interpretation through figures, tables, and participant quotes that align with the study's research questions and objectives. It showcases the participants' experiences in depth, referencing relevant literature and theories. The chapter begins with demographic details of both AIS and local students, highlighting factors influencing AIS decisions to study at UKZN, such as referrals from friends and the university's reputation for research excellence and fee remission. It discusses participants' understanding of xenophobia, commonly defined as fear or hatred toward foreigners, which can manifest in discrimination, intolerance, and violence, rooted in economic and cultural tensions or historical conflicts.

Addressing how AIS experience xenophobia at UKZN, the study found that many participants reported experiencing or witnessing xenophobic behavior both on and off campus. The analysis indicated that African international students face institutional discrimination, with limited access to jobs and scholarships exclusively available to South African students, raising concerns about equity in academic opportunities. Additionally, a new term "Blackophobia," referring to black-to-

black animosity, emerged, suggesting that xenophobia is not uniformly experienced, with foreigners from Western countries facing less hostility. The issue of language barriers significantly affected participants' experiences of discrimination. The study also examined the difficulties AIS face in accessing public services off-campus, particularly in healthcare and transport, where attitudes toward foreigners often create intimidating environments. Participants expressed fears about accessing healthcare, perceiving locals as viewing them as threats to resources. Ultimately, the chapter elucidated major causes of xenophobia, including competition for scarce resources.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a continuation of the research findings, and it analyses and discusses the results of the study based on the views, experiences, and observations of both local and African international students at UKZN. In this chapter, the study focuses on identifying and evaluating strategies for addressing xenophobia and enhancing the experiences of African international students (AIS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The chapter begins by exploring the coping mechanisms that AIS can adopt to deal with xenophobia effectively. It then investigates the effectiveness of relevant immigration policies and UKZN's codes of conduct in combating xenophobia. Key issues examined include corruption, gaps in policy implementation by the South African government, and perceptions of UKZN's policies by the students.

The chapter then offers recommendations for UKZN as an institution of higher education in South Africa. These recommendations aim to help UKZN better support its African international students and create a more inclusive environment. Additionally, the chapter outlines necessary actions for the South African government to address xenophobia. These include combating corruption as it undermines effective policy implementation, erodes public trust, and worsens efforts to combat xenophobia. The chapter also outlines ways of improving border control mechanisms, formulating and implementing effective policies, raising educational awareness, collaborating with other African states, strengthening law enforcement, avoiding political blame-shifting, ensuring fairness in employment, promoting values of tolerance and empathy, and encouraging positive media coverage. The discussion extends to strategies for improving conditions across Africa, from Cape to Cairo. This chapter provides recommendations to mitigate xenophobia and enhance the situation of African international students (AIS). It advocates for fostering economic independence across Africa, combating corruption, and establishing robust justice systems to ensure fairness and transparency. It highlights the need for enhanced collaboration among African states to address collective issues and generate employment opportunities to support economic stability. The chapter also emphasises the importance of securing good leadership and governance, evaluating and refining existing policies, and

promoting education and inclusive environments to combat stereotypes and support diversity.

## 6.2 Coping mechanisms that AIS can adopt to deal with xenophobia

The section introduces a central theme of the study: finding coping mechanisms that African international students (AIS) can adopt to deal with xenophobia effectively. This section identifies and examines various strategies and practices students can employ to manage and mitigate the impact of xenophobic experiences. The African international students were asked to highlight coping mechanisms that enabled them to deal with xenophobia. Most foreign participants indicated the need to learn the language, have friends, focus on their studies, and accept that one is not home. However, when it comes to local students, they highlighted the need for firm border control, corruption, and the need to address challenges African countries are experiencing. Some of their views below evidence this:

Participant AISP1 stated:

*I have suggested that orientation programs for African international students should cover these aspects of xenophobia to enhance their understanding of the local context. This preparation will reduce anxiety and better equip them to handle challenges. Learning the local languages and cultures is also crucial for interacting with locals and building relationships, which helps bridge differences and foster a more inclusive experience.*

Participant AISP2 stated:

*Foreign students should strive to integrate with local students and understand their challenges. They should show solidarity by supporting local issues, like increased tuition fees or extended library hours, and avoid seeking special treatment. Participating in shared causes helps bridge gaps and fosters unity among all students.*

Participant AISP5 stated:

*When in Rome, do as the Romans do. Adapting to the local language and culture is essential for blending in and showing respect as a visitor. Learning the language helps avoid standing out and demonstrates genuine interest. Assimilation should not mean losing one's identity; embracing a new culture should enhance open-mindedness and maintain our roots while fostering connections and cultural understanding.*

Participant AISP9 stated:

*One should accept being a foreigner and avoid controversial arguments to prevent appearing aggressive. If discussions become heated or someone makes rough statements, it's best to remain silent. I've learned*

*to stay quiet, even when tempted to speak, and to avoid controversy, especially in difficult situations.*

Participant AISP6 stated that: *Having local friends provides a support network and people to talk to. Additionally, seek counselling, connect with senior students for advice, and focus on your primary goal: your studies at UKZN.* As for participant AISP4, foreign students ought to be confident and make use of the platform once they have it to advocate for diversity, as evidenced below:

*Stand your ground and be confident in your actions. Be responsible in what you do, get to know your surroundings, and socialise with others. Avoid fear and steer clear of xenophobic individuals. Advocate for diversity and mutual accommodation whenever possible. Stay open-minded and resist being swayed by negative systems.*

Participant AISP7 stated that:

*Your top priority should be your safety. Stay indoors, avoid crowds, and focus on your studies. Don't overstay at a neighbour's house it's essential to have your own space. If asked to leave, respect their request and return home. While learning languages is essential, it won't fully bridge cultural gaps. Stick to your routine, go home, and rest. Prioritise your safety and well-being.*

Participant AISP8 stated that:

*Learn the local language, join groups of like-minded, non-xenophobic people, and focus on preserving your peace. This approach helps ease the stress of being a foreigner and allows you to cope better.*

Participant AISP11 stated that:

*Cultural sensitivity is crucial for me, especially in South Africa. I try to understand the local culture, customs, and history to navigate potential challenges like xenophobia. This knowledge serves as a shield and helps me avoid possible issues. Building positive relationships with South African classmates is essential in the student environment. These connections act as a support system in case of any difficulties. Respecting local perspectives, traditions, and ways of doing things is also vital. It's important not to condemn or criticise without understanding, as frustrations can arise when we don't appreciate the significance of their traditions and customs.*

Participant AISP13 stated that:

*I can only share what has worked for me. I prefer keeping to myself and don't actively engage with other foreign nationals or live among South Africans, especially black South Africans. Based on my experiences and those of my children, I find it more comfortable to reside in a community of white South Africans. Generally, I believe in minding your own business and focusing on our purpose here. Keeping a low profile is essential; there's no need to socialise overly. Being authentic and staying true to your goals is crucial. Learning the local language can benefit integration, as language and food are key elements in connecting with any community or culture.*



The participants' views on coping mechanisms for African International Students (AIS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) highlight various strategies that help AIS navigate xenophobia. These strategies include cultural adaptation, integration, building relationships, and self-preservation. Participant AISP1 suggests incorporating aspects of xenophobia into orientation programs, emphasizing cultural preparation and language learning as vital tools for adapting to the local environment. This aligns with Tshishonga (2015), who notes that social networks and community support are essential for AIS, helping them foster a more inclusive experience. Similarly, Pillay (2017) underscores the importance of resilience and adaptability, suggesting that learning local languages and cultures helps students integrate and avoid standing out.

Participant AISP5 advocates for cultural assimilation with the view that "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." This reflects the notion of embracing local culture while maintaining one's roots, as supported by Masuku and Nkala (2023), who argue that cultural expression and identity reinforcement help bridge cultural gaps. Additionally, AISP2 emphasizes the importance of building relationships with local students and participating in local issues, a strategy supported by Adepoju (2008), who stresses the role of institutional support services like counselling and cultural sensitivity training in helping AIS navigate xenophobia. Participant AISP6 recommends leveraging social networks, such as local friends and senior students, to mitigate xenophobia's effects. This approach, combined with focusing on academic success, underscores the importance of social connections for coping. Meanwhile, participants AISP9 and AISP7 focus on self-preservation, with AISP9 advising avoidance of confrontations and AISP7 emphasizing staying safe by adhering to routines and avoiding crowds. These strategies reflect Stevens' (2016) view on psychological coping mechanisms and highlight the importance of balancing integration with personal safety.

Participant AISP11 suggests cultural sensitivity as a means of navigating xenophobia, which aligns with the biocultural hypothesis that visible differences often lead to xenophobic attitudes. By understanding local customs, AIS can avoid exacerbating tensions. Lastly, AISP13 prefers keeping a low profile, reducing visibility to mitigate xenophobic encounters, which reflects a protective coping strategy. These varied coping mechanisms illustrate the complexity AIS face in managing both the need for cultural integration and the necessity of personal safety. The balance between these strategies is essential for helping AIS navigate the challenges of xenophobia while pursuing

academic success. As a researcher, I recognize the importance of creating practical recommendations that provide AIS with the tools to engage with local culture while safeguarding their well-being. Comprehensive institutional and community support systems are critical for AIS to thrive despite the challenges they face.

In a similar vein, local students suggested ways that AIS students can cope with xenophobia this was shown when participant LSP10 stated that:

*African international students can participate in cultural or international student organizations, offering a sense of belonging and shared experiences. They must prioritize self-care, paying attention to their physical and mental well-being. Engage in activities that help you relax and reduce stress. In addition, AIS must maintain a healthy lifestyle, eat well, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep to support your overall health.*

Participant LSP13 stated that:

*Establishing a communal space, perhaps through a dedicated platform or page on social media, for a specific group of individuals could enhance community engagement. Whether it's a special page for students or a platform on the main page, having a collective space to share experiences could be beneficial. Validating shared experiences, especially when dealing with microaggressions, is crucial for individuals who may otherwise feel excluded. Creating supportive environments and helping one another navigate these challenges can contribute significantly to the community's well-being.*

Participant LSP8 stated that:

*It's important to be honest with yourself, adapt to your surroundings, and make use of the resources available to express your purpose. If you encounter a situation, try educating people with an open mind, as some may not know about certain things. Be open and explain when needed. Regarding language, nobody is perfect at pronunciation, so it's something beyond anyone's complete control.*

In line with the above views, Participant LSP10 emphasizes the value of engaging in cultural or international student organizations as a coping strategy for African International Students (AIS). This idea aligns with Muthuki's (2010) view that forming peer networks is crucial for creating supportive environments that help combat feelings of alienation caused by xenophobia. LSP10 also stresses the importance of self-care, both physically and mentally, which resonates with Tella's (2018) focus on self-reliance and stress management. Prioritizing self-care is seen as a way to empower AIS, helping them build resilience to face xenophobia. Participant LSP13 suggests establishing a communal space, possibly through social media, for AIS to share

experiences and support each other. This idea connects with Whitehead and Sing's (2015) emphasis on institutional support systems that provide safe spaces for international students. Creating platforms for shared experiences allows AIS to validate their feelings, foster community, and challenge exclusionary narratives driven by xenophobia.

In my opinion, such spaces can greatly enhance the well-being of AIS by offering them a collective voice. Participant LSP8 advocates for honesty, adaptability, and utilizing available resources to express one's purpose as a proactive approach to coping with xenophobia. This view is in line with Singh's (2013) argument that engaging with local communities helps reduce isolation. LSP8 also highlights the importance of open dialogue and educating locals about the challenges AIS face. Fostering these conversations can empower AIS to reclaim their narratives and educate others, while adaptability strengthens their resilience in responding to external perceptions.

### **6.3 Investigating the effectiveness of relevant Immigration policies and UKZN codes of conduct in fighting against xenophobia in SA**

This section investigates the effectiveness of relevant policies and codes of conduct in managing the problem of xenophobia in South Africa. This chapter aims to answer the research objective and research question 5 of this study: *How effective are relevant policies and codes of conduct in managing or preventing xenophobia in South Africa?* Most participants seem to be not satisfied with the immigration policies. Some participants also indicated that the South African government cannot implement and enforce immigration policies.

#### **6.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Combating Corruption and good border control mechanisms**

This section explores the critical issue of combating corruption and establishing effective border control mechanisms. Most participants highlighted tackling corruption as a crucial factor in the fight against xenophobia, noting that corruption often undermines efforts to enforce immigration laws. Additionally, weak border controls contribute to the unchecked movement of people, exacerbating tensions. Addressing these challenges can help the South African government take significant steps toward reducing xenophobic violence and fostering a more secure and just

society. This was shown when participant AISP13 stated that:

*The South African government should address corruption within its borders, and South Africans must reduce their dependence on the government to avoid manipulation through financial incentives. The government needs to be transparent with its citizens, providing accurate information about the country and displaying false narratives about foreigners. Regarding border control, it is essential for the government to take responsibility by implementing proper measures, such as clear demarcation and effective enforcement, to prevent unauthorized entry. Additionally, tackling corruption among border officials is crucial to ensuring the integrity of immigration policies. The focus should be on creating fair and accessible immigration procedures, thereby eliminating the need for individuals to resort to alternative methods due to perceived difficulties in following official channels.*

Participant AISP1 stated:

*I mentioned earlier that the government needs to show a better understanding of its population and its issues. Initiatives should begin with responding to the needs of the people, providing necessary services, and combating corruption. Sensitization workshops and community events, including cultural festivals and sports activities, can foster unity and understanding among diverse communities. Addressing illegal immigration is crucial, and government policies can play a role in monitoring and controlling it. Stakeholders, including both government and foreign nationals, should collaborate through community platforms to develop solutions. While respecting freedom of communication, certain content detrimental to society may need censorship through technological means to prevent misinformation and chaos. Balancing control with societal welfare is essential for creating a harmonious environment.*

This is shown when participant AISP1 stated:

*The immigration policies aren't working because they're not very effective. When people cross the SA borders without proper documentation, it creates problems. This influx of undocumented individuals puts much pressure on local resources, as we've discussed. Unfortunately, the existing policies are not effectively preventing these issues. Despite good policies, the borders remain porous, allowing for corruption and exploitation. So, although the policies are there, they are ineffective in addressing our problems.*

Participant AISP2 stated:

*Governments should avoid corruption and prioritize delivering essential services to their citizens. Migration often results from political unrest, poverty, and resource shortages, driving people to seek better opportunities elsewhere. To reduce migration, especially in South Africa, governments must improve conditions for their own people and stop supporting regimes like Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF, which fails to address its citizens' needs. Recent meetings between leaders have shown a disconnect from the people's struggles, particularly the effects of poverty and lack of resources. Effective service delivery ensures that all citizens, especially the underprivileged, can thrive in their*

*own countries. Regarding immigration policies, South Africa's failure to implement its well-documented policies has worsened xenophobia. The government needs a realistic assessment of its capacity to uphold the rights of refugees, including access to education and employment as guaranteed by the constitution. Policies on paper are ineffective without the necessary systems in place. South Africa must honestly acknowledge its limitations to effectively address xenophobia and meet the needs of both locals and immigrants.*

Participant AISP15 stated:

*No people in immigration offices are corrupt. I mean, I've never seen it. So, I can't. Really. I think there's not much. Okay. So, which means that's an area to go on in terms of their policies and stuff, even the legal framework for xenophobia should be improved, cause I've, well, I'm not very knowledgeable, but I've never seen it.*

In a similar vein, the local students agree with the above view at LSP12, stating:

*I don't believe so, and my skepticism is rooted in the observable lack of accountability and corruption among government officials. Notably, individuals perpetuating xenophobic actions include government officials and prominent figures, yet none of them has faced legal consequences. In contrast, instances of racism prompt immediate arrests and prosecutions, especially if the offender is white. Despite xenophobic statements and actions by political figures and ministers, no legal repercussions seem to follow. This pattern extends to universities, where incidents of xenophobic utterances or attacks are seldom addressed effectively.*

In light of the above statements, Harris (2002) argues that while the government did not directly cause the xenophobic attacks, their behavior and perceived lack of action were contributing factors. These factors include, firstly, the government's poor control of the influx of immigrants (both legal and illegal), which has led to increased tensions within affected communities, especially in light of the competition for scarce resources (HSRC, 2008). Secondly, corrupt officials in government departments, such as Home Affairs, Border Control, the Department of Housing, and the South African Police Service (SAPS), have resulted in some immigrants obtaining documents illegally using bribes, receiving government housing which they were not eligible for and getting away with crimes through paying bribes (HSRC, 2008). Therefore, Harris (2002) further states that all these factors increase the sentiment that the government is unwilling to or incapable of dealing with the issue of illegal immigrants and also that foreigners are getting preferential treatment.

These above views collectively emphasize the challenges facing immigration policies in South Africa. Participant AISP13 underscores the importance of tackling corruption, advocating for transparent information dissemination, and implementing effective border control measures.

Participant AISP1 criticizes the inefficacy of existing policies, citing porous borders and corruption. Participant AISP2 calls for a focus on essential services and addressing root causes of migration, highlighting the impact of supporting neglectful governments. Participant AISP15 notes room for improvement in policies against xenophobia. Local student participant LSP12 observes a lack of accountability, particularly in the face of xenophobic actions by officials, revealing a pattern of impunity. These viewpoints emphasise the need for effective policy implementation, accountability, and addressing root causes in the immigration system.

Problems with immigration policies, specifically on ZEP permits for Zimbabwean nationals  
participant AISP5 stated that:

*I may not be aware of specific policies, but I'm considering the impact, like the recent ZEP policy affecting Zimbabweans, where renewals are not allowed. This policy doesn't directly combat xenophobia; rather, it signals to foreigners that they're no longer welcome, creating a hostile environment. It's not addressing the root issue; instead, it conveys a message that the country is closing its doors. This situation puts people in a difficult position, forcing them to find alternative ways to survive. Addressing corruption is crucial because, in reality, some individuals without proper documents might get released by bribing police officers. This not only undermines the effort to deal with the issue but also perpetuates corruption for personal gain. Tackling corruption is essential for a more effective and fair system.*

Participant AISP6 stated that:

*I don't think xenophobia is directly linked to any specific legislation. Consider the ZEP policy for Zimbabweans, for instance. The abrupt decision not to renew permits doesn't combat xenophobia but rather suggests that foreigners are no longer welcome. This policy, along with others, may contribute to a hostile environment. In South Africa, it appears to be more Afrophobia than xenophobia, particularly affecting black individuals due to their close proximity. White, Indian, and Chinese students often do not face the same problems. White people seem more united and have economic influence, allowing them to avoid certain issues. They can quickly address concerns to the government, ensuring their children attend private schools to avoid potential problems. This unity and economic power create a stark contrast with impoverished black communities. The recent changes in immigration policies, like the ZEP permit, have added uncertainty. The abrupt shift to mainstream visas without adequate communication seems disruptive and may contribute to tensions, possibly tied to upcoming elections. The sudden suspension of the ZEP foundation, scheduled to end in December, adds to the uncertainty. The lack of clear communication and planning exacerbates the challenges faced by individuals relying on these policies.*

In line with the above views Okeke (2022) adds that when irrational fear and arbitrariness lead the way, any slight provocation could ignite violence. This may explain why xenophobia has

engendered catastrophic results in South Africa. He asserts that nativism can help to rouse xenophobic behavior (Okeke,2022). In addition, Okeke (2022:39) states that “nativism is the extreme belief in the protection of the interests of native inhabitants at all costs and against out-groups or foreigners. Policies are made with the sole intention of protecting such interests” (Okeke,2022:39). Thus, Okeke further argues that nativism can develop into xenophobia and may be a catalyst to xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Therefore, “in both cases of xenophobia and nativism, policies may include, and not limited to, strict immigration measures, systemic discrimination, and disenfranchisement of the out-groups” (Okeke, 2022:40).

Participant AISP5 highlighted the negative impact of immigration policies, specifically citing the recent ZEP policy affecting Zimbabwean nationals. While recognizing a lack of awareness about specific policies, the participant highlighted the indirect consequences, such as creating a hostile atmosphere that signals unwelcome feelings to foreigners. The ZEP policy, instead of addressing xenophobia directly, was criticized for promoting difficulties and forcing individuals to seek alternate survival strategies. The participant also emphasized the importance of addressing corruption within the system, as bribery challenges efforts to combat the issue and perpetuates corrupt practices.

On a similar view, participant AISP6 expressed skepticism about xenophobia being directly tied to specific legislation in South Africa. Using the example of the ZEP policy for Zimbabweans, the participant argues that its sudden decision not to renew permits sends a message of unwelcome, contributing to a potentially hostile environment. The participant emphasized the distinction between xenophobia and Afrophobia, particularly affecting black individuals in South Africa. Issues of unity and economic influence among certain racial groups were noted, suggesting differences in how different communities are treated. The abrupt changes in immigration policies, such as the ZEP permit suspension, were criticized for causing uncertainty and aggravating challenges for affected individuals due to a lack of clear communication and planning.

In a similar vein, the local students support the above view as LSP1 stated:

*One of the pressing issues lies in our border management, necessitating significant improvements. Enhancements in border laws, security measures, and stricter regulations are imperative, given the evident shortcomings in the current system. A fundamental shift is also warranted in our political and policing structures. The personnel tasked with guarding our borders should undergo*

*comprehensive training or receive increased remuneration to reduce susceptibility to corruption and bribery, thereby preventing unauthorized entries. It's crucial to address corruption within the system and remove any officials involved in facilitating the illegal entry of foreign nationals. The emphasis should be on encouraging legal entry through established channels, ensuring visibility and accountability.*

Participant LSP9 stated:

*To address border issues, African governments must actively engage in border control measures, ensuring the implementation of effective controls. Additionally, there should be a focus on educating citizens about foreign nationals and providing insights into the challenges they face in their home countries.*

Participant LSP12 stated:

*I think we need to fortify our vulnerable borders because their porosity makes it uncomplicated for individuals to cross over illicitly. To address this issue, it's imperative to enhance border control measures, ensuring that everyone entering South Africa does so through proper and legitimate channels. Currently, the lack of effective border management contributes to corruption and criminal activities due to the absence of security measures. Strengthening the borders is crucial to curbing the influx of undocumented individuals into South Africa.*

Participant LSP16 stated:

*The government needs to eradicate corruption, as doing so would eliminate the necessity for stringent borders to prevent illegal entry. This would also contribute to changing the locals' perception that every foreigner in South Africa is an undocumented immigrant. Establishing a robust home affairs system for foreigners to access proper services for paper renewal is crucial. Economic stability is imperative, as its absence adversely impacts various aspects of the country. Addressing corruption and fostering financial stability will prevent unjust blame on foreigners for the country's challenges.*

Participant LSP1 supports these views, stressing the urgency of border management enhancements, security measures, and a shift in political and policing structures. Participant LSP9 highlights African governments' role in actively engaging in border control measures and educating citizens about foreign nationals. Participant LSP12 emphasises the necessity to fortify vulnerable borders and enhance control measures to curb the influx of undocumented individuals. Participant LSP16 proposes eradicating corruption to eliminate stringent borders, establish a robust foreign affairs system, and address economic stability to dispel unjust blame on foreigners. These perspectives underscore the interconnected need for transparent governance, effective border management, and collaborative efforts to create a more inclusive and harmonious society.



### 6.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Lack of policy implementation from the SA government

In this section, the study examines the shortcomings in implementing policies by the South African government, particularly those aimed at addressing xenophobia. Participants highlighted that while policies may exist on paper, inadequate enforcement and lack of commitment often undermine their effectiveness. This gap between policy formation and implementation has significant implications for the experiences of African international students and their integration into South African society. By delving into these challenges, this section explores how the failure to enforce policies properly contributes to the persistence of xenophobic attitudes and behaviors, as observed by the participants.

Participant AISP7 stated that:

*I doubt their effectiveness; they seem absent when not visible. Despite the immigration policy stipulating that local companies shouldn't hire foreign nationals without proper documentation, it appears to lack enforcement. Many foreign individuals work without the required papers, operating outside the system. To address this issue, penalizing companies that employ foreign nationals without proper documentation could be a more practical approach.*

Participant AISP9 stated that: *I disagree because if the policies were effectively implemented, xenophobia would not recur. The fact that incidents of xenophobia repeatedly happen each year suggests that the existing policies are not being utilized as they should be.* Participant AISP10 stated that: *Only half of the percentage is effective, while the other half is not. It can be successful in situations where there are fewer foreigners, creating more job opportunities for local citizens. However, it may have negative consequences. For instance, foreign investors who could contribute to the country's economy might face restrictions under the policy, impacting the overall economic growth.*

Participant AISP11 stated that:

*While the policies exist in theory, their practical implementation is lacking. Many individuals, including those working in immigration and government customs, are unaware of these policies and legal frameworks. Discussing how policies address issues becomes challenging when people are not familiar with them, rendering these documents more theoretical than practical.*

Participant AISP12 stated that *I think so because it's not easy getting a job in South Africa legally. It would be more effective if they were educated.*

Participant AISP13 stated that:

*Observing the South African Minister of Home Affairs, every time he speaks, it's evident that he dislikes foreigners. This sentiment is reflected in how immigration policies have been employed to the disadvantage of foreigners under his leadership. Thus, I don't believe the immigration policy and legal framework in South Africa are actively combating xenophobia; instead, they seem to contribute to its perpetuation.*

In a similar vein, the local students agree with the above view as participant LSP9 stated that:

*These policies are fundamentally theoretical and lack practicality; instead, they tend to exacerbate discrimination. They are utilized as tools to perpetuate further discrimination, particularly in their application. The discriminatory nature of these policies becomes evident in their criteria for granting access and benefits. Essentially, only those at the top echelon are favored, while others are disregarded and not given due consideration.*

Participant LSP10 stated that:

*The effectiveness of immigration policies and university codes of conduct in fighting against xenophobia on campus and in South Africa as a whole can vary based on several factors, including implementation, enforcement, and broader societal attitudes. While these policies and codes of conduct can play a role in combating xenophobia, their impact may be limited if not properly enforced or if they do not address the root causes of xenophobia. Furthermore, participant LSP10 stated that: immigration policies establish the legal guidelines for the presence and rights of foreign nationals in a country, aiming to ensure fair treatment and protection of their rights. Effective policies should incorporate anti-discrimination measures, preventing bias based on nationality, race, or ethnicity, and advocating for equal treatment. Simplified and transparent visa and residency processes play a role in minimizing opportunities for exploitation and discrimination. Additionally, it is crucial for authorities to actively monitor policy implementation and hold accountable those individuals or institutions found engaging in discriminatory practices.*

Participant LSP11 stated:

*The absence of effective immigration policies in South Africa stems from the government's perceived incapacity to enforce them. If all foreigners were adequately documented, it could alleviate anxiety among South Africans and provide better control over their numbers. For example, undocumented foreign nationals are thriving despite lacking legal documentation due to the outdated nature of immigration policies. The government lacks the adequate intelligence and database to address the issue, leading to poorly implemented policies. The SA government is disconnected from the reality on the streets, especially the issue of managing undocumented individuals. The perceived negligence creates a problem, allowing opportunistic groups like Operation Dudula to shape immigration. Thus, the government's approach to immigration is flawed, lacking proactive intelligence and contributing to a disorganized and potentially harmful situation.*

Both the local and African international students share a critical perspective on the effectiveness of immigration policies in addressing xenophobia in South Africa. Participant AISP9 emphasizes the recurring nature of xenophobic incidents, attributing it to the ineffective implementation of existing policies. Participant AISP10 introduces a nuanced view, suggesting that policy effectiveness is contingent on balancing job opportunities for locals and potential negative consequences, such as restricting foreign investors. Participant AISP11 underscores the gap between policy existence and practical implementation, with many individuals unaware of legal frameworks. Participant AISP13 expresses distrust in the leadership, asserting that the Minister of Home Affairs contributes to xenophobia through discriminatory policy application.

Correspondingly, participant LSP9 argues that these policies perpetuate discrimination, favouring those at the top while disregarding others. Participant LSP10 emphasizes the importance of anti-discrimination measures and transparent processes in immigration policies to combat xenophobia effectively. Participant LSP11 criticizes the government's perceived incapacity to enforce policies, particularly in managing undocumented individuals, contributing to a disorganized situation and potentially harmful outcomes. Collectively, these perspectives highlight concerns about policy implementation, enforcement, and the impact on societal attitudes, calling for comprehensive reforms to address the root causes of xenophobia.

### **6.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Views on UKZN Policies**

This section explores the perceptions of participants regarding the policies and practices of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in addressing xenophobia. The study states that by examining the effectiveness, clarity, and implementation of these policies, this section sheds light on how well the university's efforts align with the needs and expectations of its international student community. The discussion highlights both the strengths and areas for improvement in UKZN's approach to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students. Below are some of the views that the students shared:

Participant LSP1 stated that:

*On campus, it appears that xenophobic attacks are not prevalent, and I haven't come across any reports of such incidents. While I may not be well-versed in the specifics of our policies or their*

*effectiveness, I cautiously assume that they might be contributing to a positive environment, even though they may not be flawless. It's important to acknowledge that there might still be instances of discrimination or challenges that I'm not aware of. Despite this, the absence of reported xenophobic attacks within the UKZN PMB campus suggests that there is some positive impact. However, this acknowledgment doesn't diminish the possibility of negative experiences, emotions, or traumas that individuals may have encountered and that I might not be aware of.*

ParticipantLSP2 stated that, although *I haven't delved into the specifics of immigration policies, I hold the belief that UKZN is commendably addressing the matter of accommodating African international students and promoting Ubuntu, fostering social cohesion. In my view, UKZN has consistently demonstrated excellence in these aspects over the years.* ParticipantLSP3 stated that to be honest, I don't even know about immigration policies, navigation, and cause of conduct. But the code of conduct, *I feel like they do protect everyone effectively. I'm not aware of the immigration policies.*

Participant LSP4 stated:

*They show effectiveness in academic matters, achieving a full score of 100%. This applies to students residing in the residence, engaging in academic activities, and other related aspects. However, when it comes to addressing xenophobia, I am skeptical. As mentioned earlier, the effectiveness depends on the individuals involved. While they may have policies in place, the execution hinges on the people. Xenophobia might not always manifest as visible scars but can be observed in the treatment of foreign nationals, even within the classroom setting.*

Participant LSP5 stated:

*Immigration policies, along with our university code of conduct, play a crucial role in combating xenophobia on campus and in South Africa. However, their effectiveness can vary based on multiple factors, including implementation, enforcement, and border control measures. Examining components such as legal frameworks, anti-discrimination visas, residence processes, and monitoring, as well as fostering accountability, is essential. In addressing these issues, education and awareness become key tools. Universities can utilize their code of conduct to educate both students and staff about the significance of respecting and appreciating diversity and promoting inclusivity. To ensure effectiveness, it is important that these policies and codes of conduct are inclusive, taking into consideration the specific needs and experiences of African international students. Consistency is paramount for their success; however, in some instances, enforcement may be inadequate, resulting in impunity for individuals engaged in xenophobic behaviour.*

Participant LSP7 stated:

*The rationale behind both perpetuating and opposing xenophobia can be attributed to various factors. On one hand, the perpetuation arises from the employment of foreign nationals and their admission into our educational institutions. This becomes a point of contention as South Africans*

*observe these individuals in academic settings or workplaces, triggering concerns related to unemployment. On the other hand, there is a simultaneous fight against xenophobia, driven by the inclusion of foreign nationals in these spaces. This dichotomy arises from conflicting perspectives, as the presence of African international Students or workers may be perceived as both perpetuating the issue and challenging it. The extent of one's support or opposition to xenophobia often hinges on individual sentiments and perspectives on the matter.*

Participant LSP11 stated:

*Regarding UKZN and its Code of Conduct, the educational experience was noteworthy for me. The institution addresses the issue of exposure, acknowledging that biases may exist if one is not exposed to individuals from diverse backgrounds. UKZN provided a conducive environment where I could engage with various foreign nationals, allowing me to understand them on a humanistic level rather than through the lens of national origin. This interaction facilitated a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives within a secure space. However, it is acknowledged that xenophobia is not absent at UKZN.*

Participant LSP13 stated:

*I may be referring to collaboration with the People Policy Committee. It's a recurring aspect where one needs to assess the existing policy alongside current initiatives open for public participation. These initiatives have a direct impact on people's lives, and it is essential to witness the implementation of statements made in parallel. The question arises: must we reform existing policies, ensure uniform standards, or align everything cohesively? It would be beneficial, and perhaps they already do this, to call for participation from African international Students. Engaging those directly affected and students interested in global studies or related fields. This inclusive approach could provide valuable insights into the experiences of African international Students and align policy decisions with their perspectives on how these policies shape their lives.*

Participant LSP1 is optimistic about the absence of reported xenophobic attacks on campus. This perspective aligns with Otu's (2017) assertion that while overt manifestations of xenophobia may not be prevalent, covert forms can still exist, impacting the experiences of foreign students. Participant LSP1 acknowledges the potential for unreported discrimination, highlighting the importance of recognizing the emotional and psychological traumas that may not be visible. This reflects the findings of Harris (2002), who discusses the subtle and often unacknowledged forms of xenophobia that can permeate social environments. Participant LSP2 emphasizes the university's efforts to accommodate African international students and promote Ubuntu, a philosophy that underscores communal values and social cohesion. This aligns with Otu's (2017) argument that institutions should foster inclusivity and respect for diversity. However, LSP2's lack of familiarity with immigration policies suggests a gap in awareness that could hinder the

effectiveness of these initiatives.

Participant LSP3 admits to a lack of knowledge regarding immigration policies but expresses confidence in the university's code of conduct. The participant's perspective underscores the need for better communication and education regarding existing policies to ensure they are understood and utilized effectively. Participant LSP5 comprehensively analyzes the role of immigration policies and the university's code of conduct in combating xenophobia. This participant emphasizes the importance of implementation and enforcement, echoing Otu's (2017) argument that policies must be inclusive and considerate of the specific needs of African international students. The call for education and awareness as tools for promoting inclusivity is particularly relevant, as it aligns with the need for a cultural shift within the institution.

Participant LSP7 insights suggest that individual experiences and societal perceptions play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards xenophobia. Participant LSP11 shares a personal narrative about the positive impact of exposure to diverse backgrounds at UKZN. This aligns with Otu's assertion that engagement with different cultures can foster understanding and reduce biases. However, the acknowledgment that xenophobia is not entirely absent indicates that while progress has been made, challenges remain. Participant LSP13 emphasizes the importance of policy assessment and public participation in addressing xenophobia. This reflects Otu's (2017) call for a critical examination of existing policies and their implementation. The participant's focus on the impact of policies on individuals' lives underscores the need for a participatory approach in policy development and evaluation. Therefore, the participants' views collectively highlight the complexities of addressing xenophobia within the academic environment at UKZN. While there is a recognition of positive efforts and policies aimed at fostering inclusivity, there is also an awareness of the limitations and challenges that persist.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for UKZN as an Institution of Higher Education in SA**

In this section, targeted recommendations are presented for the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) to enhance its role as an institution of higher education in South Africa. These suggestions, drawn from participants' insights, aim to address the challenges faced by African

international students, particularly in combating xenophobia and fostering a more inclusive campus environment. The recommendations focus on strengthening UKZN's policies, support systems, and educational practices, with the goal of contributing to a safer and more welcoming experience for all students.

Participant RIS17 stated that:

*Mentioned that while there might be occasional instances of hostility, they are not necessarily xenophobic but may be directed towards everyone. I want to emphasize that UKZN may not have a severe problem with xenophobia or that its African international students are consistently subjected to xenophobic incidents. However, I acknowledge that there might be individuals with xenophobic sentiments. To address this issue, I propose promoting social cohesion, especially during events like orientation and fresher's parties to bring students together. Additionally, there is a need for a broader life orientation module covering various topics, including gender-based violence (GBV), xenophobia, social cohesion, and tolerance. I suggest organising compulsory soft skills workshops for both staff and students, focusing on life orientation principles, respectful behaviour, and fostering tolerance. This intentional approach aims to create a better-informed and respectful community, reducing the likelihood of inappropriate comments and incidents.*

Participant AISP6 stated that:

*I am inclined to believe that there is a need to enhance the education system in South Africa, introducing practical modules such as fashion and fabric, food and nutrition, metalwork, construction, and agriculture at the basic education level. The aim is to empower citizens with practical skills, fostering entrepreneurship and reducing dependency on government grants. The current theoretical focus of South African education leaves graduates with limited practical skills compared to other countries like Zimbabwe, where a more balanced approach includes hands-on learning and vocational training. This change could equip students with valuable skills and create a more self-reliant and empowered citizenry in South Africa.*

ParticipantLSP12 stated that:

*I am of the opinion, and I believe others who were involved in organising those protests share this view, that universities also bear responsibility in addressing the issue of xenophobia. It is not solely the government's duty. Our belief was that the university could take charge of facilitating dialogues, fostering conversations between South African students and their African national counterparts to raise awareness effectively. However, it seems that the university, including not just our own but others as well, is falling short in fulfilling its responsibility to combat this issue. From my perspective, universities are not actively engaged in addressing xenophobia, and there is a noticeable lack of substantial efforts on their part. While the government plays a crucial role in implementing educational programs and awareness campaigns, universities should actively participate in creating platforms for discussions among both local and foreign national students. I firmly believe that if universities provide a space for interaction and engagement where students from different backgrounds can meet and discuss this issue, it will be a positive adjustment*

*mechanism. This platform would greatly aid African national students in adapting to the university environment.*

Participant LSP10 stated that:

*To address the impact of language on xenophobia and foster inclusivity, both universities and South African society can implement various measures. Universities should provide language support services, including courses, conversation partners, and immersion programs for foreign students. Encouraging multilingualism on campus is crucial, acknowledging the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students. Cultural exchange programs and language-learning opportunities should be created for students from different backgrounds. Sensitivity training should be conducted for students and staff to enhance awareness of language and cultural sensitivity. Enforcing anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit bias based on language or nationality is essential. Additionally, promoting language education for all students, including locals, can facilitate improved cross-cultural communication and understanding. In conclusion, though language differences may present challenges, they can also serve as bridges to cultural understanding, with universities and society playing pivotal roles in mitigating language-related barriers and fostering an inclusive and tolerant environment for all students.*

The above views from Participants RIS17, AISP6, LSP12, and LSP10 collectively highlight the importance of addressing xenophobia through various measures. Participant RIS17 suggests promoting social cohesion through events like orientation and introducing a comprehensive life orientation module covering topics such as gender-based violence, xenophobia, and tolerance. The proposal also includes compulsory soft skills workshops for staff and students to cultivate respectful behaviour. Participant AISP6 focuses on enhancing South Africa's education system by incorporating practical modules to equip citizens with valuable skills, fostering entrepreneurship, and reducing dependency on government grants. Participant LSP12 emphasizes the role of universities in combating xenophobia, calling for active engagement, dialogue facilitation, and awareness campaigns. Participant LSP10 provides practical steps for universities and South African society to address the impact of language on xenophobia, including language support services, cultural exchange programs, sensitivity training, and anti-discrimination policies. Collectively, these responses underscore the need for comprehensive efforts at the individual, educational, and societal levels to create an inclusive and tolerant environment.

In similar vein to the above views Participant LSP14 stated that:

*Moreover, education plays a crucial role in combating xenophobia, which, as I mentioned earlier, is deeply rooted in Afro-phobia. The education system, especially in schools and universities, needs*



*to address historical divisions among Africans. The current curriculum often overlooks the history of how African nations were formed, and there is a need to impart this knowledge to young learners. By teaching children about the historical interconnectedness of African nations and cultures, we can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation, contributing to the eradication of xenophobia.*

Participant LSP12 stated that:

*The initial step should involve launching educational awareness campaigns on and off campus, not only addressing the issue at hand but also shedding light on the challenges faced by foreign nationals. By implementing these campaigns, we can increase awareness of the presence of African nationals in our country due to the adverse conditions in their homelands. It is crucial for the government to spearhead these initiatives, emphasising the circumstances, such as individuals fleeing war-torn countries. Furthermore, fostering dialogue is essential. Reflecting on the events of 2015, when xenophobic attacks occurred, students took part in organising protests against xenophobia and raising awareness on campus. Following these events, it became apparent that sustaining an ongoing conversation and educating South African students who may be uninformed about the causes of xenophobic attacks is paramount.*

Participant AISP16 stated:

*It's essential for fairness in employment allocation on and off campus. The University should prioritise fairness for everyone, considering qualifications over nationality. Education seems to be reasonably managed, allowing various students to study here. However, the primary concern, frequently discussed, is employment. The government needs to address this issue to ensure equitable opportunities. While education is relatively well-handled, there's room for improvement in employment practices. It's crucial to strike a balance, considering the needs of both South Africans and international individuals seeking opportunities.*

In line with the above views, I asked the representative international office: In what ways do African international Students benefit this University? Participant RIS17 stated that:

*Internationalisation has become a prominent aspect for universities globally, and this trend is evident even in the current landscape. The UKZN Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2033 highlights internationalisation as one of the university's five key priorities. Embracing various forms of international collaboration, such as exchange programs, hosting African international Students, and establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between universities, aligns with the university's strategic direction. While the exact benefits may not be explicitly stated, participating in international initiatives contributes positively to the university's rankings and ratings. The emphasis on attracting and engaging with African international Students reflects the university's commitment to fostering a global academic environment.*

In line with the above views, I asked the representative international office: To which factors would you attribute the success of UKZN's African international Student recruitment? Participant

RIS17 stated that:

*I believe it's imperative to highlight that the majority of our African international Students, predominantly postgraduate students, are attracted to our institution for various reasons. A significant factor contributing to this influx is the tuition fee remission, particularly for those pursuing advanced degrees. This remission opportunity, I feel, plays a pivotal role in attracting a substantial number of African international Students to our university. Moreover, for those who self-fund their education, UKZN stands out as one of the more economical options among the top South African universities, including UCT, WITS, and UJ. I recall a conversation with a student from Johannesburg who opted for UKZN due to its affordability, emphasising that it was more cost-effective compared to other reputed universities.*

Participant RIS17 further stated that:

*In terms of exchange student recruitment, our engagements are facilitated by Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) signed with partner universities worldwide. These agreements enable us to engage in student exchanges and collaborative initiatives. However, the scale of such programs has been somewhat constrained by challenges, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global mobility and the negative perceptions generated by campus protests. The safety and vibrancy of the campus environment are crucial considerations for exchange students, who often seek a cultural exchange experience rather than a superior educational offering. The occurrence of protests, preventing smooth hosting of events and activities, tends to repel potential exchange students who desire a secure and enjoyable campus atmosphere.*

Participant RIS17 further stated:

*Lastly, funding constraints have posed challenges to our previous active recruitment efforts. In the past, there were initiatives, especially for students from universities with which we have signed MOUs, involving visits to universities abroad. A colleague of mine used to engage in proactive recruitment efforts, visiting universities in Canada and personally interacting with eligible students. This personal connection was more effective than relying solely on online information dissemination. Unfortunately, due to financial limitations, such proactive recruitment endeavors have been curtailed, leaving us to rely on the hope that interested individuals will find relevant information on our website in a less interactive and impactful approach.*

The above perspectives from LSP14, LSP12, AISP16, and RIS17 collectively underscore the crucial role of education in combating xenophobia. Participant LSP14 advocates for incorporating the interconnected history of African nations into the education system to foster understanding and appreciation, thereby contributing to the eradication of xenophobia. Participant LSP12 suggests launching educational awareness campaigns to increase awareness of the challenges faced by foreign nationals, emphasizing the need for sustained dialogue and education to address the root causes of xenophobia. Participant AISP16 focuses on the importance of

fairness in employment allocation, calling for equitable opportunities and balancing the needs of both South African and international individuals. Participant RIS17 sheds light on the benefits of internationalization for universities, highlighting UKZN's emphasis on collaboration through exchange programs, hosting African international students, and MOUs with partner universities. The representative from the International Office attributes the success of UKZN's international student recruitment to factors such as tuition fee remission, affordability compared to other top South African universities, MOUs facilitating exchange programs, and previous active recruitment initiatives (currently constrained by funding limitations). These perspectives collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of addressing xenophobia through education, fairness, and international collaboration.

## **6.5 What the government can do to reduce xenophobia in South Africa**

This section explores various themes that emerged from participants' responses to the question of what the South African government must do to combat xenophobia effectively. These themes include fighting corruption and establishing robust border control mechanisms, formulating and implementing effective policies, and promoting educational awareness to shift mindsets. The discussion also covers the importance of collaboration with other African states, the need to strengthen law enforcement to treat xenophobia as a criminal act, and the responsibility of politicians to avoid the blame game. Additionally, the section addresses themes such as fairness in employment allocation, the promotion of values like tolerance, acceptance, love, and empathy, and the role of the media in providing positive and educational coverage.

### **6.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Formulation and Implementation of Policies**

This section examines the formulation and implementation of policies as a key aspect of addressing xenophobia. Most participants emphasized the importance of not only creating effective policies but also ensuring their proper implementation. They noted that well-designed policies are essential, but their impact is significantly diminished if not enforced rigorously. By focusing on both the creation and execution of policies, the South African government can better address xenophobic attitudes and behaviors, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable environment. This shown when AISP2 stated:

*To address xenophobia, the South African government must prioritize honesty in all aspects, including providing accurate statistics and formulating policies that can be effectively implemented. Avoiding the ratification of international agreements that may lead to local conflicts is essential, as is the case with the upcoming joint break with Ethiopia. The government must consider how global policies impact the local level and be transparent in acknowledging challenges without scapegoating foreigners. Clear communication with international bodies, such as the UNHCR, about the country's limitations is crucial. Ensuring straightforward and easily interpretable statistics is equally essential to prevent misinterpretations that may contribute to issues. Overall, honesty and transparency should be foundational principles in addressing the root causes of challenges in South Africa.*

Participant AISP3 stated:

*The nation should communicate to its citizens that the absence of effective leadership can lead to challenges such as xenophobia, as witnessed in its origins. It is crucial to instil the understanding that events experienced by other nations could similarly affect their own country. Therefore, fostering a spirit of Ubuntu, emphasising interconnectedness and shared humanity, becomes essential in building a resilient and harmonious society.*

In similar vein to the above view Participant LSP14 stated that:

*I consistently advocate for the implementation of clear policies, particularly addressing the concerns raised by people about illegal border crossings. The issue of having individuals entering the country without proper documentation is a primary concern that needs urgent attention. This is crucial not only for the country's security but also for situations where unfortunate events occur, such as the passing away of an individual who entered illegally. When such incidents happen, the government is burdened with the responsibility of locating the person's family and arranging the transportation of the body back to their home country, incurring significant costs. Strengthening border policies and enforcing strict regulations can help mitigate these challenges. It's important to emphasize that South Africans should be aware that crossing borders illegally is not an easy feat. This awareness may contribute to alleviating some of the frustrations expressed by the public, particularly when it comes to accessing public services like healthcare. While public health services are free in South Africa, there is a need for clear policies regarding the use of public facilities. Strict enforcement of policies, requiring individuals to produce valid documentation, ensures that legal processes are followed.*

The above views from participants jointly emphasize the importance of honesty, effective leadership, and clear policies in addressing xenophobia and related challenges in South Africa. Participant AISP2 calls for the prioritisation of honesty and transparency by the government, stressing the need for accurate statistics, well-formulated policies, and open communication with international bodies. Participant AISP3 highlights the role of effective leadership in preventing xenophobia, suggesting that instilling a spirit of Ubuntu and emphasizing shared humanity can

contribute to building a resilient and harmonious society. Participant LSP14 underscores the urgency of clear policies, particularly in addressing concerns about illegal border crossings, as they pose security risks and financial burdens on the government. The call for strengthening border policies, enforcing regulations, and promoting awareness among South Africans about the complexities of illegal border crossing resonates with the need for a systematic approach to mitigate challenges and frustrations related to public services. Together, these perspectives underscore the importance of transparent governance, effective leadership, and clear policies to address the root causes of xenophobia and related issues in South Africa.

### **6.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Educational Awareness and emancipation of the mindset**

This sub-theme highlights the significance of educational awareness and the emancipation of the mindset as a crucial factor in addressing xenophobia and fostering a more inclusive society. Most participants emphasized that education plays a vital role in challenging and changing deep-seated prejudices, particularly in rural areas where limited exposure to diverse cultures often fuels xenophobic attitudes. By promoting awareness and understanding through education, there is potential to shift mindsets and reduce the prevalence of xenophobia. This perspective aligns with my belief that a more informed and educated populace is better equipped to embrace diversity and combat discriminatory practices. Participant AISP11 stated that:

*They need to emancipate their people through education, a crucial step in addressing xenophobia. Many perpetrators of xenophobic acts often reside in rural areas, lacking exposure, leading them to generalize all foreigners as one group. The government should play a pivotal role in educating its citizens about the diverse categories of immigrants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and those with proper documentation. Failure to do so can result in attacks driven by ignorance. Moreover, the government must reconsider its social grant policies, as service dissatisfaction often stems from an entitlement culture fueled by excessive grants. It is essential to revisit these policies, emphasizing education, training, and skill development to empower citizens and foster understanding.*

Participant AISP4 stated that:

*Education is crucial, as there is currently insufficient awareness about the identities and roles of deployed individuals. There is a need for better understanding among the public, acknowledging that not all foreigners are undocumented or here for illicit purposes; NGOs bring some to address specific needs. Awareness initiatives, especially among politicians, must focus on interpreting and revising the Constitution to incorporate these nuances effectively. To enhance development, revisiting immigration policies becomes essential. Strengthening border security is critical,*

*recognizing that people often cross borders in unconventional ways. By tightening border security, particularly at vulnerable points like river crossings, the government can curtail unauthorized entries and address concerns raised by the public.*

Participant AISP11 emphasizes the need for educational efforts to address xenophobia, particularly in rural areas where there is limited exposure to diversity. This view aligns with Freire's (1970) concept of critical consciousness, which advocates for education that empowers individuals to question societal norms. In rural areas, where homogeneous views of foreigners often prevail, education can challenge these perspectives and reduce xenophobic behavior. The biocultural theory supports this, noting that lack of exposure to diversity can shape negative perceptions of others. Additionally, scapegoat theory suggests that marginalized groups, facing economic difficulties, often blame foreigners for their struggles, exacerbating xenophobic attitudes. Education, therefore, plays a key role in dismantling these misconceptions.

Similarly, Participant AISP4 highlights the importance of educating the public about the different categories of immigrants and their societal roles. This perspective resonates with Sen's (1999) argument that education expands individuals' capabilities and freedom, allowing for informed decision-making. The biocultural theory also supports this, suggesting that understanding immigrants' roles can reduce the tendency to view them as a homogeneous group. By challenging the scapegoating narrative and promoting an understanding of immigration policies and the positive contributions of foreigners, education can mitigate xenophobia and foster a more empathetic view of immigrants.

Participant AISP5 stated:

*There is a need for a more assertive approach to addressing perpetrators, shifting societal attitudes toward individuals from different countries. Efforts should be directed at educating people, fostering a mindset conducive to collaboration with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and promoting greater acceptance.*

On the other hand, Participant AISP6 further stated:

*The frustration among South Africans is understandable, fuelled by the perception that foreign nationals thrive while struggling. The lack of self-reflection exacerbates this sentiment. The belief is that the more foreigners there are, the greater the resource competition. This sentiment has been fuelled by specific individuals claiming that the government favours foreign nationals. During the 2015 xenophobic attacks, stickers opposing xenophobia were distributed in the taxi industry, but some individuals, influenced by external factors, remained unaffected.*

In a similar vein to the above view, Participant LSP3 stated:

*I think it's crucial to focus on education as a solution. The Bill of Rights emphasises the importance of respecting others and recognising the equality of every human being. It's essential to revisit and educate people on these rights through workshops. Xenophobia should be explicitly treated as an illegal act, and those found engaging in it should face legal consequences such as imprisonment. Instead of taking matters into their own hands, individuals should report concerns about foreign nationals through proper channels. The South African government is responsible for educating the public about the dangers of xenophobia and reinforcing the promotion of human rights. These principles shouldn't only apply to the South African population and every person in the country, regardless of nationality. Collaborative efforts between the government and various institutions, including the police, universities, and hospitals, should involve the development of policies that emphasize humane treatment for all individuals. This comprehensive approach addresses xenophobia and promotes a more inclusive and respectful society.*

Participant AISP5 advocates for a more assertive approach to education that fosters collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds. This perspective aligns with Hooks (1994), who argued that education should be transformative, challenging existing prejudices and promoting social justice. The biocultural theory supports this by highlighting how education can shape cultural attitudes, fostering more inclusive social environments. The scapegoat theory suggests that educating individuals about the real sources of economic and social issues can reduce the tendency to blame foreign nationals for societal problems like unemployment or crime.

Participants AISP6 and LSP3 express frustration over perceived competition for resources with foreign nationals, which is often fueled by misinformation. This sentiment highlights the need for public education on the rights and contributions of all individuals in society. Nussbaum's (1997) work on global citizenship emphasizes the importance of promoting understanding that transcends national boundaries and encourages respect and equality. Additionally, the scapegoat theory, as discussed by Girard (1986) and Allport (1954), helps explain how foreign nationals are blamed for broader economic and social problems. The participants' views reflect how scapegoating can occur when communities, under strain, project frustrations onto vulnerable groups due to a lack of understanding of the contributions and rights of foreigners.

Participant LSP6 stated that:

*I believe the government should take measures to enhance security and guarantee the protection of everyone's rights. The constitution explicitly emphasizes that the police or security should safeguard anyone within South Africa's borders. Therefore, the government must protect all individuals residing in South Africa, as they effectively become South African citizens simply by*

*being within the country.*

Participant LSP8 stated that:

*I believe in educating people about the shared experience of being black and facing everyday challenges. Some individuals strive to improve their lives, so it's important not to judge others without understanding their journey. If South Africa can eliminate the culture of ignorance and foster open-mindedness, many of the issues we currently face might cease to occur. Embracing an open-minded perspective can address the majority of these challenges.*

Participant LSP13 stated that:

*They should develop comprehensive programs that educate the public on these issues, focusing on a holistic approach rather than just covering basic information. It seems like previous efforts were somewhat superficial, and a more in-depth educational strategy is needed to bring about lasting change. By providing thorough education, there's a better chance of altering people's perspectives and fostering a positive way of life.*

Participant LSP6 emphasized the government's role in ensuring the protection of everyone's rights, reflecting the constitutional mandate to safeguard all individuals within South Africa. This perspective is supported by the biocultural theory, which posits that laws and policies when properly enforced, can shape cultural practices and promote a more just and equitable society. Additionally, the Scapegoat Theory suggests that when the government fails to protect certain groups, it can inadvertently reinforce the narrative that these groups are the cause of societal problems, thereby exacerbating xenophobia.

Lastly, Participant LSP8 and Participant LSP13 called for a more comprehensive and in-depth educational strategy to address the culture of ignorance and promote open-mindedness. This aligns with Giroux's (2005) advocacy for critical pedagogy, which emphasizes the need for education that encourages critical thinking and challenges existing power structures. The biocultural theory further reinforces this by suggesting that a more informed and critically aware populace is less likely to engage in xenophobic behaviours, as they are better equipped to understand and appreciate diversity. Thus, education can reduce the likelihood of scapegoating by helping people identify the true sources of their frustrations and challenges.

### **6.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Collaborative role with other African states**



In addressing xenophobia and its underlying causes, the collaborative role of African states becomes crucial. This sub-theme explores how regional cooperation can play a pivotal role in mitigating xenophobic sentiments and enhancing mutual understanding among African countries. The perspectives shared by participants underscore the need for a unified approach among African nations to foster mutual understanding, enhance economic stability, and promote a culture of respect and empathy across borders. In the context of international relations (IR), regional cooperation is a critical concept that aligns with the collaborative role of African states in dealing with challenges. Regional integration as an IR concept emphasises how countries can benefit from pooling resources and coordinating policies to tackle common issues (Cox, 1981). This is particularly relevant in the African context, where collaborative efforts can address both economic disparities and social tensions, including xenophobia. These views are shown when participant AISP6 stated that:

*Addressing the challenges does not solely fall on the shoulders of the South African government. The government should assertively communicate with other nations, informing them that continued support may no longer be feasible due to resource constraints. This requires political courage and the willingness to withdraw support from countries that have failed to improve their economic situations. A diplomatic approach can be taken, indicating that South Africa cannot shelter individuals responsible for destabilizing their home economies. By ending support to leaders of such nations, South Africa can send a clear message and discourage other countries from relying on South Africa as a refuge when their governance fails. This strategic shift in political support can prompt countries to prioritize internal reforms and attract foreign investment, fostering stability and potentially leading to the return of diaspora populations.*

Participant AISP10 stated that:

*Implementing discussions about effective communication and coexistence with individuals from different countries is vital in reshaping attitudes. The government should consider incorporating these conversations into school curricula and public awareness campaigns. A potential addition could be introducing a public holiday dedicated to honoring foreigners who contribute significantly to the country. Alongside these efforts, implementing a policy that holds individuals accountable for sharing xenophobic content can act as a deterrent, ensuring accountability for one's actions and promoting a more inclusive and tolerant society.*

In a similar vein, the local students support the above view as LSP3 stated:

*Collaborate with other nations to investigate the root causes of migration. When people are compelled to leave their countries, often due to economic challenges or instability, the South African government, in conjunction with the broader African community, should join forces to understand the underlying issues. Instead of perceiving it solely as a disadvantage to host*

*countries, there should be collective efforts to hold the origin country accountable and conduct thorough investigations into the core reasons driving significant emigration.*

Participant LSP9 stated that:

*The South African government, in particular, should proactively reach out to the international community. For instance, if there is a significant influx of people from Nigeria, diplomatic discussions should be initiated. Engaging with the Nigerian government to understand the factors leading to migration and offering support to address these issues could be beneficial. Instead of adopting a closed-off approach, the government should foster international relations, seeking collaborative solutions. This includes exploring the reasons why people leave their home countries and engaging with regional neighbors to address mutual concerns.*

The views expressed by participants reveal a nuanced understanding of regional cooperation, power dynamics, and their influence on migration and xenophobia. Participant AISP6's suggestion that South Africa use its diplomatic leverage to withdraw support from countries with failing economies aligns with Morgenthau's (1973) theory of power politics, which argues that nations act based on power and self-interest. By shifting support, South Africa could encourage reforms in these countries, potentially reducing migration pressures and fostering regional stability. This demonstrates how power dynamics influence international policies and responses. Participant AISP10 emphasizes the role of communication and education in fostering inclusivity, which aligns with Nye's (2004) concept of soft power. Nye's theory highlights the importance of cultural and ideological appeal in international relations. By integrating foreign contributions into education and public campaigns, South Africa could use soft power to reshape societal attitudes, reduce xenophobia, and promote inclusivity, thereby enhancing its influence regionally.

Similarly, Participants LSP3 and LSP9 stress the need for regional collaboration to address migration's root causes. This reflects Keohane and Nye's (1977) theory of complex interdependence, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of nations. By working with neighboring countries to address the drivers of migration, South Africa can foster a cooperative regional environment that tackles both migration and xenophobia, demonstrating the importance of regional cooperation in promoting stability and addressing shared challenges in Africa.

#### **6.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Strengthening law enforcement and addressing xenophobia as a criminal act**

The issue of xenophobia requires a robust legal and institutional response to ensure justice and social cohesion. Participants in the discussion emphasized the importance of reinforcing legal frameworks to hold individuals accountable for xenophobic behavior. In my view, addressing xenophobia through legal means is essential for fostering a just and inclusive society. Law enforcement agencies must be equipped with the necessary tools and training to handle xenophobic incidents effectively and prosecute them as criminal offenses. This approach provides legal recourse for victims and serves as a deterrent for future acts of xenophobia. Strengthening law enforcement in this way aligns with the broader goal of upholding human rights and promoting social cohesion, creating a society where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. This was shown when participant AIS7 stated:

*It starts with law enforcement and the SA police; we should question whether they are actively apprehending individuals responsible for spreading hate crimes and circulating inflammatory messages on social media. Currently, it appears that the police force is not sufficiently addressing these issues, leading to incidents of violence and harm. Strengthening the police force is crucial, and the government should allocate resources to enhance their capabilities. Additionally, measures to limit the entry of illegal foreigners into South Africa could potentially alleviate the problem. Addressing the issue of illegal immigration through effective border control is essential. Community outreach initiatives, facilitated by the government and social workers, should be implemented to educate people about tolerance, peace, and alternative ways of expressing frustration rather than resorting to violence. Controlling corruption in obtaining passports and visas is paramount to ensuring a more regulated and secure entry system.*

Participant AISP15 stated that:

*Xenophobia should be addressed as a criminal act, taking swift action against perpetrators to deter others from engaging in such behaviour. It is crucial to refrain from blaming foreigners for political issues within the country. Instead, there should be open discussions about the significance of African history to foster understanding. Efforts should focus on educating the public, curbing corruption, and ensuring the integrity of borders. Staff working in immigration and home affairs must be held accountable for maintaining proper procedures, emphasising that being brothers and sisters doesn't warrant unrestricted entry into the country.*

In a similar vein, the local students support the above view as LSP1 stated:

*A comprehensive upgrade of our political and policing systems is essential. Implementing better policies and fostering a police force that is both proactive and proficient can significantly mitigate various issues. Competent and well-trained officers and stringent laws against illegal activities would contribute to a safer and more secure environment, curbing illegal businesses and criminal activities. The goal is to foster competence and responsibility, reducing incidents such as illegal shops, drug trade, and kidnappings.*

Participant LSP13 stated:

*Regarding legal aspects, while setting boundaries may be challenging, placing a greater emphasis on prosecuting hate crimes related to xenophobia is essential. Investigating these incidents more thoroughly is crucial, as hate crimes have severe consequences and can escalate into violent acts against individuals or communities. Recognising the potential danger posed by individuals with violent tendencies and addressing anti-social behaviour with more stringent legal consequences is necessary to curb such actions. Prosecuting these offenses as serious crimes, beyond just murder or assault, could be highly beneficial in addressing the root causes of xenophobic violence.*

Participant LSP15 stated:

*I emphasised the importance of political education because I believe that many xenophobic attacks stem from the political landscape in our country. Politics has a significant influence on how people perceive and respond to information. For instance, the notion of a border-free South Africa is often misunderstood, as some individuals associate foreign nationals with increased crime". "However, the root cause of crime is not foreign nationals themselves but rather the government's failure to enforce proper regulations and ensure that individuals are in the country legally. South Africa experiences crime not because of the presence of foreign nationals but due to the shortcomings within the government and law enforcement agencies. Recognising that many countries host foreign nationals without experiencing a surge in crime is crucial, highlighting that the issue lies within the South African government and its systemic inefficiencies.*

In light of the above views by participants, Maseko (2022) argues that the South African government plays a role in fostering xenophobic attitudes, citing public frustration with slow service delivery, inadequate housing, corruption, and inefficiencies within institutions like the Police Services and the Department of Home Affairs. These frustrations create a climate of hostility that contributes to xenophobia. Neocosmos (2008) further stresses that the government must address these systemic issues to reduce xenophobia and improve governance. Participants in the discussion also highlight the need for stronger law enforcement to combat xenophobia. Participant AIS7 emphasizes the importance of effective policing and border control measures, aligning with Osei-Tutu's (2021) argument that a strong legal response is necessary to mitigate xenophobic violence. AISP15 advocates for treating xenophobia as a criminal act, in line with Duhalde's (2018) view that legal interventions are crucial in curbing xenophobic behavior. Londras (2017) also stresses the need for robust legal responses and accountability, reflecting the importance of legal action and open discussions about African history to promote understanding.

Local students, such as LSP1 and LSP13, support these views, calling for upgrades in policing systems and effective prosecution of hate crimes. This aligns with Vargas's (2016) argument on

the need for thorough investigations and stringent legal consequences. LSP15's emphasis on political education as a tool to address xenophobic attitudes further supports the idea of a coordinated approach to combating xenophobia. In my view, addressing xenophobia requires a multi-faceted approach, including legal reforms, enhanced law enforcement, and public education. By integrating these efforts, we can address both the immediate manifestations and the deeper-rooted causes of xenophobia, ultimately working towards a more inclusive and just society.

#### **6.5.5 Sub-theme 5: Politicians and avoiding the blame game**

In exploring the role of politicians in addressing xenophobia, it is crucial to examine how political rhetoric and actions can either mitigate or exacerbate tensions. The sub-theme "Politicians and Avoiding the Blame Game" delves into the significance of political leaders steering clear of scapegoating foreign nationals for domestic issues. It highlights the importance of responsible political discourse and the impact of avoiding the blame game on social cohesion. Most participants shared this view, emphasizing that political leaders must transcend the temptation to shift responsibility for socio-economic problems onto foreign nationals. This practice not only perpetuates xenophobia but also undermines efforts to address the root causes of domestic issues such as inadequate public services and corruption. This is highlighted when participant AISP12 stated:

*They must avoid blaming foreigners for the challenges in South Africa; instead, encourage people to embrace and learn from diverse cultures. Simplify the process of obtaining foreign papers for those who will positively contribute to the economy and emphasize fair treatment regardless of origin. Enhance school curricula to include broader cultural perspectives, fostering understanding and appreciation. Promote the exploration of different African cultures to expand knowledge and promote unity.*

Participant AISP17 stated that:

*They need to fulfill their responsibilities. The question often arises about the role of politicians in promoting xenophobia, and it's evident that politicians do play a part in fuelling xenophobia. South Africans, too, contribute to promoting xenophobia. The government's role in fostering xenophobia becomes apparent when they deflect blame for unfulfilled promises, especially concerning job opportunities, by pointing fingers at foreigners. There have been circulating messages, like a WhatsApp message, suggesting getting rid of foreigners and blaming them for job losses and corruption. The government must stop externalizing its weaknesses and address internal issues like corruption, nepotism, and ethnic tensions. They must cease using foreigners as scapegoats for their*

*shortcomings and focus on improving the living standards of South Africans.*

In a similar vein, the local students support the above view, as LSP4 stated:

*They need to refrain from making negative statements about foreign nationals, considering the government's influential role. It's crucial for them to be mindful of their language and messages, particularly during campaigns. Avoiding objectives like expelling all foreign nationals, as some public and political figures suggested, is essential. Such statements can fuel negative sentiments and stir emotions among the public, leading to unwarranted actions. It's important for government officials, public figures, and members of Parliament to choose their words wisely to prevent inadvertently contributing to the escalation of tensions.*

Participant LSP7 stated that:

*There are numerous things that need attention, particularly the language used by politicians and those in power when addressing foreign nationals. It's crucial to start with the basics and view everyone as fellow Africans from different geographic locations. Much like the acceptance seen within South Africa's 11 languages, embracing diverse cultures should extend to foreign nationals on the African continent. Changing the narrative involves altering media portrayals, showcasing both positive and negative stories. Highlighting the full spectrum of experiences can shape a more nuanced perspective. Education is key; schools should address xenophobia, making it a part of life orientation and fostering awareness and understanding from a young age. Encouraging dialogue and providing a platform for foreign nationals to share their experiences can foster a collective voice where everyone has a say.*

The above participants' views on politicians avoiding the blame game and addressing xenophobia resonate strongly with the scapegoat theory, highlighting the crucial role of political leadership in either perpetuating or mitigating xenophobic sentiments. Participant AISP12 advocates for embracing diverse cultures and simplifying processes for foreign nationals who contribute positively to the economy, challenging the tendency to scapegoat foreigners for broader societal issues. This perspective aligns with Dollard et al. (1939)'s scapegoat theory, which suggests societies often project frustrations onto less powerful groups. AISP12's call for cultural inclusivity and fair treatment counters this scapegoating and emphasizes addressing systemic problems. Kumar (2022) also highlights how political leaders exploit xenophobia to distract from governance failures, reinforcing AISP12's view for transparency and accountability.

Participant AISP17 criticizes politicians for blaming foreigners to deflect attention from their own failures, echoing Chimni's (2009) analysis that political leaders use immigrants as scapegoats to avoid accountability for policy failures. This aligns with Morrison (2021) and Sanchez (2023), who discuss how blame-shifting exacerbates xenophobia and undermines societal cohesion.

AISP17 calls for politicians to address internal issues like corruption rather than blaming foreigners. Local student LSP4 emphasizes the importance of politicians avoiding negative rhetoric about foreigners, supporting Harris's (2002) argument that inflammatory political discourse exacerbates xenophobia. LSP4's call for responsible messaging is echoed by Jones (2022), who examines the impact of political rhetoric on public perceptions of immigrants.

Participant LSP7 advocates for promoting a more inclusive narrative about foreign nationals and emphasizes education as a tool to combat xenophobia. This aligns with Kleg's (1993) call for politicians to foster inclusivity rather than using immigrants as political tools. Dunn (2017) and Nguyen (2023) support LSP7's focus on education and systemic reforms as necessary steps for reducing xenophobia. In my view, these perspectives demonstrate that effectively managing xenophobia requires a shift in political leadership practices. Leaders must stop using foreigners as scapegoats and instead focus on addressing systemic governance and socio-economic issues. This approach, aligning with scapegoat theory, calls for confronting corruption, ineffective service delivery, and economic mismanagement, promoting a more inclusive and equitable society.

#### **6.5.6 Sub-theme 6: Promotion of values such as tolerance, acceptance, love, and empathy**

The promotion of values like tolerance, acceptance, love, and empathy is crucial in fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society, particularly in the context of xenophobia. These values are essential for bridging cultural divides and mitigating the tensions that arise from diversity. By nurturing these principles, communities can cultivate a culture of understanding and mutual respect, which is vital for peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society like South Africa. The participants in this study emphasized the need for these values as foundational elements in addressing the root causes of xenophobia and building a more united and compassionate nation. This is shown when participant LSP1 stated that:

*They should shift their mindset, beginning with our leaders, particularly political figures and influential individuals. Public figures, including political leaders, must lead by example, promoting tolerance, acceptance, empathy, and love. When national leaders actively demonstrate these principles, it can influence citizens to adopt a more accepting and accommodating attitude gradually. It's unclear if there are specific laws against xenophobia in South Africa, but implementing legislation and policies to prevent discrimination could protect the rights of individuals, regardless of their origin, ethnicity, nationality, or tribe.*

Participant LSP5 stated that:

*The SA government must take comprehensive and sustained actions at multiple levels, including legal, police, educational, and social measures. Combating xenophobia requires a long-term commitment to promote and tolerate inclusivity and the protection of the rights of all individuals, regardless of their nationalities or backgrounds. So, we can look at public awareness campaigns, law enforcement access to access to justice, and community policing. Immigration policy reform.*

Participant LSP10 stated that:

*To address xenophobia in South Africa, the government must take comprehensive and sustained actions at multiple levels, including legal, policy, educational, and social measures. Combating xenophobia requires a long-term commitment to promoting tolerance, inclusivity, and the protection of the rights of all individuals, regardless of their nationality or background.*

Participant views on promoting values like tolerance, acceptance, love, and empathy are closely connected to scapegoat theory and offer crucial insights into addressing xenophobia. Participant LSP1 emphasizes the importance of shifting mindsets, particularly among leaders, aligning with scapegoat theory (Dollard et al., 1939), which suggests that societies project frustrations onto less powerful groups. LSP1's call for leaders to model tolerance and empathy challenges this tendency and highlights the role of influential figures in fostering an inclusive society, supporting Allport's (1954) idea that positive interactions can reduce prejudice. Participant LSP5 advocates for a multi-faceted approach, including legal, educational, and social measures, to combat xenophobia. Their focus on public awareness campaigns, law enforcement, and immigration reform aligns with Harris's (2002) warning against scapegoating immigrants for socio-economic problems, stressing the importance of structural changes to address the root causes of xenophobia.

Similarly, Participant LSP10 calls for long-term commitment to tolerance and inclusivity across various domains, echoing Kleg's (1993) emphasis on leaders' responsibility to promote inclusive policies. This view is supported by Dunn's (2017), who argues that leaders addressing underlying issues, rather than scapegoating, contribute to a more inclusive society. Thus, these perspectives suggest that effectively tackling xenophobia requires more than legal reforms; it demands a cultural shift led by empathetic leaders. Integrating values of tolerance and inclusivity into education, legal frameworks, and public awareness campaigns is vital for fostering a more inclusive society.

#### **6.5.7 Sub-theme 8: Media to play a positive educational role in their media coverage**



In exploring strategies to combat xenophobia and foster social cohesion, the role of media emerges as a crucial factor. Some participants have highlighted the media's potential to play a positive educational role in addressing xenophobia. The media has the power to shape public perception and influence societal attitudes through its coverage of issues related to migration, diversity, and inclusivity. By focusing on accurate, respectful, and constructive portrayals of immigrants and marginalized groups, media outlets can contribute significantly to building understanding and empathy among different communities. This is revealed as participant LSP1 stated that:

*The media also plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and needs to change how it portrays foreign nationals. Cleaning up the representation of foreigners in the media can significantly impact public opinion. Currently, the media often highlights negative aspects like drugs and kidnappings, contributing to biased views. Education on diverse cultures and backgrounds could further contribute to fostering understanding and connection among people, emphasizing both differences and commonalities.*

In a similar vein, the local students support the above view at LSP13, stating:

*There should be more open discussions and informative content regarding essential topics in various media channels. Instead of just brief ads, the government or relevant authorities could invest in longer content that educates the public effectively. For instance, funding for a 15-second ad can be used to create more comprehensive content that addresses and combats negative behaviors, teaches about microaggressions, and emphasizes the impact of certain actions on people's lives. Focusing on shaping societal attitudes is crucial, especially from a young age, as children often emulate behaviors they observe. This educational approach should extend to various platforms, including shutting down inappropriate entertainment that may perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Utilizing traditional and digital media to promote positive messages and educate the public can significantly address issues like xenophobia and foster a more inclusive society.*

Participants' views on the media's role in addressing xenophobia and promoting inclusivity align with the biocultural hypothesis and broader concerns about media representation. Participant LSP1 highlights the media's impact on public perceptions, noting how it often perpetuates negative stereotypes, especially around crime, reinforcing xenophobic attitudes. This connects with the biocultural hypothesis, which suggests that societal views shaped by media contribute to xenophobia. LSP1 advocates for shifting media portrayals towards more positive and nuanced representations to foster empathy and understanding.

Similarly, Participant LSP13 calls for more comprehensive, educational media content to counter

negative stereotypes and promote understanding. This supports the biocultural hypothesis, emphasizing the role of cultural narratives in shaping social attitudes. LSP13's suggestion for more substantive media programming aligns with research by Neocosmos (2008) and Chimni (2009), which states that media can either reinforce or challenge xenophobia by offering balanced portrayals of immigrants. This perspective echoes the work of Harris (2002) and Pell (2014), who argue that the media should challenge harmful stereotypes and educate the public. Therefore, the participants advocate for a shift in media coverage to emphasize both differences and commonalities among diverse groups. This approach, grounded in the biocultural hypothesis, suggests that positive and educational media content can significantly influence public attitudes and reduce xenophobia, fostering a more inclusive society.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has unpacked, analyzed, and discussed the strategies necessary to address xenophobia and enhance the experiences of African international students (AIS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The findings reveal the complex interplay between individual coping mechanisms, institutional policies, and broader governmental frameworks in shaping the lived experiences of AIS. The chapter has underscored the importance of effective immigration policies and the critical role of UKZN's codes of conduct in fostering an inclusive academic environment. By identifying gaps in policy implementation and highlighting the pervasive issue of corruption, the chapter calls for a more robust approach from UKZN and the South African government to combat xenophobia. This involves not only enforcing existing policies but also addressing the underlying socio-economic and political factors that perpetuate xenophobic attitudes.

The recommendations in this chapter have provided a comprehensive strategy for UKZN to support its African international students better. These include improving institutional responses to xenophobia, enhancing educational programs to raise awareness, and fostering an environment that values diversity and inclusivity. Furthermore, the chapter advocates for broader governmental actions, such as combating corruption, strengthening border controls, and ensuring fair employment practices, all of which are essential in addressing the root causes of xenophobia. Thus, it emphasises that combating xenophobia and supporting AIS requires a multi-faceted approach

that integrates economic, social, and governance reforms. It calls for a collective effort from educational institutions governments, and African states to create a more just, inclusive, and prosperous environment for all.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This study provided an overview of perspectives and experiences of xenophobia among African international students at the University of KwaZulu Natal. It was vital to have the interviews among the students such that they were able to tell their experiences hence, they were also able to demonstrate some proposed solutions. These solutions also form part of the study recommendations below. The results show that students do experience xenophobia mainly off campus, even though there are some instances where they experience it on campus. This chapter discusses the synopsis of the main results that arose from this study which ordinarily gives the idea from the synergy of the qualitative method. The contribution of this study to issues of migration and international relations is also emphasized in this section. Hence, this section outlined recommendations that can be implemented. The recommendations of this study were categorized in different aspects, namely, at the institutional level (UKZN), country level (South Africa), the African continent, the role of media to combat xenophobia, and the role that other stakeholders and organizations can play in addressing xenophobia.

#### **7.2 Recommendation for Universities such as UKZN**

To ensure that foreign African students receive equal services, universities should be proactive in identifying and addressing any barriers that may affect them. This may involve providing additional support services, outreach to foreign students, and promoting an inclusive and welcoming campus space. Moreover, universities should also develop and implement anti-discrimination policies and ensure that services are provided without bias or discrimination based on nationality or background. Foreign African students studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) may encounter various challenges, which can vary depending on individual circumstances. Hence, the university ought to have strong policies on some of the issues below:

##### **7.2.1 Strengthening Institutional Policies at UKZN**

At the institutional level, UKZN has diversity and inclusion policies, yet participants' experiences

indicate gaps in their implementation. There is a need to strengthen student support structures by establishing a dedicated office for international student affairs. This office should provide legal aid, mental health support, and an accessible grievance resolution mechanism for victims of xenophobia. Additionally, UKZN should incorporate anti-xenophobia education into student orientation programs, academic curricula, and campus-wide dialogues to foster a culture of inclusion. Establishing a monitoring and reporting system that collects data on xenophobic incidents would further enhance the university's capacity to respond proactively. These measures would not duplicate existing policies but instead fill a gap by ensuring that institutional commitments to diversity translate into concrete action.

### **7.2.2 Campus Integration between Local and African International Students and Staff**

The recommendation for campus integration between local and African international students and staff is important. This involves a specific emphasis on integrated campus activities such as an orientation tour and creating opportunities for the inclusion of an international student as part of the Student Representative Council (SRC) body. This aims to foster a more inclusive and interconnected academic environment. By incorporating African international students into the SRC, the initiative promotes representation and ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes. The orientation tour becomes a pivotal platform for cultural exchange, breaking down potential barriers by providing opportunities for meaningful interactions between local and African international students. This holistic approach to campus integration recognises the importance of not only acknowledging linguistic and cultural diversity but actively incorporating it into the fabric of campus life, fostering mutual understanding and enriching the overall educational experience for all.

### **7.2.3 Intercultural clubs of local and African international students**

Another recommendation is the establishment of intercultural clubs that bring together both local and African international Students. These clubs would foster cross-cultural interactions, understanding, and collaboration within the university community. By creating a space where students from diverse backgrounds can engage in cultural exchange, share experiences, and participate in joint activities, the intercultural clubs aim to break down barriers and promote a

sense of unity. These clubs would allow students to learn about each other's cultures, traditions, and perspectives, fostering mutual respect and appreciation. Additionally, such clubs can organize events, workshops, and initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity, creating a supportive and inclusive environment within the university. Establishing intercultural clubs aligns with the broader goal of promoting intercultural understanding and harmony among students, contributing to a more inclusive and enriching educational experience. The study recommends active participation by both local and African international students and staff for cultural events such as Africa Day and Heritage Day to showcase different cultural exchange

#### **7.2.4 Payment of Registration fees, tuition, and medical aid**

This study advocates for a more equitable fee structure for African international students. Specifically, the university should consider implementing a payment system that eases the financial burden on African international students by providing options such as installment plans or delayed payment schedules. This approach aims to bridge the financial gap between local and African international students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment within the academic community. By reassessing the fee policies and striving for fairness, the university can contribute to breaking down financial barriers and promoting a sense of equality among its diverse student body. The study recommends addressing disparities in payments, specifically related to medical insurance, such as exempting South African students from medical aid fees during registration. The study emphasizes the need for increased flexibility within the UKZN system and government policies. It suggests allowing individuals to voluntarily choose whether to enroll in medical insurance, preventing mandatory payments for services not required, particularly with the availability of the campus clinic to assist all students. Additionally, the study proposes establishing a refund system for those who haven't utilized their medical aid, highlighting the significance of fairness and individual autonomy within the university's service structure.

#### **7.2.5 Education and Awareness**

To combat xenophobia within the university, it is crucial to supplement comprehensive policies

and codes of conduct with proactive engagement in education and awareness campaigns. These initiatives can enlighten the university community about the negative implications of xenophobia and promote a culture of inclusivity. Furthermore, recognising foreign students' challenges in adapting to a new cultural environment, the university should implement support mechanisms such as cultural adjustment programs. These programs can assist students in understanding and navigating differences in customs, traditions, and social norms, fostering a more welcoming environment. Additionally, the institution should establish a robust social support system to aid foreign students in coping with the various demands of university life, promoting a sense of belonging and well-being.

### **7.3 Recommendations for the South African Government**

The government of South Africa needs to take comprehensive and persistent measures at several levels, such as legislative, policy, educational, and social, to combat xenophobia. A long-term dedication to advancing inclusion, tolerance, and the defense of everyone's rights, regardless of origin or nationality, is necessary to combat xenophobia. The South African government can take the following essential actions. Firstly, a concerted effort is required to curb hate speech, particularly among politicians. Policymakers need to formulate protective policies for foreign nationals, emphasising the need for inclusive and positive communication when addressing the public. This involves fostering an environment that encourages empathy and cooperation between locals and foreigners, recognizing the mutual benefits of collaboration. To manage the influx of foreign nationals and minimize competition for jobs, the government should explore wage policies in collaboration with labor unions. Ensuring fair wages can address disparities and reduce tension in the job market. Controlling entry visas and borders is crucial to regulating the flow of individuals into the country, striking a balance that benefits both locals and African foreign nationals.

#### **7.3.1 Social Integration and inclusion**

This chapter recommends that government interventions should be framed within a broader social integration and inclusion strategy. The ISS (2019) report shows that 66% of South Africans have

anti-immigrant sentiments. The above statistics highlight the pervasive nature of xenophobic attitudes, suggesting that effective interventions must go beyond surface-level responses and address underlying social dynamics. I recommend the South African government prioritize initiatives to foster social integration, where immigrants and local citizens can coexist in a more harmonious and inclusive society. This involves implementing educational campaigns that challenge xenophobic narratives and promote the positive contributions of immigrants to South African society. Creating community-based programs that encourage interaction between local and immigrant populations can also help break down stereotypes and build mutual understanding. Furthermore, policy development should focus on ensuring that immigrants are legally protected and socially included. This includes facilitating easier access to social services, employment opportunities, and avenues for cultural expression, all contributing to a sense of belonging and reducing the likelihood of social exclusion.

According to Ager and Strang (2008), effective social integration requires a multifaceted approach that includes critical domains such as employment, education, housing, and health. These domains are foundational for the successful inclusion of immigrants into host societies. Without addressing these aspects, government interventions are likely to fall short of fostering true social cohesion. Berry (1997) further supports this by highlighting the significance of cultural inclusion as part of social integration. In his acculturation model, Berry argues that integration, where immigrants maintain their cultural identity while actively participating in the host society, is the most favorable outcome. This approach suggests that government interventions should promote both cultural retention and social inclusion to mitigate xenophobia and foster harmony. Furthermore, Putnam (2007) emphasizes the role of social capital in fostering social integration and inclusion. He argues that government policies should aim to build 'bridging' social capital, which connects diverse groups and fosters trust and cooperation across cultural divides. This is particularly important in South Africa, where most of the population holds anti-immigrant sentiments.

A strategy focused on building social capital could help counteract these sentiments and reduce social fragmentation. In my view, the South African government must adopt a comprehensive



approach to integration that addresses both the structural and cultural dimensions of inclusion. As Castles (2017) argues that successful integration requires policies that prevent marginalization and social exclusion by ensuring that immigrants have access to social services and are accepted as part of the social fabric. By framing interventions within this broader strategy, the government can more effectively address the underlying issues contributing to xenophobia and promote a more cohesive society. Thus, this all-inclusive approach would ensure that interventions are reactive and proactive, laying the groundwork for long-term social stability and inclusion.

The study recommends creating public awareness campaigns focusing on xenophobia prevention at both primary and high schools. It is essential to incorporate educational programs that address the importance of diversity, cultural understanding, and tolerance. These campaigns should be designed to reach students at an early age, fostering a mindset of inclusivity and respect for individuals from different backgrounds. By integrating xenophobia prevention into the school curriculum, the government can contribute to shaping positive attitudes and behaviors among the younger generation. This proactive approach aims to build a foundation of understanding and acceptance, ultimately promoting a more harmonious and tolerant society.

In addition, addressing concerns about individuals who may have experienced violence or conflict in their home countries requires a multi-faceted and compassionate approach. Some foreign nationals, including African international students, are coming from their countries from violent environments due to war-torn caused by issues such as religious wars, ethnic tensions, and tribalism (for example, the Rwandan genocide). Some of them come with these negative tendencies, which can affect the local communities. However, rather than assuming that all foreign nationals have negative tendencies, it's essential to recognize the diversity of experiences within this group. Implementing integration programs that focus on language acquisition, cultural understanding, and mental health support can aid newcomers in adapting positively to their new environment. Providing access to social services, educational opportunities, and economic resources can contribute to their overall well-being and reduce the likelihood of negative behaviors. Additionally, community engagement initiatives encouraging dialogue between residents and foreign nationals can foster understanding and dispel stereotypes. While addressing potential challenges, it is crucial to approach this issue with empathy, recognizing each person's

individuality and avoiding generalizations based on nationality or background.

### **7.3.2 Strengthen weak borders to manage the influx of foreign nationals**

This study recommends the enhancement of border security measures to manage the influx of undocumented migrants effectively. This recommendation is crucial given the context of South Africa's significant challenges related to unregulated migration, which can strain public resources, impact service delivery, and contribute to social tensions. Letlape (2021) argues that the influx of unauthorized immigrants through vulnerable land borders threatens South Africa's security by increasing disease spread, environmental damage, and economic and social burdens. He further argues that it also escalates transnational crimes like drug trafficking and human trafficking, contributes to environmental issues such as pollution and deforestation, and heightens unemployment (Letlape, 2021). This strain on resources places additional pressure on government institutions, including schools, clinics, and hospitals, to meet the needs of its citizens.

To address these issues, upgrading border security infrastructure is essential. This includes investing in advanced surveillance technology, strengthening physical barriers like fencing, and increasing manpower with specialized training. Training should cover cultural sensitivity and legal knowledge to ensure the humane treatment of migrants. Additionally, improving legal and administrative processes is key. Streamlining immigration procedures and developing strategic policies can manage migration flows effectively while balancing national security and humanitarian concerns. By implementing these measures, the government can enhance border security, address public concerns, and support both social integration and national security. By fortifying border security, the government can better manage immigration, ensuring that the process is regulated, transparent, and aligned with national interests. Thus, this approach can contribute to maintaining order, addressing public concerns, and fostering a more controlled and secure entry system.

### **7.3.3 Policy Review: Permits and Visa**

It is recommended that the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) conduct a comprehensive review

of current permit and visa policies on foreign nationals, specifically considering the needs of African international students at universities. This review should aim to enhance the effectiveness of these policies while promoting a more inclusive environment for foreign students. The government should ensure that the visa application process is streamlined, transparent, and efficient, allowing for reasonable turnaround times and improved access to necessary documentation and information for applicants. It is crucial to address these biases to foster a supportive atmosphere for international students. This includes not only revising policies but also implementing mechanisms that ease the documentation process and ensure fair treatment. Strict enforcement of immigration laws should be balanced with measures to facilitate legal and regulated migration, particularly for skilled workers, to support economic growth and development.

A balanced approach is essential, as overly restrictive immigration policies can have unintended consequences, such as driving more migrants to seek unauthorized channels, which can further strain public resources and undermine social cohesion. As one scholar notes, "the state's monopolization of legitimate movement" has led to the emergence of "parallel and informal orders alongside conventional immigration law" (Vigneswaran, Araia, Hoag, and Tshabalala, 2010). This suggests that a more nuanced and comprehensive strategy is needed to address the complex realities of migration in South Africa. Essentially, the DHA should consider a multifaceted approach that strengthens border controls and enforcement measures to curb unauthorized entry and residence but does so in a way that is cognizant of human rights and does not lead to the exploitation of migrants; Streamlines and simplifies the process for obtaining work permits and other legal immigration statuses, to facilitate the entry of skilled workers and investors who can contribute to economic growth. In addition, it is necessary to collaborate with neighboring countries and regional bodies like SADC to develop a more harmonized and coordinated migration management framework in line with the African Union's migration policy guidelines (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014). Thus, by implementing these recommendations, the DHA can foster a more efficient immigration system that supports both national interests and the rights of migrants.

#### **7.3.4 Strengthening Community-Building Initiatives Through Churches and NGOs**

Churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in fostering social cohesion and supporting African international students and migrants affected by xenophobia. Churches offer safe spaces for migrants, facilitating cultural exchanges and community engagement, which helps break down stereotypes and promotes understanding (Kenge, 2017; Okbandrias, 2023). These initiatives, including interfaith events, are essential for addressing isolation and discrimination. To strengthen these efforts, partnerships between universities, churches, and NGOs should be encouraged to create structured integration programs that promote intercultural dialogue and community-building. Beyond community-building, churches and NGOs provide essential humanitarian support, such as food, medical care, vocational training, legal aid, and counseling (Mubangizi, 2004; Mahlangu, 2016). Universities should collaborate with these organizations to offer comprehensive support services, including legal, financial, and healthcare assistance. Governments should also fund faith-based organizations to reduce their reliance on donations and ensure that international students have access to necessary services.

Churches have long advocated against xenophobia, raising awareness about the challenges faced by migrants and promoting their rights (Kenge, 2017; Crush, 2002). Through public dialogues and media campaigns, churches help challenge negative stereotypes. Collaborations between churches, universities, and civil society groups should be strengthened to educate the public and influence policy reforms that protect international students and refugees. Inclusive messaging from churches can also highlight the mutual benefits of integration, reducing local resistance to refugee support initiatives. Additionally, churches provide spiritual and emotional support, offering psychological relief to migrants facing trauma and displacement (Harverson, 2014; Nyamnjoh, 2021). Integrating mental health professionals into support programs can provide a more holistic approach. Universities should partner with faith-based organizations to offer culturally sensitive counseling services, ensuring that all international students, regardless of their religious background, feel welcomed and supported.

#### **7.4 The positive role that the South African media can play in mitigating the problem of xenophobia**

This study emphasizes the influential role of the media as a social change agent, particularly in the context of xenophobic attacks. During such incidents, media reports have been observed to

inadvertently support and justify the violence by providing rationales for attacking foreigners. Recognising the media's significant position as one of the centres of power, this study advocates for a responsible use of this influence to challenge stereotypes and transform deep-seated attitudes detrimental to peace and development in South Africa. The media, as a developmental force, is urged to denounce violent behaviours against any individual, irrespective of race or nationality. Given its impact on public perceptions, the media is encouraged to actively contribute to unity by promoting messages of peace and love. This involves highlighting positive stories of collaboration, cultural exchange, and shared experiences to counteract negative stereotypes. Responsible journalism, free from sensationalism, should underscore the common humanity that unites people, fostering empathy and respect. By doing so, the media can play a pivotal role in building a more inclusive society, promoting social cohesion, and encouraging a shared sense of belonging within a diverse community.

In addition, it is crucial for media coverage to present a balanced and comprehensive perspective on the actions and behaviors of both foreign nationals and local South Africans. Rather than adopting a one-sided narrative that exclusively highlights the negative activities of a specific group, such as foreign nationals, media outlets should strive for fairness and accuracy. Investigating issues like the sale of expired goods by both local and foreign-owned spaza shops provides a more nuanced understanding of the challenges within the community. By avoiding a narrow focus on one group, the media can contribute to dispelling stereotypes and fostering a more objective and inclusive representation. This approach not only promotes responsible journalism but also encourages a more informed public discourse, fostering unity and cooperation among diverse communities rather than perpetuating divisive narratives.

#### **7.4.2 Avoiding scapegoating the foreign nationals**

The prevalent trend in both media and society involves scapegoating foreigners for the challenges faced in South African society. As elucidated in Chapter Two, certain government officials have succumbed to this misleading narrative. The researcher firmly asserts that even without the presence of foreigners, issues within South Africa would persist. It is crucial for the media to dispel such unfounded beliefs and hold the government accountable for its unfulfilled promises. Furthermore, despite South Africa boasting some of the world's best immigration laws, the

government has faltered in its implementation, highlighting a critical aspect that warrants attention and scrutiny.

### **7.4.3 Avoiding Name Calling**

In light of this, terms like Kwerekwere, Zay'zayi, and similar derogatory names should be eradicated as they artificially delineate boundaries between Africans. The elimination of negative name-calling is imperative for putting an end to xenophobia and fostering peaceful coexistence. Moreover, abandoning such discriminatory practices based on nationality is crucial for realizing the Pan-Africanist vision of the United States of Africa. Failure to address negative discrimination perpetuates a hindrance to achieving the aspirations of the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity and subsequent Pan-Africanists, rendering their ideals unattainable dreams.

## **7.5 Informal ways of combating xenophobia:**

### **7.5.1 Music, Dance-theatre**

Informal methods of combating xenophobia often involve the expressive arts, such as music, dance, and theatre. These creative mediums play a crucial role in breaking down cultural barriers and fostering understanding among diverse communities. Music and dance events provide platforms where individuals from various backgrounds can come together, promoting positive interactions and building connections. Through performances, artists challenge stereotypes and showcase the richness of different cultures, contributing to a more inclusive and tolerant society. Informal gatherings centered around music and dance create spaces for community engagement and dialogue, allowing people to share their experiences and perspectives. By celebrating diversity and educating audiences about the traditions and histories of various communities, these cultural expressions become powerful tools for promoting unity and challenging xenophobic attitudes in a compelling and accessible way.

### **7.5.2 Drama/Soaps / Series**

The media, particularly through television dramas, soap operas, and series, plays a vital role in combating xenophobia through informal means. By incorporating storylines that address and portray the complexities of xenophobia, these platforms can raise awareness and prompt

discussions within the community. Television has the unique ability to reach a wide audience and influence public perceptions, making it a powerful tool for promoting understanding and tolerance. Well-crafted narratives can humanize characters from diverse backgrounds, challenging stereotypes and fostering empathy among viewers. Through the portrayal of realistic scenarios, the media can contribute to dismantling prejudices and promoting a more inclusive society. By addressing xenophobia in popular television content, the media can actively participate in shaping public opinion and encouraging positive attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism.

### **7.6 Regional collaboration of African states**

Xenophobia in South Africa remains a significant challenge that requires a coordinated regional approach. Scholars and policy frameworks emphasize the need for institutional mechanisms, dialogue platforms, education, and economic cooperation to address xenophobic sentiments and promote African unity. Adeola (2015) stresses the African Union's (AU) role in developing a unified stance against xenophobia, recommending that the AU Assembly create a common position on xenophobic violence to enhance regional coordination. The AU Commission (AUC) should facilitate regional dialogues to exchange best practices and develop comprehensive strategies for both immediate and long-term solutions to xenophobia. Education and advocacy campaigns that promote inclusivity and Pan-African values are essential to countering xenophobic narratives and fostering unity.

Participants in the study echoed these views, highlighting the importance of regional cooperation and diplomatic engagement. For instance, AISP6 suggested that South Africa should engage with other African nations to address their reliance on South Africa for economic stability, encouraging economic reforms in these countries to reduce large-scale migration. This aligns with broader regional strategies, such as the African Union's (2018) focus on harmonized migration policies to address displacement's root causes. Adeola (2015) also emphasizes the need for monitoring mechanisms, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), to track xenophobic trends and enable early intervention. This would enhance accountability and help prevent violence. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is also critical in addressing xenophobia, particularly through economic integration, conflict resolution, education, and Pan-African solidarity. Reducing economic disparities can alleviate competition for resources, a major driver of xenophobia. SADC's Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005) promotes

regional integration, mobility, and the protection of migrants' rights, though practical implementation requires stronger collaboration among member states.

The African Union (2018) also highlights regional cooperation in migration management, advocating for harmonized migration policies to reduce irregular migration and social tensions. By implementing protocols such as the AU Free Movement of Persons, African nations can promote legal migration and economic integration. Successful implementation depends on intergovernmental cooperation, effective enforcement, and capacity-building initiatives. Thus, addressing xenophobia in South Africa requires a cohesive regional strategy that integrates policy reform, education, economic cooperation, and monitoring. Through stronger collaboration and Pan-African solidarity, African nations can take significant steps to reduce xenophobia and foster social cohesion across the continent.

## **7.7. Recommendations for Foreign Nationals in South Africa**

### **7.7.1 Avoid negative generalizations about South Africans**

Foreign nationals, in general, including African international Students, must refrain from saying statements such as South Africans are lazy to do their jobs. Such statements and stereotypes increase tensions and xenophobic attitudes because the locals will feel undermined and judged in their own country by foreigners. These stereotypes create a sense of othering (Us vs Them), which creates unnecessary division in society. The statement that "South Africans are lazy" is a negative generalization that can contribute to xenophobia and negatively impact perceptions of South Africans. When foreigners make such negative generalizations about South Africans, it can create a sense of resentment and animosity among the local population. This can lead to the perception that outsiders view South Africans in a derogatory manner, which may contribute to a heightened sense of defensiveness and hostility towards foreigners. For promoting understanding and harmony between different communities, it's crucial to recognize and challenge stereotypes encourage open dialogue, and focus on the individual qualities and contributions of people rather than making broad generalizations based on nationality or ethnicity. Mutual respect and cultural understanding are essential for fostering positive relationships among diverse communities.

### **7.7.2 Immigration-related Fraud or Abuse of Legal processes by Foreign Nationals**

The researcher has observed that some foreign nationals, not all of them, are involved in negative



activities such as marrying local South African women for them to get permanent residence and citizenship, and once they obtain their status, they can decide to divorce and marry their own women back home. While it's true that immigration-related fraud or abuse of legal processes can occur, attributing such actions to all foreign nationals is unfair. Immigration issues can be complex, and cases of marriage fraud or misuse of residency and citizenship processes are not unique to any specific nationality. It's crucial to address such concerns through legal channels, such as adhering to the policies of the Department of Home Affairs. The South African Government, through the Department of Home Affairs, should put measures in place to investigate and prevent immigration fraud. If there are specific cases or patterns of immigration abuse, it is the responsibility of the Department of Home Affairs and the relevant authorities to address this issue through legal processes. The South African government, through the Department of Home Affairs, should promote awareness of immigration laws and encourage vigilance against fraud. Thus, combating immigration fraud is a shared responsibility that requires fair and just treatment for all individuals involved.

## **7.8 Overall Summary and Conclusion of the Study**

In conclusion, this dissertation has provided a comprehensive exploration of xenophobia in South Africa, with a specific focus on the experiences of African international Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The study began with an overview in Chapter One, setting the stage by presenting the research problem, questions, and objectives. Chapter Two delved into a thorough literature review, covering various dimensions of xenophobia, including its global context, causes in the South African context, cultural aspects, and its nexus with Afrophobia. The chapter also connected the discipline of International Relations with the experiences of African international Students and outlined relevant policies and plans.

Chapter Three introduced the theoretical framework, adopting four key theoretical approaches to analyze the nature and causes of xenophobia in South Africa. The study highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, providing a robust foundation for the subsequent research. Chapter Four detailed the research methodology, emphasizing the interpretive and constructionist paradigms. It outlined the data collection plan, including semi-structured interviews, and discussed the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter Five presented the data

findings, employing thematic analysis to extract rich insights from the participants, encompassing both local and African international Students. The analysis and discussion of themes provided a close reading of experiences against the backdrop of literature and adopted theories. This chapter played a pivotal role in addressing the research objectives and questions.

Continuing seamlessly, Chapter Six extended the analysis of data findings, focusing on how African international Students cope with xenophobia, evaluating policy effectiveness, and proposing recommendations for UKZN and the South African government. The chapter underscored the critical perspectives of both local and African international Students, offering valuable insights into the challenges posed by existing immigration policies. Finally, Chapter Seven offers conclusive recommendations for policymakers, encompassing government, institutional, and continental levels. The study not only identifies challenges but also proposes viable solutions for combating xenophobia. It emphasizes the role of education, cultural exchange, and policy reform in fostering a more inclusive and tolerant environment. In essence, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of xenophobia in South Africa and provides a platform for informed discussions and actions to address this pervasive issue. The recommendations and conclusions presented aim to inspire positive change at various levels, contributing to the creation of a more harmonious and accepting society.

## **7.9 Contribution of the study in the academic realm**

This study makes significant contributions to the academic realm in several ways. Firstly, it adds to the existing body of knowledge on xenophobia, particularly in the South African context, by providing a nuanced understanding of the experiences of African international Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The literature review synthesizes diverse scholarly perspectives, covering global and local dimensions of xenophobia, the cultural context, and its manifestations in institutions of higher education.

Secondly, the study contributes to theoretical advancements by adopting and critically evaluating four key theoretical approaches Scapegoat theory, Power Conflict theory, Isolation hypothesis, and Biocultural hypothesis. This theoretical framework enhances the academic discourse on xenophobia, offering a comprehensive analytical lens for future research in this field. The

exploration of strengths and weaknesses of each theory contributes to the refinement and development of theoretical perspectives. Thirdly, the research methodology outlined in Chapter 4, embracing an interpretivist and constructionist paradigm, provides insights into qualitative research approaches, including semi-structured interviews and ethical considerations. The chapter's detailed explanation of critical reflexivity, insider and outsider positionality, and the use of the Four Quadrants of Research Ethics by Strydom and Roestenburg (2021) enhances the methodological understanding for researchers in similar studies.

Fourthly, the presentation of data findings in Chapters 5 and 6, utilizing thematic analysis and linking participants' experiences with literature and theories, exemplifies a robust qualitative research methodology. This approach can serve as a model for researchers undertaking qualitative inquiries into complex socio-cultural phenomena. Furthermore, the study contributes to practical recommendations for combating xenophobia at various levels, including government policies, institutional practices (such as those at UKZN), and broader continental initiatives. The comprehensive nature of these recommendations provides actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and institutions seeking to address xenophobia and promote inclusivity. In summary, this study's contributions to the academic realm lie in its thorough exploration of xenophobia, the adoption and critical evaluation of theoretical frameworks, the elucidation of qualitative research methodology, and the provision of practical recommendations. These elements collectively enrich scholarly discussions on xenophobia, foster methodological advancements, and offer pragmatic insights for creating more inclusive and tolerant societies.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix I: Interview Guide for African International Students at UKZN (PMB Campus)**

1. Name and Surname?
2. Gender?
3. Age?
4. Which degree are you currently enrolled for?
5. Which faculty and college are you based in?
6. What level of study are you currently in?
7. What is your nationality, and when did you come to South Africa?
8. Why did you come to study at the University of KwaZulu Natal?
9. What do you understand by the term xenophobia?
10. What are your personal views and experiences of xenophobia off and on campus?
11. What emotions does xenophobia evoke in you as an African foreign student?
12. Are foreign African students an easy scapegoat for xenophobia at the University and SA as a whole?
13. What do you think are the major causes of xenophobia at the University or South Africa as a whole?
14. How do the acts of xenophobia impact life and your studies?
15. What role does language play in the issue of xenophobia at the University and in SA?
16. What are the factors that hindered you or facilitated your adjustment to University?
17. Do foreign African students receive the same equal services provided by the University?
18. Do you think the immigration policies and legal frameworks are effectively used to fight against xenophobia in South Africa?
19. What are the coping mechanisms that foreign students can adopt in dealing with xenophobia?
20. What are some of your positive experiences of studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal?
21. What must the South African government do to stop xenophobia in South Africa?
22. What recommendations can you give to try and resolve the problem of xenophobia for African International students at UKZN and in South Africa as a whole?

## **Appendix II: Interview Guide for Local South African Students at UKZN (PMB Campus)**

1. Name and Surname?
2. Gender?
3. Age?
4. Which degree are you currently enrolled for?
5. Which faculty and college are you based in?
6. What level of study are you currently in?
7. What do you understand by the term xenophobia?
8. Do you have any friends at University who are not South African?
9. What ways do you think foreign African students experience xenophobia off and on campus?
10. What emotions do you think xenophobia evokes in African foreign students?
11. Do you think foreign African students are an easy scapegoat for xenophobia at the University and SA as a whole?
12. What do you think are the major causes of xenophobia at the University or South Africa as a whole?
13. What do you think is the impact of xenophobia on foreign African students?
14. What role does language play in the issue of xenophobia at the University and in SA?
15. What do you think are the factors that hinder or facilitate African foreign students to adjustment to University?
16. Do foreign African students receive the same equal services provided by the University?
17. Do you think the immigration policies and UKZN codes of conduct have been used effectively to fight against xenophobia on campus or in South Africa?
18. What are the coping mechanisms that foreign students can adopt in dealing with xenophobia?
19. What must the South African government do to stop xenophobia in South Africa?
20. What recommendations can you give to try and resolve the problem of xenophobia for African international students in UKZN and in South Africa as a whole?

### **Appendix III: Interview Guide for International Students Officer**

1. What special arrangements does your office make for international students prior to arrival and even after arriving at UKZN?
2. Please give an indication of the top field of study chosen by African International Students.
3. Are they secured of a place to stay in the University residences?
4. Do you think African international students are at risk of xenophobia on campus or elsewhere in the South African communities?
5. In general, what policies does UKZN have in place with regard to international students?
6. What kind of programs or mechanisms can be set up by UKZN to prevent Xenophobia against foreign students on or off campus?
7. What kind of support can the University provide to students who experience Xenophobia?
8. In what ways are International students of benefit to this university?
9. What complaints have your office received from these students with regard to their stay at the university?
10. To which factors would you attribute the success of UKZN's African international student recruitment?
11. What are the challenges international students face in coming to South Africa to study once admission is obtained?
12. What recommendations can you give to try and resolve the problem of xenophobia in South Africa?

## APPENDIX IV: Gatekeeper Letter's Permission



20 October 2020

Ms Kudzai Goto (SN 207527906) School of Social Sciences  
College of Humanities Pietermaritzburg Campus. UKZN Email: [207527906@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:207527906@stu.ukzn.ac.za)

Dear Ms Goto

### RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

*"Xenophobia in South Africa: The perspectives and experiences of African international Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal."*

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with students and/or staff members on the Pietermaritzburg campus (Taking in account the regulations imposed during the lockdown ie restrictions on gatherings, travel, social distancing etc. ZOOM, Skype or telephone interviews recommended)

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorised to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the PAIA and POPI Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely



**DR KE CLELAND: REGISTRAR (ACTING)**

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Email: [registrar@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:registrar@ukzn.ac.za)  
Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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## APPENDIX V: Informed Consent Form



Dear Participant,

My name is Kudzai Goto (207527906).....(student nr). I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College / Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is Xenophobia in South Africa: *The Perspectives and Experiences of African International Students at the University of KwaZulu Natal*. This study seeks to examine the phenomenon of Xenophobia in South Africa based on the narratives and experiences of foreign African Students at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This exploratory study attempts to capture and critically analyze the understanding of these students on the subject and nature of xenophobia, their experiences, and the probable effects xenophobia has had on their stay and study experience in South Africa.

### **Please note that:**

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about (1hr 30minutes).
- Please kindly note that this interview will be audio recorded via Zoom.
- The record, as well as other items associated with the interview, will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed of by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures). I can be contacted at The School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. Email: [REDACTED] Cell: [REDACTED]

My supervisor is Professor Dorcas Ettang, who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email: Ettang@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: [REDACTED]. The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number +27312603587.



### **DECLARATION**

I (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate. I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**Date:.....**

.....

*Thank you for your contribution to this research.*

## APPENDIX VI: Ethical Clearance Form



30 October 2020

Miss Kudzai Goto (207527906)  
School Of Social Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Miss Goto,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001891/2020

Project title: Xenophobia in South Africa: The perspectives and experiences of International Students at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

Degree: PhD

### Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 26 October 2020 to our letter of 12 October 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year until 30 October 2021

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

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