



Xenophobia as a Form of Human Insecurity: The Plight of Malawian Migrants in South Africa

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Abstract

International migration between Malawi and South Africa is a century-old phenomenon. Different categories of migrants have been involved in this ‘process’ on either a regular or an irregular basis. While scholars of differing persuasions have made concerted efforts to document the nature of and trends in migrancy, there are few seminal studies on the suffering dimension of these migrants. Most of such studies merely gloss over the experiences of migrants and do not necessarily establish the linkages between immigration, xenophobia and human security. This paper presents xenophobia during the contemporary migration period as a form of human insecurity which has a direct bearing on their stay in the destination country. Using oral data (from the Zubayumo Makamo area in the Mzimba District), newspaper reports, and archival information, among others, the paper allows the migrants to speak for themselves in order to gauge the exact nature and degree of their suffering. The paper centrally argues that the waves of xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008 were unique only in terms of scale since throughout the century migrants had been victims of, strictly-speaking, salient forms of xenophobia. Finally, the paper makes an attempt to suggest a way out of this immigration-xenophobia web for consideration by policy makers.

Introduction

International migration from Malawi to South Africa is a century-old phenomenon. Although several scholars have examined the nature of and trends in migrancy, very few have examined the linkages between immigration and the human insecurity of these immigrants. The issue of xenophobia, which could be traced to as far back as the end of apartheid and even before, has been examined generally and more loosely, but not as a human insecurity issue. This paper, therefore, presents xenophobic attacks against Malawian immigrants (including other foreign immigrants) as a form of human insecurity. In this connection, the paper argues that the waves of xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008 were unique only in terms of scale since throughout the century migrants have been victims of salient forms of xenophobia.

The paper makes an attempt to provide the contextual meaning of human insecurity by examining the changing dimension or conception of human security. It argues that the absence of

human security in its narrow view constitutes human insecurity. This is a result of the realisation that it is difficult to precisely define such a concept as human insecurity. As will be noted below, at first the concept of human security was viewed through a military lens and was, therefore, associated with the prerogative of states in international relations and political science theories. Later on, thanks to the seminal arguments of Mahbub ul Hag and others, it began being seen from the point of view of people as individuals (Human Development Report 1994). The paper broadly defines human security as “freedom from fear and freedom from want”. However, the discussion in this paper is more associated with the first part, that is, “freedom from fear”.

The paper examines the experiences of Malawian migrants from the contemporary migration period in southern Africa. During this period most migrants secured jobs in various sectors other than mining. This is in sharp contrast to the period up to the 1970s, the old migration period, when most migrants from Malawi used to work in farms in Zimbabwe and in mines in South Africa. This period can also be referred to as the era of the recruiting agencies.¹ It is worth noting that since the early 1990s, both men and women, young and old, have ended up migrating informally to South Africa. Furthermore, while most migrate to secure various jobs, some migrate for trade purposes.²

It is important to briefly outline the methodology employed in the paper in order to underscore the credibility of the research and its significance in comparison to related research. Some of the information on which this paper is based comes from the print media following an upsurge of xenophobic violence in South Africa in May 2008. Part of it also comes from the results of fieldwork conducted among the Malawian ex-migrant workers in June 2004 and April 2005. One of the limitations of the information from the print media is that it is a mixture of primary and secondary data. However, this information was duly subjected to scholarly critique before use. In addition, oral sources are a reliable primary source, especially on contemporary migration discourse on which archival sources and other secondary sources are generally lacking. What are discussed in the subsequent sections are, therefore, the actual experiences of the migrant workers themselves in the face of the trauma in question. Ideally, this approach has been adopted to let the migrants speak for themselves. The writer also did some reading of both published and unpublished secondary works on which the primary information, above, is built.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section is a brief discussion on international migration and provides the reasons why most people, especially Malawians, migrate. The aim is to establish a correlation between the reasons for migration and the reasons for xenophobic attacks. The second section attempts to give a contextual definition, if not description, of the term xenophobia. It also valuably examines the historical perspective to xenophobic feelings by South Africans. On this, the paper advances the argument that xenophobia in South Africa is an

¹The two main competing recruiting agencies in Malawi were the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), locally called *Wenela*, and the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB), locally *Mthandizi*. See, among others, Chirwa (1992) and Banda (2000).

²I conducted oral interviews with both migrants and potential migrants in Zubayumo Makamo area in Mzimba District between June 2004 and May 2005. It was revealed that there are three categories of migrants who go to South Africa. For details, see Banda (2008), and Andersson (2004).

old phenomenon, but that it continues to heighten with an influx of more and more immigrants from South Africa's neighbouring countries.

The third section examines the changing dimension of the concept of human security since the end of the Cold War with a view to establishing a modern understanding of the concept. It shows that there are two dominant views on the modern understanding of human security: the broad view and the narrow view. It argues that the absence of human security in its narrow understanding (view) constitutes human insecurity, which is the gist of discussion in this paper. The fourth section zeros in on the xenophobic experiences of Malawian migrants, especially during the contemporary migration period. The aim is to allow these migrants to speak for themselves in order to gauge the exact nature of their suffering in South Africa. It is interesting to note that, despite the suffering in question, most Malawian migrants are determined to eke out a living through working in South Africa. Lastly, the paper highlights a number of conclusions drawn from the issues discussed.

Labour migration and its causes

International labour migration, not only in Africa but world-wide, is a result of multiple push-pull factors. People tend to migrate as a result of either challenges being experienced in the origin areas (push factors) or opportunities obtaining in the destination areas (pull factors). In the case of southern Africa, countries like South Africa and, to an extent Botswana, are the labour-receiving countries whereas countries like Malawi, Lesotho, Namibia, and, presently, Zimbabwe are labour-supplying countries (Banda 2008). In addition, some scholars have explained the phenomenon of international labour migration in line with the modernisation (development) and underdevelopment schools of thought (Chirwa 1992: Banda 2008). In this case, areas that are generally lagging behind in terms of development, hence are lacking income earning opportunities, are categorised as labour-supplying areas. On the contrary, areas or regions which are highly developed are referred to as labour-receiving areas.

In the case of Malawi, labour migration occurs as a result of both push and pull factors. Since the 1990s, various categories of both men and women have emigrated from Malawi to South Africa as a result of the job opportunities available in South Africa and the general lack of employment opportunities in Malawi, both in the rural areas and urban centres. Upon arrival in South Africa they often end up being employed as gardeners, cooks, house-keepers and waiters, among other forms of employment. Another attraction is the strength of the South African currency (the Rand) against the weak Malawi currency (the Malawi Kwacha). Consequently, Malawian migrants are satisfied with the wages they get in the South Africa, especially after converting them to the Kwacha. A combination of these push and pull factors compels Malawians to migrate to South Africa for wage employment despite the fact that many South African nationals have harboured xenophobic feelings against foreigners, especially those from neighbouring countries in southern Africa.

Xenophobia and its historical perspectives

Definitional aspects

Since the early 1990s there has been a growing tendency in popular and academic writing to use the term ‘xenophobia’ to explain opposition to immigrants within Southern Africa countries, especially in South Africa. However, most writers do not make efforts to define this term. The conventional dictionary definition of xenophobia is a dislike of foreigners. According to R. Mattes et al., the etymological roots of xenophobia in South Africa are actually much broader, referring to a “fear of the unknown” or anything that is “different” (Mattes et al. 2000).

This paper uses this inclusive definition of xenophobia in order to highlight the phenomenon of apparent dislike of foreigners in South Africa. This dislike essentially has to do with stereotypes that many South Africans seem to have of foreigners, viewing them as a potential threat to their well-being. Prevalent arguments are that foreigners take the jobs from the local population and contribute to an increase in crime rate.³ It is worth noting that the term xenophobia is a complex phenomenon that requires more attention than is usually accorded in the media and academic circles. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the term in depth.

Regarding the xenophobic attacks of 2008, a report by the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa identified four broad causes for the violence:

- relative deprivation, specifically intense competition for jobs, commodities and housing;
- group processes including psychological categorisation processes that are nationalistic rather than super-ordinate;
- South African exceptionalism or a feeling of superiority in relation to other Africans; and
- exclusive citizenship or a form of nationalism that excludes others.

(Human Sciences Research Council 2008)

A subsequent report, “Towards Tolerance, Law and Dignity: Addressing Violence Against Foreign Nationals in South Africa”, commissioned by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM 2009), found that poor service delivery or an influx of foreigners may have played a contributing role, but blamed township politics for the attacks. It also found that community leadership was potentially lucrative for unemployed people and these leaders were responsible for organising the attacks. Put differently, such leaders enhanced their authority by reinforcing resentment towards foreigners.

Prior to 1994, immigrants from elsewhere in Africa faced discrimination and even violence in South Africa, though much of that risk stemmed from the institutionalised racism of the time due to apartheid. After 1994 and democratisation, and contrary to expectations, the incidence of xenophobia increased.

³ I conducted a series of interviews with Malawian migrants based in South Africa (Johannesburg, Randburg, among others) in 2005. The results showed clearly the degree of insecurity amongst these migrants. This was a result not only of experiences of animosity from the local population, but also because of the fact that most of these migrants were afraid of deportation by the South African police since they usually do not have proper documentation. In other words, they have an illegal status. The same view was echoed by the migrants in Zubayumo Makamo area in Mzimba District.

Historically, xenophobic feelings among South Africans date as far back as the old migration period (MNA 1947). During this period, there were less such feelings because the process of migration was largely controlled. The recruiting agencies were actually controlling the numbers of able-bodied men who were destined to work in the various designated mines (for more information on official migration from Malawi during the old migration period see Boeder 1974; Sanderson 1961; and Groves 2011). In this case, these migrants were not necessarily a threat since South Africans themselves were shunning mine work. Furthermore, these migrants occupied the lowest strata of the jobs available in the mines. However, clandestine migrants were ill-treated in various ways by South Africans as the following account illustrates:

The most serious fact I discovered concerns Nyasaland. The WNLA have been stopped recruiting in Nyasaland, but thousands of Nyasaland boys are continuing to make their way on their own to the Transvaal both to farms and mines...and the Nyasaland natives are frequently exploited by touts, ill-treated on farms and are robbed and ruined on the way (MNA 1947).

It is fascinating to note that the situation radically changed towards the late 1980s and early 1990s. This followed the onset of the contemporary migration period, since the 1970s, during which migrants went to South Africa informally and ended up securing jobs in various sectors. Research shows that they worked as house-keepers, gardeners, cooks, and garage attendants, among other forms of employment (Banda 2008).

Xenophobia in South Africa can also be seen in parallel with similar developments in Malawi during the last ten years. In recent years the Government of Malawi has embarked on a crackdown against illegal immigrants from various countries and also refugees who escape from the refugee camps in the country. The notable increase in the numbers of illegal immigrants has in certain respects been matched by a consequent rise of xenophobic feelings among Malawians. They generally view these illegal immigrants as being responsible for the siphoning off of the country's already limited exchange earnings through their prosperous business ventures. In this connection, one resident of Chibavi, Felix Manda, had this to say: "If you buy items from the shops belonging to *Maburundi* (Burundians), just know that that is money going down the drain" (interview with the author).

A historical perspective of xenophobia in South Africa

In this section the paper shows that although xenophobia in South Africa is historically grounded, the experiences of migrants during the old migration period are markedly different from those during the later contemporary period. This is largely due to the fact that during the earlier period, the apartheid era, South Africans and black migrants were both in the same subjective social and economic position – being victimised by the whites. Following the attainment of independence in 1994, the black South Africans took centre stage and an apparent blame game ensued – blaming immigrants for their own failure to realise their goals and for all the social ills in society.

Foreign migration is a century-old phenomenon in South Africa. It has been indicated that during the apartheid regime the labour migrants were recruited in droves by employment bureaus from neighbouring countries and exploited. This was unlike the situation of the local unionised workers. Aderanti Adepoju writes that with political independence in 1994 came a floodgate of mostly illegal migrants who were “eager to partake in Africa’s most buoyant economy” (Adepoju 2003). A large number of them brought their skills and enterprise, unlike the largely unskilled agricultural and mine workers of the apartheid era.

In recent years there is a tendency to associate migration and migrants with criminality in South Africa. Foreign migrants (within South Africa) are rapidly coming to be blamed for many of the problems facing South Africans, being linked increasingly to crime, unemployment and lack of service provision. As alluded to earlier, this is the main source of xenophobic feelings by South Africans against immigrants. In this connection, Tarran states that “migrants are commonly and deliberately associated with crime, trafficking, drugs, disease and other social ills” (quoted in Adepoju 2003). However, available literature shows that there is little evidence that shows that immigrants are the cause of the endemic crime situation, or that there is a higher crime rate among immigrants than nationals.

Unfortunate xenophobic incidents include attacks on hawkers, burning of homes of migrants and inhuman treatment by the police. Such growing xenophobia stands in jarring contrast to the racial harmony that prevailed during the 1994 election in South Africa.

According to Crush and Pendleton (2008), the widespread hostility to immigrants in South Africa can also be explained by the perception that during the apartheid regime the local (black) population held on to the white dominating group as a common enemy. After political independence, the aspirations and expectations of the blacks remained largely unfulfilled. Hence in its place came frustration and disenchantment. In unison, they turned their anger towards the immigrants from other African countries, accusing them of ‘stealing’ their jobs, houses and culture (Adepoju 2003). This is largely why immigrants are viewed as a ‘force of disruption’ rather than as ‘vehicles for economic progress’. On the (new) attitude of South Africans, Sinclair would appear to concur with Crush and Pendleton, as can be seen in this quote from an unnamed migrant:

Long time ago we were never treated like foreigners because everybody, I am referring to blacks, was not allowed to identify himself as an urban resident. South Africans were all entitled to homelands and they regarded us as being better off since racial segregation was not as harsh as it was in here. This made them to treat us with respect. Again the fact that we were all called “kaffirs” strengthened our bond. Only now that South Africans are allowed to live in towns they have begun ill-treating their fellow African brothers (Sinclair 1998: 345).

It is worth noting that xenophobia in South Africa carries a racial tag. This has been attributed to the effects of the colonial legacy in which everything white is ‘pure and good’ and everything black is ‘bad and evil’ (Matlosa 2001). Consequently, immigrants from other

continents are viewed as contributors to the country's economic development, whereas Africans (blacks) are viewed with suspicion and as people who take jobs from the local people. This view explains in part the kind of suffering to which immigrants from African countries are subjected while staying in South Africa.

At this point it is also important to consider why employers in South Africa prefer employing foreigners at the expense of South Africans themselves. In the first place, employers find immigrants cheaper to employ. Most of them are categorised as illegal immigrants and, therefore, do not aspire to join unions for fear of being apprehended and deported.⁴ Consequently, they fall victim to exploitation by unscrupulous employers, who may threaten to turn them over to the authorities for deportation. The plight of these immigrants working in South Africa is rightly summarised by Adepoju (2003), who maintains that employers largely describe immigrants as “more skilled, more productive and less militant”.

Immigrants are usually presented as a homogenous category in the literature. What is on the ground, though, is that the so-called illegal immigrants are heterogeneous and include men and women, highly skilled professionals and other informal sector workers who entered South Africa illegally, as well as those who entered legally but overstayed. These immigrants do all kinds of jobs – both the lowly and highly skilled jobs – that the local population is largely unwilling to do. In so doing, these people go a long way in contributing to the economic progress in the country.

The concept of human (in)security

The concept of security has for a long time been interpreted narrowly, for instance, as security of a territory from external aggression. It has been related more to nation-states than to people as citizens or individuals. During the Cold War, the superpowers (the USA and USSR) were locked in an ideological conflict, and, partly as a result of their colonial legacy and of Cold War pressures, countries that attained their independence during this period, were sensitive to any real or perceived threats to their national identities. Forgotten in all this were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. For many of them, security symbolised protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.

Tadjbakhsh (2008) argues that in the same way that Amartya Sen introduced ethics into economics, Mahbub ul Haq (and his team) in the 1994 Human Development Report (HDR) posited that ‘security’, until then associated with the prerogative of states in realist international relations and political science theories, should be seen from the point of view of people.

Several analysts have attempted rigorous definitions of human security. However, like other fundamental concepts, such as human freedom, human security is more identified through its absence than its presence. This is the approach adopted in this paper in order to understand the concept of human insecurity as a direct product of xenophobia.

⁴ From the interviews I conducted in South Africa, it was clearly evident that these migrants stay in hiding – they are not free to go about in the streets for fear of being apprehended. For a similar perspective by the government during the old migration period, see MNA (1936) and MNA (1960).

In the 1994 HDR, on the one hand, human security was broadly defined as “freedom from fear and freedom from want” and characterised as “safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression as well as protection from sudden and harmful disruptions in the patterns of daily life, whether in homes, in jobs or in communities” (UNDP 1994). The Report outlined the four basic characteristics of human security as being universal, interdependent in its components, people-centred, and best ensured through prevention. On the other hand, some focus on the narrow definition of “freedom from fear” that concentrates on physical violence and threats. This is the definition that is adopted in this paper.

More recently the African Union (AU), in its Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact, has incorporated human security in its “vision of a united and strong Africa, based on respect for the principles of coexistence, non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of member states, mutual respect for individual sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state” (Human Security Report 2010). To this end, it has defined human security as:

the security of the individual in terms of satisfaction of his or her basic needs. It also includes the creation of social, economic, political, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for the survival and dignity of the individual, the protection of and respect for human rights, good governance and the guarantee for each individual of the opportunities and choices for his or her full development (Human Security Report 2010).

It is worth noting that common to all these definitions are three essential components that encompass the principles of human security and help further explore the added value of the concept. First, human security is in response to current and emerging threats – threats that are multiple, complex and interrelated and can acquire transnational dimensions (Nkhoma 2012). Second, human security calls for an expanded understanding of security where the protection and empowerment of people form the basis and purpose of security. Third, human security does not entail the use of force against the sovereignty of states and aims to integrate the goals of freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity through people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and preventive strategies.

As alluded to earlier, in this paper the concept of human insecurity is understood as the absence of human security in the narrow sense of the term, that is, lack of ‘freedom from fear’. It is from this perspective that the xenophobic attacks are regarded as a form of human insecurity to the migrants residing in the destination countries, for instance South Africa.

Xenophobic experiences of migrants *par excellence*

Despite a lack of directly comparable data, xenophobia in South Africa is perceived to have significantly increased after the ushering in of a democratic government in 1994 (Neocosmos 2010). According to a 2004 study published by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP):

The ANC government – in its attempts to overcome the divides of the past and build new forms of social cohesion... embarked on an aggressive and inclusive nation-building project. One unanticipated by-product of this project has been a growth in intolerance towards outsiders... Violence against foreign citizens and African refugees has become increasingly common and communities are divided by hostility and suspicion (Crush and Pendleton 2008).

The survey was based on a citizen survey across member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and found South Africans expressing the harshest anti-foreigner sentiment, with 21 per cent of South Africans in favour of a complete ban on entry by foreigners and 64 per cent in favour of strict limitations on the numbers allowed. It is worth noting that, by contrast, the next highest proportion of the respondents in favour of a total ban on foreigners was in neighbouring Namibia and Botswana, both at 10 per cent.

It is worth noting that there were a number of violent attacks against migrants long before the 2008 xenophobic attacks. Attacks on immigrants from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique living in the Alexandra township in the north-eastern part of Johannesburg were seen, for example, in 1995, with immigrants being associated with crime and unemployment.

The 2008 riots began in May, focusing at first in the township of Alexandra, when locals attacked migrants from Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. On 12 May 2008 two people were killed and forty others were wounded in such attacks. From that date onwards most of the newspapers in Malawi carried articles on the suffering of Malawian migrants staying and working in South Africa. It was reported that South Africans were irked by low salary offers that immigrants would be offered and take. Reportedly, “this brought down the salaries that the South African nationals demanded as employers would opt for the immigrants” (Chandilanga 2008). This view is in line with the view advanced by most Malawian migrants that many poor South Africans that accuse African immigrants (in South Africa) of worsening unemployment and perpetrating crime.

Regarding the violence that ensued, which was widely reported in the media, the situation from 11 May 11, 2008 saw the “right to life” of immigrants being “ignored”, and:

degenerated into ugly scenes, leaving 35,000 people homeless as armed gangs in the squatter camps and informal settlements in the main urban centres of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town went out killing, raping, beating, stabbing and burning nationals from other African countries (Chandilanga 2008).

Following such an outbreak of violence in South Africa, the Government of Malawi took the initiative of repatriating the victims of the xenophobic attacks back home. Olivia Kumwenda (2008), in an article *The Nation*, reported that over 100 Malawians arrived in the country on May 25, 2008. According to David Kwanjana, a Malawian immigrant officer who was based in South Africa, the group of repatriated migrants comprised the vulnerable, including the sick, the

wounded, mothers, pregnant women and children (reported by Kumwenda 2008). This category of migrants was the first to be repatriated. One of the returnees in the group was Ayana Banda, from Thyolo. Ayana with her two children reportedly went to Johannesburg in 2004 following her husband. However, amidst these xenophobic attacks, Ayana's husband opted to remain behind "to gather the little property the family (had) left following an attack on their home".

Another victim of these violent attacks was Ganizani Chapuma from Thyolo. He was lucky to survive the attack after he was hacked with an axe and left for dead. Chapuma recalled:

They broke into our house in Ramaphosa, wielding pangas, metal bars, pipes, gallons of petrol and axes, among other weapons, with which they hacked and beat us. They shouted '*ngena!*' demanding that we hurriedly get out of the house. I went out where I was attacked with an axe. They targeted my head and foot. I bled through the ears and was left for dead (Chandilanga 2008).

Their house was set on fire, destroying all the fortunes he had made in a period of seven months. These included "two bicycles, a television set, a generator, two duvets, three blankets and a car battery" (Chandilanga 2008). He valued these items at 83,600 Malawian Kwacha.

Oral evidence confirms the xenophobic experiences of the Malawian migrants in South Africa prior to these attacks. It has been indicated that most migrants from southern African countries generally fail to penetrate sectors of employment apart from the domestic labour sector because of xenophobia on the part of South Africans. The latter generally feel that the foreigners worsen the unemployment situation by grabbing jobs from them. It is worth noting that most of the interviewed migrants in Zubayumo Makamo⁵ area in Mzimba district share this view.⁶

In this connection, Trywell Chisi, one of the informants, argues that you had to devise mechanisms in order to survive this xenophobia. This is what he had to do:

Since we were hated, we were forced to change our names. For example, I changed my name from Trywell Chisi to Kingsley Lauhali. You also had to adopt their language as soon as possible. Furthermore, we were forced to marry South African women. In my case, I had a wife here at home, but I married another wife in South Africa so that things should work for me. In fact, even your in-laws, the brothers of your South African wife, would then assist you in securing better jobs. That is why I was able to work in garages and service stations.⁷

⁵ Zubayumo Makamo is an area in the western part of Mzimba District in Northern Malawi. It comprises five villages, namely: Zubayumo Makamo (proper); Zebediya Makamo; Kazezani Makamo; Lithuli Makamo; and Galamala Mgungwe. This is one of the popular labour migration areas in the district. The entire area is generally and popularly called Zubayumo Makamo.

⁶ Some of the migrants I interviewed shared their xenophobic experiences while working in South Africa. They include Fletcher Makamo (Interview, Zebediya Makamo Village, Mzimba, 15 April 2005); Overtoun Lupafya (Interview, Zubayumo Makamo Village, Mzimba, 17 April 2005); Henry Makamo (Interview, Kazezani Makamo Village, Mzimba, 17 April 2005); Gladwell Nthara (Interview, Zebediya Makamo Village, Mzimba, 19 April 2005); and Genesis Mgungwe (Interview, Galamala Mgungwe Village, Mzimba, 30 April 2005).

⁷ Interview with Trywell Chisi, Zebediya Makamo Village, Mzimba, 27 April 2005.

Trywell Chisi further points out that it was extremely difficult for a foreigner to get promoted at a work place. Consequently, some migrants would even win favours from their bosses through illegal means, for example, through bribery. Chisi sheds light on how, at times, this would be done:

At times you would be forced to use part of your monthly salary to negotiate with one of the bosses for a better position during lunch break. After reaching an agreement, you would give him the money. The following day he would shout at you (for no apparent reason): “You fool come here!” And when you come closer, he would tell you that you had been given a better job at such a place.⁸

Oral evidence from Chisi, above, and other migrants both at home (Malawi) and abroad (South Africa) shows the desperate and ubiquitous situation of the migrants not only from Malawi, but also from other South Africa’s neighbouring countries at the hands of ‘militant’ South Africans.

Such a situation, however, continues unabated.⁹ In 2012 there were fresh xenophobic attacks in parts of Cape Town and the Free State. In 2013 there were also other attacks particularly against Somali shop-keepers in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria. This clearly shows the degree of insecurity that immigrants face in South Africa.

At this juncture, one would be prompted to consider the possibilities for solutions to this problem. As alluded to earlier, one of the underlying causes of such xenophobic attacks relates to a feeling of superiority (exceptionalism) in relation to other Africans. This simply shows how grave and entrenched the problem is. Since this particular part of the problem is psychological, there is, therefore, the need to change the mindset of the people in South Africa. This calls for concerted efforts by the (South African) government and other stakeholders (both public and private) to provide a more enhanced form of civic education to ordinary South Africans. In short, education will be key to solving this this problem. This is in line with the view expressed by various scholars on how xenophobia could be brought to an end in South Africa. Both Solomon (2013) and Pendleton (2010) argue that the solution to South Africa’s xenophobia is education. Solomon maintains that:

South Africans – across races and cultures – continue to live against Africa as opposed to with Africa. More South Africans are overwhelmingly ignorant of Africa. This is unconscionable. If South Africa’s leaders wish to turn this around we need to re-examine our school and university curriculum and re-educate future citizens on this continent’s rich heritage (Solomon 2013).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Xenophobic feelings of South Africans against foreigners only changes in scale – at times small-scale, and at other times large-scale. This implies that there are various underlying factors for such a development. However, an examination of such factors is not within the scope of this paper.

Pendleton furthers this xenophobia-education argument by highlighting the role that could be played by adult education (civic education), media and policy makers:

Regarding xenophobia, the primary challenge is educational, and adult education has a role to play. Citizens need to have accurate information (rather than myths and stereotypes) about migrants, immigrants and refugees... A greater sense of continentalism and internationalism could be developed in the population through adult education and curriculum reform at schools, through the media, and through the public pronouncements of opinion-makers. One of the findings from the National Immigration Policy Survey (NIPS) project is that across the region, citizens are prepared to accept and welcome non-citizens if their economic impact is demonstrably positive. Hence, skills-friendly and investor-friendly immigration policies would not be difficult to sell to citizens. Since such policies are inevitable if countries are to be and remain globally competitive, it is important that policy and opinion-makers begin to build a broad public consensus on this issue. There is nothing more off-putting to new immigrants who want to put their skills to work in and for a new country to find that they are the object of scorn and vilification simply because of their accent or the colour of their skin (Pendleton 2010).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that xenophobia in South Africa is historically grounded. It dates back to the old migration days, to the era of the recruiting agencies, when migrants from South Africa's 'satellite countries' were largely working in the mines and farms. Following the attainment of independence in South Africa in 1994, South Africa became increasingly xenophobic. This was largely because more and more immigrants entered South Africa, some legally while others illegally, to partake in the country's promising new economic circumstances.

The paper has also shown that the South Africa's xenophobia is based on fiction and not facts, on unfounded fears relating to employment opportunities and crime, and that they are a drain on already stretched social services. Contrariwise, these immigrants come with various skills, and are productive and, arguably, contribute to the economic growth of the country. In terms of dealing with the causes of this 'crisis' of xenophobia, the paper has suggested the introduction of educational reforms, constructive and active media coverage of the continent's activities and immigration policy reforms.

The paper has also examined the changing concept of human security over time. It has shown that, of late, there are two dominant views, that is, the narrow and broad views of human security. It has demonstrated that the xenophobic attacks are a source of the human insecurity of the Malawian migrants (including other nationals of other countries). In fact, in line with the narrow view above, it has equated the absence of human security to the human insecurity in question. Put differently, the xenophobic attacks have emphatically been presented as a form of human insecurity. In this way the paper has attempted to establish the migration-xenophobia-human insecurity nexus. It is worth noting that the latter does not usually come out clearly in the international migration literature.

Towards the end of the paper, the writer has dwelt at length on documenting the xenophobic experiences of migrants during the contemporary migration period. It has been indicated that the Malawian migrants working in South Africa go through traumatic experiences in the face of increasing xenophobia. Such experiences include death, injury and loss of property. On this, the paper advances the argument that the waves of xenophobic violence from May 12, 2008 were unique only in terms of scale or degree, and that from the outset migrants had been victims of what may be regarded as salient forms of xenophobia. In this connection, it has been shown that the xenophobic experiences of migrants during the contemporary period are similar to those of the old migrants during the preceding period.

What has not been examined in the paper is the relationship between xenophobia and the frequent deportations of the illegal migrants in question. It is worth noting that xenophobia has a bearing on these deportations. For instance, it has been indicated in oral sources that because of the xenophobia in question, South Africans turn some of these illegal migrants to the police, hence consequent deportations. However, this issue is not necessarily within the scope of this paper.

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