

Empirical Exploration of Perceptions on Attitudes Pertaining to Foreignness and Diversity in Tertiary Institutions in South Africa Using the Staffs' and Students' Lenses: The Case of the University of Fort Hare

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ABSTRACT Incontrovertibly, the current attitudes surrounding “foreignness and diversity” and its ramifications continue to paint a bleak picture for the nation of South Africa and could have devastating and perfidious effects towards its bilateral and multilateral relations, as well as negatively influence its direct foreign investment. This research sought to explore the attitudes surrounding “foreignness and diversity” displayed at one of the formerly disadvantaged universities in South Africa using the perceptive lenses of students and a few staff members. The research used a qualitative design, was exploratory and descriptive in nature, and used an interview guide as a data collection instrument that saw 24 participants subjected to in-depth interviews, and six staffs subjected to a focus group discussion. Findings indicate the following attitudes surrounding the state of “foreignness and diversity”: making international students live in a state of fear, impedes their socialization with the locals, negatively affects scholarship of learning, stifles the spirit of cooperation and collaboration in academic issues between the local and international students, and offers an opportunity for international students from various countries to form strong caucuses. The paper suggests strong anti-xenophobic education, security to be beefed up at the campus, and carrying out seminar and educational forums to educate the students on the phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the term “*xenophobia*” emanates from the Greek words “*xenos*” and “*phobo*”, which respectively mean a stranger and fear of persons or groups that are outside one’s understanding. Incontrovertibly, xenophobia in contemporary South Africa is a vice that needs to be annihilated altogether. This is because its effects, aftermaths and spinoffs are both perfidious and devastating (Kang’ethe and Duma 2013). In tertiary institutions, the phenomenon can create fear among the international students, stifle any form of collaborative academic engagement, and make the international students feel they are in unsafe hands as well as in an unsafe environment. Distantly, xenophobia can cause bilateral and multilateral distress, and therefore negatively affect inter-country mutuality, reciprocity and relationship (Kang’ethe and Duma 2013).

In these researchers’ perspective, xenophobia can be placed in the continuum or terrain of, or could be associated with globally known human atrocities ranging from the Jewish holocaust, the ethnic cleansing like those of the 1992 attacks of Serbian Muslims in Bosnia, or the Rwandan genocide of 1994 (Baumgartl and Fav-

ell 1995; Mamdani 2002). This is because, in all these atrocities, hatred, a lack of a group not appreciating the other, and a feeling of insecurity by the perpetrator/s within a particular group of people have been characteristics before the atrocities are unleashed against the victimized group/s of people.

These researchers consider the state of xenophobia in South Africa a serious one. This is because since the 2008 globally publicized cases of xenophobic attacks of immigrants of African origin, the episodes of xenophobia appear to be unrelenting, and taking many forms. The phenomenon has been accompanied with violence, violation of the victims’ rights to own property, lack of the country’s guarantee of securing the investors’ property, and even killing of the victims by the perpetrators. South Africa, being a staunch signatory to international immigration laws and statutes, has been sacrificed by the episodes of xenophobic episodes and wanton destruction of the victims’ properties (Guterres 2008; Bloch 2010). The unfortunate state of the phenomenon is that there has not been adequate condemnation of the episodes from all the social organs of the country starting with the government. It is these research-

ers' contention that the government needs to invest heavily in researching factors underpinning the unrelenting episodes of xenophobia, engage in massive community education on the subject and enlist the support of the NGOs and other organs to disseminate the anti-xenophobia messages. Apparently, a big lacuna seems to exist in the machinery to address xenophobia. This is because it appears to be increasingly highlighted by media but not much is heard in terms of government advocacy and lobbying against the phenomenon. This is worrying if the status informs a lack of coming up with plausible and visionary strategies to address, mitigate or annihilate the vice altogether (Kang'ethe and Duma 2013). This empirical paper discusses the perceptions of both the students and a few staffs of one of the formerly disadvantaged universities on the dynamics surrounding the attitudes against the state of foreignness, or xenophobia at the university.

Problem Statement

The paucity of researches on the state, potential and possible impacts of attitudes against foreignness and diversity in tertiary institutions in South Africa formed the main thrust and motivation to consider making an exploratory investigation of the perceptions of students and a few staff on the prevalence of attitudes against the state of foreignness and diversity, or xenophobia, the possible effects to the social lives of those victimized by it, and its possible effect on the academic productivity. The study was also boosted by the increased cases of xenophobia reported in the South African newspapers and the fact that one of the researchers while working as a counselor at the researched institution handled some cases that bordered on attitudes against the state of foreignness, or xenophobia. It was therefore considered critical that an investigation on the phenomenon be carried out with a possibility of forming recommendations to annihilate it altogether, or mitigate its impacts thereof.

Study Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this study is to explore the state and dynamics of attitudes pertaining to foreignness and diversity in South African universities and South Africa generally from the lenses of both the students and the staff. The

researchers have used foreignness and diversity to refer also to the state of xenophobia.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used qualitative research design in form of a case study. According to Thyer (2001), qualitative research design involves a systematic investigation that embraces the qualities of induction, in-depth and non-quantitative studies of individuals, groups, organizations, or communities. Creswell (2008) views a qualitative research design as one that facilitates exploration and understanding of the meaning that the individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human process. It is a design that facilitates 'description, making sense of, interpretation, or reconstruction of the meanings that the subjects attach to a phenomenon being investigated.' The researchers adopted a qualitative research design approach that facilitated exploration, description, and capturing of people's insights, attitudes, thinking and perceptions of different players on the attitudes surrounding the state of foreignness and diversity, or xenophobia (Rubin and Babbie 2011). Thyer (2001) further explicates that the qualitative research approach is concerned with non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena.

Methods of Data Collection and Procedure

The study used the documentation method, in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion.

In-depth Interviews

Twenty-four individual participants hailing from South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Lesotho, including six students from the mentioned four countries were subjected to in-depth interviews. Gender parity was also deemed a crucial element to balance the views and representativeness of study participants.

Documentation Method

Due to the fact that the phenomenon of xenophobia was posing a national challenge, the researchers immensely involved themselves in reviewing the available literature on the topic. Information on contemporary issues pertaining

to xenophobia was especially important. The domain also suffers from paucity of data in developing countries, with most data being from the western world. The peer reviewed journals, books and reports from credible institutions served as a savory foundation to get the research started. Newspapers that heavily reported on xenophobia were also sought.

Focus Group Discussions

The study entailed holding, facilitating and interviewing six participants in one focus group discussion (FGD). According to De Vos (2007), a focus group discussion is a research technique that collects data through group interactions on a topic determined by the researcher. The focus group discussion constituted of members including the Dean of students, the residence manager, coordinator of the International Office, disciplinary coordinator, one lecturer from Kenya and another one from South Africa. The basis of selecting these officers is by the virtue of their responsibility in directly interacting with students and handling student related grievances.

Research Validity and Reliability

The focus group interviewing process ensured the participation of diverse personalities on the basis of belonging to different countries. This ensured that the research process and data collected was valid, reliable and trustworthy. Reliability is concerned with the fact that in the event that the study is to be repeated using the same methodology, it is likely to yield more or less the same findings. Validity, on the other hand, refers to the correctness of research findings (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Further, validity and reliability of results were achieved through triangulating the results from the students' perceptions with those of the University officials (Creswell 2008).

Data Collection Process

It was one of the researchers who acted as the principal investigator to manage and control the research process. Informed by the literature of Rubin and Babbie (2011), she well knew that in a qualitative research, the researchers are usually the primary data collection instruments. She therefore solidly took her place to lead the FGDs and in-depth interviews. She was assisted by

two research assistants. While one research assistant took the responsibility of capturing the interviews using a tape recorder, the other one took down notes. The principal researcher made observations. A tape recorder allows a much fuller record than notes and it assisted the researcher in concentrating on how the interview proceeded (De Vos 2007; Rubin and Babbie 2011). The reason to co-opt these assistants was that due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, the researchers needed to give complete attention to the participants. This ensured that participants afforded the respect they deserved.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The data collection process embraced democratic dispensation in that participants had been briefed and made to understand their rights to withdraw at any moment of the research process if they felt not at ease. Emphatically, the research process had to avoid any sort of coercion at all costs. To strengthen the concern, Marlow (2011) reasons that whenever any type of social work research is undertaken, it is critical that no coercion is exerted and that the subject voluntarily agrees to participate (Rubin and Babbie 2011).

Research Instruments

Based on the fact that in-depth interviews were used, the study utilised an interview schedule/guide to collect data for both individual interviews and focus group discussions. An interview schedule is a set of predetermined questions that guides an interview process (De Vos 2007). It is an appropriate instrument to engage the participants and to capture their narrative terrain. Specifically, an interview schedule with semi-structured questions was used.

Sample Selection Criteria

Sampling Methodologies

A non-probability sampling methodology was adopted, specifically purposive or judgmental sampling technique. In the purposive sampling technique, the sample selection does not respect the law of probability sampling and is therefore a biased form of sample selection. To this end, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) define the purposive sampling technique as one that facilitates choosing a sample with a purpose to rep-

represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion. The technique allows a researcher to select with bias those samples that are data rich, or those samples suspected to have the information that is of interest to the researcher and the research process (De Vos et al. 2011; Rubin and Babbie 2011).

Selection Criteria

The researchers, guided by the purposive sampling technique, used several approaches. First they used the phenomenon of students who approached the student counseling unit and residence department to complain about a problem or a challenge, which was deemed to border on the attitude against foreignness, or xenophobia. Furthermore, the researchers also approached the international students' associations for obtaining non-South African students who may have been victims of attitudes against foreignness, or xenophobia. In addition, the researchers also thought it was pertinent to include several staff from other foreign nationalities for their insights pertaining on how foreign students or foreign staff were affected by xenophobia, or issues surrounding xenophobia.

Unit of Analysis

Twenty-four (24) students were selected as individual participants for in-depth interviews. Six students from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Lesotho were also chosen. The researcher ensured that these participants were gender balanced. Six staff members concerned with the student wellbeing at the researched university were involved in a focus group discussion. They comprised of the Dean of Students, the Disciplinary Coordinator, the Coordinator of the International Office, the Residence Manager, a Lecturer from Nigeria and one from Kenya. These were all university service providers who worked closely with the students.

Research Domain and Justification of Choice

The researchers were motivated to select the researched university as the research domain because when one of the researchers was working there as a counselor, she was confronted by an array of cases that bordered on attitudes

against the state of foreignness and diversity, or those that were xenophobic in nature. Strongly also, the data collection process coincided with the period in which the xenophobic wave was at its peak in various sections of the country and hence attracted international, regional and national condemnation. It was therefore motivating to conduct a xenophobic research investigation especially at the University, which was perceived to be a "rainbow one" due to its diverse student population. It has students from countries such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya to mention a few.

The researched university is geographically located in the Nkonkobe Municipality in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The 2011 student population totaled 11,078, with predominantly African students, a huge chunk of them hailing from rural areas in the Eastern Cape. This province has a population of approximately six million people and is one of the poorest provinces among the nine provinces of South Africa. The principal languages spoken in this province are isiXhosa (83.8%), Afrikaans (9.6%), English (3.7%) and seSotho (2.2%) (Statistics SA Report: Measuring Poverty in South Africa: 2000).

The current overall number of the researched university employees was 1,211. Out of this number, there were only 363 academic employees and 848 administrative employees.

Data Analysis

The researchers used a qualitative data analysis to synthesize the data. Offredy and Vickers (2010) suggest that qualitative data analysis is the process whereby raw data is used to provide explanations, understanding and interpretation of the topic under investigations. A thematic framework was used to organize data according to emergent themes. Data analysis was also inductive, which means that the final research findings came from the voices of the participants. Common themes, different themes, and unique themes were coded in separate colors, respectively. The use of assigned codes made themes clear. The researcher conducted data analysis in two phases, for the interviews and for the focus group discussion. The triangulation enriched result validity and reliability (Rubin and Babbie 2011).

FINDINGS

Biographical Details of the Participants

Age

As shown in the Table 1, findings indicated that fifty percent of the participants were in the 15-24 age category, ten percent in the 21-30 years category, while forty percent fell into the above 30 years old category. This shows that there was a balance in terms of age representation, with the younger (15-24) almost being slightly more than the middle aged (above 30 years). This means that the results are not likely to have a bias emanating from some ages not being represented.

*Foreign Nationals at the University
Living in a Spate of Fear*

Study findings indicated that seventy-five percent of the students from other African countries indicated that they did not feel safe in the hands of South Africans. They feared that a xenophobic flare up could happen anytime. They indicated that South Africans harbored feelings of hatred to an extent that they could no longer hide it. A larger majority of the participants suggested that the university needs to strengthen anti-xenophobia campaigns of promoting humanity (ubuntu) and brotherhood. This is what some participants had to say:

Table 1: Profile of the research participants

S.No.	Position	Profile of individual Participants			Age cohort			
		Gender		Age	Nationality	15-24	21-30	>30yrs
		M	F					
1.	Student		F	19	South Africa	1		
2.	student		F	18	South Africa	1		
3.	students		F	20	South Africa	1		
4.	Student	M		19	South Africa	1		
5.	Student	M		21	South Africa	1		
6.	Student	M		22	South Africa	1		
7.	Student	M		20	Zimbabwe	1		
8.	Student		F	23	Zimbabwe	1		
9.	student		F	21	Zimbabwe	1		
10.	Student		F	18	Zimbabwe	1		
11.	Student	M		25	Zimbabwe		1	
12.	Student	M		40	Zimbabwe			1
13.	Student	M		20	Lesotho	1		
14.	Student	M		32	Lesotho		1	
15.	Student		F	23	Lesotho	1		
16.	Student	M		37	Lesotho			1
17.	Student		F	21	Lesotho	1		
18.	Student		F	42	Lesotho			1
19.	Student	M		29	Nigeria		1	
20.	student	M		23	Nigeria	1		
21.	Student	M		32	Nigeria			1
22.	Student		F	41	Nigeria			1
23.	Student		F	23	Nigeria	1		
24.	Student		F	31	Nigeria			1
<i>Profile of Focus Group Participants</i>								
25.	Dean of Students				S. Africa			1
26.	Disciplinary Coordinator				S.Africa			1
27.	Residence manager				S.Africa			1
28.	Head of International Affairs				S. Africa			1
29.	Lecturer				Nigeria			1
30.	Lecturer				Kenyan			1
31.	Total					15 50(%)	3 (10%)	12 40(%)

"Although the South Africans speak of ubuntu, it appears it has dwindled completely. They need to inculcate it"

"This xenophobia can also result in death, students killing each other on campus, and many injuries."

"The South Africans' hatred for foreign students is deep. This worries the foreign students. Sometimes it affects their academic performance."

"The university should strengthen anti-xenophobia campaigns. Otherwise foreign students do not feel very safe."

One focus group participant narrated an episode of xenophobia that made him distrust South Africans generally. He reported that the experience ignited a state of perpetual fear and insecurity in him in the hands of the South Africans.

"I was staying in Fort Beaufort at the B and B. Later I got a house on campus. Some ladies offered to clean the house and also accompany me for shopping. While two ladies cleaned the house, one accompanied me to do the shopping. Later I heard that the security staff reported to the boyfriend of the lady who took me to do my shopping that her girlfriend accompanied a foreigner to the shopping area. The report that reached me revealed that the lady was very badly beaten and ended up hospital. I told myself that I have to protect myself."

All members of the focus group emphasized that the University needs to strengthen efforts in addressing the issue of safety and security for its community. Xenophobia around the University was a big issue. To this end, the Residence Manager agreed that it was fitting to urgently form a committee that will tackle the challenge of xenophobia at the researched university. In support of the fact that xenophobia is prevalent at the campus, the Disciplinary Coordinator also suggested that university campus control section was accountable to guarantee a violence-free environment. The university security staff needs to be vigilant and responsive to the safety needs of the university community by promptly attending to their complaints.

Students' Emotional Vulnerability

All individual participants (100%) agreed that the xenophobic attacks that some students

experience, be it physical, verbal or systematic, left the victims in a distressful emotional state. This can manifest in various forms such as trauma, stress, distrust and isolation. In addition, the participants revealed that facing xenophobic experiences invoked anger, hatred, aggression, loss of self-esteem, insecure, mistrust and distrust. One of the participants gave the following sentiments:

"The verbal, non-verbal attacks traumatize students. One becomes so disturbed because of the rejection and one keeps asking oneself where he/she belongs. One wonders whether South Africa is a part of Africa? I feel so lost and isolated."

"I was feeling hurt and unwanted, and I just missed my home and my beautiful country. I regret to have come to study in South Africa."

"One cannot concentrate well as one is always thinking about the environment where he/she is unsafe."

Incontrovertibly, these factors are likely to affect the students' concentration and performance in their studies. The above observation by one of the students was corroborated by all as the outcome of the focus group discussion (FGD) that xenophobic experiences result in psychological disturbances. The FGD pointed out that the students' performance and concentration levels are definitely affected by the state of attitudes against foreignness and diversity, or xenophobia. They suggested that the University needed to facilitate the formation of anti-xenophobia support groups. This is with the hope that the act could possibly help reduce or mitigate its effects. They also suggested that reinforcing supportive programs of the international students' associations, the office of the international students, as well as the student counseling unit for psychological wellness could be strategies that could deal with the effects of xenophobia in the University. Some focus group discussion participants expressed the following sentiments:

"The University does not appear to have any strategy or mechanism to fight xenophobia, yet it is a reality that xenophobia is a real phenomenon."

"Alongside the support groups that strengthen a particular kind of a desirable campaign, anti-xenophobia support groups are critical. The University administration should help kick start them."

Xenophobia Impedes Socialization between International Students and South African Students'

Eighteen (75%) international research participants claimed that they found it difficult to socialize with South African students. This is due to the unwelcome gestures and attitudes displayed by the South African students. This resulted in foreign students organizing their own socialization structures, especially for artistic and entertaining activities. This is what some of the international students stated:

"It is very difficult to socialize with South African students. They have negative attitudes towards students from other countries. They do not treat us as equals. Therefore, we do not feel like a part of them. For example, we involve ourselves in ballroom dancing and soccer. As a result, Zimbabwean students organized their own ballroom dancing, and soccer tournaments, as well as parties to socialize."

These researchers think that the above sentiments send an unfortunate state of affairs for the African continent generally. If inter-country students cannot easily mingle and socialize, then the Africa continent may not easily promise peace, resolution of conflicts and other inter-boundary conflicts. Then Pan-Africanism that the African Union preaches may be a mirage if students as young as twenty years start defining themselves in terms of physical boundaries. In these researchers' subjective lenses, this is a result of poor and misplaced parental socializations. It is high time that parents, leaders and institutions take a responsibility of advocating and preaching for Africa's gregarious spirit of brotherhood, *Ubuntu* or *botho* (humanity) and *lerato* (love) among the people of Africa (Kang'ethe 2006). For example, historical facts indicate that due to love that the neighboring countries had for South Africa, they allowed South Africans were able to operate their political agenda campaigns and leadership machinery that facilitated their liberation from apartheid in their hand. It is therefore critical that Africans see themselves as one, sing one song, eat from one plate, and dream of a united Africa. People need to strengthen the spirit of Pan Africanism.

Xenophobia Strengthens Associations among International Students from Different Countries

All the participants from the focus group (100%) alluded to the fact that xenophobia af-

fects the social life of the students. These participants indicated that due to isolation and treatment by the local students, international students choose to form impermeable circles to protect themselves. The focus group proposed that University programs such as orientation should promote and embrace social cohesion amongst students with diverse nationalities.

This is what some participants had to say:

"The victimization by South Africans causes international students to come together and strengthen African ties and associations without South Africans. The circle is formed by students from different African countries, not necessarily one country, because they can see that they have one common problem. They protect each other and feel safe in this circle. When they are hated and they feel that they are not accepted, they form a strong circle of security."

Xenophobia Negatively Influences the Scholarship of Learning

Eighteen individual participants (75%) claimed that xenophobic issues at the University negatively affected both students' and staff's quality of scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). For students, the psychological impact it had was indirectly impacting their interest in studies, motivation, and collaboration with teachers, while staff felt they worked under an environment they may not freely express their opinions, attitudes, and temperaments. However, some international students indicated that the fact that they are isolated gives them an opportunity to focus on their studies. This results in them having time and energy for their studies and they are therefore able to academically perform excellently. In addition, local students claimed that they are losing by not interacting with the international students. This is what some international students had to say:

"Academically, we are performing excellently, because we don't socialize that much with the locals. Xenophobia is the bottleneck. We resort to our books because we feel unaccepted and unwelcome. Therefore, books have offered us a solace and friendship. We have developed confidence in terms of competing with other students, and we always get distinctions. They have also learnt how to survive."

Xenophobia Stifles the Spirit of South African viz-a-viz International Students' Cooperation in Assignments

A cross-section of participants from both interviews and the focus group discussion indicated that South Africans, due to their xenophobic attitudes, are leading to the creation of a lacuna between them and the international students, which leads them to not gaining from the former. The South African students, therefore never benefited from the usual and expected cross-pollination of knowledge from international students. One of the focus group participants made the following observation,

"In the module I teach, the few South African students who collaborate with international students tend to perform better than the ones who choose not to work with them on grounds of xenophobia."

Another FGD discussant made this comment,

"The South Africa and international students do not effectuate the expected inter-country academic pollination. This is an unfortunate state of affairs that negatively impacts the UFH's scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL)."

"I organized a seminar in which I gave my students assignments to go and research on in preparation for a presentation. When they were presenting, it was vividly clear that the local students were not adequately prepared. When it came to one international student, who is known by the others that he is good, he was very thorough in making him score very high marks. It was apparent that the local students had the attitude that the international students were showing off and as a result they never asked him questions. When the local students came to me as a way of making follow up to better their presentations, I advised them to seek the assistance from their international student colleague. While the international student was willing to help them make improvements in their presentations, unfortunately the local students refused to take the gesture."

The above comments especially from the lecturer indicate that xenophobia poses a serious threat to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Some participants called for a paradigm shift in attitudes across both the students from South Africa and international students to avert or reduce the situation of xenophobia. This

could possibly and probably be one way of dismantling the xenophobic wall that prevents the free mingling of the two parties. The focus group participants also proposed that it should be a requirement in the university policy framework that students from diverse nationalities should execute educational tasks together. This will be in the spirit of building social cohesion amongst students at large. Students will also be afforded an opportunity to learn from each other's skills and knowledge in order to become all-rounded. The phenomenon can also be an opportunity to share cultures and therefore easily underpin one of the cherished goals of creating a United Africa and therefore making the goal of Pan Africanism a reality.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that xenophobia is a reality at the researched university and manifests itself in various ways to especially the international student community. It also affects the teaching community but not as much as the students. Although the research never sought the underpinnings of xenophobia, it is critical that literature provide such important aspects. Nyamnjoh (2006) contends that xenophobia can be prompted and explained by poverty, underdevelopment, economic disparities and assumptions of social and cultural superiority. This means that even in a university environment, xenophobia can account for several challenges that students experience. Furnham (2006) argues that foreign students are facing various challenges such as academic stresses, language problems, misunderstanding and loneliness. In this study, for instance, it has been revealed that xenophobia manifests itself in social interactions where students are accommodated, in lecture rooms, through language and cultural diversity. It was further found that in its multidimensional nature, it could affect the victims psychologically, socially and academically.

There is therefore a need for a more integrated strategy of addressing the phenomenon of xenophobia in the universities. The university should engage different and relevant units and academic faculties to holistically tackle xenophobia in its entirety. Furnham (2006) recommends that a development of a more coherent management structures to support foreign students is

required. Moreover, according to these researchers, there is a need for a more sophisticated analysis of the needs of students.

The study also found that xenophobia plays a huge role in dissuading socialization between international students and the local ones. Observably, there is a conspicuous deficiency in the students' social integration and cohesion that plays itself out in residences, sporting codes, as well as other social gatherings. Subjective information suggests that most international students claim that they feel unwelcome and are treated as outcasts in their own continent. It is to this end that Nyamnjoh (2006) claims that people from other countries have become synonymous with the 'unwanted syndrome'. The phenomenon has set off some reactive outcomes leading international students to also ignore as well as avoid South African students. It is due to this bad blood that Swigsworth et al. (2008) propose that people from other African countries rely on family members, caring friends as well as faith-based organizations for social support. For students, this is also applicable in that they rely on family members, students from their countries as well as from other socialization clubs or groupings such as church members. This restriction of socialization to one's own nationals obviously is an indication of a lacuna in inter-country cohesiveness and also dysfunctions in social integration. To this end, Jones (2009) argues that there should be more integration amongst students with diverse nationalities as it has been proven that this can result to each party enriching its self with cultures from other countries, as well as knowledge cross pollination. It is therefore recommended that the university units, such as sports departments, student affairs, residence department and student representative council advocate for pragmatic and systematic amalgamation of students in their social environment. This is also supported by Roostenburg (2013) who purports that different systems in the society are imperative to address the plight of refugees in the South African communities. These systems include government departments, civil societies, institutes of learning, community leaders as well as families to play their part in improving the circumstances of refugees in South Africa. Such kind of a networking can be informed by the systems theory that views a system's success through mutual collaboration of different subsystems (Maguire

2002). In terms of the universities, policy legislative framework can be instituted and formulated that respond to the needs and challenges of foreign students. It is recommendable for example, that students from diverse nations should be merged as roommates. To this end, Jones (2009) asserts that institutions of higher learning should radically review their policies in order to create situations in which positive intercultural dialogue may occur. A collaboration of students from different countries can also assist in exposing them to different languages and cultures for each one of them to widen the scope of his/her cultural experience. Perhaps, the implementation can also expedite the process of acculturation (Dubinsky 2007). Some other suggestions are that perpetual supportive and educative programs should be put in place to make it possible for students to appreciate their diversity and cohabitate peacefully. There is a need for residence-based programs that will address challenges occurring in residences such as respect and embracing music played students of diverse nations.

Alternatively, all the students from different countries should be encouraged to grace cultural based crucial events such as the heritage day that is celebrated on the 24th of September every year. In terms of sporting codes, a tournament can be organized aimed at mobilizing and sensitizing diverse nationalities of the importance of embracing different aspects of diversity. This can also be graced and honored by the senior management so as to inspire students and also demonstrate their commitment to social integration (Furnham 2006).

The study findings indicated that xenophobia could also have an impact on the issue of safety and security of students. Most international students reported that they do not feel safe given the unfriendly and negative sentiments displayed by the local students and the surrounding community. This was also exacerbated by the outrageous outbreak of xenophobic attacks which happened in various provinces of South Africa in May 2008 wherein about sixty people from other African countries were killed and tens of thousands were displaced, their properties and businesses destroyed and looted (Crush 2008; Kang'ethe and Duma 2013). This may also have triggered feelings of insecurity in students from other African countries. To corroborate this finding and observation, a study

by Swigsworth et al. (2008) revealed that people of foreign nationals perceived South Africa as a country that is volatile and whose future of peace is at stake. This has led to feelings of insecurity hindering their free movement for socializations.

Due to these validated phenomena of South Africa being peace deficient, universities have also not been immune to these safety threats. This has prompted them to embark on preventative campaigns as well as pronouncing condemnations against the volatile xenophobic attacks. To this end, the University of Fort Hare for instance, conducted anti-xenophobic seminars and workshops in 2008 that culminated in the staff and students holding hands together as a commitment to fully annihilating the phenomenon of xenophobia. The campaign has continued umpteenth time. It is recommended that the universities invest heavily in programs to beef up security and also in anti-xenophobic campaigns.

Furthermore, this research study revealed that students are academically affected by the existence of xenophobia at the researched university environment. Although it was revealed that local students often perform poorly than the international students, the locals were arrogant and had negative attitudes towards associating and collaborating with international students. These researchers subjectively think that the fact that South African students are weak in English language, or do not want to communicate in English could be one of the factors heightening their states of xenophobia. In the same vein, Shishin (2002) purports that the poor state of English among the Japanese students made them xenophobic. Information pertaining to Japanese education suggests that the Japanese government did not teach English in the schools due to fear that their children could become less Japanese. This, in these researchers' perspective constitutes a misplaced attitudinal problem. In the same vein, it is also apparent that the South African students harbor negative attitudes of haughtiness and a feeling that they do not need any cooperation and collaboration with the international students in their academic endeavors.

Research findings also indicated that due to the states of xenophobia subjected to international students through isolation, stigma and discrimination, international students were in a perpetual state of fear making them suffer profound psychological harm. These emotional de-

struction included feelings of rejection, feeling hurt, lack of belonging, distress, hatred, loss of self-esteem, and loss of confidence. Ward (1967) in Furnham (2006) contends that international students become stressed due to different challenges they face that include isolation as well as misunderstandings with local students as a result of cultural shock. These challenges can stress them to an extent of affecting their health especially for those poorly equipped with stress management system (Maguire 2002). In the same vein, Klomagagan (2006) contend that the extent of stress in international students is determined by various variables such as age, personality traits, level of study, and duration of stay. This argument is also reiterated by Church (1982) who purports that emotional reactions may not be uniform due to various reasons such as intrapsychic, interpersonal and social factors (Maguire 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that a blanket approach should not be used in looking at the psychological impact of xenophobia on students by assuming that they all have negative psychological experiences. Oberg (1960) in Ward (2001) argued that international students experience emotional reaction in chronological stages. The international students go through the honeymoon stage, wherein they are excited about the new environment. Further, they experience crisis stage, where they get to realize that they differ in culture from the locals and this results in anxiety and frustration. The subsequent stage is the recovery stage in which they surmount their crisis by developing various adaptations such as learning a new language and culture. Lastly, the international students experience adjustment stage, where they begin to participate in the new culture of the host country. It would also be naïve to think that all international students go the same route as others resist adjusting due to the abovementioned variables such as personality traits and intra-psychic facets. It is recommended that the student counseling unit should embark on addressing psychological aspects of xenophobia at all levels, especially focusing on individual or micro level given the unique nature and various variables of international students.

CONCLUSION

This exploration study of the prevalence of xenophobia at the researched university has paid

huge dividends. This is because the researchers have been able to unearth an array of factors that constitute the terrain and dynamics of the state of attitudes pertaining to foreignness and diversity and its interplay with xenophobia. The revelation that xenophobia exists at the researched university is commendable and the fact that there have been some attempts to address the phenomenon is also commendable. However, these researchers think that what is in place to surmount the phenomenon is just a drop in the ocean. Perhaps a wider quantitative based research on the phenomenon could corroborate this qualitative research that brought insights of the phenomenon. Since xenophobia is becoming an increasing problem in the country, these researchers, informed by their findings advocate to the university managers to come up with strong advocacy and lobbying platforms and campaigns to address the phenomenon. It is important that international students feel safe, socialize healthily with locals and have the two parties engage in knowledge cross-pollination in order to strengthen their scholarship of learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ Institutions of higher learning should invest time and energy to research on the states of xenophobia in their institutions.
- ♦ The country's governance structures should embark on a campaign for the South Africans to consider relooking back at the indigenous factors such as *Ubuntu* and *botho* so that they can enrich their hospitality to the individuals of foreign nationals.
- ♦ The students of foreign nationals should also bring in their qualities embedded in their cultures to be friendly to the locals and among themselves. This is because xenophobic attitudes can be harbored by both the locals and the foreign nationals
- ♦ The institutions of higher learning should have student forums to discuss the opportunities and challenges of diversity and the possible spinoffs that the variables may pose to peace and tranquility of the student community.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

It was very difficult to get participants from Zimbabwe and Nigeria as the potential partici-

pants complained of not having time for it. The researchers also thought that the potential participants from these countries felt uneasy to report their perceptions pertaining to xenophobia. However, this study also collected this data in 2007 when one of the researchers was working as a student counselor at the researched university Hare. Although it was five years from then, yet the researchers considered the experience in 2007 to be still applicable to inform current behavior and could still suffice in the decision-making process to tackle xenophobia.

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