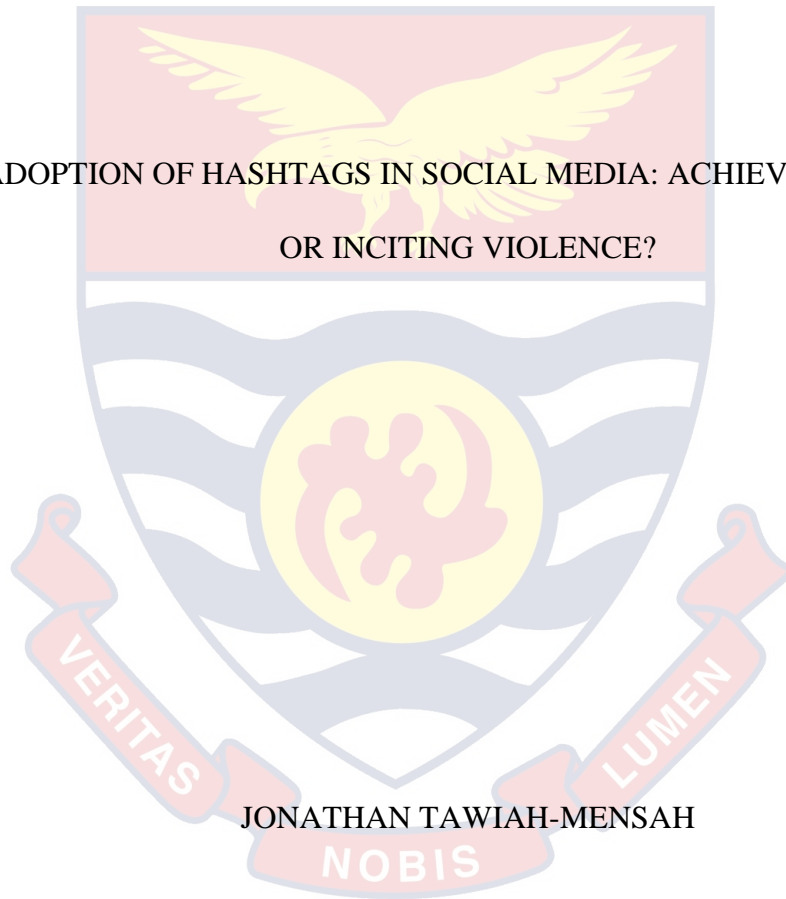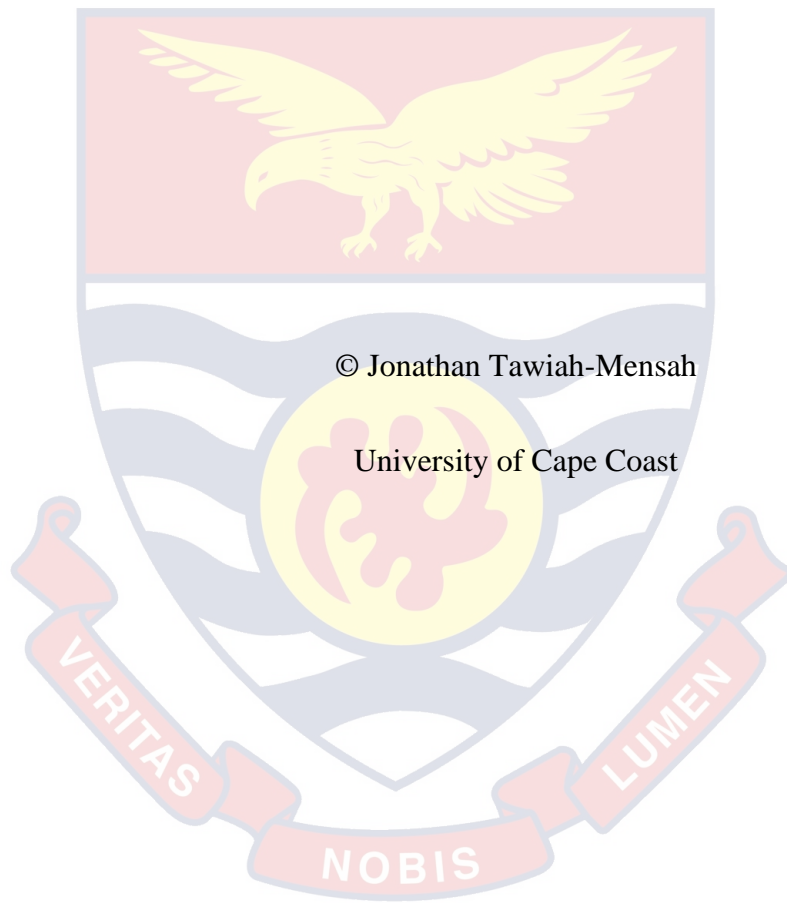UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ADOPTION OF HASHTAGS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ACHIEVING PEACE

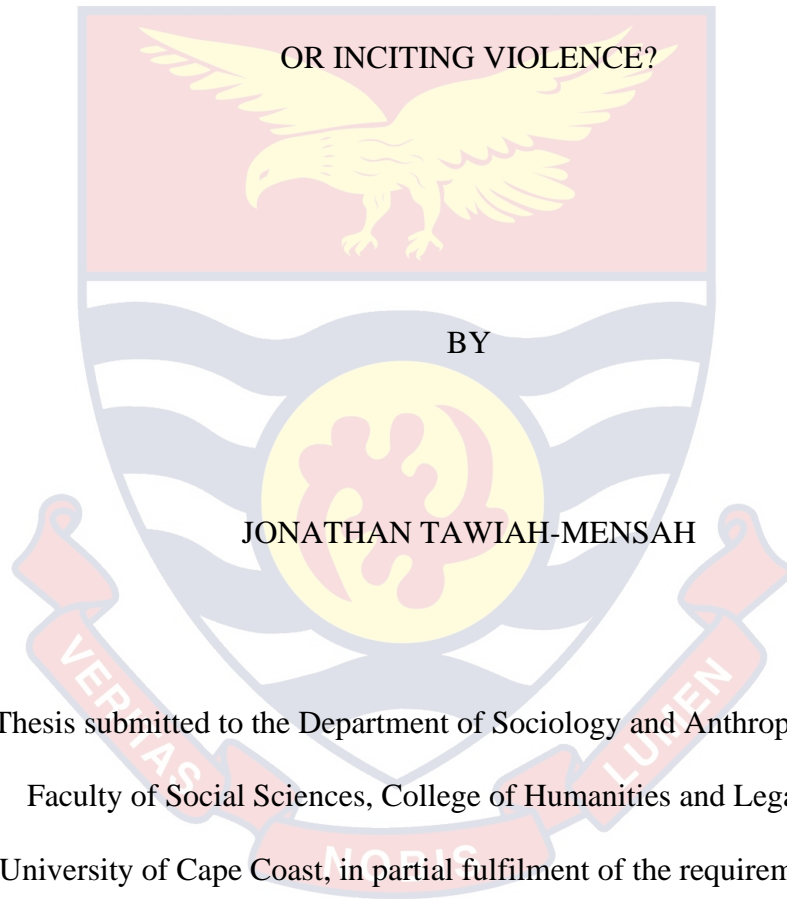OR INCITING VIOLENCE?

JONATHAN TAWIAH-MENSAH

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ADOPTION OF HASHTAGS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ACHIEVING PEACE

OR INCITING VIOLENCE?

BY

JONATHAN TAWIAH-MENSAH

Thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the

Faculty of Social Sciences, College of Humanities and Legal studies,

University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

award of Master of Philosophy degree in Sociology

MARCH 2021

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature……………………… Date…………………………….
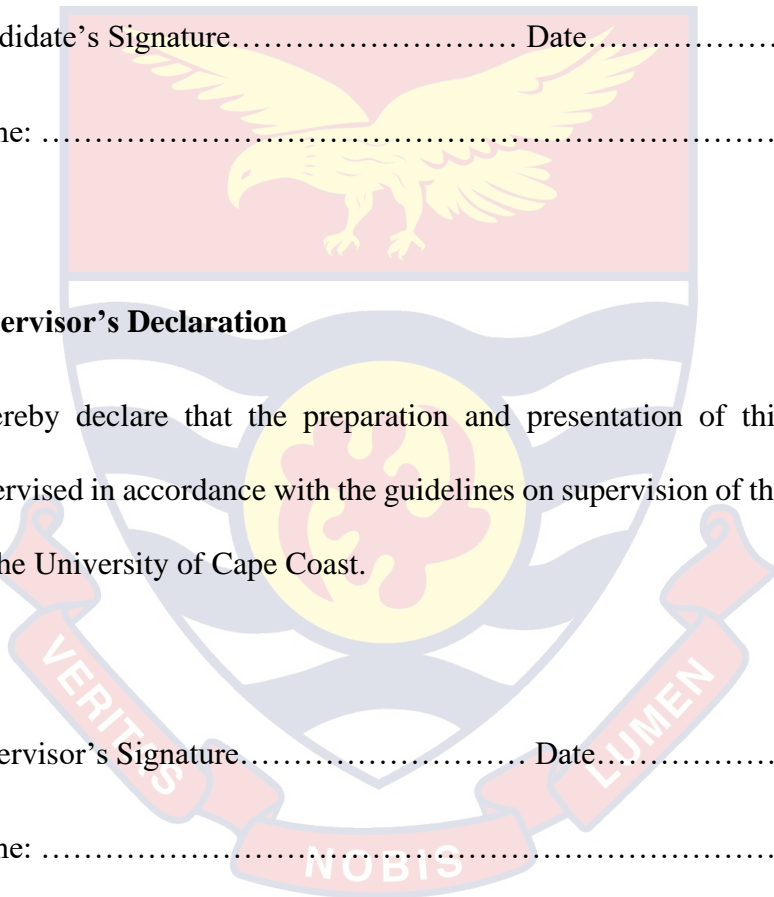
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature……………………… Date…………………………….
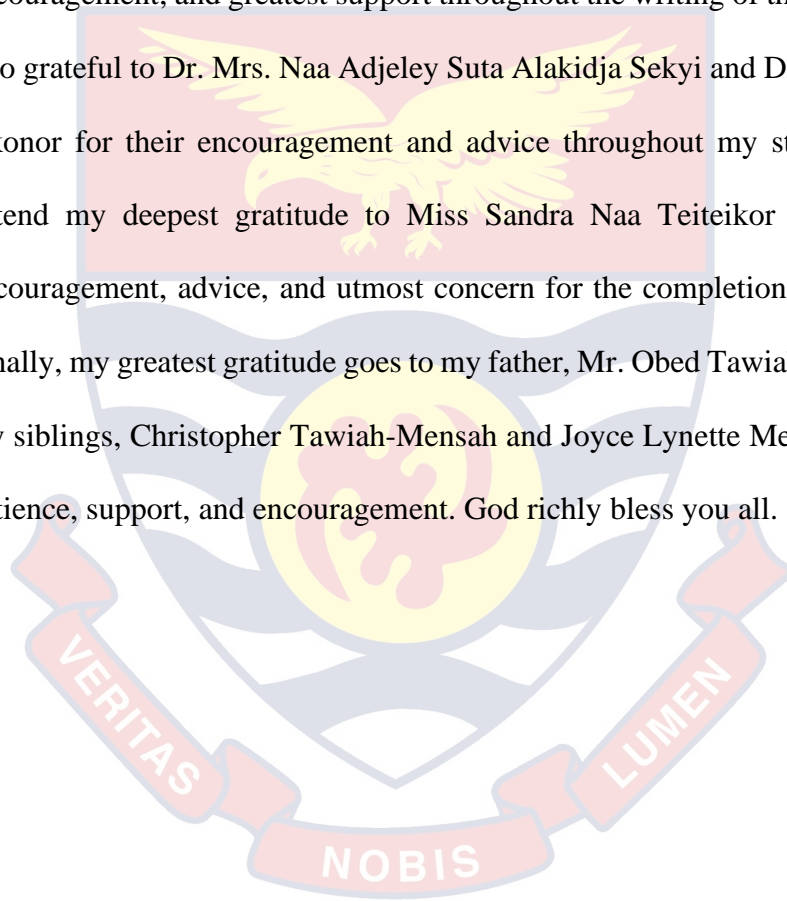
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ABSTRACT

The advent of social media platforms, specifically twitter, and the added feature of hashtags has had a way of contributing towards the dynamics of any political space and one of these political events is xenophobia which is discussed in this study. Social media have facilitated social and political change bringing about incidence of violence which has security implications. This study sought to assess the adoption of hashtags in social media and how they are used to achieve peace or incite violence. Public sphere and agenda-setting theories served as theoretical expositions for this study. The study adopted the qualitative research approach and data was sought from secondary sources in the period September 1, 2019, through to November 30, 2019, while purposive sampling technique was used to select 633 tweets. Further, the study adopted the exploratory research design, and individuals, non-state and state actors served as sources of information, while content analysis served as the mode of analysis. The study revealed that individuals are imbued with certain ethical, moral, and social values that speak against violent acts. The study further discovered that at a certain point in time given different conditions, individuals express misgivings in a form of violent messages towards a group of people or an event on media platforms. The study also revealed that non-state actors play a key advisory and advocacy role, while state actors play advocacy, social protection, advisory, and public awareness creation roles to promote social cohesion among individuals. The study recommended intensive state monitoring and engagement in productive online discourses of national importance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I graciously appreciate the rich guidance and directions of my Supervisor, Dr. John Windie Ansah, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology. My deepest thanks also go to the late Dr. Ahmed Baba Yahaya, Former Head, Department of Sociology and Anthropology for his advice, encouragement, and greatest support throughout the writing of this thesis. I am also grateful to Dr. Mrs. Naa Adjeley Suta Alakidja Sekyi and Dr. Edgar Takyi Akonor for their encouragement and advice throughout my study. Again, I extend my deepest gratitude to Miss Sandra Naa Teiteikor Hyde for her encouragement, advice, and utmost concern for the completion of this thesis. Finally, my greatest gratitude goes to my father, Mr. Obed Tawiah Mensah, and my siblings, Christopher Tawiah-Mensah and Joyce Lynette Mensah, for their patience, support, and encouragement. God richly bless you all.

DEDICATION

To my mother, Mrs. Evangeline Adukai Hammond Mensah

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
AYGF	African Youth Growth Foundation
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CGIL	Italian General Confederation of Labour
CHR	Centre for Human Rights
CPDE	CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CWAO	Casual Workers Advice Offices
FHR	Foundation for Human Rights
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
ILO	International Labour Office
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRF	Inter-Religious Forum
ISPs	Internet Service Providers
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations

NSRP   Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme

OAIC   Organization of African Instituted Churches

OHCHR   Office of the United Nations High

                              Commissioner for Human Rights

UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR ROSA   UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Africa

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

WHO   World Health Organization

WRVH   World Report on Violence and Health
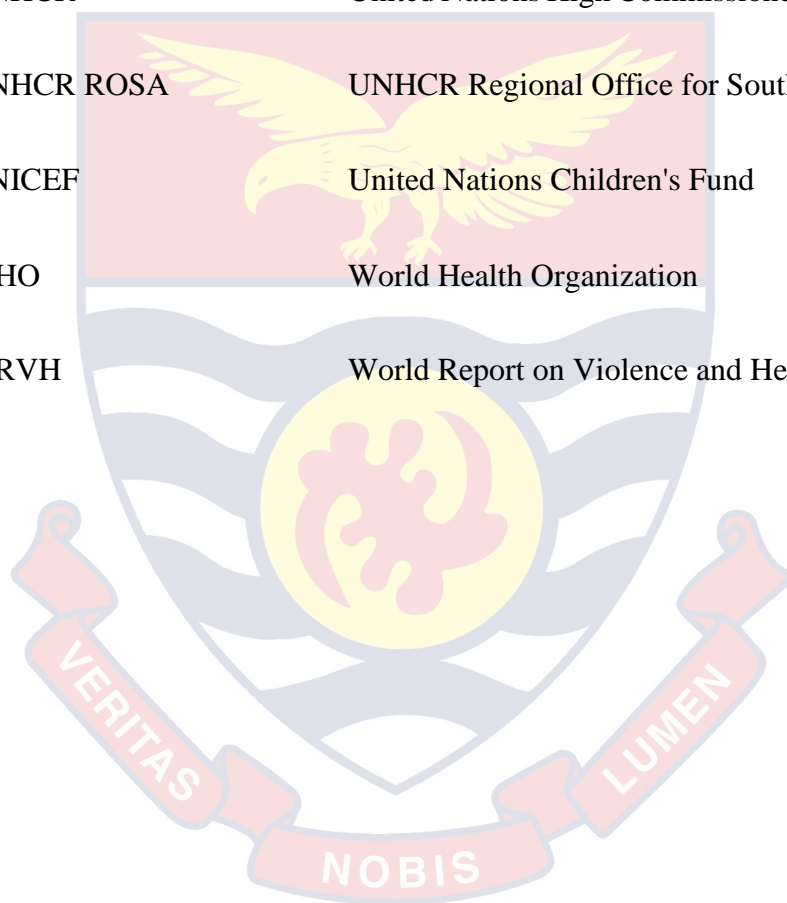
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Technology as a phenomenon that has been an integral part of social life has influenced society in diverse ways including the economy (Bahrini & Qaffas, 2019; Rodrik, 2018; Nikoloski, 2016), health (Christopoulou, Kotsilieris & Anagnostopoulos, 2018; Mustafaoglu, Zirek, Yasaci & Ozdincler, 2018; Imison, Castle-Clarke & Watson, 2016), religion (Herzfeld, 2017; McClure, 2017; Murumba & Omuya, 2017), education (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018; Cloete, 2017; Murati & Ceka, 2017), and politics (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018; Nsudu & Onwe, 2017; Theocharis, Lowe, Van Deth & Garcia-Albacete, 2015). Technology has also affected the media landscape and significant changes have taken place.

The media seems to have had a greater influence on adult socialization. The media influences individuals' beliefs, perceptions, and also shapes their behaviors (Gentile, Groves & Gentile, 2014). The media has also had significant effects on various aspects of socialization concerning values and behaviors that are believed to be harmful or not suitable (Prot et al., 2015). This seems to be characterized by the use of explicit and violent content by media users. Anderson (2001) was also of the view that in as much as the media is seen to be a tool for entertaining individuals, it is also responsible for promoting false political ideologies.

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Media, according to Bonney (2013) has gone through four stages; indigenous media, traditional media, new media, and social media. These stages have been influenced by the advancement of technology. According to Scannell (2009) indigenous media was characterized by the use of gongs, drum beats, town criers, dance, and singing which served as technological devices through which messages were conveyed within that era. Again, the traditional media made use of newspapers and magazines which served as a space for communication (Bonney, 2013). He added that the new media which consisted of technologies like mobile phones, computers, and the internet, has moved us into the social media age. This has led to information sharing amongst individuals worldwide through social media platforms like facebook, twitter, email, and blogging sites (Bonney, 2013; Castells & Cardoso, 2006).

Moreover, social media, an application put up on the internet, has created an avenue where individuals get to network globally (Hanaki, Peterhansl, Dodds & Watts, 2007). With this, communicative practices have moved away from face-to-face interactions (Villegas, 2013) to a digital world of mass protests, practically gathering people on social media platforms by isolated actors and organizations (Goswami, 2018). Social media has appeared as a communication network individuals take on to connect with others and get information in unexpected moments of crisis: from earthquakes (Starbird & Palen, 2011) to terrorist attacks (Cheong & Lee, 2010), to school shootings (Palen & Vieweg, 2008), and revolutions (Al-Ani, Mark, Chung & Jones, 2012; Lotan et al., 2011).

Furthermore, in the political space where social media platforms such as Twitter play a prominent role, one of the notable political events which seem to have attracted hashtag messages in 2019 is xenophobia in South Africa which serves as the political event to be discussed in this study. In May 2008, xenophobia broke out in South Africa and it was characterized by violent acts such as the killing of both indigenes and immigrants, and destruction of properties (Vromans, Schweitzer, Knoetze & Kagee, 2011). Individuals have also relied on diverse social media platforms such as twitter to express their views on xenophobia through the use of hashtag messages. The question now is, do these hashtag related messages on xenophobia achieve peace or incite violence?

As a step in this direction, the goal of this study is to assess the adoption of hashtags in social media and how they are used to achieve peace or incite violence relative to xenophobia. Making xenophobia the main political event to be discussed, this study seeks to unearth the contents of hashtag messages individuals share relative to xenophobia and the extent to which these messages can be seen to be creating possibilities of peace or violence.

Statement of the Problem

Social media scholars have been increasingly interested in areas that show how social media influences politics. These scholarly works have generally concentrated on these areas; advocacy (Saxton, Niyirora, Guo & Waters, 2015), activism (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018; Zeitzoff, 2017; Clark, 2016; Brown, 2015), protests (Goswami, 2018; Wang & Caskey, 2016; Thorson

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et al., 2013; Boyle, McLeod & Armstrong, 2012; Huang, 2011), and security issues (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018; Uzuegbunam & Omenugha, 2018; Nsudu & Onwe, 2017; Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016). These studies were not event-specific and lacked the use of a particular or specific virtual platform. This blurs a detailed picture of the role of social media in achieving peace or inciting violence.

Therefore, this study is a new direction as far as sociological research on social media and politics is concerned. In recent times, attention has been focused on social media and violence (Buoncompagni, 2018; Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018; Uzuegbunam & Omenugha, 2018; Tripathi, 2017; Mengü & Mengü, 2015). Scholarly works with regards to social media and violence have assumed a particular direction. In as much as I am joining this particular field of new researchers who are looking into social media and violence, I focus my study on a particular event which is xenophobia.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore the said gaps and make important contributions to this area of study. It is as a result of the above that this research seeks to assess the adoption of hashtags and how they are used to achieve peace or incite violence. It further goes on to investigate the interventions of non-state and state actors. The research would also add to the ongoing debate of whether indeed hashtags can be used to achieve peace or incite violence.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess the adoption of hashtags in social media and how they are used to achieve peace or incite violence relative to xenophobia.

In specific terms, this research seeks to;

- Unearth the content of peaceful messages shared through hashtags on twitter relative to the event xenophobia.

- Unearth the content of violent messages shared through hashtags on twitter relative to the event xenophobia.

- Examine how non-state actors respond to the grievances of individuals shared through hashtags relative to the event xenophobia.

- Examine how state actors respond to the grievances of individuals shared through hashtags relative to the event xenophobia.

Research Questions

- What is the content of peaceful messages shared through hashtags on twitter relative to the event xenophobia?

- What is the content of violent messages shared through hashtags on twitter relative to the event xenophobia?

- How have non-state actors responded to the grievances of individuals shared through hashtags relative to the event xenophobia?

- How have state actors responded to the grievances of individuals shared through hashtags relative to the event xenophobia?

Philosophical Significance of the Study

Philosophically, the tension between deontology and consequentialism is central to this study. Deontology is usually contrasted with consequentialism (Birnbacher, 2003). The main idea of Kant's deontology is based on prioritizing duties over consequences. True freedom, according to Kant (1965) is derived from voluntary, informed compliance to the directives of the moral law, irrespective of the circumstances. According to Tanner, Medin, and Iliev (2008) consequentialists draw their conclusion about what is right or wrong based on the consequences.

In this study, deontology is used to explain how some twitter users are regularly nonchalant about the outcomes of their actions. Unlike the claims of deontology that point to the idea that an action is right based on accepted rules and regulations, the actions of some twitter users reflect that of consequentialism that posits that an action is right based on its outcome (Suikkanen, 2008). This makes twitter users mindful of their actions and reduces the negative effects of twitter usage.

Significance of the Study

This study attempts to contribute to the knowledge base by revealing the types of violent and peaceful hashtags messages used on twitter and their implications on individuals and society at large. In addition, it will add to the

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new dimensions of literature springing out of social media and security issues. The study will also contribute to the Sustainable Development Goal 16 that aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. The kind of interventions made by non-state and state actors interested in peace and security issues to resolve violent acts and achieve peace will also come to light to pave way for peaceful coexistence among people.

The study will also unearth the efforts made by civil societies to help end the deadlock between parties involved in violent acts. Twitter users who campaign for peace stand to gain if their concerns are factored by various Governments and stakeholders involved in the fight to achieve peace in the world.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five main chapters. Chapter One, the introductory chapter will consist of the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, philosophical significance of the study, the significance of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter Two will focus on the literature review. Chapter Three outlines the methods of data collection employed for the study. These include the research paradigm, research approach, research design, study setting, sources of data, sampling procedure, data collection instrument and procedure, data analysis, analytical reasoning, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four looks at the presentation and interpretations of findings. Chapter Five sums up the entire

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work of the study, which comprises a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings for policy and future research.

Definition of Concepts

Social media – This refers to a set of online communication channels or technologies which facilitate interactions, networking, content sharing, and collaboration with individuals all over the world. (Kapoor et al., 2017; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

Twitter – Twitter is an online platform that allows an individual to share information (Mistry, 2011) through brief posts (not more than 280 characters) about their experiences and thoughts (Bristol, Billings & Kowalski, 2010) with other users by answering one simple question: "What's happening?"

Hashtag - Hashtag is any word(s) preceded by a hash sign '#' that is often used to mark or describe topics or conversations on social media, most notably on Twitter (Zappavigna, 2012). The hashtag serves as an indexing system that makes it easier to keep, look for, and gather information (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Portwood-Stacer & Berridge, 2014).

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study. The chapter has been into three parts; conceptual, theoretical, and empirical sections. The conceptual review explains in detail the concept of social media, xenophobia, violence, and peace, and how different authors have explained and classified these concepts. The theoretical review explains the public sphere and agenda-settings theories as theoretical expositions of this study. The empirical review examines existing literature on an overview of the most relevant theoretical studies that assess the adoption of hashtags in social media and how they are used to incite violence and achieve peace relative to xenophobia.

Conceptual Review

The concepts reviewed in this section are social media, xenophobia, peace, violence, social media and peace, and social media and violence.

Social media

Scholars have offered explanations for the concept of social media. In an attempt to define social media, scholars like Sajithra and Patil (2013) along with Huang and Benyoucef (2013) share the view that social media is an online-based application built on the Web 2.0 platform with the idea to create and share individual contents. Web 2.0 can be seen as a platform through which

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individuals create content and allow the continuous sharing of information modifications by others (Sajithra & Patil, 2013). These authors are of the view that social media can be said to be a Web 2.0 platform that links people in sharing information, knowledge, and many others. Cann (2011) also states that social media is an internet-based service that allows users to generate their contents for service and also form social virtual communities ("social aggregation") based on the web or internet in facilitating societal discussions and events (Cann, 2011).

However, our world today is filled with advanced technological knowledge and skills that have redefined human communication and interaction in modern society. Social media seems to be spearheading these technologies that aid in social interaction in recent times. Social media has been defined in a variety of ways by different scholars. Regardless of these differing views of what exactly social media is or constitutes, it is clear that social media has relevance to some areas of sociological concern. Social media offers new opportunities for human interaction and understanding human and group behaviors (Sharma, 2012; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Eckler, Worsowicz & Rayburn, 2010; Junco, Heibergert & Loken, 2010) and also serves as an avenue for social movements to make public their grievances (Goswami, 2018; Wang & Caskey, 2016; AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015; Theocharis, Lowe, Van Deth & Garcia-Albacete, 2015).

In sociological works, particularly those by Habermas and Goffman, social media is regarded as a virtual platform that shapes our social world.

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Following Habermas' (1970, p. 372) idea that 'all speech […] is oriented towards the idea of truth', individuals are perhaps showing their true selves on social media, which were previously reserved or kept private. This is what Goffman (1959, p. 119) refers to as the 'backstage', which constitutes 'places where the camera is not focused at the moment'. That being said, social media serves as a platform or virtual space that permits individuals to network and freely air their views on matters they would have kept to themselves.

Furthermore, Murthy (2011) points out the social aspect of social media. In his submission, the 'social' part of social media refers to its difference from 'traditional' media. Social media, to Murthy (2011) can be captured as a medium that aids in human interaction, via a virtual space like Twitter, and can disseminate information to online users. This new medium is designed to facilitate social interaction (Eckler, Worsowicz & Rayburn, 2010), create profiles and relationships (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Boyd & Ellison, 2008), share information and have group conversations (Sharma, 2012; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Junco, Heibergert & Loken, 2010), and create connections that will help build social networks and increases social capital (Trottier & Fuchs, 2014; Barnes, 2008). Additionally, scholars like Lusk (2010), along with Asur and Huberman (2010) view social media as the use of Facebook, blogs, Twitter, my space, and LinkedIn for communication, sharing photos and videos.

Politically, social media is regarded as a platform that creates a more hands-on democracy for its users (Sullivan, 2009), plays a vital role in political

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activism by allowing people to mobilize and organize their activities (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015), promotes political agendas (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018), plays a very important role in the global fight against terrorism (Ngige et al., 2016), and it is also used by terrorists, protestors, political organizations, religious groups, individuals and so on to spread their information and ideas (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018; Nsudu & Onwe, 2017). This can be seen in the case of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa which have security implications. Since social media is an open world of communication platform with little control by government agents, terrorist groups are noticeably using social media in advancing their activities (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa, 2018) because the platform is cheap and readily accessible (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016).

Similarly, Tinati et al. (2014) also view how social media, such as Twitter has made it possible for activists to organize, inform, and connect with various individuals alike globally. Twitter is often considered simply a platform for sharing simple status updates and for purposes of social interaction (Miller, 2008), but its usage goes beyond the ordinary. Twitter plays a vital role in discussions during protests (Lotan et al., 2011; Hughes & Palen, 2009) because it allows a variety and dispersed actors to take part in these discussions (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Likewise, activists have relied on Twitter for communication and direction during global political and social protests, such as the Occupy movement (Wang & Caskey, 2016; Benski, Langman, Perugorria, & Tejerinaand, 2013; Thorson et al., 2013), Black Lives Matter

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(BLM) movements (Freelon, Mcilwain, & Clark, 2016), the 2012 Kony movement (Goswami, 2018), as well as the 2011 Arab Spring protests (Huang, 2011).

Twitter is also viewed as one of the standard platforms that aids in communicating events or happenings such as natural disasters (Hernandez-Suarez et al, 2019; Nair, Ramya & Sivakumar, 2017) and has also been used to study elections (Gaber, 2017) and visualize the occurrence of infectious diseases (Matsumoto, Yoshida, Matsumoto, Matsuda & Kita, 2018). According to Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018) conversations on social media, most notably on Twitter, are often marked by a symbol called hashtag (#).

However, hashtags are not merely used as a labeling method, but they are specially formed by online users to comment on, compliment, disapprove ideas of individuals, support brands or events, and also to convey messages and provide up-to-date information on news bulletin (Caleffi, 2015). Recently, people use hashtags for several reasons. For instance, many movie producers and musicians use hashtags such as #GameofThrones and #ThingsFallApart respectively to promote their movies and music. More interestingly, hashtags play a major role in various political and social movements, such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, #BringBackOurGirls, #DropthatChamber.

Again, hashtags have grown themselves into a new-era language: Individuals have formed many hashtags that do not have clear meanings in the natural language. For instance, #tbt or #ThrowbackThursday indicates the

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matching picture was taken some time ago, and #TGIF attached to a photo indicates that the person who posted the photo is thanking God it is Friday.

In the same way, hashtag serves as a tool that creates a tag that makes it easier for activists to easily identify (Stache, 2015). He went further to say that hashtag also serves as a way individuals track numerous usages of the same phrase to campaign messages. Brown (2015) added that hashtag enables social media users to physically connect a single post to a larger movement, thus creating a joint form of searchable content. In so doing, the use of the hashtag in social media seems to have given hashtag users, specifically activists and online campaigners the luxury to extend their community far above traditional limits. For example, the hashtag #blacklivesmatter was not given the needed attention until a year after its first appearance following protests in Ferguson, Missouri; however, the hashtag eventually became a tool for activists to increase sidelined voices (Freelon et al., 2016). This implies that twitter gives individuals the luxury to disseminate information (tweet) through hashtags (#) around specific keywords (e.g #Xenophobia).

Summing up, it is clear that social media, particularly Twitter, gives individuals the chance to share information, with the use of hashtags, and take part in activities that before would have been unreachable to them. Thus, for this study, social media, particularly Twitter, is a virtual communication tool that permits the dispersal of information among individuals, is used for information sharing, social interaction, building social capital, as well as social actions for activists to mobilize persons and groups based on shared interests.

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Xenophobia

Some scholars (Crush & Ramachandran, 2009; Geschiere, 2009; Coenders, Lubbers & Peer, 2004) view xenophobia as an event that can be seen or witnessed all over the world. They share the view that xenophobia does not only occur in South Africa, but it occurs in every country across the globe. Similarly, Mayfield (2010) argues that xenophobia did not start in South Africa as other places (Australia, Japan, Europe, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the globe) in the world have had long histories of xenophobia. For instance**,** in Australia, xenophobic thoughts were shown towards immigrants or foreign nationals who were viewed as criminals or asylum seekers (Buchanan, Grillo, Threadgold & Wengraf, 2003). Furthermore, in India, xenophobic inclinations were mostly directed to immigrants from Bangladesh who were accused by the Indians of problems such as increased unemployment, terrorism, and environmental degradation (Crush & Ramachandran, 2010).

Likewise, in Africa, xenophobia has been recorded in Nigeria and Ghana as a result of hatred for foreign nationals or immigrants (Campbell, 2003). According to Biepke (2008, p.4) in 1969, the Ghana government under the 'Aliens' Compliance Order' chased Nigerians out of their country. Research has it that in 1983, the Nigerian government retaliated by evicting 1.5 million immigrants mostly Ghanaians out of their country (Zondi, 2008; Campbell, 2003). The xenophobic act witnessed in these two countries was incited by the economic hardship faced by both countries. This led to Ghanaians blaming Nigerians for the difficulties they were facing at the time and vice versa

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(Soyombo, 2008). In Botswana, citizens refer to people who speak strange languages coming from economically devastated countries in search of greener pastures as "makwerekwere". (Campbell, 2003, p.101). Such belittling word is also used in South Africa.

Xenophobia in South Africa and other parts of the world is not a novel occurrence. According to Yakushko (2009), Reynolds and Vine (1987), Fayomi, Chidozie, and Ayo (2015), and Nyamnjoh (2006) xenophobia is the fear, dislike, or resentment towards outsiders or foreigners or things seen to be strange or foreign. They also believe that xenophobia has a connection with ethnocentrism which is regarded as a section of people seeing their values and beliefs to be superior to others.

Additionally, Crush and Ramachandran (2009) argue that xenophobia is taken from two Greek words; "Xenos" meaning "strange" or "foreign" and "Phobos" meaning "fear". These dislikes, hatred, or fears are based on opinionated dialogues which lead to stigmatization of individuals based on their nationality (Saleh, 2015), and discriminatory behaviors including violence (Solomon & Haigh, 2009). This could be a result of their nationality, ethnic background, skin color, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, accent, or other factors (Steenkamp, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Reilly, 2001; Morris, 1998).

Unlike Yakushko (2009), Reynolds and Vine (1987), Fayomi, Chidozie, and Ayo (2015), and Nyamnjoh (2006) who view xenophobia to be the real disliked, and hatred towards foreigners or outsiders, Nel (2005, p. 241) classifies xenophobia as a 'hate crime'. To him, hate crime can be seen as the

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extreme expression of prejudice through violent criminal acts committed against people, property, or even organizations, either because of the group to which they belong or with which they identify.

Furthermore, Harris (2002) viewed xenophobia as a cruel phenomenon and grouped them into three hypotheses: first, the isolation hypothesis claims that due to the cruel nature of the apartheid system, South Africans were isolated from nation-states beyond Southern Africa which led to hostility and hatred towards immigrants because they have no history of integrating strangers (Tella, 2016; Mario Matsinhe, 2011; Dodson, 2010; Steenkamp, 2009). Second, the scapegoating hypothesis submits that immigrants are used as 'scapegoats' as they are perceived as threats to jobs, housing, education, health care, and unequal distribution of resources and wealth (Tshitereke, 1999; Morris, 1998).

Last, the bio-cultural hypothesis explains that immigrants are seen to be susceptible to violence and resentment (Human Rights Commission, 1999) due to biological and cultural differences (e.g. accent, stature, birthmarks, and others) between South Africans and immigrants (Tella, 2016; Steenkamp, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2006). This implies that bio-cultural markers create xenophobia by indicating whom to target, dislike, and be hostile towards.

In the same way, other scholars have also justified the phenomenon of xenophobia in various ways. These include; the alleged 'stealing' of South African women from the natives by foreign nationals (Mnyaka, 2003), jealous of the success of businesses owned by immigrants resident in South Africa (Khosa & Kalatanyi, 2014), fear of losing their (indigenes) social status and

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identity, fear of being intimated by economically successful immigrants, and any sense of superiority (Solomon, 2008), as well as fear of disease infection by immigrants, immigrants residing in certain areas illegally, not paying taxes while engaging in informal business and indulging in criminal activities (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Minnar, 2005). All these factors contribute to this spate of violent attacks witnessed in South Africa.

South Africa was chosen as a case study because of its racial past and the recent spate of Xenophobic attacks. This widespread fear of foreigners is very strong in South Africa, as demonstrated in the May 2008 xenophobic attacks that began in Gauteng and Western Cape and left 62 people dead, over 100,000 displaced, 670 wounded, and 1,300 arrested (Solomon & Kosaka, 2013; Monson & Arian, 2011; Kanjo, 2008). Sadly, xenophobic attacks did not end in 2008 as other incidents were seen in 2009, 2013, and 2015. This practice could be regarded as a worldwide concern, mostly attributed to technological advancements and the rapid growth in society which encourages individuals to migrate from developing and less developed countries to go in search of greener pastures. As a result of these attacks, various African leaders and governments have in the past evacuated their citizens from South Africa (Kinge, 2016), shunned, or shut down businesses owned by South Africans in their nation-state (Chen, 2015).

For this study, I focus mainly on the xenophobic attacks that happened in South Africa in 2019. In addition, I adopt an all-inclusive definition of xenophobia as, "attitudes, prejudices, and behavior that reject, exclude and

often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity" (International Labour Office (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2001, p. 2). This definition was chosen because it includes both undesirable attitudes and unfair behavior (see Harris, 2002). Moreover, the 2019 xenophobia in South Africa is termed as a political event in this study because a political decision has to be taken to solve this anomaly in South Africa. I, therefore, characterize any form of violence that occurs as a result of hatred for others due to their nationality, language or accent, skin color, or ethnic backgrounds as xenophobic

Concept of Peace

Despite the difficulty in the definition of peace, some authors or researchers have been able to define it in diverse ways. Peace was defined as the absence of war (Reynaldo, 2011). This is because the early peace studies were intensely driven by the reflection on the catastrophes of the Second World War and by a sense of crisis of human endurance instigated by the threat of a nuclear war between the two power blocs (Matsuo, 2005).

However, some scholars like Reynaldo (2011), Goldstein and Pevehouse (2009), as well as Rawat (2014) believe that peace goes beyond the absence of war or fighting. To Reynaldo, peace goes beyond the absence of war to include the suppression and reduction of economic and political cruelties and domination. In addition, Goldstein and Pevehouse (2009) view peace as not only a ceasefire but also the enhancement of relations. To Rawat, in the context

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of intra-national and international relations, peace is not just the absence of war, but also the presence of socio-cultural and economic understanding and unity among citizens.

Unlike the scholars listed above, scholars like Schilling (2012), Lederach (2009), Curle (1991), and O'Connell (1985) have different viewpoints of the concept of peace. Schilling (2012) indicated that in broad terms peace is the shield from fear, hesitation and desire, and the lack of sadism. To him, peace is not the final point of violent behavior but a long-term tactic that must be considered. Furthermore, in Lederach's (2009, p. 8) view, "the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their local culture". According to Curle (1991) and O'Connell (1985) peace is the presence of non-violent relationships, active association, and planned cooperation among individuals and groups for attaining greater goals such as justice, security, and positive transformation of conflict. Below are some classifications of peace.

Peace has been classified in many ways by different scholars (Galtung, 1996; Matsuo, 1985). For instance, Galtung (1996) the founding father of peace studies, classified peace into two dimensions: negative peace and positive peace. According to Galtung (1996) and Goldstein (2009) negative peace is a situation in which there is no direct war and physique involved. Iqbal (2016) purported that negative peace happens when fairness, objectivity, and uprightness are buried and misuse of power and resources exists. This according to Harris and Morrison (2003) leads to human sufferings in different forms.

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Schilling (2012) asserts that conflicting issues are addressed when there is negative peace.

Contrariwise, the peace that relaxes the root causes of conflict is called positive peace. Schilling (2012) elucidated that positive peace is the peace that prevails in diverse levels like behavior, mentality, and structures. These levels encompass positive content that promotes positive peace. Moreover, peace is characterized by a non-aggressive attitude, values, and high regard for every individual (Schilling, 2012; Masciulli, 2004). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (1997) explains positive peace as a state characterized by not just the absence of war, but also by the existence of factors (social and economic justice, inter-group understanding, ecological balance, and openings for democratic involvement in decision making) that lessen the possibility of violent conflict and promotes a better quality of life for all.

Beyond Johan Galtung's distinctions, the concept of peace can also be understood in two ways: the peace value and the peace sphere (Matsuo, 1985). According to Matsuo (1985) peace value refers to the content or substance of peace which can be viewed as the component of peace. To him, peace value assumes that peace can take on a specific value and can also be described in specific terms (Matsuo, 1985). Therefore, the concept of peace is not seen in a multifaceted way. Hence, since in the earlier studies of peace, it was defined as the absence of war (Reynaldo, 2011), this can be regarded as a value that described peace. Cooper (1965) stated that asking a child what peace is may

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produce just one value which could be inactivity, relief, social activity, and reunion.

Other researchers, later on, argued that peace can have multiple attributes or can assume multivariate values. This made Ishida (1969) hold the view that the appearance of peace in every culture or group should be considered as entailing more than one value or component and should be studied and described as a result. According to Matsuo (1985) peace sphere refers to the rational or cognitive space where peace is present.

This sphere of peace, according to Galtung (1996) can take several dimensions such as the universalist dimension, in-group or out-group dimension, and self-oriented dimension. With the universalist dimension, individuals view peace as world or global peace while the in-group or out-group peace is viewed as peace in two dimensions: the individual and others or within-group, and out-group in cases where the groups are the units of analysis (Galtung, 1996). Finally, the self-oriented dimension simply connotes peace of mind (Galtung, 1996). Hence, the peace sphere opens up the concept of questioning as diverse dimensions of peace can be discovered.

Moreover, researchers such as Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) as well as Sharoni (1994) have also found it imperative to inculcate a gender dimension in describing the concept of peace. To them, women are seen as peace buildings as they do not take part in violent altercations. Sharoni (1994) stated further that women are mostly present during peace negotiations to request for their needs.

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However, for this study, peace is considered as a term or a statement used by individuals to express solidarity, show love, unite people, offer prayers, condemn violent acts, advocate for actions to end violence, and give hope to the hopeless to serve the true interests of everyone.

Concept of Violence

Violence is regarded as a physical attack on another person. In defining violence as a physical attack inflicted on others, Marck and Snyder (2009), Audi (1971), along with Geras (1990) shared similar views. Marck and Snyder (2009) view violence as the intent of injuring, damaging, or destroying opponents. It is the manifestation of conflict or conflict behavior at the highest point. In furtherance, Audi (1971) suggests that violence is an everyday activity and it is continually done to something, usually an individual, animal, or piece of belongings. This implies that violence frequently occurs and it causes harm to not just humans, but animals and properties as well. Geras (1990) also views violence as simply the use of physical force to kill or injure and inflict direct pain on individuals or human beings.

However, scholars like Steger (2003) believe that not only does violence inflict physical harm on individuals, it causes psychological harm as well. He asserts that violence is the deliberate infliction of physical or psychological harm on an individual or group of persons. Consistently, research conducted by Rutherford, Zwi, Grove, and Butchart (2007) revealed that violence cannot only bring about physical injury but can also bring about psychological harm. They

added that violence can also bring about deprivation where acts of negligence and not only of commission can, therefore, be regarded as violent.

Additionally, in explaining violence as defined by World Health Organization (WHO) in the World Report on Violence and Health (WRVH), Krug et al. (2002) argued that violence is the deliberate use of physical force or power, threatened or real, against oneself, another being, or against a group or community, that either brings about or has a high possibility of bringing about injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. This definition stresses that an individual or a group must be set to use force or power against another individual or group for an act to be regarded as violent. This definition also draws attention not only to the use of physical force but also to the use of threatened or real power. Such power or force may be used against oneself, against an individual or a group or community, as in gang violence or repression of ethnic groups (Rutherford, Zwi, Grove & Butchart, 2007).

Sociologically, violence could mean an everyday occurrence which one encounters at a point in his or her life or picks up through socialization. In the same vein, Florea (2013) confers that violence has hitherto been an essential part of our lives and asserts that either as children or adults, we might be the assailants, sufferers, or eyewitnesses of violent behavior. To her, in today's world, the consequence of political, economic, or social reasons might easily cause deep-rooted violence. Furthermore, Sennett (2007) summarises Immanuel Kant's view on violence in a striking way. He argued that;

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> *Nothing good comes out of the warped wood of humanity. There will always be bad people and bad things will be committed. According to this view, cultural theorists deny the existence of evil. They are just soft-hearted social workers. Show them a serious crime; they will try to explain it on the basis of the repercussions of a bad childhood (p. 40).*

This implies that humans have bad sides that cultural theorists attribute to a child's socialization.

Violence can also be looked at in a gendered way. It is quite imperative to note that Gender-Based Violence is still in existence and it is enormously high in countries like South Africa (Wilkinson, 2017; Vetten, 2014; Machisa & van Dorp, 2012). However, gender-based violence is gradually becoming a normal act in countries like South Africa (Wilkinson, 2017; Vetten, 2014; Machisa & van Dorp, 2012) since individuals often do not report cases of female abuse to the authorities (Machisa & van Dorp, 2012).

However, in this study, violence is used to denote acts that violate the basic human rights of individuals such as threats to shoot or kill or destroy the assets of another person, hate speeches, harassments, dares, as well as insults traded on social media, particularly Twitter, by online users to cause harm to individuals.

Social Media and Peace

In other cases, Social media are seen as communication platforms that seem to have taken a very significant place in our society today. It has served as a tool used by online users to ensure accountability from governments, mobilize citizens to protest violence, uplift citizens, provide information to

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calm citizens during a crisis, and build links with people across the world (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014; Oatley, 2011) in the quest to maintain peace. In such instances, information shared on social media during moments of crisis may increase the understanding of the situation and spread to a broader population (Luna & Pennock, 2018).

In furtherance, social media has also contributed immensely to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in ways such as advancement in knowledge and creating platforms that encourage interaction acceptance between divergent groups (Oatley, 2011). This ensures peaceful coexistence between individuals and groups. Schoemaker and Stremlau (2014) add that social media gives individuals the platform to oppose each other and engage in meaningful deliberations to come to mutual agreements and understandings irrespective of their backgrounds. This according to Hoffmann (2013) permits individuals to participate in their initiatives for peace. Again, according to Smyth and Best (2013) as well as Welch, Halford, and Weal (2013), social media has been used to obtain information in conflict-prone areas. These according to them, are some conflict prevention measures put in place especially during elections in countries like Nigeria, and several others.

In terms of state-citizen relations, social media has created the avenue for public opinions and engagement in beneficial discourses (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014) as a result of democracy. This seems to have transformed and created a pleasant relationship between governments and their citizens. Additionally, with the advent of social media, transparency and accountability

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is becoming common since state officials can be exposed with a video portraying his or her indulgence in corrupt acts like electoral fraud (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides & Freelon, 2012). This indicates the role of social media in deterring individuals from engaging in unscrupulous acts for peace to reign.

Social Media and Violence

Social media have been employed by some online users to incite violence in ways such as creating a divided society, preventing peaceful protests, stimulating violent acts, and passing on fake or misleading information (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014; Hoffmann, 2013; Welch, Halford & Weal, 2013).

Moreover, according to Olabamiji (2014), the sharing of ethnic and religious views and opinions in this era of social media has resulted in some inter-ethnic, inter-religious clashes such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. He added that these messages are characterized by the posting of unpleasant pictures, threatening videos, and many others on social media platforms. This may fuel the conflict and bring about adverse effects such as the loss of lives and properties.

Furthermore, with the advancement in technology, violence is experienced online or on virtual platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and others as well. These violent acts include cyberbullying or victimization, harassment, electronic dating aggression or cyber-stalking, gang violence, peer-to-peer violence including school shootings, and cyber-suicide (Patton,

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Eschmann & Butler, 2013). They added that, recently, a new national phenomenon called internet banging, has been reported by media outlets, in which individuals involved in gangs or neighborhood factions use social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and youtube to incite dares, trade insults, or make threats of violence which may result in killing or victimization. These examples indicate the extremities of violent acts on the internet by the youth or youth groups.

Contrariwise, in as much as the youth seems to be actively involved in acts of violence, researchers such as Rogan (2016) as well as Coomaraswamy (2015) share a different view. Rogan (2016) believes that a minority of youth participate in violent actions despite the trouble they have to go through each day. This suggests that the youth are more interested in playing the role of peace ambassadors as they strive for peace in society (Coomaraswamy, 2015).

Theoretical Review

The theories reviewed in this section are public sphere theory and agenda-setting theory.

Public Sphere Theory

The term public sphere theory was first used by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas in his seminal work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Habermas (1991, p. 1) asserts that for a thing to be considered as public, it must be "open to all". He added that the task of a public sphere is that society can become engaged in "critical public debate" (Habermas, 1991,

p. 52). The public sphere is a free space where people could exchange their views or opinions to create a common, mutual judgment (Hauser, 1988).

Again, according to Delanty (2007) public sphere serves as a space present in contemporary societies and exists between the state and society. Habermas (1991) viewed the public sphere as various platforms where citizens can freely express, participate, communicate and share their understanding, ideas, and information that involve political, social issues, and other diverse things that affect their social coexistence; peace and conflicts inclusive. Such platforms can be said to be open, inclusive, an interactive place of rational-critical dialogue which is unrestricted by either the state or the private sector, and that acts as a check on state power (Kperogi, 2011).

Yet, Habermas' public sphere theory has been advanced and changed from an easily physical, locational stage to a more refined, cyber-based but complex communication space with the advancement in information and communication technology. This is a space where concerned members of the social organization meet (not physically) to exchange their views or opinions regarding public affairs and deliberate sometimes critically and analytically (Abubakar, 2012; Allan, 2010; Ubayasiri, 2007). In other words, technology has created another media for the extension of the public sphere.

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Basic Assumptions of Public Sphere Theory

In making a case for the adoption of hashtags in social media as a tool for inciting violence or achieving peace, two principles of the public sphere should be critically considered.

(1)   It is independent of government and corporate control or interference.

(2)   The discourse in the public sphere could be amiable (peaceful), critical (violent), and rational (neutral).

Application of Public Sphere Theory to the study

Comparing the constant rise in the number of social media users around the world, the traditional media audience seems to be declining as a result of the new era of information communication technologies. In recent times, social media platforms have served as a public sphere or virtual space where political issues are mainly communicated and public discourses take place. As far as this study is concerned, Twitter serves as the virtual space or the public sphere. Here, Twitter becomes a marketable platform where every individual is their media outlet and there is an unpleasant mixture of actors (Dahlgren, 2005).

The theory suggests that social media is free of government and corporate control or interference. Therefore, social media specifically Twitter is a platform that is free and without restrictions that hinder freedom of expression. Furthermore, an individual is free to have access to Twitter so far as he or she has a smartphone or a laptop with working internet. This has made regulation of the content of hashtag messages posted on twitter very difficult. However,

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Twitter users have the flexibility to post not only texts but pictures and videos as well. Thus, twitter users avoid emotional responses to issues as may be seen in other social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram because of its numerous gatekeepers and ownership policies.

Again, the theory suggests that the discourse in the public sphere could be amiable, critical, and rational. Concerning this study, the dialogue or discussion on twitter with the use of hashtags on xenophobia could be peaceful, violent, or neutral. This gives participants the chance to question some of their assumptions that may not conform to normal discourse. However, hashtag messages could be one-sided that is, it could either be campaigning for peace or calling for violence. It could also be two-sided where a section of hashtag messages is calling for peace and the others calling for violence. Here, the Twitter space becomes the public sphere and within this public sphere, the agenda is set with hashtag messages calling for either peace or violence.

Critique of Public Sphere Theory

Fraser (1990) addresses an assumption of equal opportunity that disregards several groups, not considering the disproportionateness of power. According to Losekann (2009) and Fontana (2014) Fraser holds the view that it is difficult for the parts in a discussion to put their structural differences aside to create a discourse. Again, it is impossible to draw the boundary between public and private, seeing that by regulating the entry of private issues, people and issues are left out from the discussion (Fontana, 2014). This According to Losekann (2009) is in line with Seyla Benhabib's view on the public sphere.

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According to Benhabib (1992) Habermas' discourse ethics has been gender blind because it ignores the issues of difference, that is differences in the experiences of male against the female in all aspects of life. According to him, the procedures governing the sexual division of labor in the family have been placed beyond the scope of justice and good life and therefore cannot be discussed in the public spheres. Additionally, Papacharissi (2002) whose criticisms originate from the feminist movement viewed Habermas' public sphere as excluding some aspects of the society such as women or individuals at the lower level of society.

Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory is a theory that discusses how the mass media influences the making of a certain issue a public agenda. Therefore, the mass media can be considered responsible for influencing and shaping public opinion and agenda. Such influence of mass media on the public agenda or opinion can happen intentionally or unintentionally (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The public agenda is the main focus or prime issue which the members of the society or public are concerned about (Zain, 2014). The term agenda-setting theory was first used by McCombs and Shaw (1972). Agenda-setting theory, according to McCombs and Shaw (1972), is a mechanism adopted by the media to influence public perception and behavior. By this, McCombs and Shaw (1972), as well as Zain (2014), discuss that the media primes and frames selected stories to influence what audiences think about but not what to think.

Continuously, the agenda-setting theory stands as an important theory not only on mass communication but extends to other related social science studies such as political communication (Reese, 1991). Under the agenda-setting theory, the mass media is believed not to possess the ability to set the public agenda especially in matters of opinions or attitudes (Cohen, 1963). However, the mass media has particular access in contributing to or influencing the audience's perceptions, values, focus, and priorities.

With such influence from the mass media, the media audiences tend to form their own opinion or focus on those issues that are considered worthy of inclusion on their mental agendas (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Agenda-setting happens through a cognitive process known as "accessibility," which indicates that the more repeatedly and importantly the news media covers an issue, the more that issue becomes accessible in the audience's memory (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Basic assumption of Agenda-Setting Theory

(1) Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

Application of Agenda-Setting Theory to the study

Presently, social media seems to be a platform where individuals share and receive information. In communication, the agenda-setting theory seems to be prudent to aid individuals to understand the universal role of the media. Social media platforms, especially twitter plays a vital role in shaping public

opinion on important issues related to politics (Salman, Mustaffa, Salleh & Ali, 2016). Therefore, Twitter has been used by individuals to express their worries and grievances on issues that affect them which the traditional media may not venture to broadcast. Concerning this study, agenda-setting theory explains the hashtag messages that people share on the Twitter platform to either advocate for peace or to incite violence.

Moreover, the theory is used to explain how through the internet on which twitter can be seen, people's perceptions and behaviors are influenced. As a result, Cohen (1963) mentioned that the media does not tell individuals what to think, but it tells individuals what to think about. Audiences' opinions are, however, directly or indirectly influenced, since, through their exposure to the media or hashtag messages, they are informed about happenings in their surroundings. If individuals on Twitter should broadcast a violence-related story, agenda-setting researchers argue that a person with such lived experience would relate better with it. Furthermore, if the messages are peaceful, the perceptions and behaviors of these individuals with violent experiences might be changed. Therefore, the media tends to reflect societal happenings and also mold perceptions of audiences about societal happenings (Eisend, 2009).

As a result, if individuals are exposed to violent or peaceful hashtag messages related to xenophobia through twitter, then twitter may convey this information to users and perhaps, therefore, set an agenda that reflects the content of these hashtag messages on twitter. Hence, through hashtag messages in the form of tweets, the twitter platform can set an agenda for its audience.

Critique of Agenda-Setting Theory

There is a continuing debate that circles the core questions of media influence, namely, how directly and to what degree does the media set the public agenda. Some of the recent studies propose that personal variables can lessen the influence of media agenda-setting on individuals (Matsaganis & Payne, 2005; Gross & Aday, 2003). Moreover, such influence from the media in forming an opinion is impossible for people who are far from the information or find it difficult to gain access to the information from the media (Lippmann, 1922).

Review of Empirical Literature

The content of peaceful hashtag messages

LaTarte (2019) sought to examine the use of Twitter as a means of message dispersion by Israel and Palestine news during Operation Brother's Keeper, which is known as the 2014 Israel-Gaza Conflict. The researcher employed a qualitative research method and examined the use of the principles of peace journalism (as well as the opposite, war journalism) using Twitter by six sources (three from each side of the conflict) during the whole Israel Defense Forces' (IDF's) Operation Brother's Keeper. Furthermore, he mentioned that peace journalism relates to the strategic choices of the journalist to cover in a way to provide non-violent responses to the conflict, while war journalism focuses on the events in a way tilted towards violence.

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The results of this research and the analysis of thousands of individual tweets indicated a lack of peace journalism reporting styles with tendencies of war journalism being more prevalent within the 140 characters provided. Again, the study found that the unrestricted nature of social media allows for a greater shock in coverage, which is a deviation from the purpose of peace journalism. Additionally, in many instances during this research regarding Operation Brother's Keeper, tweets were accompanied by images such as images of deceased soldiers and citizens, infographics, and colored coded messages. According to LaTarte (2019) the ability to include additional media in a Twitter post increases the opportunity to include material that can incite violence rather than achieve peace, and this can happen so fast.

The problem with LaTarte's study is that he could have gotten a whole different result if he employed 280 characters since Twitter doubled how many characters users can cram into a tweet. Again, the research could have generally looked at social media's role in media coverage of the conflict instead of examining only one social media platform. Further analysis could take account of other mainstream social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

Martin-Shields (2013) also carried out a study in Kenya on "Inter-ethnic Cooperation Revisited: Why mobile phones can help prevent discrete events of violence." The paper critically explored why mobile phones have drawn so much interest from the conflict management community in Kenya, and develop a general set of factors to explain why mobile phones can have a positive effect on conflict prevention efforts generally. He focused on theories of information

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asymmetry and security dilemmas, collective action problems, and the role of third-party actors in conflict prevention.

In the study, he found out that the expansion of mobile telephony, social media, and real-time mapping technology is the opportunity to democratize the process of information sharing during crises, giving voice to millions of citizens who otherwise would not be heard. Furthermore, he observed that there is a need for a concerted effort to develop deeper theoretical understandings of the implications of using mobile technology for conflict management, governance, and development. This, according to him, could enhance conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts as well as increase the positive effects of people working to achieve peace and stability in the places they call home.

Martin-Shields (2013) concluded that a population must prefer non-violence since technology is a magnifier of human intent, that the events of violence start and stop relative to specific events, the population knows to use their phones to share information about potential violence, and that there are third party actors involved in collecting and validating the crowdsourced data.

The content of violent hashtag messages

A study by Chetty and Alathur (2018) in India conducted a review on hate speech with different classes and terrorism with cyber use in the framework of online social networks.

The researchers concluded that the existence of online social networks led to increases in features such as contact establishment, message exchange,

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information sharing, and news posting with the consequences such as hate speech, hate crime, cyber terrorism, and extremism. They also found out that by outlining proper policies from the government about the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and online social networks, countering both hate speech and terrorism is efficient and effective. Therefore, they indicated that there is a need to develop policies and methods to prevent and control these online activities.

However, they suggested that there should be mandatory gender information while creating online social network accounts, especially for women as they are one of the targets of online hate speech. They also mentioned other possible approaches to counter hate speech which include: speech vs. speech, education and training, public awareness meeting on hate speech, making the public more tolerant, usage of hate speech monitoring systems, and television broadcast programs.

Hua, Ristenpart, and Naaman (2020) also carried out a study on Adversarial Twitter Interactions against Candidates in the US Midterm Elections. In this study, the researchers measured the adversarial interactions against candidates for the US House of Representatives during the run-up to the 2018 US general election. They collected a new data set consisting of 1.7 million tweets involving candidates, one of the largest corpora focusing on political discourse. They then developed a new method for identifying tweets with harmful content that was directed at any specific candidate. The research showed that such a technique allowed the researchers to perfectly quantify adversarial interactions towards political candidates.

Additionally, the researchers introduced an algorithm to make candidate-specific adversarial terms to capture more nuanced adversarial interactions that previous methods may not consider harmful. Finally, they employed these methods to plan the extent of adversarial interactions seen in the election, including offensive name-calling, threats of violence, posting discrediting information, attacks on identity, and adversarial message repetition.

The researchers discovered samples of more subtle adversarial interactions. They provided a typology of adversarial interactions against political candidates, using the types identified in their study and that of Duggan (2017) as well as Matias (2019) on previous victim-reported harassment categories. These types of adversarial interaction included the following:

The first one is offensive name-calling. This is presented in a form of explicit insults and usage of abusive language that are a common form of harassment on Twitter. Threats of violence are another prominent type of adversarial interaction. This entails tweets that threaten to cause physical or mental pain. The third one is posting discrediting information. This involves spreading information to discredit the candidate or others. Furthermore, attacks on identity form part of these adversarial interactions. These attacks are based on attributes such as race, religion, or gender identity are common. Last, message repetition is an effective way to sway an audience (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979).

They concluded that platforms like Twitter may use the methods they proposed in this study to improve the discovery of adversarial interactions with

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political figures. They believed that such discovery can foster healthier conversations around political figures, for example by ranking and lowering content, or by better identifying users who are initiators of harmful campaigns and environment (Hua, Naaman, & Ristenpart, 2020), and creating actions to handle such wrongdoers.

Moreover, Amir and Jakob (n.d) analyzed impolite strategies used on Facebook. They first analyzed the types of impoliteness strategies used by facebookers on Cristiano Ronaldo's Facebook page, and secondly, ascertain the factors that may have contributed to this impoliteness among the facebookers on Facebook. The researchers analyzed 5 comments based on 2 statuses on Cristiano Ronaldo's Facebook page using Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies (2011) to identify the different strategies used by the participants.

Amir and Jakob revealed that there are nine classifications based on the data Culpeper gathered. The first one Culpeper identified were insults which were divided into four sub-strategies, followed by pointed criticisms, challenging questions, condescension, message enforcers, dismissal, silencers, threats, and negative expressive. According to the researchers, Culpeper designed square brackets to give a hint of some of the structural characteristics of the strategies and alternatives that were indicated with slashes.

a. Insults

1) Personalized negative vocatives

- [you] [[fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little/etc.]

  [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead/berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/etc.]]

  [you]

2) Personalized negative assertions

- [you][are][so/such][a

  [shit/stink/thick/stupid/bitchy/bitch/hypocrite/disappointment/gay/nuts/

  nuttier than a fruit cake/hopeless/pathetic/fussy/terrible/fat/ugly/etc.]

- [you] [can't do] [anything right/basic arithmetic/etc.]

- [you] [disgust/make] [me] [sick/etc.]

3) Personalized negative references

- [your] [little/stinking] [mouth/act/arse/body/etc.]

4) Personalized third-person negative references in the hearing of the target

- [the] [daft] [bimbo]

- [she's] [nutzo]

b. Pointed criticisms/complaints

- [that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.]

- [bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible/etc.]

c. Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions

- why do you make my life impossible?

- which lie are you telling me?

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- what's gone wrong now?

- you want to argue with me or you want to go to jail?

d. Condescensions

- [that] ['s/being] [babyish/childish/etc.]

e. Message enforcers

- listen here (as a preface)

- you got it? (as a tag)

- read my lips

- do you understand [me]? (as a tag)

f. Dismissals

- [go] [away]

- [get] [lost/out]

- [fuck/piss/shove] [off]

g. Silencers

- [shut] [it/your mouth, face/etc.]   [shut] [the fuck] up

h. Threats

- [I'll] [I'm/we're gonna] [smash your face in/beat the shit out of you/box

    your ears/bust your fucking head off/straighten you out/etc.] [if you

    don't] [X]

- [X] [before I] [hit you/strangle you]

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i. Negative Expressive (Curses and ill-wishes)

- [go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself]

- [damn/fuck] [you]

Thus, the findings showed that the most common impoliteness strategy used by Facebookers on Cristiano Ronaldo's Facebook page was an insult strategy. Finally, the researchers discovered that anonymity (faceless, bodiless), lack of non-verbal cues, and emotion were the possible factors of impoliteness occurrences on Cristiano Ronaldo's Facebook page.

The problem with this research is that it only examines the use of one form of social media (Facebook). The added analysis could factor in other social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

Lastly, Mpofu and Barnabas (2016) sought to determine the perceptions of enforcing ethics on social media from people who acted as citizen journalists during South Africa's 2015 xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals. The researchers employed a qualitative research approach.

The study discovered that a social media platform such as WhatsApp was used to facilitate the April 2015 xenophobic attacks and also to warn individuals about future attacks for them to take precautionary measures. Further, the study found that in as much as some messages were valid and verified information, others were false, bringing about unwarranted fear and panic among foreign nationals in particular. The researchers also added that professional journalism principles must not apply to social media.

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The study concluded that it is possible for peer-to-peer checking and paybacks that may work as control mechanisms in social media and citizen journalism, especially in times of crisis.

Responses of non-state actors

A study was conducted by Francois (2017) on the Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations in Rwanda. He analyzed the role of CSOs in connection to the broad history of the country, their relationship with the regime on power and external donors as well as their capacity to achieve their respective mission and vision. According to various definitions of CSOs, three main actions depict the role they play in society. These include:

a) Empower citizens for better participation (education)

b) Link citizen to their leaders (mediation) and

c) Advocate for their better lives (lobbying).

The findings of this study showed that the role of CSOs to improve inclusiveness and participation during ethnic-based rule was insignificant. He also found out that the majority of CSOs in Rwanda do play a less significant role in reframing public policies. Francois (2017) also confirmed that the majority of CSOs sometimes assist while just a handful of them rarely intervene.

Again, the study showed that it was important to include and for CSOs to participate in post-conflict situations. Concerning sustainability, He deduced

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that the work done by CSOs in peacebuilding is more merely than highly sustainable. He also discovered that the strength of CSOs in Rwanda in their role of building lasting peace exceeds 50%.

Francois (2017) failed to reveal that a mixed-method research methodology was adopted in the study. Additionally, the sample was based on only three CSOs (16 national NGOs, 2 International NGOs, and 13 Faith-based organizations) neglecting other organizations like youth groups and human rights agencies who play active roles and are equally involved in peace and reconciliation work. Aside from these setbacks, Francois (2017) did well to present Rwandan CSOs residing in both rural and urban areas.

Orjuela (2020) also conducted a study on the topic "Countering Buddhist radicalization: emerging peace movements in Myanmar and Sri Lanka." The study showed how new nationalist movements and recent episodes of violence in Myanmar and Sri Lanka have prompted the mobilization of counterforces, consisting of a diverse set of actors, particularly religious leaders and civil societies. She mentioned that the rise of radical Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka can be understood as a response to societal change related to globalization, democratization, and war-to-peace transition.

The study took inspiration from and contributed to the theoretical discussion about social movements and countermovement dynamics. However, based on interviews with civil society representatives and religious leaders, complemented with secondary sources, the study found out that though the peace movements are weaker and largely reactive to and controlled by the

radical Buddhist nationalist movements, they constitute important counter-voices. The article also argues that the struggle between hate speech and counter-speech in social media constitutes an important part of the movement–countermovement dynamics.

Consequently, the study established that religious leaders play an important role in the countermovement, particularly monks who bring to mind the Buddhist values of nonviolence and tolerance. Similarly, she mentioned that representatives from all faiths engage in initiatives that promote understanding between religious groups and involve themselves in mediation and prevention of hate speech and violence. On the other hand, other activists, particularly peace activists and other civil society actors, focus on minority rights and protection, advocacy, or legal assistance. Collectively, the study indicated that these actors can be viewed as a peace movement which through its diverse activities strives towards the shared goal of inter-religious coexistence and violence prevention.

Finally, the article suggests that the two movements struggle to influence and promote their messages among the general public, within the Buddhist sangha, in the policy arena, in the judicial sphere, and through the production of cultural expressions. She indicated that representatives of the movements both mimic and attack each other on social media, where messages are amplified and mobilization enabled. She added that social media allows the fast-spreading of hateful messages, and creates filter bubbles where opposing views and source criticism are prevented.

Kanyinga (2011) using the post-2007 election violence in Kenya examined the role played by civil society in ending the crisis by responding to two questions: 'How did civil society put out the fire?' and 'What lessons can other African civil society organizations learn from the experience?

Kanyinga showed in his discussion how civil society responded to the crisis in a polarized social-political context. He held the view that different ideologies emerged concerning the Kenyan crisis: they were about whether to pursue peace as an end in itself or whether to pursue sustainable peace through the search for truth, justice, and accountability. Yet, Kanyinga indicated that these differences did not prevent civil society from impacting the mediation process: by articulating peace and demands for justice and truth, civil society informed the mediation process in many ways.

Furthermore, the study showed that civil society was also successful in both local and international advocacy, and also created and sustained a huge demand for peace and thereby forced the two parties into mediation. They also mentioned the need to end violence, restore fundamental rights, address the humanitarian crisis, and begin healing and reconciliation during the mediation process.

The drawback to this study is that the differences in civil societies were not mentioned from the beginning. It is important to state these differences since it has a bearing on how organizations react to a crisis.

Similarly, Mwaura and Martinon (2010) conducted a study on the local churches' responses to political violence in Kenya. They mainly focused on the 2007 post-election crisis, and the responses of the Catholic Church, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) as a body, and the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF), comprised of some NCCK member churches, the Catholic Church, and the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), among others. The study observed that during the election campaign, all churches seemed verifiably partial due to the close relationships many church leaders have with politicians. This according to them made it impossible to criticize politicians when the crisis broke out in December 2007.

Despite the hesitating of the Church, the researchers revealed that the Church's response was significant in terms of humanitarian assistance (especially to displaced families) and peace mediation efforts nationally and at parish levels. They further mentioned that bishops fearlessly condemned those involved in the conflict in districts affected by violence, issued pastoral letters and communiqués in partnership with the IRF and the NCCK that called for tolerance, reconciliation, forgiveness, and the cessation of violence after the election. Furthermore, the study revealed that the NCCK and IRF set up three committees, with one committee focusing on spiritual matters, one on humanitarian matters, and one on political matters.

The Spiritual Response

According to Mwaura and Martinon (2010) the spiritual committee organized a peace campaign dubbed the "Msafara (which means caravan in

Kiswahili) Campaign" and traveled around the country preaching peace. Additionally, they mentioned that Church leaders and the faithful met daily at the Ufungamano House (a complex jointly built by the NCCK and the Kenya Episcopal Conference) for prayer, while churches, mosques, and temples urged their followers to pray, maintain calm, avoid violence, and support the victims.

The Humanitarian Response

Mwaura and Martinon (2010) stated that the humanitarian committee joined forces with relief-oriented non-governmental organizations to provide shelter, food, clothing, medicines, water, trauma counseling, spiritual and social support to persons suffering as a result of the crisis, and facilitated peacebuilding and reconciliation among communities caught up in conflict.

The Political Response

The study discovered the on December 31, 2007, churches met at Ufungamano House where they developed a peace proposal that outlined four options for the Kenyan government: (1) recount the presidential votes, (2) maintain the status quo, (3) hold fresh elections, or (4) agree to share power. They also stated that the churches met several times between January and September 2008 and issued press statements calling for prayer, forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, justice, cultivation of trust, and solutions to the crises.

The study concluded that the Kenyan Church responded to humanitarian aspects of the crises quite admirably. Yet, people expected more from churches in terms of messages of hope, reconciliation, justice, creative political

intervention, and bold and prophetic leadership in the crises. Again, the Church has been accused of helping the evil by its silence, and of allowing itself to be separated and driven by partisan ethnic interests. Consequently, the Church's uprightness and identity have been called into question, demanding an assessment of its religious mission and procedures, and its public role in society. Unfortunately, the Kenyan Church has been intertwined in these conflicts and failed to offer a required non-partisan and visionary leadership. As a result, the church's moral uprightness and authority have been questioned.

Peberdy and Jara (2011) sought to examine the response of civil society organizations to the xenophobic attacks of May 2008 in Cape Town. Peberdy and Jara (2011) discovered that the civil society response to the violence in Cape Town was enormous, as they provided humanitarian efforts such as the provision of shelter and material goods to displaced people. The study also revealed that civil society aided with meeting other needs such as transport, health care, training and trauma counseling, and advice, legal and advocacy services such as monitoring conditions in camps, giving migration and legal advice, lobbying the Department of Home Affairs to renew and replace documents in camps and taking testimonies from affected people. Finally, the researchers indicated that civil society also engaged in lobbying provincial and city governments to improve conditions in the camps.

The drawback of Peberdy and Jara's research was that civil society performs roles that go beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance and social mobilization due to its diverse nature. These organizations are not

homogeneous since some civil societies such as Human rights organizations mostly intervene whenever there are issues of violence against humans while faith-based organizations are focused on religious and moral issues even though they sometimes provide humanitarian assistance. As a result, the roles of civil societies would be quite different from one organization to the other.

Responses of state actors

Nganji & Cockburn (2020) focused on the use of twitter in the Cameroon Anglophone crisis by several groups including the government, Anglophone activists, media organizations, and everyday citizens. The article addressed social media as a key communication channel used to mobilize people for a common cause and to communicate vital information during crises and conflicts.

They employed critical theoretical perspectives to examine tweets from 1 September 2016 to 31 December 2018, and also identified some key themes. These include placement of the crisis in a contested, historical context; debates about naming the crisis; key concepts; depiction of several forms of violence; and potential options for resolution.

The study concluded that social media is being used by the government, Anglophone activists, and non-affiliated people to sway public opinions on the crisis and solicit the attention of local, Diaspora, and broader international communities. They further stated that social media use has loosened the grip of governmental control of media messaging and expanded the public narratives

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available in Cameroon. Yet at the time of writing social media use does not appear to have lessened the impact of the crisis.

To end with, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) policy brief Number 5 also points out the responses of the Plateau State Government to violent conflicts in the state. This study draws on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with individuals identified because of their knowledge and understanding of the workings of the Plateau State Government, along with the secondary sources.

The policy brief reviewed the responses of the Plateau State Government to the recurrent attacks of conflict that the state has suffered in the last two decades. The policy brief revealed that the Plateau State Government gave the following responses; the establishment of Commissions of Inquiry or equivalent bodies to look into the outbreaks of violence, the attempts to improve the diversity of government, the establishment of programs to address unemployment and poverty, and a State Emergency Management Authority, as well as collaborative initiatives with neighboring states, civil society, and international development partners.

Furthermore, the brief advocates some measures to build trust between communities, and improve the management of conflict and violence which included better coordination between levels of government, federal support for reconstruction, domestication of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security; provision of support for victims of violent conflicts and displaced persons: and containing cattle rustling through effective surveillance and patrol.

The policy brief concluded that multiple measures should be employed in rebuilding trust. Again, reform and rebuilding should require strong and effective leadership since such leadership has not been evident in the state's follow-up to the commissions of inquiry established in response to incidents of violence in the state; many of their recommendations remain unimplemented.

Finally, Kinge (2016) sought to examine the International Dimensions of Xenophobic Attacks on Foreign Nationals in South Africa. The study took on a qualitative research approach with a total of 24 research participants from 7 different African countries namely Nigeria, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ghana, Congo, and Zambia.

The study found that the poor living conditions characterized by poor service delivery, job uncertainties, perception of foreign nationals taking jobs, and women of South Africans. Kinge also discovered that these violent acts brought about the destruction of foreign-owned shops and properties, dead, displacement, and relocation for the fear of being killed. The study also observed the role African countries like Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe accommodated the African National Congress (ANC) affiliates on exile during the apartheid era. Kinge drew the following conclusions;

He argued that the ANC led government put no or little effort into addressing the issue but rather caused some black South African residents to hate foreign nationals because they dressed well and spent lavishly on South African women. Furthermore, prominent personalities and governments also

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made offensive and discriminatory statements on national television that could

stimulate xenophobic violence toward foreign black nationals. Finally, African

states either evacuated their citizens from South Africa or placed an embargo

on South African owned establishments working in their country.

Chapter summary

This section of the study reviewed literature relevant to the topic under

discussion. The chapter was divided into three sections; conceptual review,

theoretical review, and the review of empirical literature.
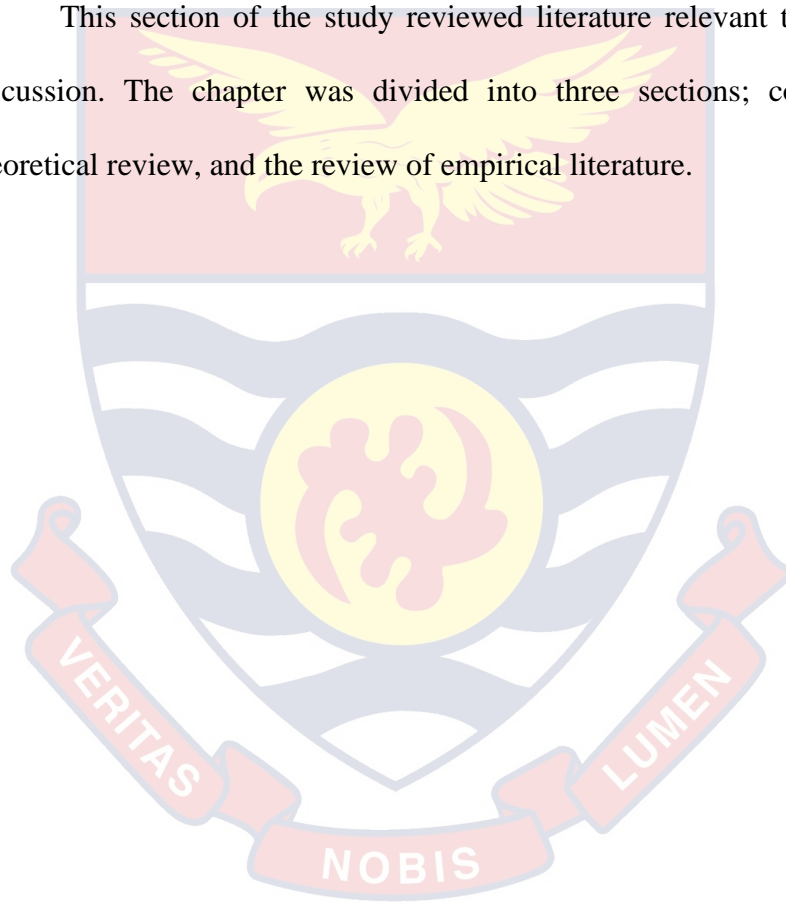
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed explanation of the research methodology. The various techniques and methods that were used to select hashtag related messages on xenophobia for the study have also been outlined. It describes the research paradigm, research approach, research design, study setting, and the sources of data. Moreover, the sampling procedure, the data collection instrument and procedure, the data analysis, analytical reasoning as well as ethical considerations were also discussed.

Research Paradigm

This study employed the interpretive research paradigm. This was done by gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its complexity in its unique context instead of trying to generalize the base of understanding for the whole population (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, since various interpretations are established among individuals, the researcher employed the interpretive research paradigm to understand the varied ways of viewing the world through diverse perspectives and beliefs (Hammersley, 2013). Besides, the interpretive perspective is in line with the qualitative research approach which is different from positivism and opens more avenues for inquirers (Callaway, 1999).

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research was used because it does not rely on numbers, it relies on individuals' expressions, opinions, interpretations, and experiences (Silverman, 2006). Since this study was based on the sharing of experiences of individuals on peace and violence, a qualitative research approach was found suitable. This study focused mainly on documentary evidence and therefore resorted to these documents during the data selection process. By documentary evidence which is born out of people's views and expressions, one can verify its authenticity in a natural environment as the presence of the researcher does not alter what is being studied (Merriam, 1988). In furtherance, documentary evidence is less time-consuming and is, therefore, more efficient than other research approaches (Bowen, 2009).

Research Design

The study employed the exploratory research design. Exploratory research was used to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon (Burns & Grove, 2005). The exploratory research design involved gathering information in an informal and unstructured manner (Burns & Bush, 2006). In addition, there was a higher level of uncertainty and ignorance about the subject the researcher sought to study since

he knew little about the issue at hand. Therefore, it was prudent for the researcher to employ the exploratory research design for this study.

Study Setting

The study was based on hashtag messages of individuals who showed interest in the security texture of South Africa during the 2019 xenophobic attacks through their tweets which either advocated for peace or incited violence. The hashtag messages that emerged in response to the event were not limited to individuals residing in South Africa. This is because individuals residing in other geographical areas also have the opportunity to comment on issues related to the event.

Therefore, there is an indication that a virtual space exists and that virtual space is the twitter platform that served as the setting for this study. This is because, the researcher did not go to the geographical area mentioned above to collect data, but rather selected data on the Twitter platform (Bowen, 2009). Twitter was selected as the study setting because it is regarded as a very vital platform where political discourses such as interaction, discussion, and information sharing in various mobilizations take place (Earl et al., 2013).

Sources of Data

Data were sought from secondary sources only. The secondary sources were hashtag related messages on xenophobia that were gathered from various twitter users on twitter. This study employed hashtags on Twitter because it was the first social media platform that employed the use of hashtags in 2007

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(Shapp, 2014). Again, Twitter seems to be the dominant social media platform on which hashtags are used by individuals to express their displeasure or support for certain happenings as it reported nearly 646 million registered users, with 290 million of these actively using the platform (Dwyer & Fraser, 2016).

Sampling Procedure

For this study, a non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling procedure) that involved deliberately selecting a sample that meets particular characteristics was used to select hashtag related messages on xenophobia (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The study employed the criterion purposive sampling and stakeholder purposive sampling procedures.

Concerning the criterion purposive sampling, the study involved the search for individual tweets that met a certain criterion which was hashtag related messages on xenophobia that were seen to either promote peace or incite violence (Palys, 2008). Stakeholder sampling was employed to identify non-state and state actors who served as stakeholders and also evaluate their responses to the event under study (Palys, 2008). The tweets selected for this study were connected to the hashtag xenophobia (#Xenophobia) that were aligned to the promotion of peace or inciting violence.

Furthermore, this study employed a purposive sampling procedure because the hashtag messages selected relative to xenophobia contained information needed for the study. In addition, it opened an avenue for the researcher to obtain relevant matters related to the ways Twitter hashtags

promote peace or incite violence. Since this study employed the qualitative research approach, the number of individual tweets did not matter but the quality of the work was an important factor (Bamberger, 2000). This gave the researcher the allowance to determine the number of tweets to engage in the research within a particular time frame.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

A document review guide was employed as the data collection instrument for this study. The document review guide was developed based on the objectives and research questions mentioned in Chapter One of the study. The document review guide contained meanings or descriptions of each of the themes that provided the researcher with the needed classification system for the selection of the data. It also captured the descriptive characteristics of individual twitter users including their twitter ID or username, country or location, job description and position (particularly for state actors), and the application used (eg. Twitter for iPhone, TweetDeck, Twitter for Android, etc.)

The document review contained information about the phenomenon the researcher sought to study (Bailey, 1994). Like other social media data, these tweets are commonly placed in a category called ''big data'' which is easily accessible (Weller & Kinder-Kurlanda, 2015). Hashtag messages were selected using a free and publicly accessible search tool called tweet deck from the Twitter stream: and collected within a particular period, that is within three months (from September 1, 2019, through to November 30, 2019) and tweets focused on a specific event or ''searchable talk'', that was xenophobia attacks,

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generated through the use of Twitter hashtags (Zappavigna, 2015) with the help of the document review guide.

The researcher selected the #xenophobia as the unit of analysis to collect hashtag related messages on xenophobia for analysis. This hashtag was employed because previous studies have found hashtags useful in evaluating the political aspects of Twitter, as they help to organize tweets around a single topic (Bruns & Burgess, 2011; Small, 2011). This was the case of the #xenophobia which appeared on the South African twitter-sphere in 2019 and lasted throughout the xenophobic attacks. I, therefore, chose to use the #xenophobia hashtag since it remained relevant as it trended through the period of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

The researcher reviewed publicly available tweets by focusing primarily on the content of tweets written in English along with the hashtag which in this case was #xenophobia. Usernames, dates, and other miscellaneous platform information were also captured. The essential data for this research was found on various individual tweets on various Twitter accounts. Twitter has the opportunity to search for a certain period and through this option all tweets that were sent concerning peaceful and violent hashtags related messages on xenophobia and the responses by various non-state and state actors in the period September 1, 2019, through to November 30, 2019. The overall data collected consisted of 633 tweets and lasted for 10 weeks. Specifically, 543 tweets were collected from individual Twitter platforms based on the first objective, while 70 and 20 tweets were collected from non-state and state actors respectively.

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Finally, exclusion criteria were used to take out some selected hashtag messages. These consisted of unrelated, repeated, and unclear hashtag messages on xenophobia. Hashtag messages from company and business accounts related to the event xenophobia in South Africa were also excluded.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was employed by the researcher to serve as the mode of analysis for this study. By content analysis, it involved reviewing or evaluating documents from electronic (internet transmitted) materials (Bowen, 2009). In addition, according to Silverman (2011), in the area of mass communication, content analysis is a recognized method of questioning documentary data since it permitted researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis of media text which advanced a complete understanding of possible meanings (manifest and latent) of hashtag related messages on xenophobia used on Twitter. This entailed the picking of hashtag messages and looking at what the participant is saying in its original state. With this, no interviews or focus group discussions were conducted so it became natural.

Qualitative content analysis was done based on the fact that this study involved the use of secondary data. The researcher conducted the qualitative content analysis by carefully and thoroughly reading tweets that made mention of hashtag xenophobia (#Xenophobia) and categorized the raw data under themes which according to Corbin and Strauss (2008) is the foundation of analysis in qualitative research. These themes were created based on the individual hashtag related messages on xenophobia that either had the

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tendencies of promoting peace or inciting violence, and hashtag related messages from non-state and state actors on xenophobia. Again, this study employed these analytical strategies; constant comparative analysis, narrative and discourse analysis, and phenomenological analysis (Thorne, 2000).

The constant comparative analysis enabled the researcher to create knowledge that is more generally descriptive or interpretive (Thorne, 2000). Constant comparative analysis was employed because this study involved two different issues; peace and violence. Here, an individual's tweets were selected based on their interest. By constant comparative analysis, the researcher compared what those tweeting about peace are saying and what those tweeting about violence are saying. Because this study was looking at a particular phenomenon and people's voices may differ, where some may be oriented towards peace and other violence, it was important to compare how people responded to a particular event. It was also imperative to compare messages from Nigerians and South Africans as they were observed by the researcher to be the dominant parties involved in the xenophobic attacks.

With the narrative and discourse analysis, some of the tweets brought out issues of how people have narrated their experiences. Narrative analysis was used to recognize the extent to which the stories people tell provide insights about their lived experiences (Sandelowski, 1994).

Phenomenological analysis is where lived experiences of individuals on peace and violence were brought to fore. This analytic strategy was employed because the study involved situating people's tweets within their lived

experiences. With phenomenological analysis, a tweet showed clearly where the individual or organization who posted it is coming from, probably his or her relative was killed and that is why he or she was calling for peace or violence. In this case, the individual's experience was used to estimate why he or she tweeted what he or she tweeted.

Analytical reasoning

This study employed inductive and abductive reasoning. Abduction was used to contribute to the researcher's conceptual understanding of the phenomena (Hausman, 1993), while the logic of induction was used to provide empirical support to conceptual knowledge. Inductive reasoning helped the researcher to start from somewhere, even though the beginning was an unconfirmed belief or not proven (Peirce, 1986), but it brought about creativity (Wright, 1999). At the stage of abduction, it involved exploring data, finding out a pattern, and suggesting possible hypotheses with the use of proper categories, and induction involved the guess which led to the truth to fix our beliefs for further inquiry (Yu, 2006). Briefly, abduction was used to create, and induction was used to verify.

Ethical Considerations

Given recent attention concerning the ethical use of social media updates, especially in social science research, the researcher turned to Twitter private policy (2020) as well as Townsend and Wallace's ethical guide to social media research (2016) to ensure that the research did not violate ethical codes. Given

that studies must adhere to moral and ethical issues to protect research participants from possible harm (Khan, 2014), it was prudent to consider ethical issues for morally sound studies.

The absence of consent with regards to the use of data collected on Twitter could likely lead to the violation of user privacy. Furthermore, the validity of the information given or posted on a user's Twitter account may make it difficult to identify the user (Golder & Macy, 2014). However, twitter's privacy policy automatically sets users to agree to a public viewing of their conversations on the Twitter platform. For that reason, the researcher assumed that since users selected for this study publicly shared their views via tweets, they have agreed or consented to the reuse of their data which is classified as public information (Twitter, 2017). This public information includes the messages you tweet; the metadata provided with Tweets, such as when you tweeted and the client application you used to tweet; the language and time zone associated with your account; and the lists you create, people you follow, tweets you mark as likes or retweet, and many other bits of information that result from your use of the Twitter services.

While Twitter usernames, handles, and messages were publicly available (although some people choose to make their posts private) in this study, the researcher anonymized the tweet posts to minimize the identification of research participants. In cases where it required the researcher to report Twitter usernames or handles, the researcher associated these names with specific tweets.

In the next chapter, the study discusses the various views of research participants according to thematic areas.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter analyses and interprets data gathered during the study on the adoption of hashtags in social media and how they are used to either incite violence or achieve peace. By so doing, four themes emerged from the data that were gathered. These themes include; peaceful hashtag messages shared on twitter relative to xenophobia, violent hashtag messages shared on twitter relative to xenophobia, the responses of non-state actors, and the responses of state actors. The section that follows discusses the peaceful and violent hashtag messages shared on twitter relative to the event xenophobia. The subsequent section discusses the issues that emerged from the responses of non-state actors and that of state actors.

Hashtag Messages shared on Twitter relative to Xenophobia

Hashtags have become a tool very pronounced on social issues as it gives activists the luxury to increase sidelined opinions (Freelon et al., 2016) and also extend their community far above physical spaces to a virtual world (Goswami, 2018). This manifests itself in the recent spate of xenophobic attacks in South Africa which brought about a wide range of concerns from individuals all over the world. These concerns were conveyed through hashtag related messages on xenophobia on individual twitter platforms. The discussion starts by looking at these hashtag related messages on xenophobia in two ways. The first contains

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hashtag related messages on xenophobia shared on twitter with content that has the potential of promoting peace. The second contains hashtag related messages on xenophobia shared on twitter with content that has the potential of inciting violence.

Peace Messages in response to the Xenophobic attacks in South Africa drawn from Twitter

It has been established in the literature that the idea of peace is regarded as one of the most valued goals of humanity as it serves as a pursuit of living a harmonious life in society (Galtung, 1996; Curle, 1991; Matsuo, 1985). As expressed in earlier sections by Reynaldo (2011) explaining peace as just the absence of war seems inadequate. In recent times, the mere existence of socio-cultural and economic considerations, and harmony among individuals is seen as peace (Rawat, 2014).

Within this context, various hashtag related messages on xenophobia shared on individual twitter platforms were found to promote peace. These included messages that expressed ethical values such as hope, love, and unity in the face of xenophobic attacks. Other statements made constituted the plea from supernaturals for their intervention. These were expressed in a form of prayer. In addition, some statements called for peace through existential negative labels, and others condemned the xenophobic attacks. In furtherance, some statements expressed condolences in a form of emotive messages to affected parties during the xenophobic attacks. Lastly, some messages proposed solutions to the xenophobic attacks.

Hashtag messages that expressed hope in the face of xenophobic attacks

Hope serves as a social value that forms a foundation for human behavior. Individuals have the desire to express hope and one of the major traces of this expression is the recognition of fear (Jarymowicz & Bar-tal, 2006). Jarymowicz and Bar-tal further argue that fear and hope are shown by individuals in situations where they perceive threats.

Since xenophobia has been viewed as a life-threatening act, individuals shared hashtag messages on their various twitter platforms which demonstrated hope. The researcher logged in, filtered messages with the hashtag xenophobia, read through, and found the following messages which expressed hope:

> *So many things going on in South Africa now but we think everything will be cool… (24th February, 2020 at 5:38 pm).*
>
> *…xenophobia and xenophobic attacks on African sisters and brothers shall end! (10th December, 2019 at 7:56 pm).*
>
> *We need to stop judging people by where they are from but by the content of their characters! I see a brighter Africa and it starts with you and me… (23rd January, 2020 at 1:20 pm).*
>
> *South Africa is so beautiful. Ask yourself why everyone wants a piece of it... we will get over\ all these challenges (12th December, 2019 at 4:14 pm).*
>
> *My beloved country is all about peace and we accept any nation because we believe that we are all equal in the eyes of The Lord. I hope and pray that this disturbing xenophobia Freud between our fellow brothers and sisters ends before it's too late (23rd February, 2020 at 6:47 pm).*
>
> *… Let's all hope and pray for a good and lasting resolution to this disgusting issue...For those caught looting the shops*

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of innocent hardworking Nigerians, I hope they're severely sanctioned (21ˢᵗ February, 2020 at 7:22 pm).

It can be seen from the narratives that individuals remained optimistic as they believed that the xenophobic attacks in South Africans will be a thing of the past. The third narrative contains statements that indicate that some individuals were not in support of the stigma attached to things foreign in South African society. As a result, they expressed their desire for individuals to maintain ethical standards in society. In cultural terms, individuals were motivated to express hope since they realized the need to avoid xenophobic attacks as a means of preserving society. In furtherance, some views showed the religiosity of some individuals as they had a moral obligation to remain hopeful through prayer. Last, hope could be found in sanctioning as a way of deterring individuals from attacking each other to achieve social order.

Hashtag messages that expressed love in the face of xenophobic attacks

Love can be viewed as a symbol of social morality. It is expressed as a moral imperative in the absence of which bonds between individuals would fall to bits (Durkheim, 1897). Weber (1946) proposed an ideal type of love as the display of moral values or religious beliefs. From Durkheim and Weber's claim, love can be seen as a psychological and social imperative to social integration. This is because love is a moral issue and without it, there will be no bond to keep society together. By way of logging in, filtering, and reading through hashtag messages relative to xenophobia, these statements which expressed love surfaced:

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Spread love, not Hate. To Africa as a whole; we need to be better. The Powers that want this chaos happening across the continent, do not let them win. Africa wake up! Wake up! (24th February, 2020 at 2:57 pm).

It's almost unbelievable to see your own kinds hate you with a distasteful pleasure, how long will it take for Africans to unite, xenophobia-the new black, with all the odds stacked against us, the least we can do is love one another... (25th February, 2020 at 5:50 pm).

Love is a principal thing, let's put our differences aside, and let's forget all the hate and jealousy, just love your neighbor as yourself. We are here for one another, we are uniquely created… (19th February, 2020 at 11:57 am).

Love unites the world, brings happiness among the people. It makes the world free from racism, xenophobia, domestic violence in marriages, families, insurgency, or any form of conflict. Love beats them all (28th January, 2020 at 12:06 pm).

Do not do bad things to foreigners living in your country. You must treat them the same way you treat your citizens. Love them as you love yourself. Remember, you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33-34 (20th February, 2020 at 11:48 am).

…We should love our South African counterparts and show love! (23rd February, 2020 at 6:33 pm).

It should be noted that Nigerians and South Africans have experienced turbulent political situations in the past years. These include the Biafra war in Nigeria (Agwu & Igwe, 2020; Inyang, 2017) and Apartheid in South Africa (Tella, 2016; Mario Matsinhe, 2011; Dodson, 2010; Steenkamp, 2009). As a result, these people know what it means to have and experience violence. Their experiences and the knowledge they have gathered about previous political turbulence speaks volumes of their call for love.

It can be deduced from the above narratives that there are contexts within which love is expressed. These could be political, cultural, or religious. The second narrative raises the issue of when social cohesion would be achieved in Africa as the continent is coupled with violence. In cultural terms, the third narrative expresses the need for love. As a result, regardless of one's orientation or cultural background, love should be shown to one another.

In furtherance, it can be seen from the narratives that individuals expressed love through biblical texts. This shows that there is a cultural foundation which means that people's religious teachings have come to bear. The expression of love is founded on their religious beliefs which have been enforced through socialization. Thus, they see love as a persuasive tool towards social control. Furthermore, individuals expressed statements that are suggestive of love serving as a stepping stone for peace as it brings joy and frees the world of its numerous problems. The fourth narrative contains statements that suggest that the appeal to love is founded on certain religious beliefs. It is suggestive that religion serves as one of the formidable cultural foundations upon which Africans would want to promote social integration (Dzorgbo, 2013; Durkheim, 1965).

Hashtag messages that expressed unity in the face of xenophobic attacks

The relevance of unity to achieve a peaceful coexistence amongst individuals was well articulated by Rawat (2014). To Rawat, peace goes beyond the nonexistence of war as it brings about socio-cultural and economic understanding and unity between people in the context of intra-national and

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international relations. The following were found as messages that expressed

unity:

> *'I am not African because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me' Kwame Nkrumah…Mother Africa is mourning and her soul isn't at ease, so let's come together, unite and put Africa at peace. United we conquered, united we overcame apartheid. United we mourned influential figures who helped change across the continent. So why must I shed my fellow brother's blood? Divided Africa is weak, but united we can move mountains. 'I dream of an Africa which is in peace with itself' Nelson Mandela. No to Xenophobia, Unity in Africa (28th February, 2020 at 4:50 pm).*
>
> *Africa stop, drop your weapons. Look at that person again. That is your mirror image that is your brethren. Pick up love, we're better than this. When we fight & kill each other guess what happens next, strangers enjoy our inheritance. Africa unite!! (25th February, 2020 at 8:11 pm).*
>
> *Our differences in language, race, ethnicity, or nationality shouldn't be allowed to tear us apart but rather unite us. Only together, can we make Africa great… (25th February, 2020 at 8:54 pm).*
>
> *We need to unite, the fights won't help anyone. They only cause splits and unnecessary deaths. Never be a reason for others' demise but be a reason for them to live (18th February, 2020 at 2:30 pm).*
>
> *I mean no disrespect but all those who are promoting riots and the killing of our brothers and sisters please remember that we are all Africans and we should all unite, stop the violence and be your brother's keeper (25th February, 2020 at 6:46 pm).*
>
> *I stopped being bothered when people addressed Africa as a country a long time ago, because what is better than being united as a people?... United we stand, divided we fall… (2nd March, 2020 at 3:51 pm).*
>
> *We Africans have to stand together and be of help to each other (21st February, 2020 at 5:54 pm).*
>
> *A united Africa is the ultimate dream. Let's strive to manifest it! (4th February, 2020 at 6:43 pm).*

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The narratives above present a picture of a clear cut call for unity, and also the foundation for which unity has to be established. Interestingly, it can be inferred from the first narrative that individuals called for unity through poems. Poems for peace are seen to be a way the youth living in conflict-prone areas express their optimism for a more peaceful future (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2019). This shows that public spaces are seen to serve as platforms where individuals visit to get their voices heard as they long for a steady future amidst the chaos. In cultural terms, Africa can be viewed as a continent with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Regardless of these differences, some individuals were stressing the need for togetherness.

In furtherance, some statements showed that individuals were not in support of the violent attacks in South Africa. This is suggestive of the fact that individuals did not believe in violence as the solution to the problems in South Africa. Moreover, some individuals raised the issue of being generally referred to as Africans. In sociological terms, this statement shows that some foreigners socially construct or create their understanding of who an African is (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) since some have little knowledge about Africa and the countries within it. The narratives point out that individuals hold the view that Africans are stronger together. As a result, individuals should join hands in the strive for a united Africa.

Hashtag messages that expressed prayer in the face of xenophobic attacks

The idea of prayer is still a relevant concept during times of crisis (Hayes, Waddell & Smudde, 2017). This is because prayer is used by individuals to express their views and also appeal to supernaturals for their intervention. This suggests clearly that individuals still acknowledge the role of the supernaturals as being capable of helping out during difficult times. This represents the idea held by people that Africans are notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1969). This description by Mbiti was found to be openly expressed through messages people shared on their twitter platforms. The following messages expressing prayer surfaced when the researcher read through hashtag messages on xenophobia:

> *Father, we bring South Africans and Nigerians before you, put an end to this age-long rift...let the unity consciousness that overwhelmed our heroes past be our portion. We rebuke everyone and anything taking advantage of this animosity...Let peace reign in Jesus's name (26th February, 2020 at 5:53 pm).*

> *Just feeling for my fellow Africans, foreigners as called in South Africa who this morning must take taxis to and from work. May the good Lord protect you guys, Amen (6th February, 2020 at 11:38 am).*

> *...For those still alive we pray for God's protection on you and your families (28th February, 2020 at 3:56 pm).*

> *My take on xenophobia is that we should pray. The physical runs parallel with the spiritual. Prayers among other things will necessitate the wisdom for practical steps among leaders. 1Timothy 2:1-4 (18th February, 2020 at 11:43 pm).*

> *We have a beautiful country, with loving people. We deserve a better South Africa. On this Bright Day, Let's pray for South Africa. Let our heritage be one of Love, Peace, Morality, Good Governance, and Ubuntu (20th January, 2020 at 4:28 pm).*

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Let's continue praying for Nigerians living in South Africa. Xenophobia is so brutal and barbaric (21ˢᵗ February, 2020 at 6:48 pm).

…let's bow our heads and say a prayer for our motherland, Africa, there are so many threats to peaceful coexistence; xenophobia, abductions, bullying, rape, corruption, scramble for resources (22ⁿᵈ January, 2020 at 2:24 pm).

…If only my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and seek my face in prayer, I'll hear their prayers and heal their land 1Chronicles 7:14 -15. Let's pray for Africa (22ⁿᵈ February, 2020 at 6:04 pm).

The killing of my brothers is what I cannot withstand. Dear God, please intervene in this South Africa matter enough of all these bloodsheds (21ˢᵗ February, 2020 at 5:38 pm).

I pray for peace in our land. I pray for safety for all women and children... I pray for protection and a safe return for all those kidnapped (31ˢᵗ January, 2020 at 5:54 pm).

Praying for our continent, change the minds of criminals, rapists all those seeking to do the crime, protect us women and children, and let our men value us! May we also do the same unto our men and children. Give us a different mindset Father (4ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 10:19 am).

Responses given show that for peace to prevail, individuals have to turn to the supernatural for help through prayer. There were statements that showed thoughts for foreigners in South Africa as individuals asked for God's protection towards them and their relatives.

In addition, some of the individuals were directing others towards the actors of change. In Africa, there is a recognition of the supernatural as being capable of intervening is still present in our social structure. This manifests itself in a form of prayer. It means that when beliefs are strong, prayers become one of the things that people feel convinced could make things work. These

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statements are also suggestive of peace as a way of preserving one's cultural heritage.

In furtherance, one striking issue which came out has to do with the fact that quite a significant number of the voices that contained prayers came from women. This could be because women and children seem to be the most vulnerable during violent acts. Moreover, two ladies namely Natasha Conabeer and Uyinene Mrwetyana, both students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and University of Cape Town respectively were killed just around the time the violence took place in South Africa. This necessitated the use of hashtags such as #RIPNatasha, #AmINext, #UyineneMrwetyana, and also #BringBackOurGirls for kidnapped women. In addition, as these women prayed, they expected that it is women and children who will gain protection. This shows that people are becoming extremely knowledgeable about potential victims when such a phenomenon is seen to be taking place.

Finally, the last two narratives indicate that women are not just seen as people who play a role in dealing with conflict but they are also projected as victims and are supposed to be protected. This shows that women are not left out in violent situations. It is shown in this study, that women are rather regarded as potential victims and therefore are supposed to be protected by the supernatural. This is contrary to Rehn and Sirleaf's (2002) as well as Sharoni's (1994) argument that women are supposed to be part of the peace-building and conflict resolution process.

Using hashtags to promote peace through existential negative labels (xenophobia)

Social norms and morality can be seen as created from a continuous definition of a particular phenomenon (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Thomas & Thomas, 1928). These forms part of labels that have a cultural basis that individuals or society use to describe a particular act as deviant (Becker, 1963). These labels constitute words that manifest themselves in everyday language and also on various media platforms (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963). Thus, people's behavior towards xenophobia can be determined by their subjective construction of reality rather than by objective reality. Through the reading of hashtag messages on xenophobia, the following statements came up:

> *Xenophobia is an act of war! Killing your neighbor, looting their businesses, and wishing them evil will not improve your situation. Do good and it will come unto you too. Let's say no to Xenophobic attacks (28th February, 2020 at 2:31 pm).*
>
> *To all the South Africans saying that this isn't about Xenophobia but fight against drugs. Let me tell you that Mob justice won't solve the problem. A Congolese student was killed in Bloemfontein. He never smoked or sold anything. Violence can only call for more violence. Stop this (25th February, 2020 at 5:42 pm).*
>
> *…It's really sad to see Africans killing Africans who are just thriving to help their families…The only thing that we should be discussing right now is how we can end this stupid Xenophobia in South African towards Nigerians and other African countries. But violence can't stop violence and I believe we can make a huge statement without violence (2nd March, 2020 at 1:27 pm).*
>
> *Say no to Xenophobia. My friend Emeka was killed last night before I could drive there he was already dead after they stabbed him in the neck and went away with his car (17th February, 2020 at 12:42 pm).*

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This violence in different parts of Nigeria is uncalled for. How are we different from those in South Africa? Let us be guided. Nigerians are the ones that will suffer because they will lose their jobs. The goal is to stop xenophobia and not fuel xenophobia…Let's be guided, please...Two wrongs can never make a right (28th February, 2020 at 6:36 pm).

Xenophobia has been trending, and it is inaccurate and the media and uninformed social media "specialists" are busy milking it. When are we having the conversations and stopping with finger-pointing? No lives should be lost, but let's not look at this one-sided (22nd February, 2020 at 6:35 pm).

Xenophobia is not solved by angry responses on Twitter. Awareness is important, and it's important to note that there are good and bad elements on both sides. Not every Nigerian is a criminal, and not every South African is a violent Xenophobe (21st February, 2020 at 6:40 pm).

It is very sad to see people using Xenophobia to insult themselves and make jokes. This is a real issue, people are dying, and businesses are shutting down. We shouldn't be insulting each other, we are meant to be united and advocate for more actions to stop the violence (2nd March, 2020 at 1:40 pm).

It can be inferred from the narratives that people have given xenophobia different tags all of which are seen as unacceptable. People are convinced that indeed the use of labels has a way of promoting peace. This implies that for an issue to be resolved, it has to be labeled negatively. For instance, South Africans and Botswanese use the term makwerekwere to describe individuals who speak odd languages as coming from economically shattered nations in search of greener pastures (Campbell, 2003). This shows that the use of labels on media platforms encourages individuals to put in effort in advocating for change. In this regard, it has been established in the narrative that xenophobia has been labeled as negative. Individuals, therefore, advocate for peace through counsel to help change the narrative.

Unarguable, the sixth, seventh and eighth narratives resonate with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory as individuals' exposure to comments on public spaces causes them to advocate for lasting solutions to issues of violence.

Hashtag messages that expressed condemnation in the face of xenophobic attacks

In this day and age, individuals have the luxury to freely air their views on happenings in society (Goswami, 2018; Wang & Caskey, 2016). This is mostly done through social media because it is economical and easily reached (Ngige, Badekale & Hamman, 2016). In a way of achieving peace given the recent violent attacks in South Africa, some participants found Twitter a suitable platform to denounce these heinous acts of violence against foreign nationals. The participants made the following statements:

> *Violence must be condemned everywhere. Xenophobic attacks are becoming more common all around the world…The United States and all the world should condemn all acts of hate, violence, and brutality (2nd March, 2020 at 2:10 pm).*
>
> *We condemn the killing and violence happening in South Africa in the name of Xenophobia, it goes against the core African value of Ubuntu (27th February, 2020 at 1:45 pm).*
>
> *…I totally condemn the act of Xenophobia, I see it as inhumane… (15th February, 2020 at 7:32 pm).*
>
> *I condemn xenophobic attacks. I stand for brotherhood, freedom, and peace (16th February, 2020 at 7:16 pm).*
>
> *I strongly condemn xenophobic attacks targeting African nationals in the Republic of South Africa… (19th February, 2020 at 11:42 am).*

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> *I'm gutted and strongly condemn the retaliatory attacks on South African businesses in Nigeria. Let's not forget that when two brothers fight to death, their enemies will inherit their wealth (28th February, 2020 at 7:11 pm).*

These responses show that, aside from condemning xenophobic attacks in South Africa, some individuals believed that people should also denounce the barbaric act in all places. Individuals, therefore, called on nations to denounce the heinous acts of violence. Individuals who openly condemn the xenophobic attacks in South Africa are guided by the Ubuntu principle. This implies that Africans have a core value of Ubuntu which they are supposed to stand for as it encourages and promotes a culture of peace and peaceful co-existence among South Africans (Mnyaka, 2003).

In addition, some statements raise the issue of the cruel nature of xenophobia. This has to do with socialization as some individuals are concerned with peace promotion rather than inciting violence. These are people who are imbued with certain social values and principles that speak against actions that reflect negative reciprocity. This is where Nigerians also try to get more from the economic opportunities in Nigeria. They, therefore, tend to attack South African owned businesses and allow Nigerian businesses to flourish.

Finally, it is imperative to note that individuals view social media as a public space to publicize their complaints (Goswami, 2018; Wang & Caskey, 2016; AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015; Theocharis, Lowe, Van Deth & Garcia-Albacete, 2015) and also to achieve peace through their hashtag messages.

Emotive messages in the face of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa

In times of crisis, individuals seem to play a key role in helping affected persons move through the grieving process. This could be done on virtual platforms such as social media instead of face-to-face (Villegas, 2013) due to the advancements in technology.

In this regard, some participants expressed emotive messages to victims and relatives who suffered from the xenophobic attacks. This was made possible because social media allows individuals worldwide to partake in expressing their thoughts on issues of great concern to them (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). During data monitoring and observation, the following statements were captured:

> *We're all Africans and can't be killing each other in the name of Foreigners. Our sympathies go out to all the affected families in the South African Xenophobic attack (27th February, 2020 at 11:37 am).*
>
> *My thoughts and prayers are with families of our brothers and sister in South Africa who lost their lives during this Xenophobia attack, may God comfort you all (28th February, 2020 at 3:56 pm).*
>
> *I stand with my brothers dying in South Africa (22nd February, 2020 at 5:47 pm).*
>
> *I decided to dress all black to work today to mourn all the people that were killed in the Xenophobia attack in South Africa. May we come out strong. We are one great Africa (18th February, 2020 at 4:55 pm).*
>
> *Just scrolled through #Xenophobia. This is sad and unacceptable in any way! Especially by people who suffered discrimination for generations. My heart and thoughts with the victims (22nd February, 2020 at 7:26 pm).*

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From these responses, it is evident that some online users expressed messages of compassion with individuals and families affected by the recent spate of xenophobic attacks. This shows a sense of togetherness irrespective of geographical boundaries. Again, the second narrative indicates the religiosity of Africans as they call for the intervention of the supernatural.

With reference to the narrative by the person who wore black, there is a clear indication of the observance of African customs about funerals and other painful moments. This shows that on social media platforms, people have their way of expressing their customs.

The fifth narrative resonates with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory that argues that the media influences public perception and behavior. Applying McCombs and Shaw's agenda-setting theory to the study, it can be established that when an individual is exposed to information about an event in a public space, he or she becomes knowledgeable about the event and this directly or indirectly influences his or her view on the said event.

Hashtag messages that expressed suggested solutions in the face of xenophobic attacks

In recent times, hashtags serve as tools for advocates to increase relegated opinions (Freelon et al., 2016) on social, economic, religious, and political issues of concern. As a result, individuals are given the chance to speak freely on significant matters with the use of hashtags.

Relative to this study, the hashtag xenophobia was used by participants to suggest ways in which peace can prevail in South African and Africa as a whole. Some participants revealed that education on African history, engagement of artists or celebrities and other influential people, and mutual aid between countries could help bring about peaceful co-existence. They stated that:

> *…We need to reduce the level of ignorance in Africa and get a lot of Africans educated more about the history of Africa without being bias and let generations come to know more about these histories. This is the only key to stop xenophobia and racism everywhere on the continent (23rd January, 2020 at 3:34 pm).*

> *You celebrities need to use your media to empower unity in African…If the case of xenophobia is killing blacks in South Africa and Africa at large, let's address it (6th December, 2019 at 4:02 pm).*

> *I have mixed feelings about this as art and activism go a long way in healing, building bridges, and raising awareness. Nigerian, South African, and other African artists could come together to address xenophobia... (24th February, 2020 at 2:26 pm).*

> *Africa let's unite. We need to speak up and protest against these attacks on our brothers and sisters living in South Africa. They're attacking everyone who's an African foreigner living in South Africa. Let's call on the world leaders to intervene on this. Let's make our voices heard (2nd March, 2020 at 3:42 pm).*

> *Development cooperation between nations is very important because it is one of the building blocks of shared peace, prosperity, and human rights for all. It is one of the antidotes to the poison of xenophobia (17th January, 2020 at 12:15 pm).*

Statements made under this section indicate that individuals regard education on African history as a way of mitigating violent acts. In addition, it can be seen from the second and third narratives that public figures are

influential people and their voice alone can bring about change. This shows that these individuals can use their media platforms to help address xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Likewise, the fourth and fifth narratives show the therapeutic nature of social participation in solving societal problems. This implies that the intervention of country heads and other statesmen, and mutual aid between nations could help achieve peace.

Unarguably, it is clear from the subsections under peace messages that most participants were stirring for peace to prevail in South Africa. This aligns with Coomaraswamy's (2015) claim that individuals are more involved in striving for peace in society. This is therefore possible to end the violent attacks born out of the hatred for foreign nationals by some South Africans as peace messages superseded violent messages thus refuting LaTarte's (2019) contention that violent responses are mostly conveyed within the 140 characters provided than non-violent responses.

With the diversity of peace messages that were found, it is imperative to point out that the public sphere as the scope is huge, and it grants people the freedom to express their feelings (Habermas, 1991) and take part in discourses by sharing their ideas and information on social and political issues within a public space. In addition, peace messages contradict the criticism of Papacharissi (2002) who asserts that the public sphere excludes some aspects of the society such as women or individuals at the lower level of society. From the findings, it can be seen that women and other side-lined groups played a role in the call for peace during the xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

Violent Messages in response to the Xenophobic attacks in South Africa drawn from Twitter

The added advantage of anonymity granted by some social media platforms seems to have resulted in online discussions that can be insulting, offensive, and provocative (Amplayo & Occidental, 2015). This was not different from messages shared on Twitter with the hashtag xenophobia (#Xenophobia) throughout the recent xenophobic attacks. In the course of reading through hashtag messages on xenophobia, the messages posted by individuals on twitter platforms included hashtag messages that expressed threats, insults, dismissals, negative expressions, retaliation, and other daring words. The messages also comprised what Culpeper (2011) described as negative expressive which includes among other things curses and ill-wishes. Messages have been categorized in the first and second subsections according to the perceived nationalities of the participants.

Hashtag messages that expressed threats in the face of xenophobic attacks

In recent times, online users stand a higher chance to be threatened on various social media platforms. This can be termed as an act of terrorism as it constitutes not only deliberate violence and its instant effects, but also in the future or forthcoming threat of violence, bringing about fear and the fear of recurrence (Schmid, 2011) on social media platforms. In the case of the South African xenophobic attacks, the messages from South Africans that expressed threats were captured as follows:

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Dear South Africans, anything that says Nigeria whether got into South Africa legally or not we make sure that it loses its existence. Whether they are here to accomplish their goals or not we bring them 6 feet underground, how about that? (28th February, 2020 at 7:44 pm).

Two foreigners sexually assaulted my girlfriend earlier today. I am planning to kill them and once I kill them don't be screaming Xenophobia (19th December, 2019 at 4:31 pm).

Why don't they just shoot them all? So this can be Xenophobia for real (13th December, 2019 at 3:46 pm).

These foreigners are doing what they are doing because they know that the media is too sympathetic to them, either way, we won't tolerate lawlessness in our country. If push comes to shove, the police must just shoot. And then we will hold a commission of inquiry afterward (14th December, 2019 at 3:59 pm).

It can be deduced from the above narratives that individuals threatened to end the lives of others through various means. Many arguments have been raised to explain why South Africans usually make such threatening statements. These arguments lend credence to Tella (2016), Mario Matsinhe (2011), Dodson (2010) as well as Steenkamp (2009) claim that South Africans were isolated from countries beyond Southern Africa which caused them to hate immigrants because they have no history of integrating strangers. From the narratives, it shows that South Africans do not just want Nigerians evicted, they want them to lose their lives as well. This shows how intense these threats are. In addition, the second narrative indicates that people use their messages to express threats based on certain experiences they have had.

 Much as these arguments can be contested, it is apparent in my data that South Africans are threatening Nigerians because of certain experiences

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they have had. Beyond the argument about isolation, loss of jobs, and others, it also has to do with certain experiences that are not economic. These experiences might have caused pain. For example, the second narrative tells you this person has endured pain because his girlfriend was attacked. The third narrative raises the issue of Merton's self-fulfillment prophecy. This presents a picture of a state where false opinions about the likelihood of an event happening lead individuals to get involved in actions that will cause the unlikely event more likely to occur (Merton, 1948). Thus, foreign nationals accusing South Africans of being xenophobic could lead to real-life violence. Last, it can be seen from the fourth narrative that with the South African xenophobic attacks, there are subjective issues influencing the messages. Nigerians also revealed the following:

> *…We should just come and fight and let's beat them blue-black. These South Africans don't have an atom of respect for us (18th February, 2020 at 6:53 pm).*
>
> *Affected African countries should come together and threaten Military action against South Africa! (6th February, 2020 at 11:10 am).*
>
> *South Africans thought they had a monopoly over violence. Other countries are coming for you as well… (27th February, 2020 at 11:28 am).*
>
> *It's so heartbreaking coming on Twitter but we have allowed South Africans to get away with so many murders. Enough is enough. If their government doesn't tame them, we will put them in place (28th February, 2020 at 2:47 pm).*

It is imperative to note that Nigerians have experienced several issues of violence in the past. These violence ranges from ethnoreligious conflicts to indigenes-settlers conflicts, Niger Delta resource-based conflict to Boko Haram

violence, as well as gender-based violence among others. They are therefore conversant with issues of violence. This speaks volumes for their dissemination of threatening messages. It can be inferred from the narratives that threatening messages made by Nigerians on media platforms are based on certain experiences. This could be a result of the attacks on their fellow citizens in South Africa. This raises the issue of negative reciprocity as Nigerians threaten to return the favor. This also shows the intensity of messages of threats as very strong.

Comparing both sides, it can be viewed that comments from Nigerians and South Africans were motivated by their lived experiences. As a result, they tend to convey threatening messages. This is suggestive of the fact that at a certain point in time given different conditions, people may express misgivings towards a group of people or an incident and these misgivings may be in a form of threatening messages. The second similitude between the comments from Nigerians and South Africans resides in the freedom of individuals to express their subjective opinions. Thus, similar to the Habermasian public sphere, this shows the promotion of a democratic culture. Last, the messages from both sides seem very intense as both parties conveyed threatening messages to assault and take one's life.

From these narratives, it can be inferred that threats constitute violent messages shared on social media thereby corroborating Amir and Jakob (n.d), and Culpeper's (2011) assertion that threats form part of the nine impolite strategies used on social media platforms. Finally, this resonates with Duggan

(2017), Matias et al. (2015) as well as Hua, Ristenpart, and Naaman's (2020) claim that threats of violence can be found within tweets with harmful contents. These tweets can be seen as a type of adversarial interaction that threatens to cause physical or mental pain. Therefore, it is can be deduced from the narratives that threatening tweets used on media platforms point to causing physical pain to individuals.

Hashtag messages that expressed insults in the face of xenophobic attacks

In social media, messages with impolite expressions are mostly used to intimidate others in online societies (Xu, Zhang & Zhu, 2010). Using insulting words is one of these means. Insults can be seen as expressions that are violent, offensive, or disrespectful. Culturally, insults are frowned upon as it shows a sign of disrespect. In recent times, insults have become normalized in virtual spaces (Culpeper, 2011; Amir & Jakob, n.d). This was not different during the recent xenophobic attacks. Through the reading of hashtag messages on xenophobia, these statements surfaced from Nigerians:

> *Nigerians should come first! South Africans are purely animals and don't deserve the sacrifices we made for them (18th December, 2019 at 3:52 pm).*

> *Simply put, South Africans are murderers, killers & vampires fully supported by their government (10th February, 2020 at 8:35 pm).*

> *These South African dudes are thieves! Always groping around in search of people to steal from hiding under xenophobia… (22nd January, 2020 at 3:17 pm).*

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South Africans are born with a touch of 'ugliness', just as ugly as they are, you don't expect a beautiful character from them (31ˢᵗ January, 2020 at 6:18 pm).

South Africans will always be losers! No matter what you do or how you see it! Losing is your birthright... (24ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 1:15 pm).

...Lazy fools...Shameless people, you are the stupidest and most lazy people in Africa, other Africans work hard but you are lazy, always complaining, using drugs and then you blame other Africans, other African countries have lower crime rates than South Africa...(20ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 12:14 pm).

Statements made under this subsection were directed to South Africans.

It can be seen from the narratives that individuals use inappropriate expressions on media platforms. This raises an issue of one's upbringing or socialization. In furtherance, the last narrative points out that indigenes become frustrated during hardships and tend to blame immigrants for their current situation (Soyombo, 2008) rather than working harder to make ends meet. Some South Africans indicated that:

We are not scared of you. Come collect your brothers and sisters selling drugs and prostituting our young women, please. They prefer to be "killed" here because it is better than to go home; to come eat shit with a fork and knife. You are animals. Your government is useless (24ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 6:51 pm).

So kicking the foreigners out has increased the unemployment rate from 29% to 36%? Shocking!! Xenophobia is not getting these monkeys employed... (29ᵗʰ January, 2020 at 3:17 pm).

In economic terms, the second narrative shows that individuals expressed their views on the unemployment issue in South Africa as foreign

nationals are being accused of stealing jobs (Tshitereke, 1999; Morris, 1998). This is a message that is saying those who are asking Nigerians to leave as unintelligent. With these statements, some are letting the South Africans see how contradictory their position has been and also how unintelligent they have been. It can be seen that sacking foreign nationals will not solve the problems in South Africa. A Kenyan mentioned that:

> *I am never setting a foot in that shit hole called South Africa*
> *full of barbaric bastards!! (18th February, 2020 at 8:09 pm).*

In addition, individuals stated the need to socially isolate themselves from South Africans. This raises some economic implications as it may cripple their tourism sector, decrease trade relations with other countries, and many others. Socially, it could render them poor as they would have a lesser chance of voicing their concerns during international summits.

On the other hand, the normalizing of insults have been seen as having political actors as the target. This could be linked to the observance of the universal principles of human rights that allows for freedom of speech. This is a common case in Ghana as day-in and day-out, politicians are made fun of, and called unpleasant names on various media platforms. Certain insults were directed to various heads of state, particularly the President of South Africa and that of Nigeria. The following statements were captured from Nigerians, South Africans, and a Kenyan:

> *...Ramaphosa is a beast (10th February, 2020 at 8:35 pm).*

> *...the problem in South Africa is that we are unlucky to be*
> *led by thieves with an ass-licking President who belongs to*
> *a useless party (12th December, 2019 at 3:58 pm).*

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We've seen useless presidents in the past, but no one excels at it like Cyril Ramaphosa. Foreigners now just do as they wish whilst he's sleeping. Impeach him!!!! Let's Impeach Cyril! (12th December, 2019 at 4:25 pm).

Now, this is leadership! Cyril Ramaphosa watch and learn you, bloody spineless coward! Here is a REAL President (President Buhari) standing up for his people and not allowing Nigerians to be bullied! (14th February, 2020 at 12:21 pm).

…It is high time world leadership considered re-classifying Cyril Ramaphosa as a lower animal and all sorts of sanctions must be imposed against this country!... (19th February, 2020 at 5:55 pm).

Our stupid president apologizes to keep his shares in Nigeria safe… (21st January, 2020 at 2:34 pm).

From the above statements, it is clear that due to the anonymity of various media platforms, individuals are given the luxury to use impolite words on others. Observably, various Heads of states are not exempted as they also have their share of inappropriate words on various media platforms.

Inferences from the findings in this subsection imply that violent events like xenophobia can lead to individuals trading insults on social media, particularly Twitter, that could lead to prolonged violence. These findings are consistent with that of Amir and Jakob (n.d), and Culpeper's (2011) views that insults constitute the common impoliteness strategy used by social media users on their platforms. Further, this also resonates with Duggan (2017), Matias et al. (2015), as well as Hua, Ristenpart, and Naaman's (2020) assertion that clear insults and usage of abusive language are a common form of harassment on Twitter. This could be a result of the freedom given to online users to express

themselves on various virtual platforms. Therefore, it is better to manage these unpleasant name-callings as it can cause psychological issues and also intensify real-life violence.

With the public sphere theory, Habermas (1962) proves that publicity and public opinion with time stemmed from the abundance of knowledgeable groups sharing their taste for arts and their thoughts and opinions in salons, coffee houses, and secret societies. With the advent of various media platforms, the bourgeois public sphere as described by Habermas has expanded as it allows individuals to reorient themselves from mere observers to potential discussants on public issues. This implies that the public sphere which in this study is the twitter platform grants citizens the chance to make their voices heard. From the discussions so far, it can be seen that the public sphere has grown into a space where people do not observe the use of certain customary messages. The statements viewed so far are suggestive of the fact that the public sphere gives individuals the freewill to incite violence with threatening, insulting, and other ill-mannered statements on media platforms.

Hashtag messages that expressed dismissals in the face of xenophobic attacks

Dismissals are impolite words viewed as a way of inciting violence between people (Amir & Jakob, n.d). These words are mainly used to drive away or sack individuals. Individuals employed such words during the recent xenophobic attacks in South Africa. By way of reading through hashtag messages on xenophobia, the following statements appeared:

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They are tired of crossing the Mediterranean Sea in bathtubs. They now want the South African government to pay for their flights; these cowards must go back to their home countries and fight their leaders (13th December, 2019 at 2:32 pm).

Nigerians must go, call it self-hate, call it xenophobia, but deep inside your heart as a South African you know why they must go (6th February, 2020 at 11:47 am).

…How did they get here? A drug lord from Nigeria came to fetch his foot soldiers here, they must go the same way they came (13th December, 2019 at 2:14 pm).

No Xenophobia here in the Republic of South Africa. We just have a lot of spoilt brats who are so many they can actually stage a shut down in a foreign country!!! They must fuck off (13th December, 2019 at 1:44 pm).

We are not brothers with Nigerians! Not even with Namibians! Good fences make good neighbors! Foreigners must go, it is not Xenophobia. There is no Xenophobia in South Africa… (4th February, 2020 at 1:51 pm).

…No one wants them to stay. For once we agree with the foreign nationals. They must go (12th December, 2019 at 3:40 pm).

The structural economic conditions in countries can make their citizens pass some comments on various media platforms. Historically, South Africa separated itself from the rest of Africa as a result of technological improvement and infrastructure amongst others. This made South Africans liken themselves to European countries as they viewed white as good and valued, while black was viewed as bad, evil, and worthless (Mario Matsinhe, 2011).

In furtherance, this creates difficulty for South Africans to relocate which shows how unexposed they are. This gives them the thought that they may not have their brothers and sisters being attacked in other countries. The

notion of lack of empathy on the part of South Africans speaks volumes because of the better economic conditions they have. They do not really appreciate what it means to spend life in other countries. Apparently, this truth seems to exist in present-day South Africa as they are driving away foreign nations from their country.

It can be seen from the narratives that South Africans do not want foreign nationals, especially Nigerians in their country. Statements made by some South Africans suggest that they want something more than xenophobic attacks. For them, it is a matter of seeing Nigerians being evicted. It is imperative to note that in the public sphere, people's responses to a particular phenomenon may sometimes be characterized by not just the phenomenon and their responses to them, but people may sway their inclinations towards other options. This also implies that in the public sphere, people speak out their wishes and not just their views, observations, experiences, and opinions.

Certainly, from the responses, it is clear that dismissals are one of the ill-mannered languages used on media platforms. Furthermore, structural characteristics such as 'they must go' and 'fuck off' were used by participants. This is in line with Culpeper's (2011), and Amir and Jakob's (n.d) assertion that dismissals are among nine strategies employed by online users on social media platforms. This is mainly so because of factors such as anonymity (faceless, bodiless), and lack of non-verbal cues and emotion as online users hide behind their electronic devices such as smartphones and laptops to bring out these impolite messages.

Negative expressive messages in the face of xenophobic attacks

As mentioned earlier, negative expressions are viewed as impolite words that contain curses or ill-wishes used on various media platforms (Culpeper, 2011). This also contains expressions like 'fuck you', 'fuck them' and 'go to hell'. These expressions were captured in the findings of this study. Reading through hashtag messages on xenophobia, the following statements indicating curses or ill-wishes came up:

> *…You guys will crawl on your knees to come and beg for forgiveness... (24th February, 2020 at 5:16 pm).*
>
> *…Barbarians deserving of Apartheid. Now that people are defending themselves, they can't attack anymore…Let dogs lick their blood on the streets (14th February, 2020 at 2:39 pm).*
>
> *…The judgment of God is coming on you all one by one. Killing my brothers from Nigeria… (29th January, 2020 at 11:59 am).*
> *I hope God can send a deadly disaster to wipe out South Africans as a punishment for what they are doing to other Africans (20th February, 2020 at 3:34 pm).*
>
> *...South Africans God bless you with Curses (11th February, 2020 at 3:19 pm).*
>
> *...one day South Africans will be foreigners or refugees in other African nations. God does not sleep (4th February, 2020 at 6:15 pm).*
>
> *Dear South Africans, someday you will wake up with no foreigners for you to kill or maim, all you're going to be left with is your former white masters & there will be no one to protect you from them. You'll be left alone in the face of looming gruesome apartheid... (19th February, 2020 at 12:08 pm).*

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South Africans may be celebrating Xenophobia but their youths will turn against them once the 'foreigner-objects' of hate are gone/dead. Feed not monsters for they will eat you the South Africans in the near future. Some will be haunted/fall into depression (22nd February, 2020 at 7:26 pm).

I'm afraid South Africa has bitten more than they can chew on these Xenophobia incidents. Not only will Posterity judge them, but they'll also live to rue their barbaric act (23rd February, 2020 at 5:14 pm).

...South Africans are dishing out the highest level of inhumanity of man to another. May also their uncles, fathers, and loved ones who lived in foreign countries experience this wickedness (20th February, 2020 at 1:50 pm).

It can be seen from the narratives that Nigerians were angry with the way their people were treated in South Africa. As a result, as traditionally as these people are, they rained curses and ill-wishes with the help of the supernaturals. The messages that contain expressions such as 'fuck you', 'fuck them' and 'go to hell' were captured as follows:

...you're abusing us in our own country, fuck you all...say I'm 'xenophobic', I couldn't care less (16th December, 2019 at 11:30 am).

...Fuck African migrants, they are everything wrong in this world. You fuck up your own country then go fuck others nice enough to host you? (13th December, 2019 at 4:25 pm).

People want the South African government to pay for their trips home! I say fuck them (13th December, 2019 at 4:03 pm).

Imagine traveling all countries with permits but to South Africa with just an ID document...Go to hell all Nigerians (16th February, 2020 at 8:41 pm).

In cultural terms, moral outrage could happen due to people's actions as it breaks social norms of behavior. This implies that when an individual fails to

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return kindness with kindness, immoral acts could occur. Sociologically, media platforms cause the loss of interpersonal qualities such as morality, honesty, and patience which can certainly be judged in face-to-face discussions (Wong, 2010). This shows a sign of postmodernism where moral standards are neglected and misplaced. This causes individuals to pass ill-mannered comments on media platforms.

The narratives are suggestive of the fact that South Africans did foreigners a favor by allowing them into their country. It can be deduced from the first and second narratives that these foreigners are not making good use of the opportunity as they are causing economic downturns in South Africa. This called for the need to evict foreigners from their country. The fourth narrative indicates that some foreign nationals particularly Nigerians came into South Africa illegally. Observably, these reasons necessitated the call for the evacuation of foreign nationals.

Last, it can be maintained that negative expressive such as Curses and ill-wishes, and 'fuck you' as mentioned by Amir and Jakob (n.d) and Culpeper (2011) have been expressed by various social media users relative to the hashtag xenophobia. It was also revealed that negative expressive messages also include expressions such as 'fuck them' and 'Go to hell' as found in this study. As a result, this added knowledge would be of help to researchers interested in violent or impolite expressions used on media platforms.

Hashtag messages that called for retaliation in the face of xenophobic attacks

Reciprocity can be viewed as the inherent drive to respond to the behavior of a related person (Dohmen, Falk, Huffmann & Sunde, 2008). Statements captured in this subsection represent negative reciprocity which shows that individuals have the intention of punishing those who have been cruel to them. Reading through hashtag messages on xenophobia, individuals revealed the following:

> *...Kill all South Africans you come across, Kill kill, Kill them all (25ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 6:03 pm).*

> *...An eye for an eye and nothing less. The ones who did the killing must be killed and nothing less. We must see to it that our brothers, who have been killed, have justice and nothing less. We will do whatever it takes until whatever gives us what we want. You don't mess with the giants of Africa and go scot-free; for there's no coming back from that until justice is served (18ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 7:02 pm).*

> *...I think Nigerians should just line up the South Africans living in Nigeria and give them the beating of their lives (25ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 8:58 pm).*

> *...Someone call me when we are arming ourselves with pangas, knobkerries, and machetes to go beat the shit out of the rapists and xenophobes. I'm done complaining and doing nothing. Call me when it's time (18ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 8:33 pm).*

> *I met this huge South African at my street today wanted to beat him up but didn't know how to approach (27ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 1:53 pm).*

> *God allow me to be used as an instrument that will fight back at South Africans (7ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 12:19 pm).*

> *Obviously, South Africa wants war, it is about time we granted them their wish (30ᵗʰ January, 2020 at 5:30 pm).*

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It gets to a point one has to realize that violence begat violence and kill that 'two wrongs don't make a right' cliché! South Africans are taking advantage and it is that time… (28th February, 2020 at 7:05 pm).

Nigerians let's take over South Africa, we take their port and airport. We starve them till they beg us. Nigeria spirit (21st February, 2020 at 6:16 pm).

It's just stupidity to wage an attack on a Nigerian company in retaliation for action or series of actions in South Africa......attack South Africa directly......not create more harm on an already failed Nigerian system (18th February, 2020 at 12:41 pm).

I know the looting will affect our economy, but if it's the only way our voices can be heard, we'll do it a thousand times. Our brothers and sisters are being killed like animals (25th February, 2020 at 5:24 pm).

It can be inferred from the narratives that individuals strongly believe in the saying 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. It is also established from the narratives that the violent attacks in South African against foreign nationals triggered a reprisal attack on alleged South African owned businesses in Nigeria. This has to do with one's socialization as some individuals are concerned with inciting violence rather than promoting peace. These are people who disregard social norms and moral values that are against acts that reflect negative reciprocity. This is viewed as breaching the commonly-known social standard. The negative side of reciprocity is it intensifies violence. For instance, the narratives point to the fact that when people are physically or verbally attacked, usually they feel justified in retaliating. This also suggests that in the public sphere, the edge to retaliate gives room for counter-reactions such as hate speeches.

Hashtag messages that expressed dares in the face of xenophobic attacks

The media is seen as a platform where gangs or other factions use to incite dares and engage in other violent acts (Patton, Eschmann & Butler, 2013). This they referred to as internet banging. Dares were also used by some participants on their Twitter platforms as a way of promoting violence during the recent spate of violent attacks in South Africa. They revealed the following:

> *Over here in the East, we are not really mad like that, our business is our life. If you try any rubbish all in the name of Xenophobia, you will be beaten till sense runs into you (20th February, 2020 at 6:04 pm).*
>
> *If South Africans want to see the full military might of Nigeria; they should touch one of our cows or a Fulani herdsman! (24th February, 2020 at 6:29 pm).*
>
> *Nigeria and South Africa should organize a friendly war to test their Military Might. Enough is enough (24th February, 2020 at 6:34 pm).*

It can be deduced from these statements that there has been a transformation in issues of violence as dares are used not only physically but are also efficient on media platforms hence buttressing Patton, Eschmann, and Butler's (2013) proclamation on the use of social media platforms such as Twitter to incite dares and other internet banging undertakings.

From the data gathered in this section, it is observable that violent messages are employed on social media platforms, particularly twitter, to discuss political events like xenophobia. Furthermore, violent messages captured in this study comprised of threats, insults, dismissals, and negative expressive messages which forms part of Culpeper's (2011) nine impolite strategies.

The Responses of Non-State Actors

In the international arena, other actors who are not found within the state, this includes multinational corporations, international political organizations, and civil societies, have over the years contributed a lot towards the maintenance of international peace and security (Bah, 2013; Bruderlein, 2000) and make up for the role of state actors (Bah, 2013).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on the messages shared by civil societies. This is because, as the data search was going on, messages from multinational corporations were not seen. In the context of the United Nations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UNHCR Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) came out with some messages on their media platforms. Even for those messages, they were connected to their wishes for a peaceful resolution of protest in their Pretoria compound by asylum-seekers. For that reason, the analysis of responses from non-state actors was limited to civil societies.

Civil societies are seen as organizations that play an intermediary role between citizens and state actors (Francois, 2017; Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Arthur, 2010, Wordu, 2004), act as agents of change as they play a major role to prevent violence and build peace (Issifu, 2017; Barnes, 2006). In recent times, civil societies employ media platforms to express their views on important issues. When the xenophobic attacks happened, Civil Societies responded and their responses were captured as follows.

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Responses from Civil Societies on the xenophobic attacks

In an attempt to help achieve a peaceful co-existence in violent prone areas, the role of Civil Societies cannot be left out (Issifu, 2017; Barnes, 2006). Civil societies are made up of groups that play a major role during and after violent situations (Francois, 2017; Kanyinga, 2011). These groups are often seen as benevolent organizations that represent individuals in a community. Civil Societies are regarded as impartial non-state actors who are called on during crises to lend a helping hand. This could be because they are seen as neutral bodies and can be trusted as compared to Governments and other state agencies (Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Arthur, 2010; Bombande, 2005). From the readings of the hashtag messages on xenophobia, it was clear that civil societies that ranged from youth groups, human rights organizations, faith-based organizations, educational and research institutes, trade unions, and political parties were found as being present on social media platforms sharing messages on the xenophobic attacks.

In furtherance, the messages posted by civil societies on their various Twitter platforms included hashtag messages of advocacy (call for assistance from various stakeholders, condemnation of violence, unity, and solidarity), policy prescriptions (suggested solutions), and awareness creation on the rights, effects, and apartheid in the face of the xenophobic attacks. Last, other messages reflected practical efforts of dealing with xenophobic attacks and some auxiliary roles of civil societies which included hashtag messages that expressed prayer, the rationale for xenophobic attacks, and disappointment.

Hashtag messages from civil societies that called for assistance from various

stakeholders in the face of xenophobic attacks

By way of reading through the hashtag messages, the following

statements came up:

> *Civil Society calls on SADC (Southern African Development Community) to take urgent action on the violence in South Africa. The recent outbreak of violence in the Republic of South Africa is a matter of grave concern for South Africa, the SADC region, and Africa as a whole… We call on the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Government of Zimbabwe to take the necessary leadership within the SADC to ensure a speedy response is put in place (The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness Youth Africa, 18th February, 2020 at 4:00 pm).*

> *Consequently, we are calling on United Nations, African Union, world leaders, to speak up in not only condemning the attacks but mounting pressure on the South African government to among other things; Provide sufficient protection and safety for all migrants in South Africa, and Identify, profile and bring the perpetrators of the heinous crime to complete justice…Conclusively, we call on the Nigerian government to; Immediately make available emergency evacuation of all Nigerians who are willing to return home, Reach out to world leaders, multi-lateral and bilateral institutions to put pressure on South Africa to immediately put sustainable and lasting measures in place to stop the xenophobic attack, and Create enabling environment for Nigerians to live and fulfill ambitions at home without been pressured and pushed to travel abroad. God bless Africa! (The African Youth Growth Foundation, 18th February, 2020 at 4:05 pm).*

> *We call on the South African institutions, social partners, and NGOs to deploy their best energies to counter such acts… (The Italian General Confederation of Labour, 16th February, 2020 at 7:33 pm).*

> *…The Centre calls on the South African government to react in a way that shows that it is not "business as usual" (The Centre for Human Rights, 13th January, 2020 at 6:39 pm).*

We are going to further engage with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) to have uniform by-laws that will deal with small businesses in all our municipalities and make sure everyone, including foreign nationals, abide by the law. All traders must have a valid trading license as is the case with big businesses. The ANC will continue to engage all role players to ensure that we find a lasting solution to these challenges…We call on our people to refrain from these xenophobic and criminal attacks on Foreign Nationals and allow Government the space to find solutions that will promote peaceful coexistence…(The African National Congress, 20th February, 2020 at 6:20 pm).

The above narratives indicate that civil societies play an intermediary role during violence (Francois, 2017; Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Arthur, 2010). This enables them to advocate for peace through the call on state actors and other stakeholders like the United Nations and other international bodies for assistance on behalf of affected individuals. This resonates with Francois' (2017) statement that civil societies create a connection between citizens and their leaders, and also advocate for the better lives of citizens. It is imperative to note that the activities of civil societies are sometimes geared towards enhancing the lives of victims of conflict (Agyeman-Duah, 2008). This necessitates the call for assistance from state and international bodies to help manage or end violence. In this regard, the advocacy role of civil societies is seen here.

Hashtag messages from civil societies that expressed condemnation of violence in the face of xenophobic attacks

Through the reading of hashtag messages on xenophobia, the following statements surfaced as reminiscent of condemnations by civil societies:

…We condemn these attacks and once more call on SADC member states to unequivocally condemn the recent and continued Xenophobia attacks and rhetoric in South Africa…We urgently call on the President of South Africa to meet responsible representatives of the affected communities and constituents and to publicly re-affirm his Government's condemnation of racist xenophobia (The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness Youth Africa, 18th February, 2020 at 4:00 pm).

Migration is not a crime. And as such, the South African government must strongly condemn acts that criminalize it… The Constitution of South Africa explicitly prohibits discrimination and recognizes the right of everyone to life and inherent dignity… (The Centre for Human Rights, 13th January, 2020 at 6:39 pm).

We are appalled by the violence and xenophobic attacks against non-South-African people. Trade unions must condemn and take action against all forms of racism and Xenophobia (The Italian General Confederation of Labour, 16th February, 2020 at 7:33 pm).

We condemn the burning of the Casual Workers Advice Offices (CWAO) in Germiston during the spate of violent attacks and looting that erupted across Gauteng on Monday, 02 September… (The Foundation for Human Rights, 27th February, 2020 at 11:55 pm).

We strongly condemn the recent xenophobic violence and attacks against foreign nationals in South Africa… (The Centre for Human Rights, 13th January, 2020 at 6:39 pm).

…We strongly condemn the incidents of violence against nationals of fellow African countries in South Africa, including the looting and destruction of their properties (The West African Civil Society Forum, 11th February, 2020 at 1:10 pm).

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The SRC notes with great concern the afrophobic attacks happening around currently and notably in Gauteng…While we acknowledge that these issues exist within our society, we wish to condemn in the harshest way the attacks on our fellow African siblings (The University of Cape Town SRC, 18th February, 2020 at 12:59 pm).

…we condemn the barbaric attacks and the looting of properties belonging to African foreign nationals…we condemn the senseless killing of young women in the hands of men… (The African National Congress, 20th February, 2020 at 6:20 pm).

It can be inferred from the statements above that civil societies are not in favor of the xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa. The first three narratives show that civil societies denounce the act and call on state actors and other non-state actors to follow suit. These narratives raise the issue of civil societies lobbying and creating a link between residents and state actors to help promote peace. This is consistent with Francois' (2017) assertion that civil societies play a role of a mediator and also lobby for better living conditions for residents in times of violence. Likewise, it resonates with Peberdy and Jara's (2011) claim that civil societies engage in lobbying provincial and city governments to improve the conditions of individuals.

Additionally, the second narrative shows that violent attacks and discrimination are frowned upon in the South Africa constitution. Some statements also show that civil societies denounce acts of violence in affected regions as indicated by Mwaura and Martinon (2010). Noticeably, the last narrative raises the issue of women falling prey to these xenophobic attacks. This shows that women are not left out in violent situations as they are abused

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by men during violence. Onlike Rehn and Sirleaf's (2002) and Sharoni's (1994) assertion that women are supposed to be part of the peace-building and conflict resolution process, in this work, it is evident that women are rather viewed as likely victims and therefore are supposed to be protected.

In furtherance, it is worth noting that both civil societies and individuals expressed condemnation during the xenophobic attacks. This indicates that, in the public sphere, messages shared tend to move in the same direction. This brings to bear the issue of collective conscience exhibited by individuals and groups.

Hashtag messages from civil societies that expressed unity in the face of xenophobic attacks

In promoting a culture of peace in Africa and the world at large, civil societies intervene to ensure that individuals and states live in harmony (Rawat, 2014). This shows that civil societies believe in the power of unity in ending the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The following were found as messages from some civil societies that expressed unity:

> *We promise to do our part in making South Africa a country we can be proud of and a home for all. We urge all fellow South Africans to do the same. Let's stand up against Xenophobia together! (The Justice Desk, 10th February, 2020 at 7:32 pm).*

> *Africans, we are one. There is no need of fighting ourselves. We are supposed to come together to build our nations in love not in anger. Fighting our self is never a solution. No African country can succeed alone. Africans need each other to develop. The wound of one should be the wound of all…(The Divine Grace of Glory Church, Nigeria, 18th February, 2020 at 4:47 pm).*

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We are at a time where we are called to unite as African people. Our country and the continent at large are at a juncture and experiencing a lot but the solution cannot be to kill off one another…Together we can nourish the torn fabric of unity and once again work together towards economic emancipation through pan-Africanism (The University of Cape Town SRC, 18th February, 2020 at 12:59 pm).

Kwame Nkrumah in his book, 'Africa Must Unite', says that 'The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart.' Many African leaders didn't believe him and as Henry Kam Kah says in his article "Vindicating Kwame Nkrumah and Uniting Africa Against Global Destruction", many self-seeking African leaders described him as a dreamer of impossibility. However, today we can see that this call for unity needs to be embraced more than ever with transformative leadership (The University of Cape Town SRC, 18th February, 2020 at 12:59 pm).

Away with colonialism, Away with imperialism…Let the unity of African people reign supreme in all of us. We are Africans and we are not going to apologize about it (The Economic Freedom Fighters [Tshwane], 30th January, 2020 at 6:25 pm).

South Africa, Islam does not allow any form of discrimination. As for migration, Islam was built on the Migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah with all his followers and they were warmly welcomed by residents of Madina and that was the victory of Islam (The Muslim Supreme Council of South Africa, 24th February, 2020 at 3:07 pm).

It can be inferred from the responses above that individuals need to come together in the fight against xenophobic attacks. This is because the presence of unity among people could lead to peace as seen by Rawat (2014). This implies that where unity or togetherness exists, there is peace. In addition, the first three narratives show that individuals are socially accountable and must participate in building healthy and peaceful societies everywhere (Poskitt &

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Dufranc, 2011). It can be seen from the third narrative that there is a call for individuals to work together to achieve economic freedom through encouraging and strengthening the bonds of solidarity between African states. This could be founded on the belief that unity is important to economic, social, and political growth and intends to bring together and enrich people of African ancestry (Frick et al., 2006).

Historically, the fourth narrative shows the relevance of the words of an influential leader like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in times like these. It is imperative to note that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah appeared as a major advocate for the unity of Independent Africa as he championed the quest for regional integration of the whole of Africa (Mkandawire, 2005). The fifth narrative indicates that outside foreign intervention, unity among African states is key. In religious terms, the last narrative brings to bear the Islamic doctrine that strives to accommodate migrants regardless of the social difference that exists between the parties involved. In this regard, statements made are suggestive of the fact that social cohesion is key as it brings peaceful coexistence between individuals.

Again, civil societies and individuals share equal views on xenophobic attacks as they were both interested in ensuring social cohesion among conflicting parties. This shows the existence of a particular trend when it comes to messages shared in the public sphere.

Hashtag messages from civil societies that expressed solidarity in the face of xenophobic attacks

Civil societies are known to assist through their responses to violence and the humanitarian efforts they provide to affected persons of violence (Peberdy & Jara, 2011). During the recent xenophobic attacks, some civil societies took it upon themselves to stand with other civil societies and victims of the attacks as well. Reading through hashtag messages on xenophobia, the narrative below surfaced:

> *We express our solidarity with all civil society organizations' efforts at prevention, mediation, and victim support as well as solidarity now being undertaken by our brothers and sisters in South Africa and assure them our full support in these efforts (The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness Youth Africa, 18th February, 2020 at 4:00 pm).*

> *We are in solidarity with the Congress of South African Trade Unions and all South African workers for the recent violent xenophobic attacks. CGIL stands in solidarity with COSATU and with all people who are suffering from violence, harassment, and discrimination due to ethnic and racial backgrounds…CGIL stands together with workers, trade unions, and all those political and civil society organizations which defend the rule of law and the defense of human rights… (The Italian General Confederation of Labour, 16th February, 2020 at 7:33 pm).*

> *We stand together with the African students, especially the Nigerian community in these trying times, and extend our condolences to our siblings who have lost their loved ones. A dark cloud hovers above our heads and Africa grieves for the fallen ones. May the rain from these dark clouds cleanse our hearts and as the skies become clearer so may our hearts (The University of Cape Town SRC, 18th February, 2020 at 12:59 pm).*

We send our deepest condolences to the families of Uyinene Mrwetyana, Jesse Hess who was found beaten, 14-year-old Janika Mallo who was found with a head injury, and boxing champion Leighandre "Baby Lee" Jagels who was shot by her boyfriend (The African National Congress, 20ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 6:20 pm).

The above statements show that civil societies work hand-in-hand to back each other as they assist victims of violence. From these statements, it is obvious that some civil societies such as the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) and the African National Congress (ANC) conveyed sympathetic messages with individuals, families, and institutions affected by the recent spate of xenophobic attacks. This shows that on social media platforms, civil societies have their way of expressing their commiseration to victims of violence.

Suggested solutions from civil societies in the face of xenophobic attacks in South Africa

Civil societies are seen as organizations that employ media platforms to advocate for change during violence or crisis (Kanyinga, 2011; Peberdy & Jara, 2011). As a result, these organizations are seen to speak freely on pressing issues. During the recent xenophobic attacks, some civil societies felt the need to propose ways to end the violence. They revealed that:

The South African government should publicly set out specific, concrete steps it is going to take to guarantee the safety and protect the human rights and freedoms of non-nationals living in South Africa, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. A comprehensive strategy should include efforts to bring to justice those responsible for inciting or carrying out violent xenophobic attacks…The government should increase the deployment of police officers with relevant specialized training in xenophobic

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crimes to improve the success rates in effectively and fairly investigating and prosecuting such crimes…(The Human Rights Watch, 20th January, 2020 at 2:56 pm).

The government should: Unequivocally acknowledge the seriousness of violence against foreign nationals in South Africa; Conduct an extensive investigation into the causes of the recurring spates of xenophobic violence; Develop adequate measures that respond to the socio-economic conditions in the state; Ensure that all foreign nationals are assisted with reporting and opening of cases at police stations and other public offices to promote access to justice; Apprehend perpetrators of xenophobic violence; and Deliberately cultivate social cohesions between South Africans and foreign nationals (The Centre for Human Rights, 13th January, 2020 at 6:39 pm).

From the narrations above, it is quite clear that civil societies use media platforms to propose policy prescriptions towards the stoppage of violence. As part of the policy prescription which civil societies generally do, one can see from the narratives that some civil societies are interested in the social protection of people. These findings have some significant theoretical relevance.

In the phase of agenda-setting, civil society can be key in pressuring the government to take various actions. Civil society groups have been able to maintain their role as pressure groups by formal and informal lobbying, embarking on public mobilization (e.g. public campaigns), and also by setting-up tests that prove a solution is feasible. Similar to the findings of Abdulai and Quantson (2009) as well as Ansah and Takyiakwaa (2018) civil societies can influence the idea behind a specific policy depending on the type of input and the framing used in their advocacy and policy prescription functions. The involvement of civil societies can determine how high social protection is on

the policy agenda and can further affect the speed at which policymaking or modifications occur.

Finally, concerning the public sphere theory, like-minded opinions from both individuals and civil societies were shared through hashtag messages. This shows that, in the public sphere, there is a sense of collective conscience as messages expressed by individuals and groups point in the same direction.

Hashtag messages from civil societies that expressed public awareness in the face of xenophobic attacks

As part of the awareness, one of the issues had to do with awareness creation on the rights of people. The other two had to do with producing knowledge regarding the effects of violence, and people being reminded about apartheid. Civil societies are also seen as organizations that embark on peace education and awareness creation programs (Francois, 2017; Ateng & Abazaami, 2016). It is imperative to note that the African Youth Growth Foundation (AYGF), as part of their September 4th press release on xenophobic attacks in South Africa, made African citizens aware of their legal rights to travel and live in any part of the world as stated by the United Nations through the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They mentioned through hashtag messages on xenophobia that:

> *As you all know, African citizens like every other global citizen have the right to legally migrate, reside and live in any part of the world as guaranteed by the United Nations through the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all migrant workers and members of their families. Also, Articles 6,7,8 and 12, of Part III of the African Union Protocol on Free movement of persons, right of residence,*

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and right of establishment were adopted on January 29th, 2018 which supports the protection of migrants, their rights, dignity… (The African Youth Growth Foundation, 18th February, 2020 at 4:05 pm).

It can be inferred from the narrative that legal justifications exist for individuals to travel and reside in a foreign land. These are presented in a form of articles. This finding of the study is consistent with Orjuela's (2020) proclamation that civil societies focus on the rights and protection of minority groups through the provision of advocacy or lawful aid.

Additionally, the study resonates with Peberdy and Jara's (2011) assertion that civil societies offer advisory and advocacy services such as giving migration and legal advice. This implies that civil societies, with the help of media platforms, engage in advocacy services to help educate individuals on their rights to migrate and also to reside on foreign land.

In furtherance, the effects of violence, precisely xenophobic attacks, have been studied by various scholars (Solomon & Kosaka, 2013; Monson & Arian, 2011; Kanjo, 2008). In the course of the recent attacks in South Africa, statements made by some civil societies show that the attacks came with some costs. As part of the media statement on the attack on Casual Workers Advice Offices (CWAO), the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) revealed that:

…The director at the CWAO, Ighsaan Schroeder, explained that when they assessed the damage this morning, they found that important equipment and furniture had been looted before the office was set alight. As a result, the office has suffered extensive damage which will have a knock-on effect on the service they provide to precarious workers…As it stands, important files have been damaged by the smoke from the fire and this is a setback not only to our operators but also to the workers who rely on us and have entrusted us

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with their personal information. That being said, we will not be deterred. We will start over again (The Foundation for Human Rights, 27th February, 2020 at 11:55 pm).

It can be seen from the narrative that not only were people killed and shops looted, businesses and establishments were also set alight. This implies that xenophobia can be viewed as a life-threatening act committed against property, or even organizations (Nel, 2005). From the statement, it stands to put forward that this civil society identifies xenophobia as an event that can lead to the destruction of properties.

With awareness creation on apartheid, historically, South Africa has gone through a period where black South Africans faced racial discrimination in the hands of the white minority due to the color of their skin (Tella, 2016; Mario Matsinhe, 2011; Dodson, 2010; Steenkamp, 2009). Apartheid is a concept or an event that will always be remembered by South Africans and citizens worldwide. The Center for Human Rights (CHR), South Africa felt the need to remind South Africans of the apartheid era. The CHR mentioned that:

As conflicts force some people to move from other countries, South Africa must remember its struggles against violent oppression and denounce injustices and xenophobic acts of violence perpetrated against refugees and other foreign nationals. South Africa must not be complicit in perpetuating cycles of xenophobic violence within its borders destroying the democratic fabric. Rather, South Africa must recognize that African Migrants Matter and it must take seriously its international commitments towards migrants and other forcibly displaced populations (The Center for Human Rights, 13th January, 2020 at 6:39 pm).

The narrative indicates the need for South Africans to accept immigrants as they also struggled in the hands of white South Africans during the apartheid

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era.   The response implies that South Africa as a host country is not friendly towards immigrants. This could be due to the fear of losing limited and valued resources such as land (Ediev, Coleman & Scherbov, 2014).

In furtherance, the narrative indicates that South Africans have not been enlightened on their foreign policy view that is based on its commitment to the values and principles of Pan-Africanism, solidarity with individuals of the South, and the world at large. There is therefore the need to familiarize South Africans with their foreign policy.

Hashtag messages from civil societies that show practical efforts of dealing with the xenophobic attacks

During the violence, forums or workshops were organized by some civil societies. These civil societies also called on key representatives to discuss vital issues without the pressure of an outright resolution. This creates the avenue for civil society groups to perform their role as facilitators during violence (Paffenholz, 2014) as they facilitate dialogue workshops and many others (Paffenholz, 2010; Barnes, 2006). In the course of the recent xenophobic attacks, some civil societies, specifically human rights organizations, and education and research institutes held forums and marches as a way of creating awareness to help end violence. They revealed the following through hashtag messages:

> *To discuss these and other related issues pertaining to migrants, the Centre will host a two-day international conference on the protection of forced migrants in Africa on 6 and 7 September 2019…(The Centre for Human Rights, 17th December, 2019 at 6:12 pm).*

The South African constitution obliges the state to protect the rights of all who live in South Africa. The Roundtable discussion will discuss the recurring waves of xenophobic violence in the country, the South African government's response, and gaps in policing. The discussion will also seek to find methods to effectively address the attitudes and perceptions towards foreign nationals who have made their livelihoods and homes in South Africa for various reasons (The Centre for Unity in Diversity, 9th December, 2019 at 12:05 pm).

In cognizance of this complexity of Xenophobia, the HSRC through the Research Unit and Impact Assessment (RIA) will hold a multi-stakeholder symposium on Xenophobia. The workshop brings together a diverse range of stakeholders including researchers, policy actors, media, and civil society…The ultimate aim of the forum is to develop proposals of multi-sectoral and multifaceted programs of action which include programmatic, policy, and socio-cultural actions that can be carried out in response to this problem…(The Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa, 24th December, 2019 at 9:00 am).

In South Africa, recent outbreaks of violence were at least partly targeting migrants from other African countries. Attacks on non-nationals have been reported from other countries as well. How can we understand current xenophobic violence in Africa? And what is needed to fight it? Join our round-table with eminent speakers!... (The Center of excellence for social science research on modern Africa, Sweden, 18th December, 2019 at 4:32 pm).

The International Office and the SRC are organizing an international forum on "Human Security in Crisis: #NoToXenophobia" that will be facilitated by Politics colleagues, Ms. Shingi Mtero and Dr. Siphokazi Magadla …We appeal to both international and South African students and staff to attend… (Rhodes University, South Africa, 22nd January, 2020 at 5:52 pm).

Staff and students are invited to join peaceful lunch-time march in solidarity with the national movement against Gender-Based Violence (#GBV), xenophobia, femicide & all other violent crimes…Wear black as a symbolic show of solidarity… (Nelson Mandela University, South Africa, 4th February, 2020 at 10:49 am).

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The response captures the role civil societies play in promoting constitutional rights and harmonious non-racial relations between all who live in South Africa. Furthermore, the responses imply that people who organize forums of such nature gather community members to spread information, either intended to prevent violent acts or to address matters relating to violence. Furthermore, the third, fourth, and fifth narratives denote the involvement of state actors and stakeholders during these public forums. It is imperative to add that organizers of these forums bring together community members to spread information, either intended to prevent violent acts or to address matters relating to the violence.

In addition, it is imperative to note that during the violence, parties to a conflict partake in workshops or forms organized by civil societies and this can lead to the suspension of conflict for a long time (Awedoba, 2011; Mahama, 2003). The last narrative captures the issue of wearing black attire as a symbolic way of observing our African culture about funerals and other painful moments. It can be seen that what has happened is a phenomenon that generates pain. This indicates that individuals have a unique way of conveying their values and beliefs on social media platforms.

Hashtag messages that reflect some auxiliary responses by civil societies in the face of xenophobic attacks

Concerning responses suggestive of other roles played by civil societies, one of the issues had to do with hashtag messages that expressed prayer. The

other two had to do with hashtag messages that expressed the rationale for

xenophobic attacks, and the expression of disappointment.

The following messages expressing prayer surfaced when I read through

hashtag messages on xenophobia:

> *Our primary school learners also conducted a moment of silence and prayer in honor of those who lost their lives in the recent xenophobic attacks (Phakamani Young Minds Academy, South Africa, 11th February, 2020 at 3:14 pm).*

> *... Prayer should change us. We (South Africa) have hardened our hearts for so long until we repent we will remain a bitter nation that hates its own. (The Connect Family Church, 25th February, 2020 at 4:06 pm).*

> *Today September 4, there will be a noon prayer service against violence at the SACC chapel at Khotso House, 62 Marshall Street, Marshalltown, and Johannesburg. All are welcome... (South African Council of Churches, 21st February, 2020 at 7:40 pm).*

It can be inferred from the above statements that civil societies also

believe in the power of the supernatural. The first narrative indicates some civil

societies' thoughts for victims of the recent xenophobic attacks as they observed

silence in commemoration of lost souls. In addition, the second narrative

expresses the belief in the power of prayer to cause a change in individuals. The

last narrative shows that during the violence, civil societies specifically Faith-

Based Organizations (FBOs) organize prayer sessions to pray against violence.

This affirms Mwaura and Martinon's (2010) assertion that during unusual

times, Church leaders come together to offer prayers to help end violent

altercations. It is worthy of noting that Africans still call on the supernatural in

times of need through prayer. It means that Africans believe strongly in the

supernatural for their needs to be provided. Again, these statements are suggestive of peace as a way of preserving one's cultural heritage.

From the above statements captured from non-state actors, particularly civil societies, it is worthy of noting that the public sphere gives civil societies the chance to freely express their views and opinions about public events on media platforms (Habermas, 1991). Further, the exposure of civil societies to media content aided them to advocate for long-term solutions to end the violence. This resonates with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory as the posts accessible to civil societies influenced their choice to contribute to ending the violent attacks in South Africa.

It is worth noting that the expressions which civil societies have given have been expressed by individuals. This suggests that there is a direction when it comes to messages shared in the public sphere. One can say that, in the public sphere, there is a direction that various categories of information sharers tend to have which supports uniformity. This shows the collectivity of conscience shared by individuals and groups.

With hashtag messages that expressed the rationale for xenophobic attacks, various scholars have given out varied reasons why South Africans indulge in violent acts against foreign nationals (Tella, 2016; Steenkamp, 2009; Harris, 2002). Harris (2002) grouped these reasons into three hypotheses namely the isolation, the scapegoating, and the bio-cultural hypotheses. The narrative below from the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness

(CPDE) Youth Africa surfaced when I was reading through the hashtag messages on xenophobia:

> *It is also apparent that poor South Africans are suffering greatly from a lack of dignity, human rights, and opportunities for self-development. The structural inequalities in South Africa exacerbate the psychosis of violence which society has not addressed in the more than twenty years since the transition to majority rule. The deep and systemic violence produced by Apartheid and Colonialism has not been adequately addressed by the democratic government. The everyday violence experienced by the majority of people living in South Africa – violence against women, children, and men; structural racism and sexism; homophobia and attacks on lesbians and transgendered persons – and the violence of poverty and social exclusion are clearly inextricably linked and contributes to the scapegoating of Africans for the ills and woes of the poor (CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness Youth Africa, 18th February, 2020 at 4:00 pm).*

It can be seen from the narrative that South Africans have once gone through some major social, economic, and political situations. This restates some previous observations made by Tshitereke (1999), and Morris (1998) that migrants are used as 'scapegoats' because they are seen as threats to jobs, housing, education, health care, and unequal distribution of resources and wealth in the country. This makes indigenes frustrated and migrants are used as 'scapegoats' (Soyombo, 2008). This indicates that immigrants are easy targets to blame for the misfortunes of South Africans. Furthermore, the narrative shows that the South African government has let-down its people by allowing such problems to prevail. These failures of the government to solve these problems give South Africans the added advantage to exert their frustrations on

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African migrants as they believe they are to be blamed for their situation (Fuller, 2008).

Finally, some hashtag messages from civil societies expressed disappointment in the face of xenophobic attacks. In as much as civil societies are viewed as agents of social change (Barnes, 2006) they need the support of the Government to make this change a reality. Statements made by some civil societies revealed their displeasure attributable to the response of the South African government on xenophobia. They stated the following through hashtag messages on xenophobia:

> *…In this chaos of violence, there is a defeating silence that is even more striking from our political leadership. We are particularly disappointed that the President, the Gauteng Premier, the Mayors of the affected metros, as well as any Chapter Nine institutions, have been slow, or are yet to engage in action to stop the looting and violence. At a time when their voices should visibly, loudly, and boldly denounce the violence, leadership has been slow to respond leaving the vulnerable even more exposed. As it stands, the South African Police Service appears to be struggling to protect innocent people and contain the situation, the very job which they are entrusted to do… (The Foundation for Human Rights, 27th February, 2020 at 11:55 pm).*

> *… It is disappointing that the South African government has done very little to address xenophobic violence in South Africa, and it is extremely worrisome to see it resurface regularly. While the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance is in place, it is not very well-known and only infrequently invoked and applied (The Centre for Human Rights, 4th February, 2020 at 3:20 pm).*

The responses presented show that civil societies strongly believe that timely responses of political actors on xenophobic attacks can help end the violence. This implies that some civil societies were dissatisfied with the South

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African governments' response to the recurring xenophobic attacks in South Africa. it is imperative to note that the government could be dragging its feet because of the label attached to xenophobic attacks as "just crime and not xenophobia" (Misago, Freemantle & Landau, 2015). Sociologically, an act becomes deviant when others see it as such (Becker, 1963). So, therefore, with xenophobic attacks being viewed as "just crime and not xenophobia", it will not require any major interferences or policy changes by the South African government.

It can be seen from the first narrative that the South African police were in no position to ensure law and order to maintain public peace. This implies that the South African police have limited their role which required them to protect human lives and properties (Landau & Haithar, 2007). In sociological terms, this could create a criminal subculture since the absence of law and order can expose young South Africans to deviant values and role models (Cloward & Ohlin, 1962). Observably, it is clear that these political actors play a major role in the success of civil societies. This speaks volumes for they showing their displeasure on media platforms towards the reaction of South African leadership.

The Responses of State Actors

The recent wave of xenophobic violence in South Africa left the whole world in a state of dilemma as they watched from various media channels, specifically social media. State actors were not exempted as they used their media platforms to address their citizens and citizens of other countries. It is

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worth noting that the role of state actors in violent situations does not only end violence but fulfills initiatives intended to resolve conflict among disputants (Abdulrahman & Tar, 2008). This shows the ultimate responsibility of state actors to ensure the maintenance of law and order in society.

From the study, there were statements made by state actors, particularly Nigerian officials, to evacuate their citizens from South Africa. Some state actors from African countries also expressed their displeasure with violence perpetrated against their citizens during the xenophobic attacks on their Twitter platforms. The state actors comprised of Governments, State Senators, Mayors, Presidents, Vice Presidents, and others. It was discovered that the comments captured in this study came from state actors mainly from South Africa and Nigeria. The responses from state actors comprised of hashtag messages that expressed condemnation of xenophobic attacks, voluntary evacuation (mainly by the Nigerian government), and advice against reprisal attacks. Other state actors reminded South Africans of apartheid and also expressed the resolution of violence in South Africa.

Hashtag messages from state actors that expressed condemnation in the face of xenophobic attacks

In recent times, just as individuals have the chance to voice out their concerns on social and political issues (Goswami, 2018; Wang & Caskey, 2016) state actors are not left out as they can freely express themselves on social media platforms. During the xenophobic attacks, some state actors found social media, specifically Twitter a suitable platform to denounce the xenophobic attacks

against foreign nationals. Through the reading of hashtag messages on xenophobia, the following statements surfaced:

> *I condemn the violence that has been spreading around a number of our provinces in the strongest terms… (A South African Official, 2ⁿᵈ March, 2020 at 1:20 pm).*

> *I have observed with great dismay the great levels of hate and violence against foreign nationals, most especially Nigerians in South Africa. As a Nigerian and a patriot, I condemn those xenophobic attacks in their entirety… (A Nigerian Official, 29ᵗʰ January, 2020 at 10:06 am).*

> *As the whole continent unites in condemning this atrocity, some high ranking officials in South African politics are restocking the fires by opprobriously justifying the heinous act of terrorism. For example, Thabo Mbeki, a former president said "Nigerian criminals are the targets of Xenophobia". Also, Lindiwe Sisulu, their foreign minister was quoted as saying "Nigerians are drug traffickers and they should be prevented from coming into South Africa"! Statements like these are high-octane "fuels" that ignite hate and propels these persistent attacks. They should be unapologetically condemned because they betray our collective quest for a united Africa (A Nigerian Official, 29ᵗʰ January, 2020 at 10:06 am).*

> *…The Federal Government of Nigeria totally condemns the renewed attacks on foreign nationals and their businesses in South Africa which has led to the loss of lives and properties worth millions of Naira... (A Nigerian Official, 11ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 4:12 pm).*

> *The recent attacks in South Africa are condemnable. It is sad and very unfortunate that the lives and livelihoods of Nigerians living in South Africa, are once again being destroyed with such wantonness carelessness, and recklessness… (A Nigerian Official, 2ⁿᵈ March, 2020 at 1:10 pm).*

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> *The attacks, maiming, burning, and ultimately killing of Nigerians in South Africa are condemnable. These frenzy of wanton destruction, social displacement, loss of properties, and means of livelihood. Immediate engagement is needed ASAP (As Soon As Possible) to stop it. And stop it in finality (A Nigerian Official, 2nd March, 2020 at 3:47 pm).*

From the narratives, in as much as most of the statements above are from Nigerian Officials, it can be seen that they have the same mindset as the South African official. This suggests that the promotion and protection of certain universal human rights principles are being adhered to. The narratives also raise the issue of hatred towards immigrants. This is not a new phenomenon as, in Africa, Ghanaians have suffered hatred from Nigerians and vice versa (Campbell, 2003). This led to the popular term 'Ghana must go'. From the third narrative, it can be seen that some high ranking South African officials justified the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Furthermore, it can be seen from the same narrative that derogatory labels such as criminals, and drug traffickers are commonly used in media platforms (Smith, 2011; Danso & McDonald, 2001). This implies that the negative portrayal of foreigners remains evident on present-day media platforms.

The fourth, fifth, and Sixth narratives raise an issue of the effects of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. From the statements made on the effects, it stands to suggest that these state actors recognize xenophobia as an event that can lead to the loss of lives and properties.

In furtherance, in the public sphere, state actors get the opportunity to speak on public issues. This indicates that they have expanded their possibility of addressing citizens on public issues from physical to a virtual space. This is

done in a way that can be seen as politically right. It is worth noting that state actors are inspired by the principles of diplomacy and are mindful of what they say in the media space. Last, statements expressed by state actors have also been expressed by individuals and civil societies. This shows that in the public sphere, there is a sense of collective consciousness since the same ideologies can be shared by various individuals and groups during an event.

Hashtag messages from state actors that expressed voluntary evacuation in the face of xenophobic attacks

Voluntary evacuation can be viewed as an option taken by African leaders and governments to safeguard their citizens residing in conflict-prone areas (Kinge, 2016). For example, the 2015 xenophobic attacks in South Africa caused the Malawian government to evacuate its citizens from South Africa. A voluntary evacuation is done during events like this to move people away from the threat to life and property. In situations like this, individuals are not mandated to leave, but it would be beneficial to them if they do so. During the recent wave of xenophobic violence, a voluntary evacuation was recommended by some state actors. The following narrations came up when I was reading through hashtag messages on xenophobia:

> *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has conveyed the generosity of a patriot Nigerian airline operator and philanthropist Chief Allen Onyema to evacuate distressed Nigerians in South Africa who wish to return to Nigeria. The evacuation is already scheduled for Saturday 7th September 2019 barring unforeseen circumstances. The Consulate General and the High Commission hereby welcome immediate registration of interested Nigerians wither at the two Missions or with leaders of the following Nigerian organizations to be coordinated by the Nigerian Citizens*

Association in South Africa (NICASA) President, Prince Ben Okoli… (A Nigerian Official, 5th December, 2019 at 1:35 pm).

May it be emphasized that this exercise is entirely free. There is no payment whatsoever either for the flight or travel document to be issued to those without valid passports. Interested Nigerians who would have registered latest by Friday evening 6th September should hold themselves ready to travel by Saturday 7th September 2019. This gesture should be viewed in the light of the security challenges which our nationals face in the country and the Federal Government's commitment to the wellbeing of Nigerians wherever they may be (A Nigerian Official, 5th December, 2019 at 1:35 pm).

Let me also say that we have made arrangements for the immediate voluntary evacuation of all Nigerians in South Africa who are willing to return home. I have directed the relevant agencies to ensure this is done speedily and efficiently (A Nigerian Official, 30th January, 2020 at 6:23 pm).

It can be inferred from the narratives that in times like this, governments of affected individuals come to the rescue of their citizens to prevent more harm from the host country. The voluntary evacuation of Nigerians from South Africa due to the recent spate of xenophobic violence aligns with the statement of Kinge (2016) that governments upon seeing the possibility of a violent attack, evacuate their citizens before they are attacked or killed by citizens of their host country.

Hashtag messages from state actors that are advising against reprisal attacks in the face of xenophobic attacks

In retaliation to the violent acts shown to Nigerians in South Africa, some citizens in Nigeria also took to the streets of Nigeria, looted and burnt shops they believed were owned by South Africans. It is worth noting that

African states such as Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have in the past boycotted South African businesses in their countries because of the way their people were roughed up in the earlier xenophobic attacks (Chen, 2015). These boycotts and attacks triggered responses from various state actors. They revealed the following:

> ...many Nigerians are justifiably aggrieved but I condemn the ransacking of certain shops owned by South Africa(ns) in some parts of the country. You cannot break into a shop, loot it out, and call it a protest! Many have clamored for an economic boycott but that also wouldn't solve the problem in the long run (A Nigerian Official, 29th January, 2020 at 10:06 am).

> Just received reports of reprisal attacks at Shoprite in Lekki, Lagos state. I know as Nigerians we are offended at the attacks against our brothers and sisters in South Africa. However, two wrongs can't make a right. Therefore, I urge calm amongst our brethren (A Nigerian Official, 2nd March, 2020 at 2:24 pm).

> Saddened by the reported damage to some property by some students earlier today. While the concerns are valid for standing up against xenophobia, damaging property is hardly the solution. Please allow those working on the issue of xenophobia to do their job. Concentrate on studies (A Zambian Official, 19th February, 2020 at 12:27 pm).

It can be deduced that in as much as individuals were involved in negative reciprocity, state actors were not in support of these acts. This implies that even though Africa has experienced leaders who are dictators (e.g. Idi Amin, and Mabuto Sese Seko), it has leaders who are sensitive to the needs of the people (Masango, 2002).

In furtherance, the narrations captured in this subsection indicate that some Nigerians and Zambians saw violence as payback for the heinous act of

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violence by South Africans against their people. As Chen (2015) clearly stated, South African businesses that operated in Mozambique during the spate of xenophobic violence against their citizens were shutdown. To these state actors, two wrongs cannot make a right, therefore, reprisal attacks are not the way to go.

Xenophobic related messages from state actors that remind South Africans of apartheid

From 1948 through to the early 1990s, South Africa witnessed a political and social system in which black South Africans were ruled by the White minority and faced racial discrimination due to the color of their skin (Tella, 2016; Mario Matsinhe, 2011; Dodson, 2010; Steenkamp, 2009). This was referred to as Apartheid. As a result, some African states came to their aid by accommodating South Africans during the apartheid era. It is vital to note that African countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe housed the African National Congress (ANC) members in exile during the apartheid system (Kinge, 2016). For instance, the Nigerian Vice President, Professor Osinbajo as a reminder reiterated the help Nigeria and Nigerians gave to South Africans during the apartheid era. He stated that:

> *...Nigeria and Nigerians invested a great deal in the pulling down of apartheid. These acts of bigotry are entirely contrary to the very ideals that all the great South African leaders including the present President fought for, and for which many gave their lives (A Nigerian Official, 2nd March, 2020 at 1:10 pm).*

The response implies that Nigeria and Nigerians helped South Africa during the apartheid era. This reiterates some previous observations made by

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Kinge (2016), Tella (2016), as well as Dodson (2010) that African states such as Nigeria and Zambia accommodated South Africans during the period of apartheid. This indicates that South Africans are breaking the front of unity and reciprocity that have characterized the political relationships between African countries.

In furtherance, the narrative indicates that South Africans have not been well educated on the role other countries played during apartheid. Thus, there is a break in the transmission of information and knowledge about apartheid and that is playing the role in escalating the xenophobic attacks. There is therefore the need to acclimatize South Africans on historical precedents.

Noticeably, the expressions which state actors have given have been articulated by civil societies. This suggests that there is a trend that various individuals tend to share hashtag messages in the public sphere. This shows uniformity and a sense of collectiveness among these individuals.

Xenophobic related messages from state actors that expressed resolution of violence

Social media specifically Twitter has in recent times been used by various groups including the government and other stakeholders to address individuals during a crisis (Nganji & Cockburn, 2020). Ngangi and Cockburn added that these media platforms serve as a communication channel used by state actors to mobilize people for a common cause and to communicate vital information during crises and conflicts. The recent xenophobic attacks triggered responses from various state actors which were geared towards the resolution

of the violence. Common to most accounts was the need to put measures in place to ensure the safety of the lives, property, and business interests of African migrants, especially Nigerians in South Africa. Going through hashtag messages on xenophobia, the following statements of state actors were captured:

> *This issue is best handled diplomatically and I appreciate the moves by President Muhammadu Buhari, and other African countries such as Rwanda and Malawi who've also fired diplomatic shots against South Africa. Though Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa has condemned the attacks, it's not enough. We want to see efficacious efforts that will calm tensions, quell attacks, and mend broken bonds. It is on this note that I urge all parties to exercise restraint, be civil and shun reprisal attacks…(A Nigerian Official, 29th January, 2020 at 10:06 am).*

> *…We will continue to put pressure on the South African Government to take concrete and visible measures to stop violence against citizens of other African nations…On our part let me reiterate that the Nigerian Government will continue to do everything possible to ensure the safety of the lives, property, and business interests of Nigerians in South Africa, and of South Africans in Nigeria (A Nigerian Official, 30th January, 2020 at 6:23 pm).*

> *…We will take this up with the authorities in South Africa to ensure that this sort of thing does not repeat itself. It is absolutely unacceptable. We will take all actions necessary for the protection of our citizens everywhere in the world. We are currently in consultation with the South African government on the urgent need to put in place measures to end these acts of violence against our people (A Nigerian Official, 2nd March, 2020 at 1:10 pm).*

> *I'm convening the ministers in the security cluster today to make sure that we keep a close eye on these acts of wanton violence and find ways of stopping them. The people of our country want to live in harmony; whatever concerns or grievances we may have, we need to handle them in a democratic way. There can be no justification for any South*

African to attack people from other countries (A South African Official, 2ⁿᵈ March, 2020 at 4:17 pm).

The Government of Nigeria is engaging the relevant South African authorities via the Nigerian High Commission in Pretoria, Consulate General in Johannesburg, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abuja to ensure that definite measures are put in place to curtail the unfortunate attacks…The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wishes to assure the general public that the Government is committed to the protection of the lives and properties of Nigerians in South Africa (A Nigerian Official, 11ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 4:12 pm).

…The Federal Government commends the arrest of some perpetrators of the dastardly act by the South African Police and calls on timely prosecution to serve as deterrence to others. However, due to the tension created by the attacks, the Government of Nigeria wishes to advise Nigerians to avoid traveling to high risk and volatile areas until the situation is brought under control (A Nigerian Official, 11ᵗʰ February, 2020 at 4:12 pm).

…there will be a briefing on illegal migration by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, and the Mayor of Ekurhuleni; Briefing by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) on initiatives to address matters raised by the Mayor of the City of Johannesburg in order to promote social cohesion, manage illegal migration and prevent Xenophobia… (A South African Official, 17ᵗʰ December, 2019 at 5:20 pm).

It is imperative to note that there is a dimension being introduced under the whole gamete of resolution. For some, it was about what they wish will be done. For others, it is about the pressure they are putting on some governments. The interest of some state actors lies in the suggestion of recommendations. All these are geared towards the resolution of xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

It can be seen from the above narratives that some African leaders believe in peaceful co-existence as it could lead to stability within every given society. It can also be deduced that leaders are concerned about the safety of

their citizens during a crisis. This causes them to intervene by putting measures in place to protect their citizens. Given cultural inhibitions against the disrespect of elderly people, Africans are socialized to regard their elders or leaders. This is because they are seen as an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge in society (Dei, 1994; Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976). This is termed gerontocracy. From the fifth narrative, it is imperative to note that governments of conflicting parties work together to promote social cohesion and end violent situations.

With the variety of messages that were found from state actors, it is important to note that the public sphere grants leaders the opportunity to freely exchange their views about public events on media platforms such as social media (Habermas, 1991). In furtherance, the exposure of state actors to comments on various media platforms enabled them to advocate for lasting solutions to end the violent attacks. This corresponds with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory as the messages available to state actors influenced their decision to advise citizens and also support feasible actions to end the violent attacks in South Africa. Last, this confirms Gentile, Groves, and Gentile's (2014) assertion that an individual's opinions and actions can be influenced by the media.

As a final point, it can be said that the responses captured from the state actors above were all geared towards the promotion of social cohesion among individuals within and outside South Africa. Therefore, state actors with the help of media platforms, primarily reacted to issues concerning the reprisal attacks in other African countries, condemned the violent attacks, put measures

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in place to evacuate their citizens who were willing to leave South Africa, touched on some African nations' role in the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, and also played a major role in resolving the violent attacks in South Africa through their various interventions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The underlying theme of this study was to assess the adoption of hashtags in social media and how they are used to incite violence or achieve peace. This study specifically looked at the content of peaceful and violent hashtag messages on twitter relative to xenophobia, and how state and non-state actors responded to the grievances shared by individuals through hashtags. This chapter provides a summary of the whole work, conclusions drawn from the study, and relevant recommendations drawn from the analysis of the data that is expected to inform policy formulation and implementation. Suggestions for further research are also presented in this section.

Summary

The base of this study was found on the role social media platforms play during political events such as xenophobia. In furtherance, the study pointed out the relevance of hashtags in political discourses which makes it quite easier for information sharing on virtual platforms.

Again, the study recognizes that discourses on social media platforms during violent attacks can either bring about peace or cause violence to escalate. The study then looked at the responses of state and non-state on their social media platforms, particularly Twitter, regarding the recent spate of xenophobic attacks. This study has been guided by four specific objectives. They include:

- To discover the content of peaceful messages shared through hashtags on twitter relative to the event xenophobia

- To discover the content of violent messages shared through hashtags on twitter relative to the event xenophobia

- To establish how non-state actors, particularly Civil Societies, responded to the grievances shared by individuals through hashtag messages relative to xenophobia

- To establish how state actors responded to the grievances shared by individuals through hashtag messages relative to xenophobia

In furtherance, the study employed the qualitative research approach, and data was sought from secondary sources using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected from September 1, 2019, through to November 30, 2019, with the help of the documentary review guide. The researcher conducted the qualitative content analysis by thoroughly reading tweets that made mention of #xenophobia and categorized the raw data under themes. Last, this study employed the following analytical strategies; constant comparative analysis, narrative and discourse analysis, and phenomenological analysis.

Findings

The summary of data gathered on the adoption of hashtags in social media and whether they promote peace or stimulate violence are as follows:

- A plethora of messages were shared and some of these messages conveyed peace whiles others conveyed violence.

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- In terms of peace messages, it was found that tweets conveyed during the recent spate of xenophobic violence comprised of messages that expressed ethical values such as hope, love, and unity in the face of xenophobic attacks. Other messages were expressed in a form of prayer, existential negative labels, condemnations, emotive messages, and suggested solutions to the xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

- Regarding violent messages, the study found that online users spent their time disseminating hashtag messages that expressed threats, insults, dismissals, negative expressions, retaliation, and other daring words in the face of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

Additional data gathered from non-state actors could be summarized as follows:

- Concerning responses from non-state actors, specifically civil societies, it was found that six civil societies namely; youth groups, human rights organizations, faith-based organizations, educational and research institutes, trade unions, and political parties shared their views with regards to the recent wave of xenophobic violence in South Africa.

- Messages that were expressed by civil societies were seen to be wide-ranged. These included messages of advocacy, policy prescriptions, and awareness creation. Last, other messages reflected practical efforts of dealing with xenophobic attacks and some auxiliary roles of civil societies that included hashtag messages that expressed prayer, the rationale for xenophobic attacks, and disappointment.

Lastly, data gathered on the response of state actors in the face of xenophobic attacks could be summarized as follows:

- The findings showed that state actors such as Governments, State Senators, Mayors, Presidents, Vice Presidents, and others from mostly Nigeria and South Africa also expressed their disapproval of violence committed against their citizens during the xenophobic violence on their Twitter platforms.

- However, the responses from state actors tended to promote peace. They responded favorably with hashtag messages that expressed various roles. These included advocacy, social protection, advisory, and public awareness creation roles.

Conclusion

As per the findings gathered, it is essential to draw the following conclusions.

First, social media serves as a virtual space used by individuals all over the world to share their pleasures, displeasures, approvals, and disapprovals about certain social and political events.

Social media, particularly twitter, have become platforms for the expression of sentiments, beliefs, values, norms, knowledge, and information towards an existing social phenomenon. From the evidence gathered, it is obvious that in the face of socially disapproving events, the direction that messages take is the ones that promote peace rather than violence.

Additionally, the actors found in the public sphere on the social media space are oriented towards playing advocacy, social protection, advisory, and

public awareness creation roles and putting strategic measures in place to tackle the issue of violence.

Finally, it can be concluded that responses from actors were seen as promising in terms of the maintenance of peace and the creation of intercontinental solidarity.

Recommendations

- First, the Information and Communication directorate of the African Union and other regulatory bodies such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should intensify the monitoring of messages posted on social media as negative contents in messages posted on social media platforms could adversely influence others.

- Moreover, the Information and Communication directorate of the African Union should strengthen its use of social media by engaging in productive discussions with residents to have control over messages disseminated on these platforms by social media users.

- The Information and Communication directorate of the African Union should create a committee that would be responsible for collating all messages shared by individuals on social media platforms on issues of general importance for the sake of policy.

Suggestions for Further Research

First, mixed-method should be employed in the future as this study could not be generalized since it employed a qualitative research approach only. In addition, future research should employ the use of other social media

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platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Moreover, a comparative approach could also be beneficial in this regard. Scholars can examine whether social media users post more violent messages on twitter than they do on Facebook or Instagram concerning a particular event.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DOCUMENT REVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

This code sheet in this protocol is meant to guide the researcher in the selection of hashtag messages on Twitter that is suitable for the study. The nature of this guide is based on the objectives and research questions of the study. It also entails descriptions of each of the themes that give the researcher a desirable classification system for the selection of the data.

Descriptive Characteristics (Twitter user accounts)

- Name of author
- Twitter ID/Username
- Country/Location
- Job description
- Position
- The application used (eg. Twitter for iPhone, TweetDeck, Twitter for Android, etc.)

Twitter user category

User category	Description	Example
Individuals	Role in inciting violence or achieving peace	@jowwy_aries let's kill them all, they do not belong here #Xenophobia (violent tweet) @jowwy_aries Praying for all #Xenophobia to cease (Peaceful tweet)

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Groups or companies	Role in inciting violence or achieving peace	
Non-state actors	Affiliated to Civil societies in and outside South Africa	
State actors	Affiliated to Governments and Government officials in and outside South Africa	

Tweet topics/issues and tweet examples

Tweet Topic/issue	Category Description	Tweet examples
Call to action	Tweets calling for peace, unity love, and others. Tweets featured additional hashtags such as #SayNoToXenophobia, #AfricaUnite, and #PrayForSouthAfrica, and others	@jowwy_aries let's all unite and allow love and peace to prevail #Xenophobia #AfricaUnite #SayNoToXenophobia

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Violent tweets	These focused on cases or tweets of threats, trading insults, dares, dismissals, and others. They featured additional hashtags such as #EnoughIsEnough and others	@jowwy_aries let's kill them all, they do not belong here #Xenophobia #EnoughIsEnough
Non-state actors	Tweets focused on responses of non-state actors (civil societies) around the event with the hashtag (#Xenophobia)	
State actors	Tweet focused on responses of state actors around the event with the hashtag (#Xenophobia)	