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Discursive strategies of framing in Nigerian and South African headlines on xenophobic violence

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Abstract: This article examines the frames built in Nigerian and South African newspaper headlines and the linguistic strategies by which they are characterised. Sixty headlines (thirty from three Nigerian newspapers – *Vanguard, DailyTrust, The Sun*, and thirty from three South African newspapers – *Cape Times News, City Press, SowetanLIVE*) on South African xenophobic violence, published between February 2017 and October 2019, were purposively sampled and analysed using insights from frame theory and critical discourse analysis. Three frames were noticed: 'South African government as not able to check xenophobic violence' (co-constructed by both Nigerian and South African headlines); 'South Africans as not able to accommodate immigrant competitors' (by Nigerian headlines); and 'Immigration control as a means of checking xenophobia' (by South African headlines). Frame One is typified by topoi (with lexical choices, and structural opposition) and perspectivisation (with epistemic modality and presupposition). The second is marked by intensification (with aggregation and metaphorisation) and prediction (with evaluative nouns and thematisation). The third is indexed by the topos of immigration control (with specialised vocabulary items) and predication (with emotive metaphors/adjectives and rhetorical questions). Aside from the significant addition made to media studies on xenophobia, the article sheds additional light on the often-neglected role of the media in shaping people's ideological outlooks.

Introduction

The article investigates the discourse surrounding the framing of xenophobic violence in South Africa, as articulated in both South African and Nigerian newspapers, and paints a complex picture of blame attribution, calls for justice and proposals for solutions. Framing is closely tied to meaning, in the sense that frames play a part in language use at different levels of meaning-making and interpretation. Framing theory suggests that how information is presented influences the position people take with respect to processing that information. This assumption is corroborated by Keren (2011) who believes framing concerns the way 'something', e.g. narrative, discourse, etc., is produced and the meaning that is generated from such production. Hence, Chong and Druckman (2007: 107) agree that framing 'refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue'. In news discourse, for example, framing is central to the way news items help establish the literal 'common sense' interpretation of events (Mass Communication Theory 2017). Observably, it is one way through which the media draws the public's eye to such a sensitive topic as xenophobia and then goes further to create frames, through which such information can be interpreted (Arowolo 2017). What this means is that the media generates and sustains a specific frame in the memory of its audience (Ugwu 2021). This corroborates Crompton's (2010: 42) definition of frames as 'cognitive structures held in long-term memory that contain particular values'. They are abstractions that work to organise or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media places on the information they convey (Mass Communication Theory 2017). Creating frames for news stories has perceptibly become a conscious linguistic practice in newspaper reportage (Feldman 2007; Ononye 2014; 2017a), where framing is understood operationally as a process by which news media highlight, emphasise and give more

prominence to a specific subject or issue raised in a news story. This is often done to enhance understanding or used as a cognitive shortcut to link stories to the bigger picture. In Entman's (1991) view, however, frames are sometimes difficult to identify clearly, because many of the framing devices can appear as natural unmarked choices of words or images. This is especially so in news reporting where a delicate issue like xenophobia is involved. Creating frames for news events is commonly a mindful choice by news reporters and editors, who try to justify their media ethics by neutrally collecting, organising and presenting the ideas, events and topics they cover (Mass Communication Theory 2017). For this reason, media frames are mostly created through many stylistic means hidden in language, and this calls for a systematic inquiry into media language to understand the impact of media framing, especially in the context of immigration and xenophobia. The present study, therefore, examines the discursive strategies utilised for framing in South African and Nigerian newspaper reports on xenophobic violence in South Africa. This is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how xenophobic violence is framed and represented in media discourse.

In the next section, the concept of xenophobia and existing studies on it are reviewed, from where the objectives of the article are presented. In the subsequent sections, the theoretical framework and methodology of the study are presented; this is followed by a discussion of the analytical findings, and finally the conclusion.

Xenophobia and media discourse

Xenophobia, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2001 refers to 'attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity' (in Miller 2018: 1). The term, which was derived from two Greek words: *xenos* and *phobos*, meaning 'stranger' and 'fear' respectively, literarily denotes the fear of a stranger. However, as witnessed more recently in many countries of the world (with a growing increase in competition over scarce resources and concerns about national security), xenophobia goes beyond attitudes to connote different sociopolitical/ethnocentric prejudiced violent activities against foreigners and minority out-groups (Masuku 2006). Hence, Watts (1996; in Oni and Okunade 2018: 39) explains that xenophobic prejudices further produce 'political xenophobia', which is a desire to create and apply public policies that actively discriminate against foreign individuals. He opines that xenophobia is 'a "discriminatory potential" which is activated when ideology such as ethnocentrism is connected to a sense of threat on a personal or group level'.

Similarly, Crush and Ramachandran (2010) aver that xenophobia is similar to nationalism and racism, and refers to any social and political phenomenon that contributes to the marginalisation and/or exclusion of minority groups in social and national settings. They add that acts of violence, aggression and brutality towards migrant groups as found in South Africa, among other countries, illustrate extreme and escalated forms of xenophobia which are occasioned by hostile and skewed perceptions of migrant groups, discriminatory practices and poor treatment.

Although xenophobia is a global problem, its incessant violent manifestation in South Africa in recent times has become a global concern. Before the end of the apartheid regime in 1994, for example, South Africa was already characterised by xenophobic violence against Mozambican and Congolese immigrants (Wikipedia n.d.). From 2008 up until 2019, widespread xenophobic protests, riots and attacks targeted at black foreign nationals in South Africa were witnessed at different periods such as May 2008, May and November 2009, July 2012, May/June 2013, April 2015, June 2016, February 2017 and March/September 2019. As Claassen (2014) notes, what is more worrisome in South African xenophobic violence is that it is not just perpetrated by criminals, but by many communities, in widespread participation and support.

Scholarly attention on South African xenophobia and xenophobic violence, in general, splits into linguistic and non-linguistic studies. The non-linguistic category cuts across studies on the political (e.g. Odiaka 2017; Miller 2018; Oni and Okunade 2018), psychological (e.g. Jearey-Graham and Bohmke 2013; Kerr et al. 2019), economic and developmental (e.g. Crush and Ramachandran 2010; Mamabolo 2015; Mabera 2017), as well as sociological and anthropological (e.g. Adjai

and Lazaridis 2013; Hagensen 2014; Hussein and Hitomi 2016) dimensions to the violence. The linguistic category to which the present study belongs has largely concentrated on media portrayal of xenophobic activities, given that 'the media has the ability to organise experience that can change the audience's ideological outlook' (Ononye and Osunbade 2015: 96; Ononye 2018). These studies have mostly utilised different discourse analytical tools in exploring the frames and positioning, the rhetoric and the underlying issues such as ideologies and belongingness in the media discourse on xenophobia.

The frame/positioning category of studies investigates the framing of low-income migrants like asylum seekers (Burroughs and O'Reilly 2013; Burroughs 2014) and average job-seeking migrants (Milioni et al. 2015) in Ireland and Cyprus. The studies reveal that some commonly held negative attitudes towards migrants come as a result of the way the media frames the migrants. For instance, the media's framing of migrants as 'illegal immigrants' or 'violators' (Milioni et al. 2015: 164) consequently influences the public's positioning and stereotyping of migrants as 'undocumented' and 'unsanctioned' (Burroughs and O'Reilly 2013). In a similar study, Burroughs (2014: 165) – like Burroughs and O'Reilly (2013) – analyses the same set of data on illegal immigrants in Irish print media, but rather focuses on the 'common argumentation' usually advanced in the media to control illegal immigration, which is not unconnected to the 'broader ideological conceptualizations of governmentality and national identity, which may contribute towards legitimized practices of inequality and exclusion in Ireland'. These studies have contributed a lot, especially with respect to demonstrating that negative framing erodes migrants' rights over time, changes their identity, and reproduces stereotypes that breed xenophobic attacks against them. The studies, however, differ from the present one in many respects. First, they are neither based in South Africa nor South African xenophobia. Another point of departure is in terms of the data handled; the studies reviewed above are not targeted at the South African news discourse, much less with that of Nigeria. Theoretically, the studies utilise simple frame semantics (Burroughs and O'Reilly 2013; Milioni et al. 2015) and Foucauldian and critical discourse analysis (CDA) frameworks (Burroughs 2014) in the analysis of media representation of immigrants, as against the present study which is grounded in a combination of frame analysis and a discourse-historical model of CDA.

Next is the rhetorical category of linguistic studies (Yakushko 2009; Ekman 2019). They largely focus on the rhetorical analysis of anti-xenophobia discourses that attempt to counter xenophobic violence and the use of media archives to identify collocative, reoccurring and similar representations of immigrants. Those employing CDA (KhosraviNik 2010a; Banjo 2014; Mbetga 2014; Vanyoro 2015) concentrate on negative representations of black immigrants in South African media as 'othered' out-groups. These studies highlight the ideological leanings of the representations, such as black immigrants as 'aggressors' or 'abusers' of the social and legal systems of South Africa. Although the linguistic studies here have investigated negative representations of foreigners in South African media, they appear to have, on the one hand, neglected the nuances of using discursive strategies in building frames in media texts, and on the other hand, not included a framing theory in their theoretical framework for handling media representations. Unlike studies in the frame/positioning category above, the studies here have concentrated on South African media, but have not considered Nigerian media or combined media coverage of other African countries in their analyses, where citizens are also affected by xenophobia violence. Hence, it might be insufficient and unreliable to base analyses of media texts on South African media alone, especially as it has to do with discursive strategies of framing news participants and their activities in xenophobic violence. Therefore, the present article is an attempt to fill the gap(s) in the literature. Specifically, it aims to: reveal the frames projected in Nigerian and South African newspaper headlines on South African xenophobic violence; identify the discursive strategies deployed in constructing the frames; and account for the linguistic forms that the strategies are characterised by. The study is expected to move the existing scholarship on media framing a step forward, especially in combining critical discourse analysis with frame analysis, which is distinct from the approaches employed in previous linguistic research. This emphasises the need for nuanced analyses of media discourse on xenophobia, and understanding the intricacy of frame construction in the news. Unlike previous studies that rely primarily on South

African media, the present study accommodates media coverage of xenophobic violence in selected Nigerian newspapers. This broader scope enables a more comprehensive understanding of the discursive strategies and frames surrounding immigration and xenophobia.

Theoretical perspectives

This article is anchored on theoretical insights from Lakoff's (2004; 2006) frame theory and Wodak's (2001; 2006; 2011) discourse-historical approach (DHA) to CDA. While the former is used in revealing the media frames used in the data, the latter helps in identifying the discursive strategies and linguistic forms employed in the discursive strategies used to realise the frames. The concept of framing gained prominence in the early 2000s because of George Lakoff, whose extensive work on framing, especially in political and media discourses, has earned him the title 'the father of framing' (Bai 2005). The communicative practice of framing was, however, first discussed in 1972 by Gregory Bateson (1972: 197), who observed 'psychological frames' as a 'spatial and temporary bounding of set of interactive messages' that operates as a kind of meta-communication (Hallahan 2008). Another pioneer, Erving Goffman (1974), studied different institutions and examined the way frames structure people's interactions and organise their experience of the world. Charles Fillmore's (1982: 111) approach was dubbed 'frame semantics' where he defines a frame as 'any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits'. With Bateson and others as influences, Lakoff (2004: xv) defined frames as

> mental structures that shape the way we see the world…they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as good or bad outcome of our actions…You can't see or hear frames…When you hear a word, its frame (or collection of frames) is activated in your brain.

The point made here is that certain concepts are hardwired into our brains through experience. For Lakoff (2006: 25) therefore, '[f]rames facilitate our most basic interactions with the world – they shape the way we reason, and they even impact how we perceive and how we act'. This means that the use of a specific word, or sets of words, for example in newspaper headlines, automatically creates a certain set of construals in the mind of the public (see also Lakoff 2008). And this is what Lakoff calls the 'cognitive unconscious', which is defined as the processes that take place below the level of consciousness, and which are inaccessible to awareness and control (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). In this way all 'knowledge and beliefs are framed in terms of a conceptual system that resides mostly in the cognitive unconscious' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 10). Hence, the role that frames play in structuring ideas and concepts is related to how the human mind unconsciously makes connections, which we may call networks of association.

Lakoff identifies two manifestations of frames, namely surface frames and deep frames. Surface frames are those that feature at the structural level, evoked by the words that are used in linguistic expressions, while deep frames are value-laden frames that the surface frames point to. Deep frames, as Lakoff (2006: 29) puts it, are 'the most basic frames that constitute a moral worldview or a political philosophy'. They are, as Humphrey (2014: 27) corroborates, 'embedded deep in the core of humans, i.e. in their values'. This makes frames potent when applied in institutional communication such as the news media, and is hence easy to believe by the public (Ononye 2017b). Hence, the deep frames one holds are the most basic value-laden frames, which are 'stored' in the cognitive unconscious, many of which are sometimes taken for granted. This is why CDA becomes necessary here.

CDA is an approach to discourse analysis that calls into question ideas and assumptions in language 'that have become taken for granted as self-evidently valid on the grounds that they preserve a status quo which in effect sustains inequality and injustice' (Widdowson 2007: 71). It is a multidisciplinary and eclectic research paradigm that engages a wide variety of data and methodologies to investigate different dimensions of power and ideology manifest in discourse as social practice (Ononye and Nwachukwu 2019). The present article, in exploring the discursive strategies through which specific deep frames are constructed in the news texts under study, relies on Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA).

DHA is an effort aimed at integrating 'systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a written or spoken text' (Wodak 2006: 15). This approach to CDA proposes a toolkit that facilitates the analysis of indirect prejudiced utterances based on a variety of data, methods and background information (Wodak 2011). The purpose, therefore, is to identify and expose the linguistic and rhetorical nuances and allusions contained in prejudiced discourses. Wodak (2001), for example, puts forward five questions that could help detect the discursive elements that make up such kinds of utterance, namely how are individuals named and referred to linguistically?; what traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to such individuals?; by means of what arguments and argumentation patterns do specific individuals or groups try to validate and rationalise the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others?; from what perspective are these references, attributions and arguments articulated?; and are the respective utterances expressed overtly, intensified, or mitigated? (Wodak 2001).

With these questions, five types of discursive strategies are discussed, namely nomination (involving the construction of in-group and out-group references with linguistic devices such as categorisation, metaphors and metonymies), predication (relating to labelling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively through devices like evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits, implicit or explicit predicates), argumentation (dealing with the justification of positive or negative attributions with topoi used to justify political inclusion or exclusion, discrimination or preferential treatment), perspectivation/discourse representation (having to do with expressing involvement, and positioning speaker's point of view with such communicative features as reporting, description, narration or quotation of [discriminatory] events and utterances), and intensification or mitigation (having to do with modifying the epistemic status of a proposition through intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterances) (Reisigl and Wodak 2009). KhosraviNik (2010b) summarises the categories above as largely referring to social actors and social action argumentation.

Methodology

For the method, 60 newspaper headlines on xenophobic attacks in South Africa, purposively sampled from South African and Nigerian daily newspapers published between February 2017 and October 2019, constitute the data for the study. Specifically, the South African newspapers include *Cape Times, City Press* and *SowetanLIVE*, out of which 10 newspaper headlines are sampled from each. In the same way, 10 headlines are taken from three Nigerian newspapers, namely *Vanguard, The Sun* and *Daily Trust*. The newspapers were chosen not only for their being national dailies with a wide range of circulation in their respective countries, but also for their diversity in perspectives and editorial stances, offering a comprehensive view of media coverage on xenophobic violence. Similarly, the Nigerian media was included in the discussion because Nigerian citizens have been among the primary targets of xenophobic violence in South Africa. Therefore, analysing how Nigerian media outlets cover and frame incidents of xenophobic violence provides valuable insights into how these events are perceived and understood by Nigerian audiences. It also sheds light on the experiences and perspectives of Nigerian migrants living in South Africa, as well as the reactions and responses from Nigerian authorities and communities.

To provide easy access to the newspapers and the headlines being analysed, they have been given identifying codes. The headlines by South African newspapers are numbered SA1 to SA30, while those by Nigerian newspapers are numbered NG31 to NG60. The data sets are subjected to a critical discourse analysis, which involves a mixture of descriptive, critical and interpretative methods, with theoretical insights drawn from George Lakoff's frame theory and Ruth Wodak's DHA. With an inclusive bottom-up analytical approach, the descriptive method aids in the identification and discussion of media frames and the discursive strategies by which they are realised, the critical aspect explores the issues and socio-political contexts constraining the choices of frames, while the interpretative approach attaches meaning to the identified media frames and strategies.

Findings and discussion

From the analysis of the data, three different frames have been observed as predominantly used by the Nigerian and South African newspapers in conveying information on xenophobic violence in South Africa. These frames include 'South African government as not able to check xenophobic violence', 'South Africans as not able to accommodate immigrant competitors' and 'Immigration control as a means of checking xenophobia'. The first frame is built by both Nigerian and South African newspapers; the second is largely used by Nigerian newspapers; while the third one is largely constructed by South African newspapers. The frames are each discussed below.

South African government – not able to check xenophobic violence

This frame is commonly constructed in the Nigerian and South African newspaper headlines to represent the South African government as complicit in the occurrence of xenophobic attacks against foreigners in South Africa. The frame is built using two major discursive strategies, namely *topoi* and *perspectivisation*. The strategy of topoi is evident in the data as specific linguistic items in the headlines point to two lines of argument, namely the topos of justice and the topos of doing the right thing. The former, for example, is focused on seeking restitution for the losses (e.g. lives, livelihoods, properties, resources, etc.) that immigrants usually incur due to xenophobic violence. This topos is reflected in the headlines which try to establish that the South African government should either be sanctioned, held responsible, or be made to recompense for its inability to control xenophobic attacks on foreigners. This argumentative topos is largely expressed in Nigerian headlines and tends to advance the logical expectations and agitations of most Nigerians that the Nigerian government and/or the international community should ensure justice prevails. This line of argumentation is indexed in the data by such lexical items as 'suspension' or 'cutting' of diplomatic ties and 'suing' the South African government, and these sustain the impression that the government is culpable for the incessant attacks. The following headlines illustrate the justice topos:

(1) Xenophobia attack: Ekweremadu urges FG to suspend diplomatic ties with SA (*Vanguard*, 3 September 2019)
(2) Xenophobia: FG must sue South Africa Govt. now (*Vanguard*, 14 September 2019)
(3) Xenophobia: Reps meet Buhari, consider cutting off ties with South Africa (*Vanguard*, 17 September 2019)

The texts in headlines (1) to (3) are from *Vanguard*, a Nigerian newspaper. There is a preponderance of a similar kind of topoi across Nigerian newspapers, especially after the xenophobic attacks in September 2019 in South Africa. The headlines advance the arguments of many Nigerians regarding the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and South Africa. The seriousness and urgency of this topos are heightened by the uniformity of the views of the three major arms of the Nigerian government reflected in the texts. Such news actor as (Senator) 'Ekweremadu' in (1) represents the Nigerian Senate; the (Nigerian House of) 'Reps' meet[ing of President] Buhari' in (3) shows the involvement of the Presidency; while the motivation of the Nigerian Federal Government (FG) to 'sue South Africa Govt.' in (2) also expresses the necessity and possibility of involving the judiciary. The support from Nigerian authorities is carefully selected and gazetted by Nigerian newspaper headlines as a strategy of argumentative topoi seeking diplomatic redress from the South African government as a result of the recurrent xenophobic violence in the country.

The topos of doing the right thing, on the other hand, is a strategy manifest in both the Nigerian and South African newspapers. This is projected by some headlines that counter the argument that the occurrence of xenophobic violence in South Africa is usually due to immigrants' overbearing and competitive attitudes (Crush and Ramachandran 2010). It is anchored on the reality that immigration has become a recent phenomenon that governments or their citizens cannot stop, but channel towards growth. Hence, two patterns of the justification topos are observed, namely protect immigrants (which is noticed more in South African newspaper headlines), and blame xenophobic violence on inefficiency in government institutions (championed mostly by Nigerian newspapers).

While the former is linguistically reflected in the data with the use of structural oppositions, the latter is found with the use of illocutions. Some examples can be considered:

(4) Foreigners are not taking our jobs, the government is failing to create jobs (*City Press*, 18 April 2019)
(5) Foreign migrants are not root cause of SA's problems. Stop spreading dangerous lies (*City Press*, 24 September 2019)
(6) XENOPHOBIA: South Africa becoming a failed State (*Vanguard*, 15 September 2019)
(7) Xenophobia: Police have no plan as crime intelligence is caught napping (*City Press*, 9 September 2019)

The texts in (4) and (5) are South African newspaper headlines, and they contain the two-part negated opposition pattern, 'not this, but that'. For instance, in (4), the first part of the headline, 'Foreigners are not taking our jobs…' tallies with the 'protect immigrants' topos of justification, which legitimises the idea that immigrants do not constitute any economic threats in South Africa. The second part ('…the government is failing to create jobs'), conversely is the 'blame government' topos of justification, which tends to shift attention to the deficiencies of the government. The same protect/blame pattern is also observed in (5), albeit in a reversed order. For instance, the first part of the text in (5) can be recognised as 'Foreign migrants are not the root cause of South Africa's problems', which logically fits into the protect immigrants argumentation; while the second part becomes 'Stop spreading dangerous lies', which still falls in line with the 'blame government' script. From these findings, it appears the South African writers are more focused than their Nigerian counterparts on protecting migrants. Nigerian newspaper headlines, as earlier hinted, observably focus more on the 'blame South African government' topos of justification. For instance, the Nigerian headline in (6) saying that 'South Africa [is] becoming a failed State' is a necessary corollary to the South African headline in (7) (that 'Police have no plan as crime intelligence is caught napping'), which all advance the 'blame government' justification topos.

Aside from topoi, another discourse strategy – through which the South African government is framed as 'culpable for xenophobic violence' – is perspectivisation. The news reporter/editor decides whose voice – among different groups of participants in a discourse – is heard/read. Also, the newspapers may decide to focus more on the voice of the group of participants they tend to sympathise with, expose, or blame. In building the frame in question, this strategy is used mainly for the latter purpose in both sets of newspaper headlines, and the linguistic model employed includes the modality system (with epistemic meaning – expressing strong certainty, and boulomaic meaning – expressing desire), and the concept of presupposition (including both existential and logical). Let us consider some examples:

(8) 'We can't stop xenophobic attacks' – South African defence minister (*Vanguard*, 9 September 2019)
(9) Joburg mayor Herman Mashaba on xenophobia: 'There is nothing to apologise for' (*SowetanLIVE*, 19 September 2019)

The headlines in (8) and (9) capture direct quotations of some South African government officials' provocative statements that tend to support the xenophobic attacks. The official's use of epistemic modality in (8), represented with the modal auxiliary 'can't', is seen as an expression of strong certainty. This vigorous verbal declaration that the South African government is *not able* to do anything to control xenophobic attacks presents the government as weak and the officials as tactless. Again, this self-attested inability, worsened by the use of the first person (plural) pronoun ('we') that suggests the inclusion of all government institutions and functionaries, is one of the indices that the newspapers have capitalised on in framing the government as culpable for the recurrent violence against immigrants. Such a lapse in governance, perspectivised by a high degree of certainty, is thus powerful in hypothesising a reality for the reader, that there is no end in sight or recompense for losses from xenophobic attacks in South Africa. With respect to presuppositions,

there are two major assumptive lexical items in (9), namely 'nothing' and 'apologise'. The two lexemes make understandable presuppositions pointing to the background narrative. First, there are 'things' (xenophobic attacks) that are happening/have happened, which resulted in the loss of lives, livelihoods and properties of mostly immigrants in South Africa; and second, these things were not well managed by the government, and hence, people expect a 'formal' apology from the South African government.

South Africans as not able to accommodate immigrant competitors

This hostility frame is observed only in the Nigerian newspapers, and the two discursive strategies through which this is realised are *intensification* and *predication*. Generally, South Africa is constructed as volatile and its nationals as hostile, going by the intensification of the news about foreigners' victimisation. Two manifestations of intensification have been noticed in the data, namely aggregation and metaphorisation. The former exposes the statistics of victimised immigrants and the probability of occurrence of xenophobic activities, while the latter has to do with heightening the illocutionary force of news actors' propositions. Generally, the Nigerian newspapers employ this strategy to highlight the impact of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa on foreigners, of which Nigerians constitute a reasonable number. Let us explore these features in the examples below:

(10) Xenophobia: Death toll hits 10 in South Africa (*The Sun*, 6 September 2019)
(11) Xenophobia: 116 Nigerians killed in South Africa – Presidency (*Daily Trust*, 21 February 2017)
(12) Xenophobia: 640 Nigerians ready to return – NIDCOM (*Daily Trust* 9 September 2019)

One statistical strategy of aggregation that goes without notice in these headlines is what van Leeuwen (2008) calls 'numericalisation'. Consider the numbers listed in the texts: 'Death toll hit *10*…' in (10), '*116* Nigerians killed…' in (11), and '640 Nigerians ready to return' in (12). The Nigerian newspapers utilise this aggregation practice of numbering the people who are attacked or displaced as a strategy for revealing the growing impact of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. This is a powerful rhetorical tool which has a way of intensifying the seriousness of the activities and the reader's negative perception of the level of victimisation. This is further heightened by the choice of lexical verbs accompanying the numbers. For instance, by saying that 'Death toll *hit* 10…' in (10), the reading public can easily map the conceptual metaphor on a source domain of something (i.e. the death toll of victims of xenophobia) that is rising so fast, which is probably yet to be controlled. In a similar vein, saying that '116 Nigerians *killed*…' in (11), the reader's attention is easily called to the reality that the victims do not choose to die, but are 'killed in South Africa' by South Africans. The figures leave the reader with the impression that South Africans are hostile to immigrant competitors.

Aside from intensification, another discursive strategy through which the South African hostility frame is presented is predication. The focus here is on describing news actors, their actions, or the activities they engage in during xenophobic attacks. Two linguistic triggers have been identified through which predication is achieved in the headlines, namely the use of evaluative nouns and thematisation pattern. With respect to the former, the newspaper headlines are found to negatively label the South African actors in line with their roles in the violence, while the latter presents a verb system that allows the Nigerian news reporters/editors to focus on specific types of actions taken by a specific group of actors. Some examples will better support this point:

(13) Xenophobia: South African protesters insist foreigners must leave (*Daily Trust*, 9 September 2019)
(14) Xenophobia: Mob destroys 4 Nigerian shops, houses in South Africa (*Daily Trust*, 21 January 2018)
(15) Xenophobia: South African mob burns another Nigerian alive (*The Sun*, 23 April 2018)
(16) Xenophobia: More foreign shops looted in Johannesburg (*Daily Trust*, 28 February 2017)
(17) Xenophobia: 9 Nigerian-owned shops burnt in South Africa (*Daily Trust*, 22 October 2018)
(18) Xenophobia: Nigerian mechanic killed by mob in South Africa (*The Sun*, 7 April 2017)

The evaluative nouns 'protesters' in (13) and 'mob' in (14, 15 and 18) are all inherently negative, and semantically show the different dimensions of the xenophobic violence in South Africa. This stereotypical negative presentation probably explains why the South Africa protesters have come to be regarded as hostile. This way of reducing social actors' identity to the actions they perform is also related to van Leeuwen's (2008) discursive strategy of 'functionalisation'. However, according to Ononye (2017b), such evaluative labels are not ideologically free representations of facts because they are personal and subjective. The evaluative nouns cited here are some of the textual evidence of labels for the South African youth that betray the ways the Nigerian press constructs a frame of hostility for South Africans. The creation of the frame confirms Watts' (1996: 97) definition of xenophobia as 'a "discriminatory potential" which is activated when ideology such as ethnocentrism is connected to a sense of threat on a personal or group level'.

Another linguistic pattern is the peculiar thematisation model chosen to report the violent actors and their actions. As can be observed in (examples 13 to 15), the experiential type of theme is used, where the emphasis in the Nigerian headlines is on exposing the agents of the actions reported in the rheme. For instance, by saying '*South African protesters* insist…', '*mob* destroys…' and '*South African mob* burns…', the reader is not in doubt about the performers of the actions. At other times, the Nigerian headlines focus on the goals of the actions of the experiential theme to also allow the reading public to feel the impact of such actions. Here, the thematic elements 'more foreign shops…' in (16), '9 Nigeria-owned shops…' in (17) and 'Nigerian mechanic…' in (18) all become inverted themes. This is the method of theme development that Eggins (2004: 342) calls 'the zig-zag pattern', in which the elements of rheme are switched to become elements of theme in subsequent clauses. This selective thematisation pattern, together with the use of evaluative nouns, contributes to the discursive strategy of predication, which – through drawing readers' attention to specific actors and their xenophobic activities – sustains the frame that South Africans are hostile to immigrant competitors.

Immigration control as a means of checking xenophobia

This frame is mostly created by the South African newspapers using predominantly two discursive strategies, namely the topoi of immigration control and predication. The topos of immigration control, for example, is employed through plain and specialised vocabulary items that generally point to the porous immigration system in South Africa. The topos sustains this frame by presupposing that illegal migrants gain entry into South Africa due to these conditions, and hence xenophobic violence is triggered by their domineering activities and illicit businesses. The following examples illustrate this argumentative topos:

(19) SA must implement stricter immigration laws (*City Press*, 18 September 2019)
(20) Government to prioritise border control: President Cyril Ramaphosa (*SowetanLIVE*, 20 September 2019)
(21) Migration must be monitored (*SowetanLIVE*, 18 September 2019)

The debate about immigration control is something that has not only enjoyed wide attention across legislative, diplomatic and public discourses, but has also gained popularity since the beginning of the recent xenophobic attacks in South Africa. In the texts above, several expressions express the need to check illegal immigration, which in turn becomes the major cause of illicit activities in South Africa. Specific lexical items, such as '…stricter immigration laws' in (19), '…border control' in (20) and '…monitored' in (21), reflect this argumentative topos of immigration. While the first two lexical items are of the specialised immigration vocabulary stock, the third is a plain word used in expressing the serious efforts required by South African immigration control. By respectively focusing on making immigration law more stringent, taking priority to control the border, and monitoring the kinds and numbers of people immigrating into South Africa, the South African newspapers propose a pragmatic way of checking xenophobic violence. However, this frame appears to be a sequel to the earlier frame constructed by both South African and Nigerian newspaper headlines, namely 'South African government as not able to check xenophobic violence'.

Aside from the immigration topos, predication is another discursive strategy noticeably deployed for the construction of the immigration control frame in the data. To further substantiate the need for immigration control, South African headlines are found to represent illegal immigrants and their illicit activities negatively. This is largely achieved through two linguistic triggers, namely the use of emotive metaphors/adjectives (that disapprovingly describe the immigration status and the nature of activities of immigrants) and rhetorical questions (that tend to pre-empt the result of uncontrolled immigration). Let us consider some examples from the data:

(22) 'SA no place for unskilled foreigners' (*SowetanLIVE*, 27 September 2019)
(23) Mashaba: Timid government is failing to deal with undocumented immigrants (*City Press*, 10 September 2019)
(24) 'We need stricter laws for small and informal businesses' (*City Press*, 12 August 2019)
(25) Foreigners are pawns in politicians' 'dangerous, misleading' blame game (*City Press*, 2 May 2019)
(26) Stealing jobs? Burden on healthcare? New report busts myths about immigrants (*City Press*, 20 August 2019)

As evident in these texts, foreigners are variously categorised as 'unskilled' in (22), 'undocumented' in (23), 'pawns' in (25), and some of their businesses as 'small' and 'informal' in (24), which are negative labels. In presenting a subjective assessment of the foreigners, such lexical items as 'unskilled', 'small' and 'informal' are the negative adjectives used in the sampled texts, while others like 'undocumented' and 'pawns' belong to the emotive metaphor category. Again, such lexemes 'unskilled' and 'undocumented' have to do with immigration status, while others like 'pawns', 'small' and 'informal' relate to the nature of immigrant activities in South Africa. Aside from the subjective descriptions of immigrants, instances of rhetorical questions have been observed in the data as well. For instance, by asking if immigrants constitute a threat to employment and healthcare in South Africa, a concrete picture of what effect an uncontrolled influx of immigrants would have on such sectors is painted in the minds of the reader, thereby changing the ideological outlook towards immigrants. This is a powerful rhetorical strategy, which – according to Aboh and Ononye (2019) – is capable of creating an end result of what may not be, but is possible. The linguistic forms of predication, together with those of the immigration topos discussed in this section, have contributed in no small measure to sustaining the argumentation that illegal immigrants are a major problem, and hence the frame that immigration control would be a pragmatic means of controlling intermittent xenophobic violence in South Africa. Generally, these discursive ways of representing immigrants in the media, according to Burroughs (2014), have contributed to the negative attitude towards immigrants, which has in turn become the chief remote trigger for xenophobic attacks.

Conclusion

The article examined the discursive strategies of framing in Nigerian and South African newspaper headlines on xenophobic violence in South Africa. Three frames are observably revealed in the news texts, namely 'South African government as not able to check xenophobic violence' (co-constructed by both Nigerian and South African headlines), 'South Africans as not able to accommodate immigrant competitors' (exclusively projected by Nigerian headlines) and 'Immigration control as a means of checking xenophobia' (built largely by South African headlines). Firstly, the portrayal of the South African government as complicit in xenophobic attacks emerges as a dominant frame. Nigerian newspapers, in particular, highlight the government's perceived failure to control violence against foreigners. Through discursive strategies like topoi and perspectivisation, the headlines emphasise demands for diplomatic action and accountability. This framing underscores the urgency for justice and restitution for victims of xenophobia, positioning the South African government as liable for the recurring violence. Additionally, the study delves into societal attitudes, portraying South Africans as hostile toward immigrant competitors. The intensification and predication strategies employed in both Nigerian and South African newspapers underscore the scale and impact of xenophobic attacks, often using emotive language to highlight

the plight of victims. Such framing perpetuates the narrative of South African hostility towards immigrants, contributing to the broader understanding of xenophobia as a deeply ingrained societal issue. Furthermore, the findings suggest immigration control as a potential solution to mitigate xenophobic violence. Through the topos of immigration control and predication strategies, the newspapers advocate for stricter laws and border control measures. This framing reflects a belief that regulating immigration could address underlying tensions and reduce future instances of xenophobic violence.

Generally, the framing of xenophobic violence in South Africa, as depicted in Nigerian and South African media, reflects a multifaceted exploration of government control, societal attitudes and proposed solutions. Including Nigerian media in the discussion enriches the analysis and provides insights into the experiences, perspectives and responses of Nigerian stakeholders. The findings of the study can have critical and social relevance to contemporary scholarship on xenophobia based on its potential to inform policy and diplomacy, challenge stereotypes, promote social change and foster advocacy on the perceptions, concerns and interests of Nigerian stakeholders. However, until there is a holistic investigation exploring multimodal features across other news texts like reports, editorials, etc., the linguistic efforts aimed at revealing the nuances of framing and addressing media propagation of xenophobia may still pose further challenges.

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