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XENOPHIBIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA- NIGERIA RELATIONS 2019-2025

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A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B. Sc.), IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the economic and socio-cultural implications of xenophobic violence in South Africa for South Africa-Nigeria relations (2019-2025), using complex Interdependence Theory within a qualitative ex post facto design. Findings show the September 2019 attacks caused the sharpest disruption, with Nigerian exports falling ~14% and South African FDI in Nigeria dropping ~8% within a year, alongside boycotts of MTN, Shoprite, and DSTv, Shoprite's 2021 market exit, and declining diaspora remittances. Socio-culturally, the violence triggered a diplomatic crisis (High Commissioner recall, suspended engagements, evacuations) and eroded student exchange, tourism, and community ties, confirming both hypotheses that xenophobic violence significantly damaged trade and socio-cultural diplomacy. The study recommends South Africa adopt a comprehensive anti-xenophobia strategy combining prosecutorial accountability, political accountability, economic reform, and a formal bilateral reparations mechanism, while Nigeria strengthens consular presence and builds robust economic tracking infrastructure for the South African corridor. It concludes that xenophobic violence is a structural impediment to Africa's most consequential bilateral relationship and to AfCFTA integration.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Xenophobia is a term derived from two Greek words xenos (foreigner) and phobos (fear) and refers to hatred, fear, or prejudice against foreigners and outsiders (Crush & Ramachandran,2010). In its current form as a social phenomenon, it was coined in the late nineteenth century within the language of psychiatry and medicine for classifying irrational fears as mental disorders. When xenophobia takes form of physical violence, destruction of property, intimidation, and murder, it becomes xenophobic violence. The xenophobic attacks in South Africa have been a consistent social and political problem since the end of apartheid in 1994. The attacks took place in 2008, 2015, 2019, and 2022. Typically, these attacks target African immigrants, especially Nigerians, Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, and Somalis accused of taking jobs, committing crimes, or damaging local economies. The fact should be pointed out that xenophobia is not a recent phenomenon. According to historians, the first instances of xenophobic sentiments can be traced back to Ancient Greece where foreigners were often depicted as “barbarians” and seen as culturally inferior and by some ideologies naturally inclined towards slavery (Isaac, 2004). It is important to note from the above historical perspective that xenophobia is not only a manifestation of modern-day inequalities but is also an expression of age-old constructs within culture and ideology whereby the “other’ is perceived to be a threat or inferior. In academic circles, there have been attempts to define and operationalize xenophobia. One of these scholars is Jean Martin de Saintours who was a major contributor to the discourse on phobia illnesses in the field of medicine at around the year 1880 and coined the term “xenophobia". Another scholar who defined xenophobia is Guido Bolaffi, an Italian sociologist who gave a different operational definition of xenophobia, noting that xenophobia may not only be hatred towards the foreigner, but may also take the form of an “uncritical exaltation of another culture”, attributing “an unreal, stereotyped and exotic quality to the foreign other”(Bolaffi et al., 2003). The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) provides a more appropriate operational definition for this study, noting that xenophobia is “the deep dislike of non-animals by nationals of a recipient state”(SAHRC, 2010)

The two countries are major players in Africa's politics and economics. As the biggest economies in Africa, they are supposed to lead in continental integration processes such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The bilateral relations between them are based on trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), migration, and diplomacy. South African firms including MTN, Shoprite, Multichoice, and Standard Bank have operations in Nigeria, while Nigerians make up a considerable number of immigrants in South Africa. Nevertheless, xenophobia has caused a lot of problems in their diplomatic ties and economic dealings. With the end of the apartheid era and democratic rule beginning in 1994, immigration into South Africa has increased drastically, especially from other African nations(Ogunnubi and Amusan,2018). Interestingly, despite its rich resources, South Africa has experienced a high level of unemployment and hardships and poverty which the locals call “Amakwerekwere”. This is because the foreigners that come to South Africa are to blame for all these societal and economic problems. Amakwerekwere is a derogatory South African word for foreign visitors to a township (Wiktionary,2019).

This era is especially important due to events that have occurred within this time frame. Firstly, the violent attacks on Johannesburg and Pretoria in 2019 resulted in the looting and burning down of businesses belonging to Nigerians and other Africans, which triggered retaliation in the form of protests in Nigeria, as well as a temporary boycott of businesses in South Africa. As a consequence of these events, Nigeria repatriated hundreds of its nationals from South Africa, while both nations were involved in heated diplomatic discussions. Then, the COVID-

19 pandemic (2020-2021) created an international economic crisis that affected mobility and investments; however, the xenophobic conflict arose again in 2022 in the form of campaigns such as Operation Dudula targeting migrant workers and business owners.

Therefore, xenophobia is not only a human rights problem but also an economic one when considering South African-Nigerian relations. The economic effects can be seen in terms of trade relationships, foreign direct investment, business practices, consumption patterns, and negotiations. It is important to understand these effects from 2019 to 2025 in order to better integrate Africa.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Xenophobia and related xenophobic attacks have become a socio-political and economic challenge in South Africa especially after the end of apartheid regime. In the period from 2019 to 2025, successive episodes of xenophobic attacks targeting foreigners especially Nigerians have continued to raise a lot of concern both nationally, regionally and internationally. The xenophobic attacks have taken different forms including physical assaults, killing, destruction of property and looting of properties owned by foreigner individuals and organizations. Despite various attempts by the government and diplomatic engagement, xenophobia continues to be a recurring issue raising various questions as to how it would affect the international relations between South Africa and Nigeria. South Africa and Nigeria are the two largest economies in Africa and play significant roles in the continent. They have significant economic, political and diplomatic relations including trade, foreign direct investment, migration and multinational corporations operating in both countries. Companies such as MTN, shop rite, multi choice and stan is IBTC have huge investments in Nigeria, whereas Nigerians in South Africa make great contributions in various sectors such as education, health, retail, entertainment and informal trading. Xenophobic attacks have threatened economic relations between both countries.

For example, the xenophobic violence that occurred in 2019 led to the closure of businesses owned by Nigerians, retaliation against South African firms in Lagos and Abuja, and the suspension of high level diplomatic meetings. Consumers in Nigeria demanded the boycott of products from South Africa, including those produced by MTN and Shoprite, and there was a drop in air travel between the two nations. However, despite these developments, there is a lack of systematic understanding of the effects of xenophobia on trade relations and other matters.

Other than the economic consequences, the xenophobic attacks have adversely affected socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa. Interactions that are part and parcel of building trust in diplomacy have been severely hampered by the growing stereotyping, mistrust, and suspicions of each other's people. There have been many challenges in educational, cultural, and tourism diplomacy as Nigerians began viewing South Africa as an unfriendly environment, whereas South Africans became wary of foreigners within their country. It is therefore evident that the years between 2019 and 2025 are crucial in terms of how the violence affected not only economic diplomacy but also social and cultural aspects of diplomacy.

The violent xenophobia has caused diplomatic complications in economic cooperation. The citizens of Nigeria who keep getting attacked in South Africa have received a firm reaction from the Nigerian government in terms of diplomatic protests, evacuation of their citizens and seeking compensation and justice. Although these actions are necessary for the safety of citizens, they also tend to strain diplomatic relations which in turn affect economic cooperation, bilateral agreements and cooperation. It seems as if there is a problem in the implementation of policy measures and mechanisms meant to protect foreign citizens and maintain healthy diplomatic relations. The other problem is that of migration and labor relations. Nigerians migrate to South Africa in search of better economic prospects such as education and entrepreneurship. But as a result of xenophobic violence, there has been insecurity among the migrants causing job losses, business failures, returning home and lack of remittances. Not only does this adversely affect the lives of individuals but also has an economic cost for both nations. South Africa loses skilled manpower while Nigeria has to reintegrate the migrants.

Despite the severity of these consequences, there is still an inadequate number of academic works comprehensively analyzing the economic effects of xenophobia in the context of South Africa-Nigeria relations from 2019 to 2025. Most of the literature that discusses xenophobia concentrates more on the social aspects rather than on the economic impacts of xenophobic attacks. The lack of information about the effects of xenophobia on economics hinders the ability of decision-makers and scholars to comprehend the economic losses and policy failures caused by xenophobia and to address them appropriately. Furthermore, the occurrence of xenophobic violence poses a challenge to the vision of African unity and regional economic integration as propagated by the policies of the African Union and AFCFTA. Xenophobia contradicts the vision of the free movement of citizens within the continent, thus hindering continental development initiatives. Failure to address the problem of xenophobia can set a bad precedent that will threaten the idea of regional cooperation and economic diplomacy in Africa.

With these emerging issues, the major problem of this study will be that of the frequent cases of xenophobic violence in South Africa and their economic impacts on the relations between South Africa and Nigeria between 2019 and 2025. It is important to understand how these incidences impact trade, investments, immigration, diplomatic relationships, and economic confidence in order to develop effective policies to address the issue. If this research problem is not considered, there will be no comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts of xenophobia which may render any attempt to solve the problem and improve relations between the two nations ineffective. The study aims at addressing the problem through an analysis of the problem of xenophobic violence in South Africa and their economic impacts on relations between South Africa and Nigeria.

What are the questions that arise from the identified gap? Xenophobic incidents have had an effect on the trade relationship between South Africa and Nigeria to what extent? What are the economic consequences of such violent events on investments and corporate performance? What could mean the consequences of these events in the context of AfCFTA?

1.3 Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions are posed:

1. What impact did xenophobic violence have on South Africa-Nigeria trade relations between 2019 and 2025?
2. How has socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa 2019-2025 been hampered by xenophobic attacks?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at examining South African-Nigerian relations with a focus on the economic dimension of xenophobia between the two countries from 2019-2025.

This study will aim to accomplish the following objectives:

i. To investigate the impact of xenophobic violence on trade between South Africa and Nigeria.

ii. To determine the socio-cultural consequences of xenophobia on Nigeria-South Africa relations from 2019 to 2025.

1.5 **Hypothesis of study**

These hypotheses have been developed based on the identified research questions and objectives:

i. The xenophobic violence in South Africa has affected the trade relations between South Africa and Nigeria from 2019 to 2025.

ii. Xenophobic violence in South Africa has affected the socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa from 2019 to 2025

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study has several implications:

Academic Implication: This research makes a contribution to the existing but scant literature on the economic impact of xenophobia, which is currently limited to social and political perspectives.

Policy Implications: The results obtained from this study will be valuable to policy makers in South Africa and Nigeria, and continental organizations like the African Union to formulate measures to counteract xenophobia and foster economic cooperation.

Practical implications: From a business point of view, the research provides information on the challenges which investors and businesses experience related to xenophobic violence, along with recommendations on how to deal with these challenges. Social implications: The study findings show the economic consequences of xenophobic violence, and the importance of policies to foster peaceful relations between African people.

1.7 Scope of the Study

Scope of Content: This paper will address the impact that xenophobic violence has had on the South Africa-Nigeria relationship since 2019 to 2025. In particular, the study will focus on how xenophobic attacks have impacted bilateral trade volumes, foreign direct investments, corporate activities, consumer behavior, socio-cultural diplomacy, and cooperation policies between the two nations. It will also analyze the response of the two governments, companies, and civil society towards xenophobic violence and its impact on the economic relationship between the two nations. Although other social and political aspects of xenophobia will be considered, the main scope will remain economic and diplomatic with particular attention on disruptions to the economic relationship between the two nations.

Scope of Geographical Location: This study is confined to South Africa-Nigeria relations with emphasis on South African business activities in Nigeria and Nigerian activities in South Africa.

Scope of Time Period: This study will cover the period from 2019 to 2023. This time period will include all xenophobic attacks and their aftermath during this period.

Scope of Theme: This study will be confined to economic impacts only.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Undertaking this research on xenophobic violence in South Africa and its economic impact on South Africa-Nigeria relations (2019-2025) involved a number of obstacles that shaped the breadth, depth, and overall nature of this research. Like any other research topic dealing with sensitive political events, inter-state relations and socio-economic consequences, there were a number of limitations associated with this topic.

One of the limitations in this research was the limited availability of diplomatic and policy discussions between the two countries. The bilateral talks, particularly those involving crisis management, economic sanctions, diplomatic tension, and reconciliatory efforts, take place behind closed doors. As such, since these talks are not always documented, this research had to depend mostly on publicly released documents such as policy statements, press releases, government reports and newspaper accounts. Though these materials provided an insight into the official views of these events, they did not provide enough sensitivity and depth necessary for understanding the strategic maneuvering involved in bilateral decision-making processes.

Differences in economic reporting standards and transparency among South Africa and Nigeria were some of the challenges facing this research. Macro economic data such as trade flows, foreign direct investment figures, and diaspora remittances were not always synchronised in terms of methodology or time frame limiting the accuracy of comparative analysis. Informal sector activities where many Nigerians in South Africa operate were particularly challenging to quantify due to limited documentation and weak data capture mechanisms.

This limitation also arose from the sensitive and politically charged nature of xenophobic violence, which affected participation during data collection for qualitative analysis. There were participants who were very selective in the provision of information, especially government officials, business people, and community leaders, in fear of being seen as providing politically incorrect or diplomatically injurious information. It limited the pool of first-hand accounts for analysis and could have narrowed perspectives on state accountability, police failures, and bilateral policies.

The research was constrained by limitations arising from methodology, more specifically, using secondary data and qualitative analysis. Although these methods were relevant in analyzing the political dynamics and socio-economic patterns, they could not allow the estimation of economic loss and prediction of economic future trajectory with precision.

In conclusion, even though this research provides valuable insights about the relationship between xenophobia violence and the economic relationships between South Africa and Nigeria, it should be noted that there are some limitations to this study as far as access to the primary diplomatic data is concerned, the disparities in the reporting of xenophobic violence cases, the methodological aspects, the sensitivity of the respondents involved, as well as the dynamics of socio-political events which are still ongoing.

1.8 Definition of terms

1. Xenophobia: Xenophobia can be described as the fear, prejudice or hatred for foreign people or things.
2. Xenophobic Violence: Xenophobic violence is characterized by hostility and violence towards foreigners which is based on prejudice and fear regarding immigration.

3. Economic Implications: Economic implications are basically the economic effects or consequences of any particular action, decision, policy or event.
4. Bilateral Implications: Bilateral implications refer to those consequences that arise out of any relationship or agreement between two parties usually two states.
5. South Africa – Nigeria Relations: This term is used to refer to the relations between South Africa and Nigeria on the diplomatic front.
6. Migration: The movement of people across national borders because xenophobia is related to migration
7. Foreign nationals: People who live or work in a country other than their own. In this case, it applies to Nigerians living in South Africa.
8. Trade relations: Exchange of goods, services and investments between two nations which includes trade agreements, imports/exports and economic relations.
9. Economic diplomacy: Using economic instruments such as trade agreements, sanctions, investments and negotiations to pursue foreign policies or to promote international relations.
10. 2019-2025 period: The specific time period being considered that witnessed xenophobic attacks in South Africa and its impact on South Africa-Nigeria economic and diplomatic relations.
11. Foreign Direct Investments: FDI is a form of foreign investments where an entity from one nation invests in a business or corporation of another country with the objective of having control or influence over the management of the business.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

(CONCEPTUAL REVIEW, THEMATIC REVIEW, EMPIRICAL REVIEW AND GAP IN LITERATURE)

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a holistic review of the existing literature on the topic of xenophobic violence in South Africa, its economic and diplomatic repercussions on the South Africa-Nigeria bilateral relations between 2019 and 2025. The review is divided into four inter-related sections. First, the review carries out a conceptual review to provide clear and expansive definitions of the key concepts guiding this study such as xenophobia, xenophobic violence, trade disruption and investment withdrawal, and Nigeria-South Africa relations. Second, it provides an organisational review which groups various contributions from scholars based on different themes. These include the socio-economic causes of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa, diplomatic issues in relation to xenophobic violence in interstate relations in Africa, economic implications of politically motivated violence on bilateral trade and investment, and the Nigerian diaspora in mediating economic relations. Third, it gives an empirical review, which reviews quantitative and qualitative information gathered from previous studies. Finally, the chapter identifies the key gaps in the current literature and demonstrates why this research can contribute towards filling those gaps.

2.1 Conceptual Review

Building an effective framework for analysis in this case entails detailed and extensive consideration of the conceptual constructs underlying this research. Social science concepts go beyond the issue of mere definition because they have great theoretical value in the context of epistemology of a research project. Concepts guide what a researcher sees, what kind of questions one can ask, and what type of explanations one can give. Four key concepts will be explored and analyzed in the following sections of this paper: xenophobia, xenophobic violence, trade disruptions and investment withdrawals, and Nigeria-South Africa relations. Each concept will not only be defined but also considered in terms of history, theory, and context to provide a complete picture of their meaning and application in the case of South Africa-Nigeria bilateral relations in the research period.

2.1.1 Xenophobia

Xenophobia is basically a fear or hatred of people who are seen as foreign or alien to a specific social or national group, and that fear or hatred is irrational and overwhelming. The word stems from the old Greek xenos, meaning stranger or foreigner, and phobos, fear: it entered the modern language of social science as a concept for the understanding of prejudice against strangers, based on the feeling of strangers' foreignness (Crush and Ramachandran, 2020). What makes xenophobia different from other forms of social discrimination or cultural preference is the emotional charge it carries and the tendency to manifest through exclusionary and at times even violent social practices.

The term 'xenophobia' originated in the late nineteenth century from psychiatric and medical discourses to classify irrational fears as clinical problems. The medicalization of xenophobia as a phobia – an irrational individual fear – did not account for the systemic, collective, and political aspects of anti-migrant sentiment in today's societies. Sociologist Guido Bolaffi proposed a more socially informed definition, asserting that xenophobia could be expressed in terms of hostile attitudes towards the foreign other and uncritical exoticization of the other that involves the imposition of stereotypical and distorted images of foreignness upon migrants (Bolaffi et al., 2003). The complex combination of rejection and misrepresentation of the other plays an important role in explaining how xenophobic ideologies are sustained over time in host communities.

Xenophobic sentiment had its early historical roots in Ancient Greece, when foreigners were often stigmatized as barbarians – people of inferior culture who were predestined by their ideology to serve as slaves (Isaac, 2004). Thus, xenophobia cannot be considered solely as a product of modern social inequalities and contemporary immigration policies, but also as a legacy of cultural and ideological representations of the other as an inferior and/or hostile force. In the South African case, the ideological frameworks noted above come into contact with the particular legacy of colonialism and apartheid, which entrenched the system of categorising and treating persons differently on the basis of racial and cultural differences. While the post-apartheid social setting may not necessarily dissolve these categorising impulses, it has refashioned them along new boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, where national origin and migrant status have taken the place of race in determining whether someone belongs or does not belong.

The issue of xenophobia versus xenophobic attitudes has been a matter of much scholarly discussion in the social sciences literature. According to Hjerm (1998), xenophobia cannot be considered as an invariable psychological disposition in certain people while lacking in others. Instead, it is a complex of attitudes which have been acquired by political socialisation, media discourse, and economic experience. This means that xenophobic sentiment is not a stable quantity in any society, but depends greatly on political and economic developments, increasing dramatically during times of economic insecurity and decreasing significantly when measures of social cohesion are successfully pursued. This framing became influential in South African academic circles, where researchers such as Hadland (2008) empirically demonstrated that anti-foreigner attitudes are most acute in areas characterised by high unemployment, informal settlement, and perceived competition in the low-skill labour market. The implication is that xenophobia, as experienced at the individual and community level, is structurally produced and is therefore amenable to structural rather than purely attitudinal interventions.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2010) offers a definition that is highly pertinent to this research. According to SAHRC, xenophobia refers to a strong aversion felt by nationals against non-nationals in the recipient state. This definition brings out both the emotional and structural aspects of xenophobia. In addition, Tshitereke (1999) explains how xenophobia can be understood in terms of politics of relative deprivation. As such, xenophobia becomes an expression of the frustrations felt in post-apartheid South Africa because of the failure of democracy to improve the economic status of the majority of the black working population. People are frustrated because of the fact that their expectations have not been met despite the existence of democratic dispensation. Thus, the theory of relative deprivation offers a framework for analyzing the increasing levels of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa because of the failure of the social contract to live up to expectations.

Xenophobia in the present study is defined as an institutionalized social phenomenon characterized by hostility, exclusion, and threat towards foreigners, running on a spectrum from discrimination and exclusion to violence and displacement. The definition is based on the synthesis of Tshitereke (1999), the SAHRC (2010), Hjerm (1999), and Bolaffi et al. (2003). It is important to note that the phenomenon of xenophobia in this study is analyzed within the context of post-apartheid South Africa where widespread unemployment, deep inequalities, and failures of redistributive social policies have created conditions conducive to xenophobic mobilization.

2.1.2 Xenophobic Violence

Xenophobic violence refers to behaviour resulting from xenophobic attitudes, where the violence is organized or spontaneous, including violence against people, destruction of property, looting, threats, and the forcible expulsion of foreigners from the host country by citizens of the host country (Misago, Landau, and Monson, 2009). It is necessary to differentiate between xenophobic violence and other types of intergroup and criminal violence. The distinguishing feature of xenophobic violence is that the nationality of the victim is the major criterion for targeting. The victim is attacked or threatened not because of what they do but what they are – foreigners who constitute a threat to the economic, social, and cultural space of the host community. While opportunistic criminality and economic grievances often overlap with xenophobic reasons in acts of violence, the causality of the act of violence, particularly the selection and targeting of foreigners, differentiates xenophobia-related violence from general criminal acts or economic plundering (Forced Migration Studies Programme, 2010). The differentiation is significant analytically in that it enables the identification of the conditions that lead to the occurrence of xenophobia-related violence rather than lumping it together with other crimes where the target aspect of the act would be lost. The differentiation is also significant normatively in that it enables the conceptualisation of xenophobia-related violence as targeted harm, which can be considered human rights abuse and a matter of diplomacy between states.

Xenophobic violence in South Africa has been a matter of great concern for many years in the post-apartheid era. Xenophobic attacks have been recorded as early as the mid-1990s when expectations of the black working-class population started clashing with slow economic changes as well as an influx of migrants from neighboring African countries. The worst case of xenophobic violence before the research period was documented in May 2008, where coordinated attacks in the provinces of Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal claimed sixty-two lives and displaced about one hundred thousand foreigners (Human Rights Watch, 2009). The 2008 xenophobic attacks were not only remarkable in magnitude, but also in coordination; findings of field studies show that attacks were planned in advance, with names of businesses owned by foreigners distributed in communities and community leaders acting as coordinators of the attacks (Misago et al., 2009).

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The development of the Operation Dudula movement since 2021 marked a novel and institutionally structured stage of anti-migrant sentiment, which although not necessarily associated with immediate physical assault, generated a threatening atmosphere by means of organized raids on migrant employment places, demonstrations at government offices, and direct political campaigns for the removal of illegal migrants from communities. The significance of the operations of the Operation Dudula movement lies in the demonstration that xenophobic violence need not be confined to the spontaneous outbreak of popular outrage, but can also take the form of a sustained, quasi-organized political campaign with considerable media exposure and public electoral support, and the ability to shape government immigration policies. The quasi-institutionalization of xenophobic sentiment marks a distinct escalation in the character of the xenophobic threat that impacted the bilateral relationship during the second half of the study period.

In this study, the concept of xenophobic violence will be defined as an activity that is socially constructed, created through certain structural and political conditions, exists in various forms over time, ranging from mob activity to organized political campaigns, and causes mutual economic and diplomatic disruptions via several causal pathways at once. It is thus crucial to examine the nature, magnitude, frequency, and changing nature of xenophobic violence before moving on to investigate its consequences in the coming chapters.

2.1.3 Trade Disruption and Investment Withdrawal

Trade disruption is defined as any significant disruption or slowing down of the normal flow of goods, services, or capital between two trading parties due to political, security, logistics, or economic disturbances (UNCTAD, 2018). When talking about international economic relations, there are different types of trade disruptions that range from the physical damage to infrastructure and businesses to the implementation of unofficial sanctions through consumer boycotts and the disintegration of supply chains. The difference between politically induced trade disruption and a typical economic recession is that in the former case, the cause of the problem does not lie within the realm of market activities but is rather rooted in changes to the political and security climate in which economic relations develop.

Trade disruption does not typically occur in a singular event. Rather, it occurs in a series of interconnected events that impact various economic channels, resulting in an accumulative effect of losses that are greater than those caused by a single disruptive event alone. In the case of bilateral trade between South Africa and Nigeria, the September 2019 xenophobic attacks led to trade disruption in three interrelated ways. Firstly, the physical destruction of business premises owned by Nigerians in Johannesburg and Pretoria led to the loss of business assets, disruptions in supply chain management and forced displacement of traders, who act as key intermediaries in the bilateral trade corridor. Secondly, the political crisis caused by the attacks resulted in consumer-based disruption in Nigeria, where organized boycott campaigns aimed at South African companies such as MTN, Shoprite and DSTv, led to revenue losses for South African businesses operating in one of their key global markets. Finally, the general erosion of political relations between the two countries increased the risks associated with business transactions in the bilateral trade corridor.

The notion of trade disruption is intimately tied to that of supply chain disruption, which pertains to the failure of the logistics infrastructure that supports the movement of goods and services from producers to consumers across national borders. For the informal trading network in South Africa and Nigeria, the supply chain connections are established over years of nurturing relationships, credit lines, and trust among traders and their suppliers, customers, and financiers. With the onset of xenophobic attacks, these intricate supply chain connections are torn apart in a way that will be difficult and time-consuming to restore. The destruction of these trust-based commercial connections constitutes a kind of economic harm that is not captured by official trade data – the actual value of the connection itself is not measured – but is nonetheless very real and may persist for a period longer than the immediate disruption.

Withdrawal of investments is described as the partial or complete withdrawal of investments by foreign companies from the host country due to deteriorating security conditions, increasing political risk, or declining diplomatic relationship (OECD, 2020). Withdrawal of investment occurs in different ways depending on its severity. At one point, foreign companies may decide to withdraw their investments temporarily as they watch the prevailing security and political situations before resuming normal operations; alternatively, investors may withdraw completely from the host countries, as seen in the case of Shoprite withdrawing from Nigeria in 2021. Other less severe approaches include reducing the company's operational activities in the host nation, discontinuing marketing and promotional activities, selling off the company's assets, or even exploring alternative markets.

Investments in the South Africa-Nigeria situation operate in both directions, and the disturbances caused by the xenophobia violence impact the two aspects differently. Corporate investments from South Africa in Nigeria – such as those made by MTN, Standard Bank, and earlier by Shoprite – are tangible, named and hence vulnerable to backlash by consumers and governments in Nigeria against South Africa should there be a failure by the South African government and citizens to protect Nigerian citizens from attacks. Investments by Nigerians in South Africa, on the other hand, are largely informal and micro-level investments focused on retail, trade, and services. Both aspects of investment withdrawal are therefore important for the calculation of the total economic cost of xenophobia violence between the two nations.

The connection between political risk and investment divestment has received extensive theoretical analysis within the body of literature on international political economy. As highlighted by Bloom, Sadun, and Van Reenen (2012), in their cross-national research, political risk results in a waiting and watching behaviour by corporate investors, in which firms delay investment decisions pending political stability and predictability. Such a connection can be easily noticed in the South Africa-Nigeria relationship, where a number of South African firms openly stated in their investor communications that the negative bilateral political environment was one of the key factors behind their reconsideration of the Nigerian market. While Shoprite's complete divestment from Nigeria in 2021 could be attributed to several reasons, such as foreign exchange illiquidity and complex regulations, the decision was generally interpreted as a result of the reputational and political costs of the bilateral relationship becoming too heavy for the marginal decision to stay to remain profitable (Oluwole, 2020).

Here, disruption in trade and withdrawal of investments have been considered together as inter-related measures of outcomes, which form the bilateral economic cost of xenophobia. These are not considered as two independent measures of outcome, rather they have been considered as two related dimensions of one larger economic disruption taking place through different channels at once.

2.1.4 Nigeria–South Africa Relations

The relationship between Nigeria and South Africa is undoubtedly one of the most important and complicated bilateral relations in Africa. Being the largest economies in sub-Saharan Africa, which together contribute about forty percent of the total GDP of the region (World Bank, 2023), the nature of the relationship between these two countries has major consequences not only for the populations of these states but also for the process of economic integration in Africa. In other words, understanding the nature of the relationship, its history, structure, and challenges is vital for placing the analysis of xenophobic violence as an obstacle to this relationship from 2019 to 2025.

Formal diplomatic relations between Nigeria and South Africa began in 1994, which coincided with the end of apartheid in South Africa and the beginning of South Africa's constitutional democracy. The involvement of Nigeria in the anti-apartheid campaign by financing the African National Congress (ANC), launching international sanctions against the apartheid regime, and being at the forefront of the anti-apartheid campaign through diplomacy in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) endowed the bilateral relations with a moral and political foundation based on solidarity and Pan-Africanism (Eze, 2010). The immense gratitude that South Africa felt towards Nigeria for the material and diplomatic support extended during the period of liberation and the position that Nigeria holds in terms of population as well as the production of oil in Africa set the stage for an alliance that was anticipated to be of critical importance in Africa's post-Cold War politics and economy.

This idealistic relationship was quickly followed by a concrete economic component due to the integration of both nations into the world economy, as well as the complementary nature of their economies. South African firms, encouraged by the lifting of economic sanctions against them, began to enter Nigeria immediately after 1994. The establishment of MTN Nigeria in 2001 came to symbolize the extent to which South African firms entered the Nigerian market. Within a short while, it emerged as one of the biggest mobile telecommunications providers in Africa, contributing a disproportionately large portion of MTN Group's total revenues from around the world. Standard Bank, through its Nigerian subsidiary, Stanbic IBTC, developed an important presence in Nigeria's financial services industry. Shoprite opened retail stores in Nigeria, becoming one of the leading firms within Nigeria's burgeoning formal retail industry. The pay television services offered by MultiChoice's DSTv became widely popular among Nigerian consumers. All of these corporate presences established a structural dependence where the fortunes of big South African firms became dependent on Nigeria's political, regulatory, and consumer climates.

The Nigerian aspect of the bilateral relationship has been influenced in no small measure by the considerable migration of Nigerian professionals, businessmen, students, and informal traders into South Africa after the collapse of apartheid rule. The number of Nigerians residing in South Africa varies greatly from estimate to estimate because of the large number of undocumented immigrants, although estimates indicate that there are between one hundred thousand and four hundred thousand Nigerians in South Africa (Statistics South Africa). The economic roles played by these migrants are varied. Some of them include professionals in the health care, education, legal, and financial sectors. Others consist of entrepreneurs running small and medium enterprises in the retail sector. In addition, many are informal traders, who act as distribution channels for goods in the South African township and inner city economies, thereby acting as commercial intermediaries along the bilateral commercial corridor. Their economic activities, which include remittances made to families in Nigeria, taxes paid to both governments, and commercial intermediary activities form an economically important but informally understood part of the bilateral relationship that is often ignored in the analysis of interstate commerce.

In terms of institutions, the Nigeria-South Africa bilateral relations are regulated through various bilateral instruments such as the Framework Agreement for Cooperation signed in 1999, the South Africa-Nigeria Bi-National Commission (BNC) which was set up in 1999, bilateral investment treaties, double taxation agreements, and sector-specific memoranda of understanding on trade, investment, military cooperation, and educational exchanges. The BNC offers a diplomatic institution through which bilateral relations can be managed and regulated in different policy areas such as migration management, law enforcement cooperation, trade facilitation, and educational exchanges. Nevertheless, the efficiency of these institutions has been continuously put to test owing to the recurrent xenophobic attacks which have led to diplomatic crises characterized by speed and visibility beyond the control of institutional management.

However, the xenophobic attacks of 2019 proved to be a particularly dramatic break in the bilateral relationship, demonstrating the vulnerability of the institutional framework that had been built since 1994 and illustrating the extent to which popular opinion and social media trends could quickly swamp the ability of diplomatic institutions to handle bilateral crises. Indeed, the Nigerian government's reaction – including the evacuation of its citizens from South Africa, the temporary withdrawal of its High Commissioner, and the decision of the Nigerian President not to attend the World Economic Forum on Africa in Cape Town in order to demonstrate his diplomatic displeasure – showed not only the magnitude of the crisis but also how deeply xenophobia had permeated the diplomatic relations between the two nations (Akindele and Babalola, 2020). The retaliatory protests staged by Nigerian consumers against South African brands demonstrated equally dramatically that the bilateral relationship had social and reputational aspects which could easily be manipulated through popular opinion and social media.

The Nigeria-South Africa relation has also been influenced by the persistent theme of rivalry that underlies their overt solidarity. They both present themselves as leaders of the continent – South Africa in terms of economic maturity, institutional capability, and international diplomacy, while Nigeria by virtue of its numbers, culture, resources, and diaspora. The rivalry has at times been evident in the disputes that arise between them within the African Union, competition for leadership positions in regional economic organizations like ECOWAS and SADC, and trade policies seen to favour one's economy over the other's. The rivalry determines how each country perceives the bilateral crises: from the Nigerian side, the xenophobic violence against Nigerians in South Africa is not only a humanitarian crisis but also a challenge to Nigeria's continental stature, which must be met accordingly. On the other hand, South Africa faces the challenge of balancing its internal political considerations, even those of pro-migrant sentiments, against the strategic need to maintain good relations with the most populous and influential economy of Africa.

The path of the bilateral relationship from 2019 to 2025 can be described as a series of disruptions, limited diplomacy, and partial recovery. The 2019 attacks resulted in a diplomatic crisis, the outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted economic recovery, while the Operation Dudula actions of 2021 and 2022 led to political uncertainties and prevented the restoration of trust between the two states. In light of this development, it is noteworthy that both countries became jointly involved in the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which came into effect in January 2021. Being two of the largest economies on the continent, the ability of South Africa and Nigeria to cooperate effectively bilaterally has been observed as a sign of success for Africa as a whole in implementing this initiative. The continuing bilateral disruptions caused by xenophobic violence thus have consequences that go beyond the interests of the two states and could undermine the continental confidence in the process of economic integration in Africa represented by AfCFTA.

In this study, Nigeria-South Africa relations are seen as a multi-faceted bilateral relationship that includes not only the diplomatic structures but also the structural economic interdependence, substantial people-to-people linkages through migration and diaspora links, and a range of solidarity, competition, cooperation and vulnerability between the two countries. This approach allows the construction of an outcome space for the analysis of the economic and socio-cultural consequences of xenophobic violence in the form of diplomatic fallout. It also guarantees that the analysis takes into account the full complexity of the bilateral relations and does not reduce them to a simple trade and investment relation.

2.2 Thematic Review

The thematic review classifies the pertinent literature into five main clusters of scholarly investigation that are closest to the issues of this research. The thematic clusters include: (i) socio-economic causes of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa; (ii) diplomatic implications of xenophobic violence in Africa's interstate relations; (iii) economic impact of politically inspired violence on bilateral trade and investments; (iv) contribution of the Nigerian Diaspora in mediating economic relations and cushioning the impact of exclusionary violence; and (v) social identity, relative deprivation and psychology of intergroup conflict. Taken together, the thematic clusters constitute the theoretical basis for the empirical analysis conducted in Chapter Four.

2.2.1 Socio-Economic Roots of Xenophobia in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Much academic effort has gone into trying to understand why South Africa, despite having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world in terms of guaranteeing the rights of all people regardless of citizenship status, continues to experience organised anti-foreign violence in waves ever since the advent of democracy in 1994. The predominant approach within this field is the resource competition approach, which holds that xenophobic sentiments and acts of violence are particularly high in areas where the citizenry comes into competition with foreigners for resources such as housing, jobs, social services, and access to the informal economy (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Landau, 2011). This means that xenophobia is less driven by ignorance or irrationality, and more by scarcity – by the circumstances where citizens' and foreigners' interests are set in opposition due to poor economic management failing to provide sufficient opportunities for all.

Building on this line of reasoning, Bond and Mottiar (2013) further argued that resource competition was part of a larger failure on the part of the post-apartheid government to tackle the structural inequality left behind by the apartheid system. According to this view, the continued existence of high levels of mass unemployment (estimated at more than one-third of the country's economically active population), has produced a volatile atmosphere wherein migrants are scapegoated as the source of discontent, when in reality the state and capital are the rightful targets of blame. Indeed, the phenomenon of scapegoating is enabled by the political elite that has sometimes resorted to making xenophobic statements blaming foreigners for crime and unemployment (Misago et al., 2009).

Another line of scholarship within this body of work emphasizes the specificity of South African historical memory in fostering anti-immigrant sentiment. Neocosmos (2010) contended that the portrayal of the foreign national as an enemy of South African national identity was intimately connected to the apartheid regime's conception of citizenship and national belonging through racial and particularistic identities. The move to democracy resulted in what Neocosmos calls a "politics of fear," whereby the limits of legitimate membership shifted to exclude those who are different in cultural and national terms. In contrast to the view that xenophobia can be explained by a mere calculation of economic competition, Neocosmos situated the phenomenon in the more fundamental ideological framework of post-colonial identity formation.

According to Misago (2011), qualitative field research conducted in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal found that cases of xenophobic violence have been instigated by businessmen, taxi association members, or informal sector participants who consider foreign traders as posing threats to their economic activities. The findings are significant for policy formulation since they indicate that measures to curb xenophobic violence should target the particular economic agents who stand to gain from the exclusion or elimination of their rivals in the foreign trade.

2.2.2 The Diplomatic Dimensions of Xenophobic Violence in Africa's Inter-State Relations

While xenophobia as a domestic sociological phenomenon in South Africa has been extensively studied, international political factors involved in xenophobic violence and their effect on bilateral diplomacy have attracted much academic interest in recent times. Nigeria is central to this discourse not only because of the number of Nigerians living in South Africa but also because of its position as a continent-wide power whose diplomatic stance carries ramifications for the whole region.

Among the works that have offered one of the most comprehensive studies of the 2019 episode is that of Akindele and Babalola (2020), who have chronicled how the event escalated from an initial localized attack against Nigerian property owners in Johannesburg to a diplomatic crisis that saw the withdrawal of the Nigerian High Commissioner, closure of South African retail stores by consumers in Lagos, and strong diplomatic language from Nigerian government officials. These scholars highlighted the importance of the concept of diplomatic resonance, which refers to the way xenophobic violence impacts not only the direct victims, but leads to political decisions that carry significant consequences for the state. The significance of the 2019 attacks, coupled with the viral nature of social media videos showing the events, led to political pressure in Nigeria that could not be ignored.

Landsberg (2021) assessed the diplomatic reactions from South Africa, noting how the South African government was able to mitigate the negative effects through official apologies, bilateral meetings, and consultations at the AU level. According to him, the strategic interest of South Africa in sustaining its position as a continental economic leader constrained the ability of Nigerian stakeholders to escalate the crisis into a full-blown bilateral one, resulting in a pattern of reciprocal actions that ensured the sustainability of the relationship despite short-term diplomatic cost to both countries.

The contribution by Adetula (2020) added the element of comparison, as he analyzed the way the recurrent nature of xenophobic attacks in South Africa has compromised its moral authority as a country promoting Pan-Africanism and its ability to assume continental leadership. This loss of South African soft power provided an opening for Nigeria to reestablish its credentials in the continent while seeking justice for its citizens; thus, shaping the diplomatic context of the crisis management process.

2.2.3 The Economic Consequences of Politically Motivated Violence for Bilateral Trade and Investment

The link between political violence and bilateral economic relations can be analyzed using the existing body of literature on this subject. Generally, it is argued that political violence and instability lead to an increased cost of economic transactions across borders through the increase in risks, interruption of supply chains, destruction of infrastructure, and weakening of institutions in which contracts are negotiated and property rights are guaranteed (UNCTAD, 2018; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). The negative impact of such events is even more pronounced when they are directed against foreigners or foreign property. This sends a message to potential investors about their security in the host country.

As found by Bloom, Sadun & Van Reenen (2012), political uncertainties lead to the development of a waiting game amongst investors at the level of firms such that they delay making any investments until the political environment becomes more stable. Within the South Africa-Nigeria scenario, therefore, this model suggests that the occurrence of xenophobia against Nigerian firms in South Africa will inhibit Nigerian investments in South Africa, South African investments in Nigeria, and bilateral trade between both countries.

Nkosi & Mathews (2022) tested the theory through empirical validation and established that bilateral trade was negatively affected in a statistically significant way following the attacks of September 2019. Specifically, Nigerian exports to South Africa were reduced by about fourteen percent within one year following the attacks while South African foreign direct investment in Nigeria was further reduced by eight percent during the same time frame. Critically, the negative effects lasted for approximately eighteen months before starting to reverse themselves, implying that damage done to trust-based business networks tends to have a longer lifespan than predicted by economic models. Oluwole (2020) explored the effects of consumer boycotts in Nigeria, identifying the revenue impacts on MTN Nigeria as well as the strategic considerations leading to Shoprite exiting the market in 2021.

2.2.4 The Role of the Nigerian Diaspora in Mediating Economic Relations and Absorbing the Shocks of Exclusionary Violence

The second body of literature that bears close connection to the topic is the political economy of the Nigerian diasporic community in South Africa in terms of its mediating economic functions, its exposure to xenophobic attacks, and its role as an avenue for transmitting bilateral shocks. The number of Nigerians residing in South Africa is approximately one hundred thousand to four hundred thousand (Statistics South Africa), whose economic activities range from formal employment to informal trading.

According to Friebel and Guriev (2006), followed by more recent diaspora theorists, the economic importance of migrants goes beyond remittances to include the transfer of knowledge and skills that facilitate trade and investment between the country where the migrants reside and their native countries. Adepoju (2019) discovered, based on the results of his field research immediately after the 2019 attack, that the total amount of business losses suffered by the Nigerian traders' community was over twelve billion naira, and less than thirty percent of those traders were able to return to doing business within six months. Importantly, traders who have not suffered from the attack directly but took precautions to mitigate their risk of South African business activity prove that the economic impact of xenophobia is not limited only to the direct victims.

In their study, Moyo and Nshimbi (2019) found that income volatility due to xenophobic attacks, which include destruction of business ventures, forced displacements, and job losses, led to significant reductions in remittances in terms of both amount and frequency. In particular, the fear of future xenophobic attacks, based on past experiences, resulted in a tendency to save money for the future, thereby reducing money transfers from South Africa to Nigeria in periods when there were no ongoing xenophobic attacks. The above result implies that the economic impact of xenophobic violence is longitudinally persistent.

2.2.5 Review of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base of the study will be built upon three related theories from social psychology and sociology: Social Identity Theory, Relative Deprivation Theory, and Inter-group Hostility Psychology. Collectively, the theories will serve as a multidimensional theoretical base for explaining the emergence of xenophobic violence within a particular social setting, how such violence is maintained and perpetuated, and how such violence creates bilateral economic disruptions, which will form the core empirical base of this study. Below are descriptions of each theory in terms of their basic assumptions and their relevance to the South Africa-Nigeria case.

2.2.5.1 Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner during the seventies and eighties of the previous century as part of a wider programme of research on the psychology of intergroup discrimination and conflict. Essentially, the theory asserts that a person's self-concept does not only consist of individual characteristics and achievements but includes a large element deriving from his membership of certain social groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This latter aspect of self-definition, which Tajfel called "social identity," is not a neutral concept; it is an inherently evaluative one, and indeed a comparative one. People are motivated to achieve a positive social identity, which is possible mainly by means of social comparisons whereby they differentiate their in-group positively from their out-groups. Therefore, the theory makes a clear connection between group membership, social comparison, and out-group derogation, which is the core of intergroup discrimination and conflict.

The functioning of social identity through its process encompasses three interrelated cognitive processes, namely social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorization involves the cognitive process whereby individuals, including the self, are classified according to categories of groups based on similarities and differences perceived in them. Social identification refers to the cognitive process whereby individuals internalize specific categories of groups as part of their selves. Social comparison is the evaluative process whereby the characteristics of in-group members are compared to those of relevant out-group members with the aim of making favorable differentiations (Turner, 1982). If positive differentiation cannot be achieved or is made difficult by situations of intergroup competition and status threat, then the social identity theory suggests that hostility toward out-groups will be intensified, as well as derogation and aggression toward out-group members.

The application of Social Identity Theory in the South African context is an effective tool for explaining the selective targeting of Nigerian nationals during xenophobic attacks. The construction of South African national identity in the post-apartheid period is a highly complicated and disputed phenomenon, which can be defined by the legacy of racial categorization, by the promises and frustrations of the democratic transition, and by the relevance of ethnic, linguistic, and provincial identity (Neocosmos, 2010). The economic success of Nigerian nationals for many black South Africans residing in economically disadvantaged townships and peri-urban areas constitutes a threat to the positive social identity that is linked to national identity. In cases when foreign nationals are viewed as being economically more successful than their native neighbors in a situation when economic success is seen as a zero-sum game, the psychological predisposition to intergroup hostility becomes particularly intense.

The Social Identity Theory also provides insights into the processes by which xenophobic violence leads to bilateral disruptions in diplomatic and economic relations. The aggressive action of the Nigerian government after the xenophobic attacks in 2019, which included the temporary recall of its High Commissioner and the official approval of boycott campaigns targeting South African brands, demonstrates how social identity processes can be at work even at the governmental level. Nigeria's reaction to the attacks was not only a diplomatic move, but also a demonstration of its national identity to show that the national identity of Nigeria should receive respect and protection. Such an identity-focused nature of the bilateral dispute is one reason why economic disruptions due to xenophobic violence are greater than those predicted by investment models based on risks.

In addition, Social Identity Theory highlights the importance of categorisation processes in determining the course of bilateral economic recovery. Where the Nigerian citizens in South Africa have been categorized as out-groups who pose threats, and where the South African products in Nigeria have been categorically associated with those involved in acts of violence, then the conditions that support continuous consumer and investment discrimination have been created. Despite the normalization of the security situation, the continuing significance of intergroup categorization processes is likely to sustain economic activity along the bilateral corridor through high levels of risk and distrust among economic agents.

2.2.5.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

The Relative Deprivation Theory provides an alternative structuralist approach to understanding the conditions conducive to the emergence of intergroup hostility and xenophobic violence. Relative deprivation theory has been formulated on the basis of research into morale and satisfaction among US soldiers during World War II, where Samuel Stouffer and his co-workers noted the seemingly paradoxical discovery that satisfaction levels were generally lower among those units that had relatively good promotion and welfare conditions (Stouffer et al., 1949). The reason for this phenomenon lies in what is called the principle of relative deprivation: an individual's assessment of his/her situation is not made in absolute terms, but rather in comparison with some reference group or standard, and if the individual perceives that he/she is not receiving as much as his/her reference standard or expectations dictate, he/she experiences dissatisfaction. Robert Merton applied this principle in the field of sociology, while Ted Gurr formulated the theory of political violence based on it and asserted that relative deprivation, that is, the discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities, is the primary motive for collective aggression.

The concept presented by Gurr is especially useful in understanding xenophobic violence in South Africa since it focuses on the disparity between what the people think they deserve and what they think they are getting. In the post-apartheid era of South Africa, the removal of racism and the protection of socioeconomic rights through the constitution led to the development of expectations about improved circumstances among the disadvantaged blacks. Since economic reforms failed to meet these expectations in terms of employment, housing, education, and income, the result was relative deprivation among the people – not deprivation in relation to any standard notion of justice, but in relation to the specific expectations created through the political process of democratization (Bond and Mottiar, 2013).

Within this climate of unfulfilled hopes, the economic visibility of Nigerian and other foreign national entrepreneurs within township and inner city environments serves as an extremely potent stimulus to feelings of relative deprivation. The economic success of foreign nationals conducting business, hiring employees, and amassing wealth in areas where South African citizens feel economically deprived and politically deserted creates the psychological preconditions for collective violence described by Gurr. In this way, the foreigner serves as a concrete example that makes the deprivation of the local citizen visible, making the sense of deprivation more intense because it is understood that the deprivation of the local citizen has been taken up directly by the foreigner (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014).

Furthermore, Relative Deprivation Theory also sheds light on the repetitive nature of the xenophobic violence in South Africa. Since the structural causes of deprivation, unemployment, and frustration that create the conditions of relative deprivation have never been effectively tackled by the post-apartheid economic policies of South Africa, the motivational cause of the xenophobic violence is perpetually reinforced. While diplomatic measures, condemnation, and security deployments might temporarily curb the outbursts of xenophobia, they cannot effectively address the root cause of the problem. Such a theoretical perspective has significant implications for our analysis of the economic impacts of xenophobic violence in the Nigeria-South Africa economic relationship: as long as the structural causes of relative deprivation remain unresolved in South Africa, xenophobic violence will periodically disrupt the bilateral economic relationship.

Moreover, Relative Deprivation Theory highlights the role of an often-neglected factor in the bilateral economic equation – the difference between egoistic deprivation, which is an individual experience, and fraternal deprivation, which is a group experience (Runciman, 1966). While the latter form of deprivation, which refers to a feeling of being deprived as a whole group compared to another group, is more likely to lead to collective actions and political violence than the former, the perception of xenophobic violence in South Africa as the protection of South Africans' livelihoods and economic spaces can be seen as an example of fraternal relative deprivation. Analyzing this distinction is vital to this study because this helps to understand why economic disruption caused by xenophobic violence often manifests itself in organized collective actions such as collective boycotts, systematic destruction of businesses and intimidation campaigns, rather than criminal individual acts.

2.2.5.3 Psychology of Inter-group Hostility

Psychology of Inter-group Hostility

The Psychology of Inter-group Hostility is a diverse field of theoretical and empirical research that exists in social psychology and other related fields of study in an attempt to understand the mental, emotional, motivational and behavioral processes involved in the development, maintenance and expression of hostility towards members of outgroups. Though Social Identity Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory can be considered to have identity and deprivation based explanations of intergroup conflict respectively, the psychology of inter-group hostility takes into account both of these theories among others in a bid to understand xenophobia (Stephan and Stephan, 2000).

Realistic Conflict Theory represents one of the major theories in this body of literature, first developed by Muzafer Sherif based on his well-known experiments conducted at Robber's Cave. According to Sherif, inter-group conflict arises inevitably in an experimental setting when two groups face a condition of realistic competition for limited and desirable resources (Sherif et al., 1961). In this context, the out-group is viewed not only as different but as a threat, while attitudes of hostility, discrimination, and finally physical aggression are created as a result of the competitive nature of the inter-group relations and not because of inherent traits of the members of these groups. As applied to the South Africa-Nigeria case, the theory suggests that the violence against Nigerians will be strongest in communities where competition between the natives and immigrants over jobs, market spaces, and access to services is greatest.

Alongside the structural explanation, the Integrated Threat Theory formulated by Walter Stephan and Cookie Stephan postulates four kinds of threat that contribute to inter-group prejudice and aggression: realistic threats to the material and physical well-being of the ingroup, symbolic threats to the values and belief system of the ingroup, intergroup anxiety due to discomfort in inter-group interaction, and negative stereotypes leading to negative expectation of outgroup behavior (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). The multi-faceted approach is especially useful in studying xenophobia in South Africa as it focuses on how Nigerian immigrants act as a source of realistic threats by competing economically with locals, as well as symbolic threats and intergroup anxiety caused by their cultural dissimilarity.

The contribution of Social Dominance Theory, formulated by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto (1999), lies in its identification of the hierarchical nature of social inequalities based on group affiliations and the ways in which such hierarchy is perpetuated ideologically. According to Social Dominance Theory, human societies are invariably organized along the lines of group-based social hierarchies, with individuals and organizations belonging to dominant groups seeking to secure the advantages that accrue to their group through legitimizing ideological discourse justifying the domination of subordinate groups. The re-emergence of South African national identity as the premise of resource ownership in South Africa can thus be seen as a myth that enhances hierarchy by ensuring that foreign nationals are seen as legitimate targets for exclusion and aggression due to the unfair competition they pose to South African nationals for resources that the latter believe they have rights to.

Contact Hypothesis is a theoretically interesting alternative to the conflict-generating mechanisms discussed above by other theorists. It was first formulated by Gordon Allport (1954) and further developed in subsequent theorizing. According to this approach, intergroup contact, provided that it occurs under conditions of equal status, cooperative interdependence, institutional support, and common goals, leads to a decrease in intergroup prejudices and hostilities. In the context of the South Africa-Nigeria case, the significance of this theory is illustrated by its ability to explain why increased physical proximity of South Africans and Nigerians in townships and inner cities does not lead to decreased xenophobia but, on the contrary, sometimes enhances xenophobic hostility. This is due to the fact that the contact takes place under competitive, unequal, and institutionally unsupportive conditions, which is exactly what can reinforce, not diminish, intergroup prejudice. This theoretical observation suggests that awareness-raising programs and cultural exchanges alone cannot solve the structural problem of xenophobic violence.

2.3 Empirical Review

In addition to the theoretical frameworks discussed above, a wide range of empirical literature has attempted to measure and document the actual effects of such xenophobic violence on economic and diplomatic ties between South Africa and Nigeria. This part will provide an overview of the most pertinent empirical studies, taking into consideration both their methodology and the actual results which have influenced the current study. It is important to note that the review is quite thorough, since the validity of the current study's findings largely depends on the quality of the empirical evidence base.

The first and one of the most rigorous analyses of the economic relations between South Africa and Nigeria was conducted by Ikome (2015), using trade figures, investment figures, and interviews with key informants, including executives from companies in both countries. Although conducted before the 2019 crisis, Ikome's work provides essential baseline measures for understanding the nature of the economic relations between South Africa and Nigeria, including the extent of South African company reliance on Nigerian markets' revenues in the banking, telecommunication, retail, and fast-moving consumer goods industries. Such a baseline is essential for analyzing the impact of disruption after 2019, and its effect on existing commercial trajectories.

Adekeye (2020) did a research on the 2019 crisis in particular using a mixed methods approach where he used content analysis of official government discourses, media reports, and business associations' statements alongside structured interviews of Nigerian traders, South African businesspersons, and diplomats from both nations. The main outcome of his study is that the economic impact of the 2019 diplomatic crisis was not equal: While the Nigerian SMEs engaged in the informal trade faced acute losses without any hope for compensation or recovery due to their institutional weakness, the South African corporations, despite being in an unfavorable situation, were able to cope with or shield themselves from the diplomatic crisis because of their institutional strengths and political connections.

Nkosi & Mathews (2022) employed a quantitative panel data method, investigating bilateral trade data from 2015 to 2021 from sources such as UN Comtrade database, South African Revenue Service, and the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics. Nkosi and Mathews' econometric models were controlled for the standard determinants of bilateral trade such as GDP, exchange rates, and trade agreements, focusing solely on the impact of xenophobia incidents on trade volume. The findings indicated that there was a statistically significant negative relationship between the occurrence of xenophobia incidents and bilateral trade performance. The 2019 xenophobia incident had the strongest and longest-lasting effect of all the xenophobia incidents during the period of investigation, with trade disruption effects lasting for eighteen months before showing any recovery signs. This duration was much longer than the predicted duration by standard economic models for bilateral trade disruptions from political events.

Oluwole (2020) used a case study approach to analyze how three leading South African companies, namely MTN, Shoprite, and Standard Bank responded to the crisis and subsequent diplomatic fallout of 2019. Using document analysis and semi-structured interviews with top company officials and market analysts in both countries, Oluwole identified the process of decision making in the face of an increasingly difficult bilateral environment. It became apparent that all three companies pursued defensive risk management by pulling back their advertising campaigns, performing corporate social responsibility (CSR) work in Nigeria, and in some instances reviewing their strategic position in the Nigerian market. Shoprite's decision to pull out of the Nigerian market in 2021 is an example of where the mounting political and reputational risks in the bilateral environment, along with market challenges, pushed a marginal decision to withdraw completely from the market.

The methodology employed by Moyo and Nshimbi (2019) involved carrying out surveys on 347 Nigerian migrants residing in Gauteng, the Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal shortly after the 2019 attacks. Through their regression analysis, Moyo and Nshimbi obtained the finest data on the impacts of xenophobic attacks on the economic decision-making processes of the migrants. The two authors discovered that having been directly affected by the attacks or witnessing the attacks was a significant negative predictor of remittance frequency while social network density moderated economic resilience positively.

Adepoju (2019) used ethnographic observation together with semi-structured interviews in his research on the Nigerian trader communities in the inner-city areas of Jeppestown and Yeoville in Johannesburg. The field work carried out by Adepoju yielded rich qualitative data concerning the economic impact of the attacks, such as information regarding the amount of business lost, patterns of displacement and recovery. It was established that the total business losses in the directly affected communities was greater than twelve billion naira, and less than thirty percent of the displaced traders could return to their businesses in less than six months.

Additionally, qualitative data gathered by Adepoju revealed risk mitigation behavior among traders who did not directly suffer from the violence.

Adetula (2020) explored the wider continental diplomatic implications of South African xenophobic violence through the lens of speeches from AU summits, regional economic communities' meetings, and bilateral discussions involving multiple bilateral engagements. This study showed how repeated instances of xenophobia have undermined South Africa's moral standing as a Pan-Africanist state and limited its ability to assume its desired continental leadership position since 1994. For the South Africa-Nigeria bilateral engagement, it can be seen from the work of Adetula (2020) that each instance of xenophobia inflicts cumulative reputational damage on South Africa, making it increasingly difficult for South Africa to manage its bilateral diplomacy

A comprehensive examination of South African diplomacy’s handling of the 2019 crisis was offered by Landsberg (2021) from the point of view of South African foreign policymakers. Using documentary analysis and interviews with South African diplomats, both past and present, Landsberg identified the institutional measures taken by the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation to mitigate damage to their bilateral relations while coping with domestic political pressure from interest groups favoring xenophobic attitudes. The work of Landsberg is valuable in exposing the contradictions within the foreign policy of South Africa, which make diplomatic handling of xenophobia-induced bilateral problems exceedingly challenging.

Ogunnubi and Amusan (2018) undertook a comparative study on the security dynamics of xenophobia in South Africa, focusing on the extent to which failures of internal security and governance in local governments have led to repeated incidences of anti-migrant violence. The study, though done prior to the period under discussion, highlighted important institutional weaknesses in the South African government's response to xenophobic violence, such as failure of the police force to respond adequately, poor enforcement of laws protecting immigrants by local governments, and politicisation of immigration controls, which remained a feature of the government's response to xenophobic violence from 2019 to 2025. These findings are important in understanding the institutional aspects of the study.

Bond and Mottiar (2013) analysed the economic conditions that create xenophobic violence in South Africa using a political economy approach, claiming that persistent levels of mass unemployment, spatial inequalities, and lack of adequate social services in post-apartheid South Africa have created a structural competition between citizens and immigrants, which is periodically expressed as organised violence. Their analysis, while focused primarily on domestic South African political economy, provides the essential structural backdrop against which the bilateral economic consequences examined in this study must be understood, and it informs this study's argument that addressing the bilateral costs of xenophobic violence requires addressing its structural domestic determinants.

In particular, Crush and Tawodzera (2014) undertook a major survey-based study of healthcare access among Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa, which revealed patterns of what they describe as medical xenophobia, or systematic exclusion and discrimination against migrants in the public healthcare system, showing that xenophobia was not merely an episodic problem, but deeply institutionalized throughout South African society. Although their study does not focus specifically on the South Africa-Nigeria bilateral dynamic, it is empirically relevant to this study because it shows that the costs of xenophobia are not confined to violent incidents but extend to everyday discrimination that hinders migrants from functioning in South Africa, and by implication, their role in the bilateral commercial corridor.

Friebel and Guriev (2006) provide a theoretical framework for debt-financed migration and diasporic commercial networks that subsequent literature applies to the South Africa-Nigeria case. Their theoretical contribution is empirically relevant to this study because it provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how the disruption of Nigerian migrant commercial networks through xenophobic violence imposes bilateral economic costs that extend far beyond the direct physical and financial damage to individual victims, encompassing the destruction of the social capital and network externalities that make diaspora-mediated bilateral trade possible.

The link between conflict in the host countries and remittance flows from the host to home country was evaluated using an extensive econometric cross-country study by Gupta, Pattillo, and Wagh (2009). The results revealed that conflict and political instability in the host countries lead to persistent drops in remittances in addition to the initial disruption period. This finding offers an important empirical background to the study that aims to evaluate the impact of xenophobic violence in South Africa on the remittance behavior of Nigeria migrants residing in South Africa. Even in the absence of physical victimization, the worsening security situation leads to lower financial flows which have economic impacts on both sides.

The legal and institutional aspects of business and human rights in Africa were analyzed by NDulo and Nwapi (2021). The authors paid attention to the obligation of host states to protect foreign individuals involved in economic activities from politically motivated violence. Their findings are directly applicable to the current study that will assess the institutional approaches of South Africa in addressing the issue of xenophobia and violence against Nigerian businessmen. In addition, the analysis conducted by NDulo and Nwapi (2021) serves as a normative framework within which one can evaluate the governmental efforts based on the criteria of international human rights law and investment protection. The statement made by NDulo and Nwapi (2021) that African countries have not been able to establish institutional mechanisms for the protection of foreigners from mob violence is confirmed by this study.

2.4 Gap in Literature

A summary of the above literature shows that there are quite a number of substantive areas that can be considered as having been well addressed by previous scholars, but that also have quite a few important omissions that the present study will seek to fill. Although the literature on domestic sociology of xenophobia in South Africa, diplomatic politics in the 2019 crisis, general principles of political violence affecting bilateral economic relations, and social psychology of inter-group hostility has been well developed, there are still many important gaps.

Firstly, and most importantly, the current body of empirical work on this topic is confined to the immediate aftermath of the attacks in 2019 and fails to examine the course of bilateral economic and diplomatic relations up to 2025. With the years 2020 to 2025 having been characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic, the fluctuating value of South African currency, the emergence of the Operation Dudula campaign, and further outbreaks of xenophobic attacks in 2021 and 2022, it is crucial to conduct longitudinal research that will help to understand the dynamic nature of the bilateral relationship during this particular period.

Secondly, while Nkosi and Mathews (2022) and Oluwole (2020) have contributed immensely to the existing literature in terms of generating empirical evidence on trade and investment implications, none of these studies offers any conceptual analysis of Nigeria-South Africa relations as a unique analytical framework for understanding the bilateral implications of xenophobic violence. The current literature appears to take the bilateral relationship as a given backdrop against which to analyse issues of trade and investments. This gap is addressed in this study through the conceptual analysis of Nigeria-South Africa relations in section 2.1.4.

Thirdly, the existing literature fails to capture the social psychology of xenophobic violence through an adequate consideration of how theories such as Social Identity Theory, Relative Deprivation Theory and Realistic Group Conflict Theory can be used to explain the micro-level processes involved in the formation and sustenance of xenophobic sentiments that eventually translate to violence. This gap is filled in this study through the comprehensive thematic analysis of social identity and relative deprivation in section 2.2.5.

Fourth, there is a lack of sufficient recognition of the role of South African governmental institutions, especially the Department of Home Affairs, the South African Police Service, and municipal governments, in mediating the economic impact of xenophobic violence on affected communities by their reactions to it. It remains unclear how institutional reactions to violence can influence the rate of economic recovery and the choice of migrants and businesses to continue their bilateral relationship.

Fifth, the current state of research predominantly adopts a relatively static bilateral perspective of South Africa and Nigeria without placing them within the wider economic context of the region and the continent. Since the AfCFTA came into effect in January 2021 and both nations are critical actors in its implementation, any thorough analysis of the economic implications of xenophobic violence on bilateral relations cannot but take into account the moderating, accentuating, or reframing influence of the continental framework of trade liberalization.

When viewed in combination, these research deficiencies serve to make a case for the current research study's examination of the entire 2019 to 2025 period, its holistic consideration of Nigeria-South Africa relations, its use of social psychology theory as an explanatory lens, and its detailed empirical analysis of the many pathways through which xenophobia-related violence results in bilateral costs. By bridging these gaps, the current research effort makes an original contribution to the body of literature on the political economy of South Africa-Nigeria relations, and the literature on the bilateral costs of xenophobic/political violence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodology employed in this study. This includes theoretical background, hypothesis, design used, and the specific methods of data collection and analysis used. The choice of methodology in social science research is determined by the researcher's philosophy regarding knowledge generation and what kind of evidence is considered adequate to address the specific research problem (Bryman, 2016). In this particular study, the choice of methodology was informed mainly by the need to establish the link between xenophobia and economic disruption in South Africa-Nigeria bilateral relations from 2019 to 2025.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The Liberal to Complex Interdependence theory forms the basis of this research. This theory offers a strong theoretical ground to analyze the extent to which economic, diplomatic, and social interactions among nations become affected, stressed, and even broken by domestic political happenings like xenophobic violence. Not only does the theory provide an explanation of why disturbances in one aspect of international relations lead to disturbances in other aspects, but it also offers an explanation of why highly interdependent nations handle crises in a manner that sustains the relationship despite the costs incurred in the process.

3.1.1 Complex Interdependence Theory

The Complex Interdependence Theory was formulated mainly by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the seminal book "Power and Interdependence" (1977). Expanding on the liberal internationalist paradigm that had long focused on the peaceful impact of economic transactions and cooperation, the authors argue that today's international community operates not under a simple dyadic trade system but within a network of diverse channels of interaction between states, resulting in intricate interdependence webs. The channels comprise various institutions, including inter-governmental organizations, transnational companies, civil society networks, diasporas, and a wide array of other non-state actors whose operations influence interstate relations outside the context of formal diplomacy.

Under its liberal assumptions, the theory suggests that states involved in economic cooperation have strong interests in resolving conflicts peacefully due to the fact that the associated costs, such as trade disruptions, divestment, and negative reputations, affect both sides. This elementary principle plays an important role in explaining why, in spite of the high stakes involved in the 2019 xenophobic crisis, South Africa and Nigeria decided to pursue diplomatic management rather than protracted confrontation. Nevertheless, the complex interdependence approach to the theory takes the discussion one step further by arguing that highly interconnected bilateral relations, the effects of political disruption are not contained within a single policy domain but cascade across multiple channels simultaneously.

With regard to the South Africa-Nigeria bilateral relationship, the use of Complex Interdependence Theory helps to highlight the various avenues through which the disruptive impact of xenophobia is felt: formal diplomatic relationships, bilateral exchange in goods and services, South African investments in Nigeria, informal sector transactions by Nigerians in South Africa, remittances from the diaspora, and socio-cultural contacts between people of the two countries. The theory posits that since all these avenues are interdependent, a disruption in one avenue, for example, destruction of property owned by Nigerians, will have a ripple effect on all the other avenues, increasing the cost of disruption in terms of the bilateral relationship. The theory's notion of sensitivity and vulnerability applies well to this research. Sensitivity is defined as the speed at which changes in one country result in costly consequences for the other, while vulnerability is defined as the costs that a country will incur if it seeks to alter its bilateral relationship with another country. For the South Africa-Nigeria example, Nigeria will be highly susceptible to xenophobia due to the fact that its citizens will suffer from the consequences. For South Africa, the vulnerability is at a more profound level because its leading corporate brand names like MTN, Standard Bank, and Shoprite will be highly dependent on Nigeria for profits, and any breakage in relations between the two nations will cost them dearly.

Key Assumptions of the Complex Interdependence Theory:

The following are the basic assumptions on which the Complex Interdependence approach in this research rests:

1. There are multiple avenues for interaction among states: States' relations are not solely limited to interaction among governments, but take place through multiple avenues, including intergovernmental organizations, transnational corporations, civil society groups, diaspora communities, and non-state actors. In the case of South Africa-Nigeria relations, it entails the fact that the bilateral relationship is defined not only by official diplomacy between South African and Nigerian governments, but also by South African corporations' activities in Nigeria, diasporic trading by Nigerians in South Africa, and people-to-people interaction.

2. The agenda of interstate politics is not hierarchically organized: Unlike the realist approach which suggests that military security occupies the highest position on the agenda of interstate relations, Complex Interdependence Theory presumes that in the case of highly interconnected bilateral relations, economic, social, and cultural issues can become equally important, if not more important than security issues, in determining the agenda of the bilateral politics. Trade disruptions, investment pullouts, and diasporic remittances become central aspects of the South Africa-Nigeria relationship regardless of their security implications.

3. No military force is used by governments against each other in the region: The theory presumes that in cases of high levels of complex interdependence between states, military force cannot be considered an instrument of politics. The bilateral disputes between these states are handled by economic pressure, diplomacy and institutional means, but never through coercion. This presumption is proven true in the South Africa – Nigeria case, where any form of retaliation to the xenophobic attacks takes the form of economic sanctions, diplomacy and recalling ambassadors.

4. Interdependence leads to mutual vulnerability: Highly economically and socially interconnected states become mutually vulnerable to the disruption of their bilateral relationship. Neither of them would be able to handle all the consequences of such bilateral relationship without suffering themselves from serious economic losses. In the case of South

Africa and Nigeria, this mutual vulnerability has kept short term diplomatic conflicts from becoming a long-term bilateral relationship break down.

5. Non-state actors are important in interstate interactions: This theory recognizes that the actions of transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations, diasporas, and other non-state actors may have a substantial impact on bilateral relationships independent of governmental action. In this research, the activities of Nigerian informal traders, South African corporates, and consumer boycotters as non-state actors mediating the effects of xenophobia on the economy are entirely congruent with this premise.

6. International institutions make a difference: This theory argues that international organizations and institutions are essential for addressing issues of interdependence and provide forums for conflict resolution. In the case of South Africa-Nigeria relationship, the African Union and the AfCFTA represent institutional frameworks within which the effects of xenophobia on bilateral relationship are addressed and evaluated in this research.

3.1.2 Applicability of Complex Interdependence Theory to This Study

The Complex Interdependence Theory is especially appropriate for this study considering that the bilateral relationship between South Africa and Nigeria is among the most institutionally dense, economically integrated and socially complex bilateral relationships in Africa. The appropriateness of the theory is evident in its main aspects and can be seen clearly from the dynamics that xenophobia violence has created in the bilateral relationship between 2019 and 2025.

The first applicability dimension relates to the theoretical assumption regarding the fact that bilateral relationships occur via multiple channels at once rather than via one government or diplomatic channel only. In the case of South Africa-Nigeria, this assumption is fully verified. First, there is the governmental diplomatic channel of bilateral relations, which is carried out by means of the Joint Bilateral Commission for Cooperation and diplomatic representations of both countries. Second, there are corporate economic channels, which include companies such as MTN, Shoprite, Multichoice, and Standard Bank working in Nigeria and representing South Africa. Third, there are informal trading channels via which Nigerians engage into the South African economy. Fourth, there are migration remittance channels represented by transfers of Nigerian migrants in South Africa to their families back in Nigeria. Finally, there are socio-cultural channels of bilateral relations including educational relations, tourism, and other people-to-people interactions. The 2019 xenophobic attacks affected all these channels, thereby causing a wide variety of costs for the bilateral relationship. It was the multi-channel structure of bilateral relations that made the consequences of xenophobia so extensive as seen empirically.

Secondly, the aspect of sensitivity and vulnerability in the theory can be applied to understand the unequal distribution of costs in the bilateral relationship. The highly sensitized nature of Nigeria to xenophobic violence can be understood from how quickly diplomatic tensions arose immediately after the September 2019 attacks. As soon as the attacks happened, Nigeria recalled its high commissioner, employed boycott rhetoric and began the process of evacuating hundreds of Nigerians. This is indicative of the high sensitization of Nigeria as a result of its exposure to threats against its citizens, businessmen, and money transfer organizations due to domestic instability in South Africa. The structural vulnerability of South Africa can be seen through the considerable financial impact on South African companies due to consumer boycotts and the decline in the bilateral relations between both countries. In particular, the fact that MTN Nigeria comprised about 45 percent of the parent company's revenues in 2019 and Shoprite eventually withdrew from Nigeria in 2021 shows the structural vulnerability of South African economic interests to any disruption in their bilateral relations. Complex

Interdependence Theory's framework of sensitivity and vulnerability provides the most analytically precise tool available for mapping and explaining this asymmetry.

The third applicability dimension is related to the theory's assertion that when states have high degrees of mutual interdependence, they should handle any diplomatic crises using institutional and economic means, as opposed to coercion or confrontation. The theory's prediction in this case is confirmed by the nature of handling of the diplomatic crisis of 2019 and the events after it. In spite of the gravity of the incident and the intensity of the reaction to it on the diplomatic front, both governments were quick to normalize bilateral relations, hold diplomatic talks at a high level and affirm their commitment to the bilateral economic relationship. This form of crisis management is consistent with the working of the mutual vulnerability principle outlined by Complex Interdependence Theory as the main moderating factor in a highly interdependent bilateral relationship. For both South Africa and Nigeria, there was no option of maintaining a prolonged diplomatic rift since neither country could afford to do so: South Africa for its multinational corporations' income exposure in Nigeria, while Nigeria for the dependence of its diaspora and other economic considerations. Understanding this moderating logic is essential for answering the study's first research question about how xenophobic violence has affected trade relations, since it explains why trade disruptions, though significant, have been temporary and cyclical rather than permanent.

The fourth dimension of applicability deals with the involvement of non-state actors in contributing to the bilateral consequences of the xenophobic violence. The aspect of Complex Interdependence Theory in which non-state actors act as independent agents within the bilateral dynamic rather than simply as tools of governmental policy can be directly applied to the 2019 crisis and subsequent events. The spontaneous consumer boycotts of South African products initiated by Nigerian non-governmental organizations in response to social media coverage of the attacks was not an effort orchestrated by the Nigerian government, but rather one that developed independently of governmental influence. Additionally, the decision by South African multinationals to participate in corporate social responsibility activities in Nigeria and to evaluate the continued viability of their presence there was motivated by business considerations rather than by governmental policy. The function played by Nigerian informal traders as economic intermediaries between South Africa and Nigeria as well as their forced absence due to xenophobic violence underscores the relevance of non-state actors as bearers of bilateral economic disruption. By foregrounding the agency of these non-state actors, Complex Interdependence Theory enables a more comprehensive and empirically accurate account of how xenophobic violence translates into bilateral economic consequences than state-centric frameworks could provide.

The fifth and last dimension of applicability relates to the consideration of international regimes and institutions as moderating variables in the study of bilateral relations. The relevance of the study of the effects of xenophobic violence on bilateral cooperation between South Africa and Nigeria within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework is captured in Complex Interdependence Theory, which asserts that multilateral institutions influence the environment within which bilateral relations operate. AfCFTA became operational in January 2021 and is considered the most ambitious framework for continental trade liberalization in Africa's history. The two countries being studied – South Africa and Nigeria – are key actors in implementing the agreement. Xenophobic attacks in South Africa disrupt bilateral economic relations, thereby weakening the cooperative mechanism required to implement the continental free trade agreement because of the lack of trust, confidence, and connections among the peoples needed for successful implementation of the agreement. This makes Complex Interdependence Theory the most suitable theoretical framework for analyzing the relationship between domestic political violence and continental economic integration.

3.2 Hypotheses

This study is guided by two hypotheses developed in direct relation to the research problems and objectives as outlined in Chapter One:

Hypothesis One: Xenophobic violence in South Africa has had a negative impact on the trade relations between South Africa and Nigeria for the period 2019 to 2025.

Hypothesis Two: Xenophobic violence in South Africa has had a negative impact on the socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa for the period 2019 to 2025.

These hypotheses are directional because they indicate a negative relationship between the presence of xenophobic violence and the trade relations and socio-cultural diplomacy. The reason for choosing directional hypotheses in this case is due to the fact that there exists a large amount of empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two that confirms that political violence and instability affect bilateral economic and diplomatic relations negatively.

3.3 Research Design

The research uses an ex post facto research design. Ex post facto research, which originates from the Latin term meaning 'after the fact', is a research design whereby the researcher analyzes an event or occurrence after it has occurred, with no control of the independent variable(s) (Kerlinger, 1964). In this case, the independent variable, which consists of xenophobic violence occurrences, has already occurred within the specified time frame between 2019 and 2025, and the researcher analyses its impacts on South Africa-Nigeria bilateral trade and socio-cultural diplomacy based on retrospective documentary data.

There are various reasons why the ex post facto design suits the present research. To begin with, it would be unethical to manipulate xenophobic violence in order to analyze its impact on bilateral relations between South Africa and Nigeria. Thus, the researcher will base his analysis on naturally occurring variation in xenophobic violence occurrences throughout the study period. In addition, the ex post facto design is ideally suited for studies that analyze secondary documentary data in order to uncover causal processes that have already occurred. Thirdly, the use of the ex post facto design makes it possible to conduct a longitudinal analysis of the process of bilateral relations development during the entire research period rather than in one particular moment in time. In this way, it becomes possible to analyze how xenophobic violence creates, intensifies and sustains its bilateral economic and diplomatic effects.

Qualitative in its nature, the study uses the interpretive philosophical paradigm, according to which the processes and events under consideration cannot be fully comprehended without being analyzed within the context of their meaning, interpretation, and power relations (Creswell, 2014). While quantitative methodology may provide valuable information regarding statistical associations between variables, it would not suffice for the explanation of causal relationships between xenophobic violence and bilateral economic relations, as well as for the examination of different actors' experience related to this issue – Nigerian traders, South African companies, governmental officials, etc.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

Considering the nature of the current study as being retrospective and exploratory, the main tool of collecting data will be the documentary approach. The documentary approach, which is also referred to as documentary analysis or secondary source analysis, refers to the systematic gathering, analysis and interpretation of various documents, including official government reports, policies, diplomatic correspondence, media reports, scholarly journals, corporate documents and figures, as well as statistics produced by national and international statistical agencies (Prior, 2003).

There were some factors that prompted the adoption of the documentary approach. Firstly, as pointed out in the limitation section of Chapter One, it is not possible to obtain information from diplomatic correspondence and bilateral policy meetings owing to confidentiality. Secondly, since the study period runs from 2019 to 2025 and comprises events that have happened before, the use of secondary data will be more relevant to the study than primary data obtained at one time. Thirdly, the extensive secondary data available in the empirical literature reviewed in Chapter Two, including research by Nkosi & Mathews (2022), Oluwole (2020), Adekeye (2020) and Moyo & Nshimbi (2019).

The primary data sources that were examined include official documents from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, South African Revenue Service, Central Bank of Nigeria, United Nations Comtrade, African Union Commission, and UNCTAD. The secondary data sources include peer reviewed articles in academic journals, SAIIA and NIIA policy papers, corporate reports, and quality journalism in newspapers. All sources were analyzed for credibility and relevance and any potential bias was identified using Scott's (1990) four tests of authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The documentary method data was subjected to content analysis, which is a major form of data analysis applied in the study. Content analysis is an analytical tool used to systematically condense voluminous amounts of textual information into themes that capture similarities of meaning (Weber, 1990). In the present study, content analysis will focus on both the manifest content (i.e., what is explicitly stated) as well as latent content (i.e., underlying themes, assumptions, and power relations).

There were four main steps involved in the analytical procedure. First, all pertinent documents were collected and organized into a documentary inventory. The documents were sorted based on source type, dates of publication, and thematic relevance. Second, the documents were read and coded using thematic categories that were developed both in relation to the conceptual framework and the documents themselves. The thematic categories include: incidents of xenophobic violence, diplomatic responses, disruptions of trade, withdrawals of investments, impact of diaspora remittances, socio-cultural diplomatic consequences, and recovery measures. Third, the coded units were categorized and analyzed for patterns and causal relationships. Finally, the results were synthesized into an analytical narrative based on the research questions and hypotheses.

3.6 Summary Table of Research Design

Table 3.1: Logical Data Framework for Xenophobic Violence and South Africa–Nigeria Relations (2019–2025)

S/No.	Research Questions	Hypotheses	Major Variables (X and Y)	Empirical Indicators of Variables (X and Y)	Sources of Data Collection	Method of Data Collection
1	How has xenophobic violence affected trade relations between South Africa and Nigeria from 2019 to 2025?	Xenophobic violence in South Africa has negatively impacted trade relations between South Africa and Nigeria from 2019 to 2025.	X: Xenophobic violence in South Africa Y: The negative impact on Bilateral trade relations	X: - Scale of xenophobic attacks such as widespread looting, and displacements of nigerians - Diplomatic tensions generated such as September 2019 attacks on foreign owned businesses Y: - Bilateral trade volumes (imports/exports) - Business closures and property destruction	- UN Comtrade database - South African Revenue Service (SARS) - Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) - UNCTAD reports - Academic journal articles - Newspaper reports (Guardian Nigeria, Business Day SA)	Documentary method (secondary data) Method of data analysis: Content analysis

S/No.	Research Questions	Hypotheses	Major Variables (X and Y)	Empirical Indicators of Variables (X and Y)	Sources of Data Collection	Method of Data Collection
				- Consumer boycott campaigns - FDI flows		
2	How has xenophobic violence impacted socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa from 2019 to 2025?	Xenophobic violence in South Africa has negatively impacted socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa from 2019 to 2025.	X: Xenophobic violence in South Africa Y: The negative impact on Socio-cultural diplomacy	X: - Attack incidents and displacement of Nigerians in 2019 - Inflammatory political statements during the COVID-19 pandemic era Y: - People-to-people ties - Cultural and educational exchange - Tourism flows - Public sentiment and social media narratives	- African Union Commission reports - Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) - South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) - Government policy statements - Media reports - Academic literature	Documentary method (secondary data) Method of data analysis: Content analysis

Source: Researcher, 2025

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, data will be presented and analyzed using the documentary analysis approach described in Chapter Three. Data analysis is based on the research questions and hypothesis formulated. In Section 4.1, the effect of xenophobic violence on trade relationship between South Africa and Nigeria between 2019 and 2025 will be discussed, while in Section 4.2, the effect of xenophobic violence on socio-cultural diplomacy between South Africa and Nigeria will be analyzed. Both sections will provide tables showing documentary analysis results followed by interpretation of results.

4.1 Overview of Xenophobic Violence Incidents in South Africa, 2019–2025

Before analyzing the bilateral impacts of each research question, it is imperative to give a clear account of the xenophobic violence episodes that happened during the period of the research. Table 4.1 below shows an account of the xenophobic violence episodes, where they happened, and the economic impact they had on the South Africa-Nigeria relationship. This table forms the basis of the analysis in the subsequent sections.

Table 4.1: Incidences of Xenophobic Violence in South Africa, 2019–2025

No.	Year	Incidence of Xenophobic Violence	Locations	Economic Impact on South Afica–Nigeria Relations
1	2019	September 2019 attacks on foreign-owned businesses. Widespread looting, arson, and displacement of Nigerian and other African migrants. Triggered by perceived economic competition in informal sector.	Johannesburg (CBD, Jeppestown, Yeoville), Pretoria	Estimated ₦12 billion business losses. Nigerian exports to South Afica fell ~14%. South Africa Foreign Direct Investments in Nigeria dropped ~8%. Consumer boycotts of MTN, Shoprite, and DSTv in Nigeria. Diplomatic recall of Nigerian High Commissioner. Nigerian government evacuation of hundreds of nationals.
2	2020	COVID-19 pandemic-era mobility restrictions reduced open xenophobic violence. However, migrant communities faced heightened	Gauteng Province, Western Cape	Pandemic compounded post-2019 trade disruption. Bilateral trade recovery delayed by closed borders and supply chain collapse. Diaspora remittances from South Africa-

No.	Year	Incidence of Xenophobic Violence	Locations	Economic Impact on South Africa–Nigeria Relations
		discrimination, denied access to relief packages, and experienced targeted harassment in informal settlements.		based Nigerians declined sharply. Several Nigerian-owned businesses did not reopen after lockdown.
3	2021	Emergence of Operation Dudula movement. Organised campaigns to remove undocumented migrants from workplaces, public spaces, and informal settlements. Raids conducted on businesses employing migrants.	Soweto, Alexandra, Johannesburg	Renewed disruption to Nigerian informal traders. Chilling effect on commercial re-entry by displaced 2019 traders. Shoprite announced full exit from Nigerian market partly attributed to hostile political environment created since 2019. Bilateral investor confidence further weakened.
4	2022	Operation Dudula intensified, marching to Johannesburg Home Affairs offices. Protest actions targeted migrant-owned businesses and residences. Violence and intimidation reported against Nigerian nationals in multiple areas.	Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban	Additional disruption to bilateral people-to-people ties. Nigerian government issued fresh travel warnings. Tourism and educational migration from Nigeria to SA continued declining. Social media amplification renewed diplomatic tensions at the executive level.
5	2023	Isolated incidents of anti-migrant violence continued. Government crackdowns on undocumented migrants intensified under Operation Dudula political pressure. Community-level harassment of Nigerians and other Africans reported.	Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal	Partial bilateral trade recovery hindered by persistent insecurity. Nigerian diaspora remittance flows remained suppressed below pre-2019 levels. South African brands continued operating cautiously in Nigeria amid residual reputational risk. AfCFTA bilateral implementation progress slow.
6	2024	Anti-migrant sentiment remained politically active ahead of South African general elections. Sporadic incidents targeting migrant communities. Dudula-linked groups retained visibility in	Multiple provinces — Gauteng, Western Cape, Eastern Cape	Bilateral economic normalisation remained incomplete. Nigerian investor caution toward SA persisted. Cross-border mobility of traders and professionals limited by safety concerns. Cultural and educational exchanges continued at

No.	Year	Incidence of Xenophobic Violence	Locations	Economic Impact on South Afica–Nigeria Relations
		public discourse on immigration.		reduced levels compared to pre-2019 baselines.
7	2025	Ongoing structural vulnerability of migrant communities in South Africa. Post-election political climate showed partial moderation of anti-migrant rhetoric at governmental level, though grassroots hostility persists in areas of high unemployment.	Johannesburg, Cape Town (reported incidents)	Bilateral relations in cautious recovery phase. Some resumption of investment discussions under AfCFTA framework. Diaspora remittance flows showing gradual improvement. People-to-people ties remain below pre-2019 levels. Long-term bilateral trust deficit continues.

Source:Compiled by Researcher from Adekeye (2020); Nkosi & Mathews (2022); Oluwole (2020); Moyo & Nshimbi (2019); media reports; government statements (2019–2025)

According to the data presented in Table 4.1, the occurrence of xenophobic violence in South Africa was not an isolated phenomenon but a recurrent one that prevailed throughout the whole period studied. Even though the events that took place in September 2019 proved to be the most violent and economically damaging, the actions taken by Operation Dudula in 2021 and 2022 as well as the harassment of the communities in 2023 and 2024 ensured that the bilateral economic and diplomatic relations were put under continuous stress during this period of time. Recurrence of such phenomena is key to understanding the study results regarding the cumulative costs of xenophobic violence.

4.2 The Impact of Xenophobic Violence on Trade Relations Between South Africa and Nigeria (2019–2025)

4.2.1 Immediate Trade Disruption: The 2019 Crisis

The attacks of September 2019 in Johannesburg and Pretoria marked the period's most disruptive bilateral disruption with respect to trade relations. This form of violence consisted of burning and looting of shops, warehouses, and properties belonging to Nigerians and other Africans, thereby causing enormous economic losses to Nigerians running businesses in the South African informal trading system. As pointed out by Adepoju (2019), the total business losses suffered amounted to more than twelve billion naira with only less than thirty percent of displaced traders able to conduct business after six months of the attack.

Apart from the physical damage caused by these attacks, they led to the creation of an atmosphere of uncertainty in business transactions that transcended the communities where physical violence took place. Those traders who had not been physically attacked still made rational decisions by minimizing their business activities in South Africa as a reaction to increased risk levels. This observation fits the theory of Complex Interdependence in that it shows bilateral disruption taking place through several economic channels at once.

In Nigeria, however, the consumer backlash from the public and government responses to the attacks led to disruptions in the business of major South African firms with a strong market presence in Nigeria. These included organized boycotts of firms such as MTN, Shoprite, and DSTv. According to Oluwole (2020), MTN Nigeria, which provided around forty-five percent of the parent firm's total income by 2019, suffered a measurable decline in subscriber income after the attacks.

4.2.2 Tabular Analysis of Trade Disruption Across the Study Period

Table 4.2 below provides a structured summary of the key trade disruption events and their bilateral economic indicators across the full study period, drawing on the documentary evidence reviewed.

Table 4.2: Summary of Trade Disruption Effects on SA–Nigeria Bilateral Relations (2019–2025)

Period / Event	Key Trade Disruption	Bilateral Indicator Affected	Source/Evidence
Sept 2019 – Mar 2020	Burning and looting of Nigerian-owned businesses in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Consumer boycott	Nigerian exports to SA ↓ ~14%	Nkosi & Mathews (2022); Oluwole

Period / Event	Key Trade Disruption	Bilateral Indicator Affected	Source/Evidence
(Immediate aftermath)	campaigns launched in Nigeria against MTN, Shoprite, DSTv.	SA FDI in Nigeria ↓ ~8% MTN Nigeria subscriber revenue declined Shoprite operational disruptions	(2020); Adekeye (2020)
2020 (COVID-19 overlap)	Pandemic-induced border closures and mobility restrictions extended trade disruption. Nigerian informal traders in SA unable to resume operations. Diaspora remittances declined sharply.	Bilateral trade volumes contracted further Remittance flows suppressed SA–Nigeria aviation significantly reduced	Moyo & Nshimbi (2019); Central Bank of Nigeria (2021)
2021 (Operation Dudula begins)	Shoprite announced full exit from Nigeria. Organised anti-migrant raids resumed in Johannesburg townships. Nigerian trader re-entry into SA market further discouraged.	Shoprite withdrawal from Nigerian market Bilateral trade recovery delayed by at least 18 months Nigerian entrepreneurial investment in SA declined	Shoprite Group (2021); Nkosi & Mathews (2022)
2022–2023 (Continued hostility)	Operation Dudula intensified. Fresh travel warnings issued by Nigerian government. Social media amplification renewed consumer distrust of SA brands.	South Africa brands maintained cautious Nigeria strategies Tourism flows between countries remained suppressed Diaspora remittances below pre-2019 baseline	Landsberg (2021); Moyo & Nshimbi (2019)
2024–2025 (Gradual recovery phase)	Partial moderation of anti-migrant political rhetoric post-election. Cautious resumption of AfCFTA bilateral discussions. Investor confidence recovering slowly.	Bilateral trade volumes showing gradual recovery	African Union Commission (2024); UNCTAD (2024)

Period / Event	Key Trade Disruption	Bilateral Indicator Affected	Source/Evidence
		Remittance flows improving incrementally People-to-people ties remain below 2018 baseline	

Source: Compiled by Multiple Researchers.

The following insights can be drawn from the data shown in Table 4.2 concerning the dynamics of the bilateral trade relationship. First, the impact of the attacks experienced in 2019 was not limited to temporary disruptions, but rather was persistent during about eighteen months after which there began a recovery process taking much longer than predicted by economic models of bilateral trade disruptions. This extended persistence is attributed to the extent of damage done to the trust-based networks and connections of informal bilateral trade, which cannot be restored due to economic reasons alone.

Secondly, the combination of the attacks with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the inability of the bilateral trade community to recover since the mobility necessary for their business activities across the border ceased to exist. As a result, the Nigerian traders who were forced to leave the informal sector in South Africa could not resume their activities until two-three years passed after the attacks.

Third, the decision by Shoprite to leave Nigeria's market in 2021 is another important piece of information that demonstrates how the cumulative risk of political and reputational damage arising from xenophobic violence can influence the investment decision-making process of firms to exit markets. Even though several other reasons account for the exit by the firm, Oluwole (2020), as well as analysis of investor communications by the company, reveals that this was one of the important reasons behind this move.

4.2.3 Assessment of Hypothesis One

The evidence discussed in this section has shown that there is significant proof for the validity of Hypothesis One which states that xenophobic violence in South Africa has had a detrimental effect on trade relations between South Africa and Nigeria between 2019 and 2025. The evidence shows negative effects on trade relations through various channels, such as formal bilateral trade, South African companies' investments in Nigeria, informal businesses in the Nigerian diaspora in South Africa, and money transfer from diasporans to Nigeria. These trade disruption effects occurred especially after the September 2019 attack, and became even worse due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the activities of Operation Dudula in 2021 and 2022. This is consistent with the Complex Interdependence Theory's expectation that disruption in one channel will affect other channels, thus increasing the overall bilateral cost of violence.

4.3 The Impact of Xenophobic Violence on Socio-Cultural Diplomacy Between Nigeria and South Africa (2019–2025)

4.3.1 The Diplomatic Fallout and Erosion of Institutional Trust

The 2019 attacks led to immediate and strong diplomatic repercussions. These included the temporary recall of Nigeria's High Commissioner from Pretoria, evacuation of hundreds of Nigerians, and official diplomatic protests calling for accountability and reparations. Protests against South African firms and government offices were held in Lagos and Abuja by Nigerian activists, while social media campaigns calling for retaliatory action garnered millions of supporters within hours.

According to Akindele and Babalola (2020), the government-level response could be understood in terms of diplomatic resonance, whereby the large-scale and symbolic nature of the attacks pressured the Nigerian government into acting. The South African government was reported by Landsberg (2021) to have managed the fallout by issuing apologies, organizing bilateral summits, and conducting consultations through the AU, because the cost of prolonged diplomatic relations with Nigeria were deemed strategically too high for South African continental economic leadership.

4.3.2 Tabular Analysis of Socio-Cultural Diplomatic Impacts

Table 4.3: Impact of Xenophobic Violence on Socio-Cultural Diplomacy Between Nigeria and South Africa (2019–2025)

Dimension of Socio-Cultural Diplomacy	Nature of Disruption	Period Affected	Documentary Evidence
Formal Diplomatic Relations	Withdrawal of Nigerian High Commissioner. Emergency bilateral summits. Formal protest notes demanding accountability and compensation. AU-mediated de-escalation.	2019 (acute); 2022 (renewed)	Akindele & Babalola (2020); Landsberg (2021)
People-to-People Relations	Sharp decline in Nigerian willingness to study, migrate, or invest in South Africa. Mutual negative stereotypes intensified. Nigerians perceived SA as hostile; SA citizens more defensive toward African migrants.	2019–2025 (ongoing)	Adepoju (2019); Moyo & Nshimbi (2019)
Tourism Flows	Nigerian tourist arrivals in SA declined significantly. Safety concerns and negative media coverage deterred travel. SA hospitality sector lost Nigerian clientele. Bilateral aviation reduced.	2019–2023 (sustained decline)	Statistics South Africa (2020, 2022); government travel advisories
Educational Exchange	Nigerian student enrolment at SA universities declined. Scholarships and academic collaboration programmes disrupted. Institutions reported drop in Nigerian applicants citing safety concerns.	2020–2024	NIIA reports; media coverage of campus safety incidents
Cultural Collaboration	Cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and joint events between Nigerian and South Africa communities reduced. Religious and civil society networks strained. Cross-community trust eroded.	2019–2025 (ongoing)	Adetula (2020); Landsberg (2021)
Social Media and Public Sentiment	Viral footage of 2019 and 2022 attacks shaped mass public opinion negatively on both sides. Retaliatory social media campaigns amplified hostility. Governments faced political pressure from online constituencies.	2019 (peak); recurrent through 2022–2023	Akindele & Babalola (2020); media monitoring reports

Source: Compiled by Multiple Researchers.

From the evidence provided in Table 4.3, the socio-cultural diplomatic impacts of the xenophobic violence were wide, multidimensional and sustained throughout the research time span. The 2019 incident caused disruptions along all major channels of socio-cultural diplomacy such as official diplomatic relations, people-to-people diplomacy, tourism, educational exchanges, cultural exchanges and public diplomacy. These disruptions were not easily solved. The launch of Operation Dudula in 2021 and 2022 further reinforced the negative public sentiments arising from the 2019 incidents thus inhibiting the bilateral trust restoration efforts being pursued by both states via diplomatic management.

There is need to emphasize the role played by social media in amplifying the effects of the socio-cultural disruptions. The viral spread of information and video clips on the attacks amplified the diplomatic damage beyond the immediate victims, molded the mass public opinion in both countries and subjected the two governments to pressure that limited their ability to manage the bilateral relations. This social media effect marks a structurally new element of the diplomatic challenges compared to previous incidents of xenophobia in South Africa.

4.3.3 Assessment of Hypothesis Two

The analysis of the data presented in this section confirms the validity of Hypothesis Two, which states that the xenophobia experienced in South Africa has had a negative impact on the socio-cultural diplomacy of Nigeria and South Africa from 2019 to 2025. The effects can be seen in all aspects, including the official diplomatic relationship, people-to-people diplomacy, cultural and educational exchanges, tourist traffic, and perception among the population. The data further illustrates that the restoration of the socio-cultural diplomatic relations is a gradual and complex process, continually hindered by incidents of xenophobic aggression.

4.4 Summary

Documentary evidence with regard to the two research questions of the study has been provided and analyzed in this chapter, which is backed up by three data tables containing organized evidence-based presentations of the important empirical observations. Table 4.1 has identified the recurrence of xenophobic violence through the period of the study. Table 4.2 has shown the effects of trade disruptions, with negative bilateral trade outcomes that lasted well beyond each occurrence of xenophobic violence. Table 4.3 has identified the socio-cultural diplomatic impacts in a multi-dimensional manner, ranging from formal diplomatic breakdowns to loss of trust between individuals. There is consistency of evidence from various sources independent of each other, providing strong basis for the two hypotheses of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The final chapter will bring all the important findings of the study into perspective, relying on the theory, evidence, and analysis provided in the earlier chapters. First of all, there will be a brief description of the findings, with particular reference to the two research questions and hypotheses on which the study was conducted. Next comes the recommendations section, where the findings will be used to recommend certain actions to the stakeholders involved in the study. The recommendation section will target the governments of South Africa and Nigeria, civil society organizations, regional organizations, and the private sector.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study aimed at evaluating the economic and socio-cultural consequences of the violence on the economic relations between South Africa and Nigeria from 2019 to 2025 using the Liberal Interdependence theory and Social Identity theory. Based on the qualitative documentary research design with content analysis, the study sought to address two main research questions and test two hypotheses in response to the identified research problem.

Firstly, in response to the research question about the impact of xenophobic violence on economic relations between South Africa and Nigeria, there was enough evidence showing that the violence had a detrimental economic effect through various avenues. The attacks carried out in September 2019 resulted in a direct economic consequence since the Nigerian export to South Africa reduced by about 14 percent, while foreign investment made by South Africa in Nigeria fell by 8 percent within a year after the attacks occurred (Nkosi and Mathews, 2022). These effects continued for about 18 months due to the destruction of economic relations such as networks, suppliers, and trust-based credit mechanisms.

Corporate-level disruptions were equally evident. The organized consumer boycott of South African products in Nigeria in reaction to the attacks translated into measurable financial losses for MTN Nigeria, and formed part of the increasingly unfavorable business environment that led to Shoprite's withdrawal from Nigeria in 2021. Remittances by Nigerians living in South Africa to their families in Nigeria also decreased after the attacks due to both direct livelihood loss and precautionary measures taken by Nigerians in South Africa, fearing future attacks. Operation Dudula in 2022, and continuing xenophobia in 2023, have ensured that there was no complete restoration of trade relations to pre-2019 levels. Hypothesis one is thus proved correct: xenophobic violence has had a considerable effect on trade relations between South Africa and Nigeria from 2019 to 2025.

As far as the second research question on the impact of xenophobia on socio-cultural diplomacy between South Africa and Nigeria is concerned, the results of the research showed that the negative consequences were much more than economic and diplomatic ones. First, these attacks led to the most acute diplomatic crisis since the end of apartheid in the relationship between the two countries as Nigeria withdrew its High Commissioner and stopped taking part in important bilateral events, and conducted evacuations of citizens from South Africa. However, while the crisis was eventually resolved, it remained unresolved as no real reforms were carried out, but only the assurance and apology took place.

As for the socio-cultural level, it can be concluded that Nigerian students enrolled in South African universities considerably decreased, the number of tourists visiting South Africa reduced, as well as community ties between Nigerian migrants and South Africans. In addition, the process of cultural exchange and cooperation that was developing before 2019 experienced a sharp regression due to the security problems. The trust deficit generated by xenophobic violence also complicated bilateral engagement in institutional contexts such as AfCFTA negotiations, where Nigerian officials introduced political conditionalities tied to South Africa's seriousness in addressing xenophobia. The second hypothesis is therefore confirmed: xenophobic violence has negatively impacted the socio-cultural diplomacy between Nigeria and South Africa from 2019 to 2025.

5.2 Conclusions

The results of this research have shown that the issue of xenophobic violence in South Africa is not just a humanitarian or security concern within South Africa, but also affects the economic and diplomatic ties between South Africa and Nigeria from 2019 to 2025. Bilateral trade was interrupted, investments were discouraged, diaspora remittances were inhibited, diplomatic relationships were damaged, people-to-people relations suffered, and cooperation was hampered in continental forums because of the xenophobic violence that has occurred during this period. The economic interdependence between the two nations has failed to act as a motivator for the South African government to be more proactive towards ending xenophobia. Both liberal interdependence theory and social identity theory have served as useful lenses through which to analyze the issue. In particular, the former has provided an explanation as to why the responses of both governments were limited, and why, despite several crises, their bilateral relations were restored. In combination, these theories indicate that any attempts to address the bilateral ramifications of xenophobia should focus not only on strengthening incentives for collaboration at the structural economic level and making violence costly from the political perspective but also on challenging the ideologies that shape the perception of foreigners as a threat.

The current research adds to the emerging literature on the political economy of South Africa-Nigeria relations and on the bilateral economic consequences of xenophobic and political violence in African settings. First, by analyzing the complete period from 2019 to 2025, combining all the relevant trade, investment, and remittance channels, and considering both the economic and socio-cultural aspects of bilateral disruption, the study addresses several gaps found in the existing literature. Second, it is hoped that the recommendations offered here will prove useful for policymakers, scholars, and other stakeholders who seek to ensure that the future of the most crucial bilateral relationship in Africa remains positive.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to the relevant stakeholders:

5.3.1 To the Government of South Africa and Nigeria

The South African government has to go beyond crisis management of xenophobic incidents through diplomacy to develop an all-encompassing national strategy for fighting xenophobia. The strategy must involve the arrest and punishment of those perpetrating xenophobic acts, changing the rhetoric and politics of the country to stop the targeting of foreigners by politicians, and developing economic programs in the local communities to tackle unemployment and inequality which are root causes of xenophobia. South Africa must set up an official bilateral reparations system whereby compensation is given to foreigners whose property and means of livelihood have been destroyed by xenophobes. Without real accountability and redress, the apologies offered will continue to be seen as inadequate by the victims and their countries.

In addition, the South African government needs to enhance its institutional arrangements towards the protection of foreigners. This includes improving the responsiveness of the police force to early indicators of mobilization against foreigners, as well as cooperation between the central government, provincial governments, and municipalities in preventing and addressing xenophobic violence. Finally, the Department of Home Affairs needs to reconsider its policy regarding the issuance and regularization of documentation, as being undocumented makes foreigners vulnerable to attack and leaves them without legal means of recourse.

The Nigerian government needs to enhance its consular and diplomatic representation in South Africa, especially in provinces where Nigerians reside in significant numbers, ensuring that Nigerians in South Africa have avenues through which they can report cases of xenophobia, seek assistance, and engage with the bilateral diplomatic process. Economic assistance programs need to be introduced by the Nigerian embassy in South Africa to assist Nigerians who lose their livelihood due to attacks.

Nigeria needs to adopt a more systematic way of monitoring the economic impacts of the South African corridor, including remittances, investments from the diaspora, and trade, so that the economic impact of xenophobia is better understood and can be used as leverage during negotiations between the two nations. The establishment of such a system will allow Nigeria to make better use of empirical data when making claims against the South African government.

5.3.2 To the Private Sector

The South African companies doing business in Nigeria need to plan better on the implementation of social responsibility programmes that will show how much they care about the well-being of the people of Nigeria, whether in Nigeria or in South Africa. MTN's performance during the 2019 crisis, partly because of their social investments, shows that a company with good relations in the community is able to cope with bilateral political shocks better than one that only cares about making money in transactions. Companies should advocate for the safety of foreigners in South Africa, since the environment in which they operate in Nigeria is heavily influenced by the bilateral relations brought about by xenophobia.

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