

XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS AND ITS IMPLICATION ON HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Xenophobic attacks and its reoccurrence in South Africa have been a subject of debates recently. Many questions begging for answer on the reason why South Africa that is acclaimed a rainbow nation by her late president Nelson Mandela could become hostile to foreign nationals who were path of her struggle to end the apartheid regime. Hostility displayed towards the foreign nationals' ranges from assaults, destruction of properties to physical attack on their lives. Rendering many homeless, jobless, displaced, wounded and killed. This study aimed at ascertaining the causes of the attacks, examine the human resource management implication of the attacks and recommend ways of ending the menace. Using Secondary source of data and employing Frustration-aggression theory, the study discovered that factors such as the effect of apartheid system on the mind of the people, poor service delivery by government officials, competition for scarce economic resources are responsible for the attacks. The incessant attacks have threatened human resource management in the areas of human resource planning, employee recruitment, employee retention, loss of organizational resources invested in human resource, diversity management and employee mobility. It recommended that government should demonstrate sincerity and goodwill towards ending this menace through policy, regulations and sanctions against erring citizens, take action against hate speeches, compensate the legal immigrants who have been negatively affected by the attacks, engage in value re-orientation through aggressive campaign to citizens on diversity management and tolerance. Organizations should insure all its employees against such attacks, and the civil societies should orientate the citizens on the rights of foreign nationals.

Keywords: *Xenophobia, Human Resource Management, South Africa, Foreign.*

INTRODUCTION

South Africa like any other democratic society has been exposed to globalization, which left her economy open to the world thereby increasing the inflow of foreigners in search of employment opportunity, shelter (for refugees), tourism, education etc. this inflow of foreigners has been

meted with unprovoked attack and hostility (Minnar, 2005). Despite South Africa's constitutional accommodation of the principles of human rights, equality and social justice, tolerance and non – discrimination, race based discrimination still persisted (Nel, 2005).South Africa xenophobic attacks are an open display of hostility toward foreigners. It shows elements of racial discrimination which is displayed through attacks on lives and properties of foreigners, leaving them wounded, incapacitated, and some killed. In this era of globalization, labour have become highly mobile, thereby allowing people to move their labour to a place where there will be high returns on the services rendered.

The human resource is crucial to the existence of an organization such that it claim to be the most important resource available to any organization, be it private or public, manufacturing or non-manufacturing. Organisation may have efficient and sophisticated machines, tools and equipment coupled with vast financial and material resources,someone who is the human resource will have to put them to use (Simbo, 1996).Efficient productive activities cannot be achieved without giving human resources the enabling environment in which it can contribute effectively to the production of goods and services that will satisfy human needs.

Xenophobic attack that has been on the increase in South Africa, posed a challenge to human resource management ability to effectively acquire, utilize and maintain the human resources available to the organization.

Statement of Problem

South Africa, a country with about 58 million inhabitants has been grappling with xenophobia for the past two decades (Linus, 2019). Over the years, there has been increase in cases of violent attacks and hostility against foreign nationals in South Africa leading to death and displacement of people. Many are wounded and rendered incapacitated, properties destroyed, shops looted and burnt. The lives that are lost accounted for some of the human resource available to the organization. The organization may not be able to recover from it in the short-run and it is not without its attendant consequences for human resource management.

Objective of the study

This study aimed at:

- i. ascertaining the cause and effects of xenophobia in South Africa
- ii. examine the effect of xenophobic attacks on human resource management.

Significance of the study

The anti - foreign aggression in South Africa is assuming an alarming dimension due to its destructive dimensions. There are many studies on xenophobic attacks but the human resource management implication of such attacks has not been given adequate attention. This study will help the policy makers to implement foreigner-friendly policies that will enhance accommodation and peaceful co-existence between their citizens and foreign nationals.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Meaning of Xenophobia

Xenophobia is a crime expressed through dislike, fear distrust and hostility towards strangers. This hate crime is an overt discrimination and display of aggression towards people, property or organization because of their association to a particular group (Nel, 2005). Xenophobic attack constitutes an infringement of individual's human right in a globalized world. This constitutes an attitudinal problem involving stigmatization, discrimination, and rejection (Beatrice, 2016).

Factors Responsible for Xenophobic Attacks

According to Nel, 2009;Linus, 2019;Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016; Madlala, 2016; Hans, 2016; Mbazira, 2013; Mbecke, 2014; Zama, 2012; Ndlovu, 2014; Managa, 2012; Mbuyisa, 2013;the following factors are responsible for attacks on foreign nationals:

- i. **Effects of the apartheid system on the mind of the people**—The apartheid system is characterised by domination by the whites, discrimination and oppression of the blacks. The South African black community emerged from a background where they were oppressed and segregated by the White apartheid regime. The country has been confronted with the non-acceptance of foreigners within its borders due to the

traumatic effect of repression experienced by the South Africans in the apartheid period which have been on the mind of the people.

- ii. **Competition for economic resources** -Most protests which have occurred in South Africa, whether service delivery, or some other motive, have resulted in the looting of foreign owned goods. Some of allegations which were posed against the foreigners include the following: foreigners are not registered and they do not pay taxes; Foreign nationals sell products at prices below those that local business owners; Foreign nationals receive unfair privileges from wholesale companies due to shared religious beliefs; Foreign nationals intentionally open spaza shops within close proximity to locally-owned businesses, thereby capturing some of the locals' markets; Foreign-owned businesses sell fake goods or non-South African products; Foreign businesses owners operate their shops for nearly 24 hours every day and even have workers sleeping there.
- iii. **Poor service delivery by government officials** - The post-apartheid government was found to be too slow in its attempts to overcome infrastructure and service delivery backlogs. Citizens see government as not being able to deliver basic services to the people, especially at the local government level which resulted from incompetence of the local government in dealing with the services delivery issues.
- iv. **Employment opportunities** – Limited employment opportunities available are being taken over at a cheaper rate by the foreigners at the expense of the citizens
- v. **Political factors**—Most South Africans anticipated a change for better with the transition from apartheid government. Politicians make temporary promises most likely to satisfy voters during each new election campaign. By this, they raise the public's expectations, thereby creating false perceptions. The people foresaw end of poverty and improved standard of living. Unfortunately, their hopes were dashed when the elected office holders performed below expectation. Lack of public participation as a result of being excluded from local decision-making and accountability by the municipal officials and councilors who represent them in wards.

Incidences of Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

Xenophobic violence incidences by Province, 1994 – 2018		
1	Gauteng	212
2	Western Cape	111
3	KwaZulu – Natal	67
4	Limpopo	40
5	Eastern Cape	33
6	Mpumalanga	22
7	North West	20
8	Free State	29
9	Northern Cape	5
Source: Xenowatch, African Centre for Migration & Society https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47800718		

Human Resource Management

At the center of the growth, viability and survival of any organization is the effective acquisition, utilization and maintenance of the human resources available to the organization. Human resource management involves a set of people-oriented process aimed at making human resources available to the organization in the right quantity, right quality and at the right time, so as to meet organizational goals. Human resource management refers to a set of people-oriented functions or activities that involves the effective acquisitions, use and maintenance of the human resources within an organization (Simbo, 1996).

Methodology

The study basically relied on secondary data collected through different publications and archives such as the international agencies reports, news item, texts, journals, magazines, Newspapers, Bulletin and the internet.

Implication of Xenophobic Attacks on Human Resource Management

Racial discrimination did not end with apartheid in South Africa. This is not without its consequences. The following are the implications of xenophobic attacks on the management of human resource:

- i. Human Resource planning:** The required quantity and quality of the human resource is often hard to acquire as at when needed unless the need is preceded by long term planning. Manpower planning can be defined as that part of the overall organization planning process by which an organisation tries to ensure that it has the right number of people and the right kind of people, at the right time, at the right places performing functions which are economically useful and which satisfy the needs of the organization and provide satisfaction for the individuals involved (Simbo, 1996). Incessant attacks that affect life and properties of people will keep them away from jobs momentarily or permanently in case of relocation or death. This will affect the forecast of human resource needs per time, as human resource managers cannot predict attack and when predicted, the employees that will be affected may not be known. This jeopardises the ability of the organization to effectively plan for human resource demand and supply as organizations cannot say with certainty or make projections on the number of human resources that will be needed per time in an environment where violent attacks claim lives of people consistently.
- ii. Employee Recruitment:** This involves getting a pool of applicant for vacant positions within the organization, from which the organization will select to fill the vacant positions. Globalisation has made the world a global village, where human resource can be acquired from different parts of the world. Attacks on foreign nationals will limit the pool of applicants to those that are natives of such community only. This will short change the organization from recruiting other nationals which may serve as an opportunity to harness their unique and diverse contributions towards the accomplishment of organizational goals.
- iii. Employee Retention:** The nature of attacks directed at foreigners' impact on the security of lives and properties thereby threatening their retention on their jobs. Human

resource management function entails acquiring, utilizing, maintaining and retaining the human resources within the organization. Employees flee attack prone areas, when they know that the attack may be directed at them. Retaining the employees will allow the organization to keep some of its trade secret which may be compromised when employees are unnecessarily displaced during attacks.

- iv. Loss of Human Resource Investment:** Today, the costs of managing the organisations' human resource are becoming extremely high as days go by. The valuable resources of an organization invested in making human resources suitable for use ranges from money spent on recruitment, training and development. Overt aggression on foreign national causes injury, leading to incapacity thereby reducing productivity, death of a talented employee and when death does not result the employee may be displaced thereby frustrating their employment contract with the organization.
- v. Diversity Management:** Globalization has allowed people from different religion, ethnic, race and nationality to interact and exchange views, ideas and contribute to common goals without geographical barriers. The value of contribution or quality of output of workers from different background and orientation when brought together as a team to work on projects cannot be over-emphasized. Xenophobic attack will deprive individuals, organizations and nations this awesome opportunity for employment relationship, which will be of benefit to individuals, organizations, nations and global community at large.
- vi. Labour Mobility:** Globalization has ushered in an era where occupation is increasingly mobile. People move from one nation to the other in search of greener pastures where their services will attract more income. South Africa, been the most economically viable country in Africa is attractive to foreign nationals, making it one of the most preferred State for job mobility in Africa. The incessant and unabated cases of xenophobic attack constitute a threat to occupational mobility of labour and global human resource management.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Frustration-Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression theory has been written a long time before the wave of insurgencies, but it has relevance in the explanation of modern-day xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Ted Gurr (1970), in his book “Why Men Rebel” explores why people take to violence. In Gurr’s opinion, frustration is the major source of aggression. When frustration is sufficiently prolonged and sharply felt, anger and violence is inevitable. Gurr explained this hypothesis with his term “relative deprivation”, which is the difference between what people think they deserve, and what they actually think they can get. The major assumption in Gurr’s book is that “the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity”. In his opinion, the way frustration produces aggressive behaviour on the part of an individual, so does relative deprivation of social group lead to collective violence.

Relative deprivation is the tension between your actual state, and what you feel you should be able to achieve. Deprivation occurs when your value expectations exceeds your value capabilities. After writing volumes about the non-rational causes of violence, he added a passage on the rational utilities of violence; people act out their frustration if they believe that they can be relieved from their discontent by going violent and if previous success of collective violence helps determine perceived utility of violence (Gurr, 1970). Although, aggression is neither necessary nor sufficient but the more prolonged a feeling of frustration, the greater the probability of aggression.

‘South Africans protested out of frustration and desperation over lack of service delivery from government. The communities tried a number of peaceful ways in engaging with authorities in expressing their frustration. However, the answers at most of the times was slow in coming due to a number of causes chiefly among them, the authorities turn a blind eye on the grievances’ (Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016)

In the context of this discussion frustration results from years of white political domination and the competition (with foreigners) for limited economic resources in terms of employment and social infrastructural facilities such as health care services among others.

Conclusion

This study has shown that xenophobic attacks on African migrants residing in South Africa in the recent past is not new, as there has been anti-foreign bias in the country since independence. This article provided a brief overview of the attacks and its implications on human resource management. Xenophobic attack is unimaginable especially in South Africa that has successfully emerged from years of racial segregation to that of democratic equality and recognition.

No individual, group or state can exist without interaction with other people from varying background and nations in today's changing work and business environment. Accommodation and tolerance of others will make both nationals and foreigners in a nation to live harmoniously and achieve both individual and corporate objective.

Adequate supply of physical and financial resources is not enough to ensure economic development of any organization, rather it is the human resources that engage other organizational resources judiciously to achieve organizational goals. The ease with which this can be achieved depends to a large extent on the environment in which organizations operate. Organizations need the environment to survive and the environment needs the organization to produce need satisfying goods and services. All of this can only be achieved in a peaceful environment devoid of all forms of attacks on lives and properties of people.

Recommendations

In order to have a nation devoid of violence, discrimination, and inequality where human rights are respected individuals, organizations and governments have roles to play. The following are the recommendations of this study:

Government should;

- i. demonstrate sincerity and goodwill towards ending this menace through policy, regulations and sanctions to erring citizens, no matter the status or social class.
- ii. guard against hate speech and impose penalties to anyone found culpable.
- iii. compensate the legal immigrants who have been negatively affected by the attacks.

- iv. engage in value re-orientation through aggressive campaign to citizens on diversity management and tolerance.

Organizations should;

- i. insurance all its employees, so that compensation will be guaranteed in cases of attacks.
- ii. employ information and communication technology, so that employees can easily communicate with the organization in cases of threat or attack and,

The civil societies should orientate the citizens on the rights of foreign nationals.

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