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Afrophobia and Recurring Bloodbath: Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity and Roméo Katompa Incident

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Abstract

This study examined Afrophobia and the Recurring Bloodbath: Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity and the Roméo Katompa Incident. The study adopted a qualitative research using a case study approach, while content analysis served as the primary method of data analysis. Data were obtained from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, official reports, government statements, reputable news publications and digital media content. The analysis was guided by Social Identity Theory and Framing Theory, while Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework was employed to identify recurring patterns within the data. The findings revealed that Afrophobic violence is driven by a combination of socio-economic inequality, unemployment, identity politics, weak migration governance, exclusionary nationalism and political rhetoric. The study further established that recurring attacks undermine Pan-Africanism, weaken African solidarity, damage interstate relations and threaten regional integration initiatives. In addition, media framing and political communication were found to significantly influence public understanding of migration, either reinforcing stereotypes or promoting empathy and continental unity. The study concludes that addressing Afrophobia requires comprehensive policy interventions that strengthen migration governance, encourage responsible political communication, promote ethical media practices and reinforce the principles of Pan-Africanism and peaceful coexistence. The study contributes to political communication scholarship by integrating migration, identity politics, media framing and African solidarity within a contemporary analytical framework.

Keywords: Afrophobia, Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity, Political Communication, Roméo Katompa Incident

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Introduction

The African continent was founded on the ideals of Pan-Africanism, solidarity, regional integration and the free movement of people. Institutions such as the African Union and regional economic communities have consistently promoted cooperation, peaceful coexistence and collective responsibility among African states. Despite these aspirations, recurring episodes of xenophobic violence in South Africa have exposed a widening gap between the normative ideals of African unity and the lived experiences of African migrants residing within the continent. Rather than strengthening continental integration, periodic attacks on foreign African nationals have generated fear, diplomatic tensions and renewed scholarly debates on migration governance, citizenship and regional solidarity (Akinola, 2018; Gordon, 2020).

Although hostility towards migrants exists globally, South Africa presents a particularly significant case because many victims of anti-migrant violence are fellow Africans from countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Malawi, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Scholars argue that these attacks extend beyond conventional xenophobia because they frequently target Black African migrants while largely excluding migrants from outside Africa. Consequently, several researchers and commentators increasingly employ the concept of **Afrophobia** to describe this distinctive pattern of discrimination and violence directed against African nationals by fellow Africans (Naicker, 2016; Landau, 2011). The concept reflects not merely prejudice against foreigners but a deeper crisis of African identity, belonging and continental citizenship.

Since South Africa's democratic transition in 1994, episodes of anti-migrant violence have recurred with alarming regularity. Major outbreaks in 2008, 2015, 2019 and subsequent years resulted in deaths, injuries, widespread destruction of property and the displacement of thousands of migrants. Research attributes these recurring attacks to a combination of economic inequality, unemployment, political rhetoric, competition over scarce resources, weak migration governance and exclusionary forms of nationalism (Gordon, 2020; Kerr, Durrheim, & Dixon, 2019). Reports commissioned by the Human Sciences Research Council and the International Organization for Migration further identify relative deprivation, perceptions of economic competition, community mobilisation and political manipulation as major drivers of xenophobic violence.

These recurring attacks have profound implications beyond South Africa's borders. They undermine regional economic integration, discourage intra-African migration and weaken confidence in continental initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), whose success depends substantially upon increased mobility, cooperation and mutual trust among African states. Episodes of violence have repeatedly triggered diplomatic protests, retaliatory demonstrations and calls for stronger continental responses from affected countries. Such developments illustrate that xenophobic violence has evolved from a domestic security challenge into a significant issue of African diplomacy, regional governance and political communication.

Recent reports surrounding the death of Congolese professional boxer **Roméo Katompa**, popularly known as *Bololo*, have once again intensified continental concern regarding the safety of African migrants in South Africa. The incident generated widespread public attention across Africa and extensive discussion on digital media platforms, where many users interpreted it within the broader historical pattern of recurring anti-migrant violence. At the same time, South African authorities urged caution, noting that social media claims surrounding the circumstances of the incident remained under investigation and should not be treated as verified facts pending official confirmation. Consequently, the Roméo Katompa incident has become an important contemporary case through which broader questions concerning Afrophobia, public perception, migration security and African solidarity may be critically examined.

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From a political communication perspective, recurring xenophobic violence illustrates the powerful influence of media narratives, political discourse and digital communication in shaping public attitudes towards migrants. Traditional media, social media platforms and political elites frequently frame migration either as an economic threat or as a humanitarian concern. These competing narratives significantly influence public opinion, identity formation and policy preferences. Digital platforms have also amplified transnational conversations, enabling African citizens to express solidarity with victims, condemn violence, demand governmental accountability and mobilise continental responses in real time. Consequently, communication has become central not only to understanding xenophobic violence but also to constructing collective African identities and shaping public diplomacy.

Furthermore, the recurring nature of these attacks raises important theoretical questions regarding the relationship between nationalism and Pan-Africanism. While Pan-African ideology advocates unity beyond colonial borders, recurrent violence against African migrants suggests the persistence of exclusionary national identities that undermine continental integration. This contradiction calls for renewed scholarly inquiry into how national interests, political rhetoric, media framing and socio-economic anxieties interact to produce Afrophobic sentiments within African societies.

Against this background, this study investigates Afrophobia and the Recurring Bloodbath: Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity and the Roméo Katompa Incident. Using the incident as a contemporary case study rather than as proof of any unverified allegation, the study seeks to examine how recurring xenophobic violence affects African solidarity, regional integration and political communication. It further aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on migration, security, identity politics and Pan-Africanism while offering evidence-based insights for policymakers, scholars and regional institutions committed to promoting peaceful coexistence and sustainable African integration.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Africa's commitment to Pan-Africanism, regional integration and the free movement of persons, recurring xenophobic violence in South Africa continues to undermine these ideals. For more than two decades, African migrants have been subjected to repeated episodes of physical attacks, displacement, destruction of property and loss of life. Although successive South African governments have condemned these incidents and introduced various interventions, the persistence and recurrence of anti-migrant violence suggest that existing policy responses have not adequately addressed the structural, political and socio-economic factors driving the phenomenon. Consequently, Afrophobia has emerged as a major human security concern with implications extending beyond South Africa to the entire African continent.

Existing scholarship has extensively examined the causes of xenophobia in South Africa, including unemployment, poverty, economic inequality, migration pressures, nationalism, identity politics and political rhetoric (Kerr, Durrheim, & Dixon, 2019; Lotter & Bradshaw, 2022; Chekenya, 2024). However, comparatively little attention has been devoted to examining how recurring Afrophobic violence affects African solidarity, Pan-African identity and continental integration through contemporary incidents that shape public discourse. Furthermore, while many studies analyse xenophobic violence from sociological, economic and security perspectives, fewer have explored its implications for political communication, regional diplomacy and the construction of African identity.

The widespread attention surrounding the Roméo Katompa incident illustrates how individual events can rapidly become symbols of broader concerns regarding the safety of African migrants and the perceived failure of African states to protect one another's citizens. Regardless of the outcome of official investigations into the incident, the extensive public debate it generated demonstrates the growing influence of media and digital platforms in shaping perceptions of Afrophobia and African solidarity. Such

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incidents frequently intensify diplomatic tensions, stimulate public demands for governmental action and reinforce narratives of mistrust among African populations. Recent waves of anti-migrant violence have also prompted several African governments to repatriate their citizens from South Africa, highlighting the regional consequences of the crisis.

The problem, therefore, is not merely the recurrence of xenophobic attacks but the widening disconnect between the ideals of African unity and the realities experienced by African migrants within the continent. Unless this contradiction is critically examined, recurring Afrophobic violence will continue to threaten regional integration, weaken interstate relations and diminish public confidence in continental institutions such as the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates Afrophobia and the Recurring Bloodbath: Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity and the Roméo Katompa Incident**,** with the aim of contributing to scholarly understanding of the relationship between Afrophobia, political communication and African solidarity while providing evidence-based recommendations for policy and regional cooperation.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between Afrophobia, recurring xenophobic violence and African solidarity**,** using the burning alive Roméo Katompa as a contemporary case for analysing the implications of anti-migrant violence on Pan-Africanism, political communication and regional integration in Africa.

Research Objectives seeks to:

1. Examine the factors responsible for recurring Afrophobic and xenophobic violence against African migrants in South Africa.
2. Assess the implications of the Roméo Katompa killing for African solidarity, Pan-Africanism and regional integration.
3. Analyse how political communication and media narratives shape public perceptions of Afrophobia and recurring xenophobic violence in Africa.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors are responsible for the recurring Afrophobic and xenophobic violence against African migrants in South Africa?
2. What are the implications of the Roméo Katompa murder for African solidarity, Pan-Africanism and regional integration?
3. How do political communication and media narratives influence public perceptions of Afrophobia and recurring xenophobic violence in Africa?

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory (SIT): Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), explains how individuals derive part of their identity and self-esteem from the social groups to which they belong. The theory posits that people naturally categorise themselves and others into social groups, creating distinctions between ingroup ("us") and outgroup ("them"). These group identities influence attitudes, behaviours and perceptions, often leading individuals to favour members of their own group while discriminating against those perceived as outsiders.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), social categorisation is followed by social identification, where individuals adopt the norms and values of their chosen group. The final stage is social comparison, in which the ingroup is evaluated positively against perceived outgroups. When economic hardship, political

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uncertainty or competition for resources arises, these distinctions become more pronounced, increasing prejudice, stereotyping and intergroup hostility.

Within migration studies, Social Identity Theory has been widely applied to explain xenophobia, ethnic conflict, nationalism and discrimination. The theory suggests that migrants are frequently portrayed as competitors for employment, housing, public services and economic opportunities. Such perceptions strengthen exclusionary national identities and may legitimise hostility towards migrants, particularly during periods of economic instability.

Social Identity Theory is highly relevant because it explains why African migrants become targets of recurring Afrophobic violence despite shared racial, historical and continental identities. The theory demonstrates that national identity may override broader African identity, resulting in the construction of migrants as outsiders who threaten local economic and social interests.

The theory further explains how stereotypes, prejudice and collective narratives contribute to hostility towards African migrants. In the context of the Roméo Katompa incident, Social Identity Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how perceptions of belonging, identity and exclusion influence both violent actions and public reactions across the African continent.

Framing Theory: Framing Theory originated from Goffman's (1974) work on how individuals organise and interpret social reality through mental frameworks known as "frames". The theory was later developed within communication research by Entman (1993), who argued that media framing involves selecting particular aspects of reality and making them more salient in communication in ways that promote specific interpretations, problem definitions, causal explanations, moral evaluations and policy recommendations.

Media organisations, governments, political leaders and social media users employ framing to shape public understanding of political events. The framing of migration, for example, may portray migrants as economic contributors, humanitarian victims or security threats. These competing frames significantly influence public attitudes, policy preferences and political behaviour.

With the growth of digital communication, framing has expanded beyond traditional journalism to include social media, citizen journalism and online activism. Competing narratives surrounding xenophobic incidents spread rapidly through digital platforms, influencing public opinion both within South Africa and across the African continent.

Framing Theory provides an appropriate framework for examining how media coverage, political discourse and digital communication shape public perceptions of recurring Afrophobic violence. The theory explains why similar incidents may generate different public reactions depending on how they are presented by news organisations, political actors and online communities.

In relation to the Roméo Katompa incident, Framing Theory helps explain how competing narratives influence interpretations of the event, public expressions of solidarity, diplomatic responses and discussions on Pan-Africanism. It also provides a basis for analysing how political communication contributes to either reinforcing stereotypes or promoting African unity and peaceful coexistence.

The combination of Social Identity Theory and Framing Theory provides a comprehensive analytical foundation for this study. Social Identity Theory explains the socio-psychological processes underlying prejudice, exclusion and Afrophobic violence, while Framing Theory explains how media narratives, political communication and digital discourse shape public understanding of these events.

Tthese theories enable the study to examine both the causes of recurring Afrophobic violence and the communication processes through which such violence influences African solidarity, Pan-Africanism and

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regional integration. Their integration offers a robust framework for analysing the complex relationship between identity politics, migration, media representation and political communication in contemporary Africa.

Review of Related Literature

Xenophobia, Afrophobia and African Solidarity

The phenomenon of xenophobic violence in South Africa has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the past two decades, particularly following the recurrent attacks on African migrants in 2008, 2015, 2019 and subsequent years. While early scholarship largely conceptualised these attacks as manifestations of xenophobia, recent studies increasingly argue that the violence is more accurately described as **Afrophobia**, since the principal victims are predominantly Black African migrants rather than foreigners in general (Dlamini et al., 2020; Dube, 2018).

According to Dube (2018), Afrophobia represents hostility directed specifically towards African nationals, distinguishing it from conventional xenophobia, which broadly refers to hostility against foreigners irrespective of race or nationality. Using data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey, Dube demonstrated that attitudes towards African migrants differ significantly from perceptions of migrants from Europe or North America, suggesting that anti-African prejudice possesses unique social and political characteristics. This finding has influenced contemporary migration scholarship, encouraging researchers to reconsider the terminology used to explain violence against African migrants.

Similarly, Dlamini et al. (2020) argued that South Africa's recurring attacks on African nationals have significantly damaged the country's diplomatic image across the continent. The authors contended that describing these attacks merely as xenophobia obscures their racial and continental dimensions because the overwhelming majority of victims originate from neighbouring African states. They concluded that the persistence of Afrophobia undermines regional cooperation, interstate diplomacy and the ideals of Pan-Africanism.

Recent scholarship has further strengthened this position. Lotter and Bradshaw (2022) argued that recurring violence against African migrants represents a broader crisis of post-apartheid nation-building and social cohesion. They proposed a conflict transformation perspective, suggesting that Afrophobia reflects unresolved structural inequalities, exclusionary nationalism and failures in social integration rather than isolated criminal behaviour. According to the authors, sustainable solutions require institutional reforms that promote dialogue, inclusion and social justice instead of reactive security measures alone.

Beyond questions of identity, scholars have increasingly examined the legal and human rights implications of Afrophobia. Sekati (2022) argued that African migrants in South Africa experience structural discrimination manifested through territorial exclusion, unequal access to socio-economic opportunities and limited legal protection. The study maintained that the continued marginalisation of African migrants reflects broader legacies of inequality and exclusion, thereby necessitating constitutional and institutional reforms to safeguard migrants' rights and dignity.

Migration scholars also continue to emphasise the implications of Afrophobia for continental integration. Maseng (2024) observed that although extensive literature documents xenophobia and migration conflict in South Africa, comparatively little research has explored how hospitality (philoxenia) could promote African unity and continental integration. The study argued that sustainable regional integration requires not only economic cooperation but also social acceptance, intercultural dialogue and positive public attitudes towards migrants.

The consequences of recurring Afrophobic violence extend beyond physical insecurity to include serious

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psychological and public health challenges. Thela and Tomita (2017) found that repeated exposure to discrimination, violence and social exclusion significantly affects the mental health and post-migration adaptation of African refugees and migrants residing in South Africa. Their findings demonstrated that Afrophobia generates long-term emotional trauma, anxiety, depression and reduced social integration among migrant communities.

From the perspective of political communication, media narratives and public discourse play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of migration. Entman (1993) argued that media framing determines how audiences define social problems, identify causes and evaluate policy responses. Applied to migration, framing may portray migrants as economic competitors, security threats or humanitarian victims. Such representations influence public opinion and can either reinforce prejudice or promote empathy and social cohesion.

Likewise, Goffman's (1974) theory of frame analysis suggests that individuals interpret social events through socially constructed frameworks. Consequently, repeated media portrayals linking migrants with unemployment, crime or pressure on public services may legitimise hostility against foreign nationals, whereas frames emphasising shared African identity may strengthen continental solidarity.

Identity politics provides another important explanation for Afrophobic violence. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argued that individuals categorise themselves into social groups and often discriminate against perceived outgroups to preserve positive group identity. Within the South African context, national identity may supersede broader African identity, leading migrants to be viewed as outsiders competing for scarce economic resources. This theoretical perspective explains why hostility frequently targets fellow Africans despite shared racial and historical experiences.

Although substantial scholarship exists on xenophobia, migration and identity politics, important gaps remain. Much of the literature focuses on the structural causes of anti-migrant violence, including unemployment, poverty, inequality and migration governance, while comparatively fewer studies investigate the relationship between Afrophobia, political communication and African solidarity using contemporary case studies. Furthermore, limited research has examined how highly publicised incidents such as the Roméo Katompa incident shape continental discourse, diplomatic relations and digital political communication. This study therefore seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the intersection of Afrophobia, recurring xenophobic violence, political communication and African solidarity through a contemporary African case.

Empirical Review

This study reviewed empirical studies closely related to Afrophobia, xenophobic violence, media framing, migration and African solidarity. The review identifies the methodologies employed, key findings and gaps that justify the present study.

Amenaghawon and Salawu (2022) investigated the framing of the 2019 xenophobic attacks in South Africa by selected African newspapers. Using **qualitative content analysis**, the study analysed newspaper reports to determine how the attacks were represented across the continent. The findings revealed that most newspapers framed the attacks as **xenophobia**, **criminality** and **a threat to African unity**, while emphasising the diplomatic implications for South Africa's relations with other African countries. The study concluded that media framing significantly influenced public understanding of the attacks and shaped continental reactions. However, the study focused primarily on traditional newspapers and did not examine the broader implications of Afrophobia for political communication and African solidarity. This gap provides justification for the present study.

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De Gruchy et al. (2022) examined how migration was framed in South African media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing a **mixed-methods design**, the researchers analysed **12,068** media reports and conducted a framing analysis of a representative sample of **561** articles. The findings indicated that, contrary to earlier assumptions, many South African media organisations increasingly portrayed migrants sympathetically and criticised government failures rather than blaming migrants for the pandemic. Nevertheless, some reports continued to reinforce stereotypes linking migration with social and economic pressures. The study concluded that media framing remains influential in shaping public perceptions of migrants. However, it did not specifically examine recurring Afrophobic violence or its implications for African solidarity and political communication.

Lotter and Bradshaw (2022) explored Afrophobia in post-apartheid South Africa using a **qualitative conflict transformation approach**. Drawing on documentary evidence and conflict literature, the study found that recurring violence against African migrants is driven by structural inequality, political exclusion, weak governance and unresolved socio-economic tensions. The authors argued that Afrophobia should be understood as a multidimensional conflict requiring institutional reforms, inclusive governance and social dialogue rather than purely law enforcement responses. Although the study provides important insights into the causes of Afrophobia, it paid limited attention to media narratives, digital political communication and continental public reactions following major incidents.

Jani (2024) conducted a **critical discourse analysis** of the construction of Afrophobia in three leading South African online news platforms *TimesLive*, *News24* and *Independent Online* covering reports published between 2019 and 2022. The findings revealed that media discourse frequently constructed Black African migrants through narratives associated with crime, illegality, economic competition and national insecurity, thereby reinforcing Afrophobic perceptions. The study concluded that language and media representation play significant roles in constructing public attitudes towards African migrants. However, the research focused exclusively on media discourse and did not examine how such representations affect African solidarity, diplomatic relations or public communication across the continent.

Tarisayi (2024) examined media framing of **Operation Dudula**, an anti-immigrant movement in South Africa. Using **content analysis** and **Framing Theory**, the study analysed media reports concerning the movement's activities. The findings showed that media narratives presented Operation Dudula from competing perspectives: some reports framed it as a legitimate response to unemployment and undocumented migration, while others portrayed it as vigilantism and organised xenophobia. The study concluded that competing media frames significantly influence public opinion regarding immigration and anti-migrant violence. However, the research did not investigate the broader implications of such narratives for Pan-Africanism, African solidarity or recurring Afrophobic violence.

The reviewed empirical studies demonstrate that substantial research has been conducted on xenophobia, Afrophobia, migration and media framing in South Africa. Existing studies have predominantly focused on the causes of xenophobic violence, media representation of migrants, migration governance and public attitudes towards immigration. However, there is limited empirical evidence integrating Afrophobia, recurring xenophobic violence, political communication and African solidarity within a single analytical framework. Furthermore, few studies have utilised contemporary incidents**,** such as the Roméo Katompa incident**,** to examine how recurring attacks influence continental discourse, digital political communication, Pan-African identity and interstate relations. This study seeks to fill these empirical gaps by investigating the intersection of Afrophobia, recurring xenophobic violence and African solidarity through a contemporary political communication perspective.

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Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design**,** employing the case study approach to investigated Afrophobia and the Recurring Bloodbath: Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity and the Roméo Katompa Incident**.** The study employed the content analysis method.

The population of the study comprised all publicly available communication materials relating to recurring xenophobic violence against African migrants in South Africa, with particular emphasis on materials concerning the Roméo Katompa incident. The population included: Newspaper reports, Official government statements, African Union communications, International organisation reports, and Editorials. Others include Opinion articles, Press releases, and Academic publications.

The study adopted critical case sampling technique, a purposive sampling**,** which enabled the researchers to deliberately select documents directly related to the objectives of the study. Only documents containing substantial information on Afrophobia, xenophobic violence, African solidarity and the Roméo Katompa incident were included in the analysis. The sample consisted of selected documents published between **2023 and 2026**, including: 15 newspaper reports, 10 scholarly journal articles, 5 official reports, 10 online news publications, and 5 official statements from governments and international organisations. This produced a total sample of 45 documents for qualitative analysis.

The principal instrument for data collection was a document analysis guide developed by the researchers. The guide focused on the following variables: Nature of the reported violence, Forms of Afrophobic narratives, Political communication patterns, Media framing and African solidarity narratives. Others include Diplomatic responses, Public reactions, and Implications for regional integration. The guide ensured consistency during data extraction and analysis.

Data were collected through systematic document review. Relevant documents were identified using keywords such as: Afrophobia, Xenophobia, African migrants, South Africa, and Roméo Katompa among others. The study employed Thematic Analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).The themes generated were interpreted in relation to the study objectives and the theoretical frameworks. To ensure the quality of the findings, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria for trustworthiness: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Profile of Documents Analysed

Category	Number	Period	Purpose	Relevance
News reports	15	2025–2026	Coverage of incidents.	Primary media narratives.
Journal articles	10	2018–2024	Scholarly evidence.	Theory/context
Official reports	5	2019–2024	Policy/governance	Institutional perspective.
Government statements.	5	2025–2026	Official response	Political communication.
Online publications.	10	2025–2026	Digital discourse	Public opinion

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Table 2: Coding Framework for Thematic Analysis

Theme	Code	Sub-theme	Interpretation
Afrophobia	AFR	Hostility to African migrants.	Evidence of targeted anti-African prejudice.
Xenophobic Violence	XV	Attacks and displacement	Recurring pattern of violence
Media Framing	MF	Conflict/Humanitarian.	Shapes public understanding.
Political Communication	PC	Official responses	Influences trust and diplomacy.
African Solidarity	AS	Pan-African unity	Calls for collective action.
Identity Politics	IP	Othering	Explains exclusionary attitudes.

Table 3: Textual Analysis of Selected Reports

Source/Date	Headline/Focus	Dominant Frame.	Key Textual Features.	Interpretation
News Report 1	Attack on African migrant	Humanitarian	Victim-centred language	Builds empathy and condemns violence.
News Report 2	Roméo Katompa incident.	Conflict	Focus on incident and reactions.	Highlights continental concern.
Govt Statement	Official response	Responsibility	Calls for calm and investigation.	Frames state accountability
AU Statement	African solidarity.	Unity	Protection of Africans.	Reinforces Pan-African ideals.
Editorial	Recurring violence.	Critical	Questions policy failures.	Links recurrence to governance.

Table 4: Contextual Analysis

Context	Evidence	Analysis	Implication
Economic conditions	High unemployment discussed in reports.	Economic grievances are linked to anti-migrant narratives.	Need for inclusive socio-economic policies.
Political environment	Official statements and diplomacy.	Government communication	Improved crisis communication.

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		influences public confidence.	
Regional integration	AU and African responses	Violence strains Pan-African cooperation.	Strengthen continental mechanisms.
Digital media	Online debate	Rapid spread of competing narratives.	Counter misinformation.

Table 5: Critical Discourse Analysis

Discursive Theme	Illustrative Discourse.	Ideological Meaning.	Theoretical Link
Othering	Migrants portrayed as outsiders.	Constructs exclusion.	Social Identity Theory.
Security narrative	Migrants linked with crime.	Legitimises restrictive attitudes.	Framing Theory
Pan-African solidarity	Calls to protect Africans	Promotes shared identity	Pan-African discourse
Accountability.	Government urged to act.	State responsibility.	Political communication.

Analysis of Findings

The findings of this study were analysed in line with the three research objectives and interpreted using Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Framing Theory (Entman, 1993). The analysis was derived from the thematic examination of selected news reports, scholarly publications, official statements and institutional reports on Afrophobia, recurring xenophobic violence and the Roméo Katompa incident.

Research Objective One:

To examine the factors responsible for recurring Afrophobic and xenophobic violence against African migrants in South Africa. The analysis revealed that recurring xenophobic violence in South Africa is driven by a combination of economic, political, social and identity-related factors. The thematic analysis showed that unemployment, poverty, inequality, competition for scarce economic resources and weak migration governance were consistently identified as structural conditions encouraging hostility towards African migrants. These structural challenges create an environment in which migrants are frequently blamed for social and economic hardships.

Beyond economic explanations, the findings demonstrated that identity politics plays a significant role in sustaining Afrophobic attitudes. Many of the analysed documents portrayed African migrants as outsiders competing with South African citizens for employment, housing and public services. Such representations reinforce the distinction between "citizens" and "foreigners," thereby legitimising exclusion and discrimination.

Political rhetoric was also found to contribute to recurring violence. Several analysed reports suggested that public statements associating undocumented migration with crime, unemployment and insecurity

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indirectly reinforce negative public perceptions of migrants. Consequently, political communication influences how migration is understood within society.

These findings support Social Identity Theory, which argues that individuals categorise themselves into in-groups and out-groups, often favouring members of their own group while discriminating against outsiders (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The findings also corroborate previous studies (Gordon, 2020; Lötter & Bradshaw, 2022), which argue that economic hardship alone cannot explain xenophobic violence without considering identity politics and political mobilisation.

Research Objective Two:

To assess the implications of the Roméo Katompa incident for African solidarity, Pan-Africanism and regional integration. The analysis showed that the Roméo Katompa incident generated widespread concern across the African continent and renewed debates regarding the safety of African migrants in South Africa. Regardless of the final outcome of official investigations into the incident, the public discourse surrounding it reflected growing frustration over recurring anti-migrant violence and perceived failures to uphold the ideals of African unity.

The thematic analysis further revealed that repeated incidents of violence weaken confidence in continental institutions promoting regional integration, including the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The findings suggest that recurring attacks undermine the principles of Pan-Africanism by creating fear among migrants, discouraging cross-border mobility and straining diplomatic relations between African states.

The findings also indicate that African governments increasingly respond to such incidents through diplomatic engagement, official condemnations and calls for improved protection of migrants' rights. However, these responses have largely remained reactive rather than preventive.

These findings agree with Akinola (2018), who argued that recurring xenophobic violence represents one of the greatest threats to African integration and continental solidarity. The findings equally support the argument that Afrophobia extends beyond domestic security concerns to become a regional diplomatic challenge.

Research Objective Three:

To analyse how political communication and media narratives shape public perceptions of Afrophobia and recurring xenophobic violence in Africa. The findings indicate that political communication and media narratives significantly influence public understanding of Afrophobia. The analysed documents consistently employed three dominant frames:

1. **Conflict Frame**, emphasising violence, insecurity and diplomatic tensions.
2. **Humanitarian Frame**, highlighting victims' suffering, displacement and human rights concerns.
3. **Responsibility Frame**, focusing on government accountability and policy responses.

The study further found that digital media have transformed political communication by enabling rapid dissemination of information, public mobilisation and transnational solidarity campaigns. Social media platforms were observed to function simultaneously as channels for humanitarian advocacy and as spaces where misinformation and inflammatory narratives could circulate rapidly.

The analysis also revealed that language plays an important role in constructing public perceptions of migrants. Expressions portraying migrants as economic competitors, illegal immigrants or security threats reinforce exclusionary attitudes, whereas narratives emphasising shared African identity encourage empathy, solidarity and continental cooperation.

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These findings strongly support **Framing Theory** (Entman, 1993), which posits that the manner in which issues are presented significantly influences public interpretation and policy preferences. The findings are equally consistent with studies demonstrating that media narratives shape attitudes towards migration and national identity across Africa.

The study demonstrates that recurring Afrophobic violence in South Africa is a **multidimensional phenomenon** arising from the interaction of socio-economic pressures, identity politics, migration governance, political communication and media framing. Economic hardship alone does not adequately explain the persistence of violence. Rather, recurring attacks are reinforced by exclusionary narratives, political discourse and social constructions of migrants as outsiders.

The findings further reveal that incidents such as the Roméo Katompa case have broader implications beyond individual acts of violence. They influence continental public opinion, diplomatic relations, African solidarity and perceptions of Pan-Africanism. The study therefore establishes that recurring Afrophobic violence represents not only a migration or security challenge but also a political communication issue with significant implications for regional integration and African unity.

Finally, the findings confirm the suitability of **Social Identity Theory** and **Framing Theory** as complementary analytical frameworks. Social Identity Theory explains the socio-psychological processes underpinning exclusion and hostility towards African migrants, while Framing Theory explains how media narratives and political communication shape public perceptions and policy debates concerning Afrophobia and African solidarity. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of the causes, communication dynamics and regional implications of recurring xenophobic violence in South Africa.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the persistent challenge of Afrophobia and recurring xenophobic violence in South Africa, particularly regarding its implications for African solidarity, political communication and regional integration. The discussion is organised according to the research objectives and interpreted in relation to the theoretical frameworks and existing scholarly literature.

The first objective sought to examine the factors responsible for recurring Afrophobic and xenophobic violence against African migrants in South Africa. The findings indicate that the violence is driven by a complex interaction of economic hardship, unemployment, poverty, socio-economic inequality, political rhetoric, migration governance challenges and identity politics. While economic competition was frequently cited in the analysed documents, the study found that structural economic conditions alone do not sufficiently explain the persistence of recurring attacks. Rather, political narratives and public perceptions that construct African migrants as competitors for employment, housing and social services reinforce hostility towards migrants.

This finding is consistent with **Social Identity Theory** (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains that individuals classify themselves into social groups and often discriminate against perceived outsiders in order to preserve positive group identity. The findings also support Gordon's (2020) argument that xenophobic attitudes in South Africa are shaped not only by economic insecurity but also by political distrust and perceptions of social threat. Similarly, Lotter and Bradshaw (2022) argued that Afrophobia reflects unresolved structural inequalities and exclusionary nationalism rather than isolated criminal behaviour. Consequently, the recurrence of violence reflects both structural socio-economic challenges and socially constructed perceptions of African migrants.

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Regarding the second objective, the findings revealed that the Roméo Katompa incident generated widespread concern across Africa and renewed debates concerning the safety of African migrants in South Africa. Irrespective of the outcome of official investigations into the incident, public discourse surrounding it demonstrated how individual events can rapidly become symbols of broader concerns about recurring anti-migrant violence and the apparent failure of African states to uphold the ideals of Pan-Africanism. The study established that recurring Afrophobic violence weakens confidence in regional institutions, discourages intra-African mobility and strains diplomatic relations among African countries.

These findings support Akinola's (2018) assertion that xenophobic violence undermines the objectives of African regional integration and contradicts the philosophy of Pan-Africanism. The findings further suggest that recurring attacks threaten the implementation of continental initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), whose success depends partly on the free movement of people, mutual trust and interstate cooperation. Thus, Afrophobia represents not merely a domestic security issue but also a continental governance challenge.

The third objective examined how political communication and media narratives shape public perceptions of Afrophobia and recurring xenophobic violence. The findings demonstrated that political communication significantly influences public understanding of migration and African solidarity. The analysed documents consistently employed humanitarian, conflict and responsibility frames, each shaping public interpretation differently. Humanitarian frames encouraged sympathy for victims, conflict frames emphasised insecurity and diplomatic tensions, while responsibility frames focused attention on government accountability and policy responses.

These findings strongly support **Framing Theory** (Entman, 1993), which argues that media framing influences how audiences define problems, assign responsibility and evaluate solutions. The study further found that digital media have become central to political communication by facilitating rapid dissemination of information, online activism and continental solidarity campaigns. However, digital platforms also provide opportunities for misinformation, hate speech and emotionally charged narratives that may escalate tensions during periods of crisis.

Overall, the study demonstrates that recurring Afrophobic violence cannot be understood solely through economic or criminal explanations. Instead, it represents a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by identity politics, political communication, media representation, migration governance and regional diplomacy. The integration of Social Identity Theory and Framing Theory provided a comprehensive understanding of both the causes of recurring violence and the communication processes through which public perceptions are formed. The study therefore contributes to the growing scholarship on Afrophobia by integrating migration studies, political communication and African regional integration into a single analytical framework.

Conclusion

This study examined Afrophobia and the Recurring Bloodbath: Xenophobic Violence, African Solidarity and the Roméo Katompa Incident**.** The findings demonstrate that recurring violence against African migrants in South Africa is not an isolated or temporary phenomenon but a persistent socio-political challenge arising from structural inequalities, identity politics, exclusionary nationalism, political rhetoric and ineffective migration governance.

The study established that recurring attacks undermine the ideals of Pan-Africanism by weakening African solidarity, discouraging regional mobility and damaging interstate relations. Furthermore, incidents such as the Roméo Katompa case illustrate how individual events can shape continental discourse and influence

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public perceptions regarding migration, security and African unity. The study also demonstrates that political communication and media framing play crucial roles in either reinforcing Afrophobic narratives or promoting solidarity and peaceful coexistence.

The application of Social Identity Theory explains how group identities and perceptions of outsiders contribute to recurring hostility towards migrants, while Framing Theory demonstrates the influence of communication in shaping public opinion and policy responses. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation of the causes and consequences of Afrophobic violence.

The study concludes that sustainable solutions require more than reactive law enforcement. Effective interventions must address structural socio-economic inequalities, improve migration governance, promote responsible political communication, strengthen media ethics and reinforce the principles of Pan-Africanism. Protecting African migrants should be regarded as a shared continental responsibility essential to achieving regional integration and sustainable development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The South African Government should strengthen migration governance by improving immigration management, law enforcement, intelligence gathering and early-warning systems to prevent recurring attacks on African migrants.
2. Political leaders should exercise greater responsibility in public communication by avoiding inflammatory statements capable of promoting stereotypes, discrimination or hostility towards migrants.
3. Media organisations should adopt conflict-sensitive reporting practices that emphasise factual accuracy, balanced reporting and responsible framing of migration-related issues while discouraging sensationalism and hate speech.
4. The African Union (AU) should develop a continental framework for monitoring, preventing and responding to Afrophobic violence, including mechanisms for rapid diplomatic engagement and protection of African migrants.
5. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should strengthen collaboration on migration governance, intelligence sharing and cross-border security to enhance the safety of African migrants throughout the continent.
6. Civil society organisations should intensify public enlightenment campaigns promoting tolerance, multiculturalism, peaceful coexistence and the values of Pan-Africanism among African citizens.
7. Social media platforms and digital communication stakeholders should collaborate with governments and civil society to identify and reduce the spread of misinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence against migrants while promoting verified information during periods of crisis.
8. African governments should strengthen bilateral and multilateral diplomatic cooperation to ensure the protection of their citizens residing in other African countries and establish clear protocols for responding to future incidents of anti-migrant violence.

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