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Xenophobic Attack in South Africa: an Impediment to Love and Tolerance as Dynamics of African Cultural Unity and The Out

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ABSTRAK

Permasalahan xenofobia dan konflik di Afrika terus menjadi tantangan yang signifikan dalam mencapai perdamaian dan pembangunan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep cinta dan toleransi sebagai seni penting yang dapat menjadi kekuatan utama dalam mendorong perdamaian di Afrika. Cinta dipahami sebagai esensi ilahi yang menciptakan dan menyatukan segala sesuatu, sementara toleransi dianggap sebagai turunannya yang mendukung harmoni dalam keberadaan manusia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui tinjauan pustaka dan analisis historis terhadap dampak kolonialisme pada nilai-nilai cinta, toleransi, dan hubungan antar manusia di Afrika. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa cinta dan toleransi adalah kualitas yang saling memperkuat dan sangat diperlukan untuk menciptakan perdamaian serta harmoni sosial. Namun, kolonialisme lebih memprioritaskan eksploitasi sumber daya alam dan membagi masyarakat Afrika, sehingga menghambat penanaman nilai-nilai tersebut. Kesimpulan penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya membangun lingkungan yang mendukung persatuan dengan mendorong masyarakat Afrika untuk saling menerima sebagai saudara, melampaui perbedaan nasional, agama, dan budaya. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar pemerintah Afrika menciptakan kebijakan dan lingkungan yang memungkinkan individu tinggal dan bekerja di seluruh benua tanpa diskriminasi, asalkan memenuhi persyaratan hukum terkait migrasi dan tempat tinggal. Langkah ini diharapkan dapat mengurangi kecenderungan xenofobia dan mendukung pembangunan perdamaian berkelanjutan di Afrika.

ARSTRACT

The issues of xenophobia and conflict in Africa remain significant challenges to achieving peace and sustainable development. This study aims to examine the concepts of love and tolerance as essential arts that can serve as a central force for fostering peace in Africa. Love is understood as the divine essence that creates and unites all things, while tolerance is considered its derivative, supporting harmony in human existence. The study employs a qualitative method, with data collected through literature reviews and historical analyses of the colonial impact on the values of love, tolerance, and interpersonal relationships in Africa. The findings reveal that love and tolerance are mutually reinforcing qualities essential for establishing peace and social harmony. However, colonialism prioritized the exploitation of natural resources and the division of African societies, thereby hindering the cultivation of these values. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of fostering an environment that promotes unity by encouraging Africans to accept one another as brothers, transcending national, religious, and cultural differences. It recommends that African governments develop policies and create environments that allow individuals to live and work across the continent without discrimination, provided legal requirements for migration and residency are met. These measures aim to reduce xenophobic tendencies and promote sustainable peace and development in Africa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"The farther backward you can look the farther forward you are likely to see" Winston S. Churchill. "How happy and prosperous are those who follow the guidance of love. How unfortunate, on the other hand, are those... unaware of the innate love deep in their souls – M. Fethullah Gullen. At some point, the pre-Socratic thinkers who devoted considerable energies towards grappling with the question of what the basic stuff of the universe was, both materialists and idealists, acknowledged that a certain positive force of attraction bound the world together. Their arguments, found in metaphysics either recognise matter or idea as the basic stuff of the universe, in which case they were either materialists or idealists. The one indubitable magnetic force that binds the universe together, it could be argued, is God, somewhat synonymous with love. It was such a force that, despite the cultural diversity of the world, ensured things tilted towards uniting rather than drifting apart, hence, the name "universe", rather than "pluriverse" (Nadasdy, 2021; Silova et al., 2020).

In a similar vein, tolerance can be regarded either as a quality or by-product of love. Love can therefore be construed as the primary force of the universe that brings about, and binds everything else together. In other words, God as Love is the source of things, and tolerance as its derivative, is mutually reinforcing. There are different accounts of creation, which one way or another point to love, mutuality, sharing, accommodation, tolerance, coexistence partnership, etc. as the essence of existence. In another development, it is very pertinent to state that love and tolerance are important dynamics in human existence, and are central in the efforts to reform ourselves for constructive roles in society. It is our view that there can be no deep personal reformation without the values of love and tolerance as ingredients. In other words, love and tolerance are the constitutive dynamics for personal reform, which composite dimensions are spiritual, physical, emotional and relational. These four dimensions assist the individual not only to understand the introspective environment but to relate with the external context or environment both human and non-human.

This paper tends to fathom the role of love and tolerance in prevention of violence, conflict, and by extension, promote peace and building of human co-existence. The prevention of violent conflict presupposes the possession of a certain state of mind, the disposition for "loving", embracing the humanity for others as intricate part of our essence as persons, accepting the "other" as "neighbour" not only from the point of view of same creation, but also as co-travelers in "Noah's Ark" especially in Africa. It is against this background that the thrust of this paper tends to focus on the relation between The Federal Republic of Nigeria and The Republic of South Africa in the post-apartheid era is generally described by the governments of both countries as "cordial", however, it is the one marked by volatility and tensions. The two countries as major players in Africa were considered strategic partners especially under the administrations of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. Both presidents played significant roles in the promotion of African unity, culture, development, peace, security and stability (Alotaibi, 2021; Khadiagala & Nganje, 2016).

Oshita espouses that there are different accounts of creation, which one way or another point to love, mutuality, sharing, accommodation, tolerance, co-existence, partnership, among others, as the essence of existence. A number of these accounts are based on well-known religious and sacred texts. The account in the Holy Bible, for instance, has it in Genesis that God created the universe, humankind and all that is in it. John 3:16 states that "for God so love the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes him should not perish but have eternal rest". Parallels of this attribution can be found in the Holy Qur'an and other sacred books. From the Qur'anic point of view, previous research posits that building peace among human beings is the most important task, though one of the most difficult of all required of human family (existence) (Hymel & Darwich, 2018; Sulaiman, 2021). He submits further that peace is one of the names of God (As-Salam). Many Muslims name their children "Abdul-Salam" (the servant of Peace) after this divine name, and as such, it is the responsibility of all humans to love and live peacefully in order to make the entire world a reflection of the divine name Peace. Giving credence to the above, previous research asserts that the Arabic root word S-L-M, carries connotations of "peace, love and submission" (Cremin et al., 2018; Rahmani et al., 2017).

Considering the spate of violence in today's world, and the proliferation of weapons capable of rendering the human family extinct several times over, it is pertinent and urgent for mankind to always seek peace, love, and to tolerate one another. Even in the midst of war on the battlefield, if there is an opportunity for peace, it is better the two warring parties seek peace and incline towards it too. This is in line with the wise saying "jaw-jaw is better than war-war". Similarly, previous research posits that peaceful co-existence and mutual cooperation are based on recognition of human dignity, understanding of common origins of all human beings, the consideration of diversity as positive, the acknowledgement of other people's religion and race, the awareness that creation of all beings are from the only one God (Gilabert, 2020; Muthaliff et al., 2016).

Arising from these, previous research surmises that "if the Lord did not love creation, there would be neither moon nor stars nor sun. The entire Heavens are all poem of love with the Earth being the rhyme (Gülen, 2010; Pellizzato, 2024). "In her well-known hymn published in 1848, Cecil Alexander aptly captures this appellation of God as the greatest architect in the words: "All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small, All things wise and wonderful, The Lord God made them all". This paper argues that love and tolerance are important dynamics in human existence and are central to reform ourselves for constructive roles in society. It is believed that there can be no deep personal reformation without the value of love and tolerance as ingredients. In other words, love and tolerance are the constitutive dynamics for peaceful-co-existence, which composite dimensions are spiritual, physical, emotional and relational. These four dimensions assist the individual not only to understand the introspective environment but to relate with the external context or environment, both human and non-human.

This paper also seeks to investigate the role of love and tolerance in human peaceful co-existence. The prevention of violent conflict presupposes the possession of a certain state of mind, the disposition for 'lovingly' embracing the humanity of others as intricate part of our own essence as persons, looking and accepting the other people as one not from the perspective of mere human beings but also as members of the same race (Africa). From the perspective of a common ancestry of Abraham and so "co-passengers of Noah's Ark," it is our duty as individuals to appreciate the positive energy inherent in social diversity, nurture and celebrate it, not to antagonise or destroy it. Nature and nurture are in conformity with the positive side of creation that as individuals, we reform towards perfecting our spiritual, physical, emotional and relational attributes in support of conviviality and social solidarity. It is part of the teleological design of humankind despite its diversity to co-exist in love, to jointly partake in all that the creator has provided for us in tolerance of one and another (Karimullah & Islami, 2023; Palmer, 2022). This submission is part of the lessons of composition of the Ark of the Noah and spirit that sustained its smooth sailing and anchor despite the turbulence of the water. If the "passengers" in the Ark of Noah did not see themselves as sharing a common faith and destiny, as loving partners, it is doubtful if that great ship would have made it to the anchorage. Love produces faith and the passengers in the ark had a lot of it. It was love, tolerance and faith that made the lion and the goat, the snake and the chicken, birds and insects, etc. to ride safely to the shore. If for a moment we shut our eyes and imagine our world today during this first one and half decades of the 21st century as a sailing ark, it would be one heading for a disaster worse than the titanic.

Alexander Pope, the author of the poem Solitude thinks about what it takes a person to be a happy individual. Pope views that the happiest life is found in the countryside, where one can live in peace and security far from the worries and troubles of the world. Equally, previous research asserts that our world has become a global village where people are interconnected than ever, and technological process continues at an amazing speed (Adams, 2018; Farman, 2015). The emergence of human beings' awareness of their place in universe increases their sharing in one another's happiness and sorrow; this consciousness is unique in our time carries that no nation in the world can claim complete isolation, even the simplest of societies. South Africa introduced apartheid in 1948, as a systematic extension of pre-existing racial discrimination laws (en.wikipedia.org). It is upon this racial discrimination that the term cultural heritage was muted. It is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Cultural heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible cultural heritage (Alves, 2018; Su, 2018).

Having at one time referred exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, cultural heritage as a concept has gradually come to include new categories. Today, we find that heritage is not only manifest through tangible forms such as artifacts, buildings and landscape but also through intangible forms. Intangible heritage includes voices, values, traditions, oral history. Popularly, this is perceived through cuisine, clothing, forms of shelter, traditional skills and technologies, religions, ceremonies, performing arts, storytelling, etc. the heritage surmises that an idea on how we can make the past part played by Nigeria of our future (Fredheim, 2020; May, 2020). But it is a common knowledge that art or the cultural realm and its expertise that ought to bind all Africans together have been institutionally and discriminately divorced from their real connections due to power, greed, superiority and inhuman relation. There has been some research works on national and international rifts, but as far as this researcher is concerned, there is no work/xenophobic attack perpetrated by South Africans against other African countries that assisted South Africa to surmount over apartheid. This gap in research is what this study intends to fill.

The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of xenophobic attacks in South Africa as a barrier to love and tolerance, which are fundamental dynamics of African cultural unity. This study examines how xenophobic attacks affect intercultural relations, undermine inter-nation solidarity in Africa, and pose significant challenges to achieving social harmony. The research aims to explore and explain the social, cultural, and psychological impacts of xenophobic attacks in South Africa and how these acts obstruct efforts to sustain cultural unity in Africa. By identifying the challenges and opportunities in rebuilding love

and tolerance as core values of African cultural unity, this study seeks to provide deeper insights into strategies for addressing xenophobia and strengthening social cohesion across communities in Africa.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to understand the phenomenon of xenophobic attacks in South Africa as an impediment to love, tolerance, and African cultural unity. This approach was chosen to delve deeply into the social, cultural, and political dynamics related to xenophobia and its impact on cultural harmony across Africa. The research subjects include victims of xenophobic attacks, perpetrators, local community members, and stakeholders such as government officials, community leaders, and human rights activists. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their direct experiences and relevance to the issue. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted using semi-structured guidelines to ensure flexibility in gathering information. Document analysis encompassed media reports, government policies, and relevant previous studies. All data were recorded with participants' consent to ensure the validity and reliability of the information. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, identifying patterns and key themes related to xenophobic attacks, their root causes, and their impacts on love, tolerance, and African cultural unity. The analysis process included coding the data, grouping findings based on themes, and conducting an in-depth interpretation to address the research objectives. Data validation was carried out through source triangulation and member checking to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Are love and tolerance life? Love and tolerance are not necessarily life, but paraphernalia of life. The reason they serve as paraphernalia of life is to live authentic, conscious and positive life. Once man becomes aware of this fact, the art form, of which literature is part, will begin to reflect its natural reconnection to meaningful living. The ideas contained in a work of art, Toward a global civilization of love and tolerance are signs to the fact that the work is connected to real things in societies, to life, to government and even polities. Instances of misinformation, prejudice, misconception or even a mass of received negative information or man-hatred-for-man based on skin colour, all negate the ethics of love and tolerance, thus, contributing greatly to the escalation of ethnic, tribal and even racial conflicts in the world especially Africa. Love is an elixir, a human life on love is made happy by love and makes those around him or her happy with love. In the vocabulary of humanity Love is life; we feel and sense each other with love. God Almighty has not created a stronger relation than love; it is this claim of love that binds humans together. In fact, the earth is nothing but a ruin without love to keep it fresh and alive. Jinn and humans have sultans; bees, ants and termites have their queens, for each of these there is a throne. Kings and queens come to power in different ways, and then they ascend their thrones. Love is the sultan that reigns on the throne of our hearts, with no power struggle being involved. The tongue and lips, the eyes and the ears only have a value as long as they carry the flag of love, yet, love is only valuable in and of itself. The heart, the pavilion of love, is priceless because of the love it carries. Castles can be conquered without bloodshed merely by waving flags of love in front of them. The phenomena of prejudice, fear, anxiety, discrimination and even physical attacks and extermination are offshoots of psychological conditions engendered by particular states of affairs, it is only love an tolerance that can control them.

Can dialogue and tolerance make us become conscious of something we take for granted?. There are many negative things we say to people the consequence of which we may not appreciate: the stereotypes we form, the prejudices we habour as well as the injustices we support consciously or unconsciously are things we take for granted. It is the work of Art, toward a global civilization of love and tolerance that will make us realize the enormity of the problem we create with those negative energies. Dialogue means the coming together for two or more people to discuss certain issues, and thus the forming of a bond between these people. In that respect, we can refer to dialogue as an activity that has human beings at its axis. Undoubtedly, everyone is rewarded according to his or her own sincerity and intention. If people come together and direct their actions with sincerity and good intentions, then they may be winners even if others should consider them losers. This connotes the wise saying that "deeds are judged by intentions" of dialogues are re-engineered through tolerance and love, it will turn out well.

Tolerance is not only one of the most frequently talked about issues today, it is also one of the most essential issues. Actually, tolerance is the rose of our life, a realm of the heart that never withers. Above all else, just as the entire universe is woven lace on the loom of love and tolerance. The strongest relationship

among individuals that forms family, society, and nation are dialogue, love and tolerance. Universal tolerance shows itself throughout the cosmos in the fact that each particle helps and supports every other particle. This is true to such an extent that the most dominant factors in the spirit of existence are dialogue and tolerance. From this perspective, humankind "conscious" participates in this symphony of dialogue and tolerance that are being played in existence. By developing dialogue and tolerance in their true nature, human beings investigate how they can demonstrate it in a human way. Therefore, without misusing dialogue and tolerance in their spirit and for the sake of the love in their own nature, every person should offer real help and support to others. They should protect the general harmony that has been put in the spirit of existence, considering both the national laws and the laws that have been made to govern human life.

How can love and tolerance checkmate xenophobic attacks on fellow Africans?. The work of Art itself cannot make any change. It needs the human agent to bring about the change. The work of Art can only make us conscious; it makes us to know. When we know, our knowledge will mean nothing if it is not put to use. Once we come to the stage of making our knowledge functional, it means we have become aware of what the problems are. It may necessitate that we begin to create the awareness of the inevitability of conflict in the African sub-region. It means we will begin to look at various ways of ensuring that we love, tolerate, dialogue and live in peace with one another regardless of one nationality. We will begin to generate options of ensuring that we live together in peace to ensure development. However, while efforts should be made by every research on ethnic conflict and resolution in Africa to articulate and clarify the values, interests, goals and orientations of all Africans, the role of responsibility and visionary leadership play in giving the peoples a great sense of belonging and faith in the Africa entity with the spirit of James Joseph Brown that says "I am black and proud, say it loud".

Discussion

This study reveals that xenophobic attacks in South Africa pose significant challenges to fostering love, tolerance, and African cultural unity. The findings demonstrate how xenophobia not only strains interpersonal relationships but also undermines broader cultural and social cohesion. The analysis highlights that these attacks are driven by complex socio-political and economic factors, including unemployment, competition over resources, and deeply ingrained stereotypes. The ripple effects extend beyond immediate violence, eroding trust and creating a climate of fear and division within communities.

The results of this study align with prior research that identifies xenophobia as a growing issue in South Africa and a barrier to continental solidarity. For instance, previous research emphasized that xenophobia disrupts social harmony by fostering hostility towards foreign nationals, particularly those from other African countries (Mutanda, 2017; Tella, 2016). Similarly, previous research found that such attacks often reflect broader socio-economic frustrations rather than genuine cultural or ethnic conflicts (Esman, 2019; Fjelde & Østby, 2014; Williams, 2015). However, unlike previous studies, this research delves deeper into the cultural implications of xenophobia, demonstrating how these incidents disrupt the shared values of Ubuntu—a concept central to African identity that emphasizes community, compassion, and mutual respect.

In contrast, some studies have suggested that xenophobic tendencies may also be rooted in historical grievances and colonial legacies (Angu, 2023; Langa & Kiguwa, 2016; Yingi et al., 2024). While this perspective provides valuable context, the findings of this study argue for a more immediate focus on the socio-economic drivers that exacerbate these tensions in contemporary South Africa. By grounding the discussion in present realities, this study offers actionable insights for mitigating xenophobia. The implications of these findings are profound for both academic discourse and practical policymaking. Academically, the study expands the understanding of xenophobia's impact by framing it within the context of cultural unity and values such as love and tolerance. It underscores the need to view xenophobia not merely as a localized issue but as a continental challenge that threatens African solidarity.

Practically, the findings suggest the necessity of multi-faceted interventions. Addressing the socioeconomic roots of xenophobia requires coordinated efforts from governments, civil society, and international organizations. Educational initiatives that promote cultural awareness and the principles of Ubuntu could help counter stereotypes and foster mutual respect among diverse communities. While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative nature of the research, while rich in depth, limits the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could incorporate quantitative methods to validate and expand upon these results across a broader population. Second, the reliance on purposive sampling, though effective for this study's aims, may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within affected communities.

Additionally, the study focused primarily on South Africa and may not fully reflect the dynamics of xenophobia in other African contexts. Comparative studies across multiple countries could provide a more

comprehensive understanding of how xenophobia affects African cultural unity. Based on these limitations, this study recommends the following: (a) Policy Interventions: Governments should prioritize inclusive economic policies that address unemployment and resource competition—key drivers of xenophobia; (b) Community Programs: Grassroots initiatives promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding should be scaled up; (c) Further Research: Future studies should explore the intersection of xenophobia with gender, youth dynamics, and digital media's role in shaping perceptions and responses to xenophobia. By addressing these areas, future research and interventions can build on this study's contributions to foster love, tolerance, and a unified African cultural identity.

4. CONCLUSION

While the colonialists saw the need to grant independence to Africa, they also see the need to make sure that the colonies never ceased to be sources of raw materials for the entrenchment of the imperial centres instead of entrenching love, tolerance and good man-to-man-relationship. This study reveals that the colonialists ought to have instilled and encourage dialogue, peace, love and tolerance among factions representing different nations' ideologies, cultures and religions. As a means to checkmate xenophobic and all other forms of attack in the African sub-regions, it is recommended that: Africans should see one another as brothers regardless of nationality, religions or cultural differences; All Africans should be allowed to live in any part of the continent without any hitch once should a person has fulfilled emigrant and residential permits, among other things as required by the host country.

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