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# A Qualitative Case Study of Experience of Xenophobia Among Francophone African Informal Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Pretoria

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**Abstract:**

Francophone African immigrants in South Africa find it difficult to find formal employment because of exclusive laws and the challenge of language barriers. Accordingly, they frequently resort to informal businesses which expose them to acts of xenophobia. Xenophobia and Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs have negative and positive consequences in South Africa. This article presents a descriptive account of individual experiences of xenophobia among thirty (30) Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria during the conduct of their business. It therefore, seek to answer the following questions; (a) How are Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs discriminated against while conducting their business in Pretoria? (b) What type of harassment do they face while conducting their business in Pretoria? (c) Why are they attacked while conducting their business in Pretoria? This descriptive qualitative case study adopts content analysis to describe the experience of xenophobia among Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria. The findings reveal “skipping” Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs to buy from South African informal traders is an experience of discrimination. It establishes virtual, verbal, and physical harassments Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs experience while conducting their business in Pretoria. It demonstrates that the failure to lend money to South Africans or calling police on locals attract violent attacks against Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs while conducting their business in Pretoria.

**Keywords:**

Xenophobia, Francophone African, Informal Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Locals

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## Introduction

The effect of migration in the present global age is observed in ways the phenomenon affects our 'social worlds,' change societies and transform economies and nations (Massey et al., 1998, p. 1). Two decades ago, scholars in migration research state that, "like many birds, but unlike other animals, humans are a migratory species. Indeed, migration is as old as humanity itself" (Massey et al., 1998, p. 1). The movement of people from one country to another is rooted in well-defined historical conditions that point at specific socioeconomic contexts. The contexts remain signposts as to why migration research has much to offer re: the movement of people from one country to another, past and present (Massey et al., 1998, p. 3).

A lot of theories have explained why people move from one country to another. People with financial means, as well as educated professionals for example, move temporarily or permanently from one country to another for health reasons, religious missions, spiritual purposes, to marry, study or pursue other personal ambitions (Marschall, 2018, p. 2). Others move as a response to dramatic political change - war, conflict - genocide, or dynamics of forced displacement of refugees, and individuals fleeing persecution; natural or 'man-made' disasters etc (Marschall, 2018, p. 2).

This article intends to provide an empirical experience of xenophobia among Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs while they conduct their business in Pretoria. Xenophobia and informal immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa have negative and positive consequences (Ngota et al., 2017, Tshishonga, 2015). However, xenophobia and the presence of high number of African immigrants in the country are a result of factors associated with political, social, and economic conditions in host and country of origin. In host country (South Africa), xenophobia fosters discrimination, harassment, and attacks against immigrants based on the perception they are "foreigners" (Mashau, 2019; Ngota et al., 2017; Tshishonga, 2015). While informal immigrant entrepreneurs "add value through innovation, generate wealth, and create employment for immigrants and locals through entrepreneurial activities along sidewalks, on street corners, at municipal stalls and in small shops" (Moyo, 2014, p. 253).

## Literature Review

Post-1994, Francophone Africans increasingly migrate to South Africa as a result of "push and pull factors" (Bouillon & Morris, 2001). Landau and Segatti (2009) argue that the rise of Francophone African migration to South Africa is due to the need to seek protection from domestic harassment and violence. McGowan (2003) argues war is a push factor of migration that is prevalent in Francophone African countries. Rwodzi (2011, p. 18), added, other push factors such as violent dictatorship, persecution, natural and human-made disasters" have compelled Francophone Africans to flee to South Africa. Marschall's (2018) also contends that the dynamics of poverty, such as a lack of economic opportunities

in Francophone African countries, force Francophone Africans to move to South Africa in search of better socioeconomic opportunities to improve their living conditions and that of kind and kith (Marschall, 2018). While the pull factors that attract Francophone Africans to migrate to South Africa are chain of events such as “the lifting of restrictions on African urbanisation in the late 1980s”, the relatively tranquil political atmosphere after apartheid, and the growing economy of South Africa” (Posel, 2004, p. 277-292, Peberdy, 2001, p. 15-32). Hiropoulos (2017) attests from different data sources that there are about two to three million African immigrants (including Francophones) residing in South Africa.

Several studies conducted on xenophobia and informal immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa consider xenophobia as discrimination, harassment or attacks perpetrated against people labelled as “foreigners” in the country (Akinola, 2018, Nshimbi & Moyo, 2018, Tengeh, 2016, Tirivangasi et al., 2016, Tshishonga, 2015). While some scholars regard informal immigrant entrepreneurs as persons who move from one country to another to operate economic activities in the informal sector (Tengeh, 2016, Tirivangasi et al., 2016, Tshishonga, 2015). Nshimbi and Moyo (2018), describe the informal sector as the economic sector which is neither taxed nor regulated.

The literature review reveals a cause-effect relationship between xenophobia and African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa in general (Nshimbi & Moyo, 2018, Tengeh, 2016, Tirivangasi et al., 2016, Tshishonga, 2015). This article focuses on individual experiences of xenophobia among Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria. Moyo and Nshimbi (2018) often use the term ‘informal immigrant traders’ to refer to African immigrants operating business in the informal sector. Feige (2005) claims the informal sector involves transactions that bypass tax and regulatory system set in place.

It is evident African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa in general have experienced discrimination, harassment, and attacks while conducting their business (Peberdy, 2019, Skinner, 2017, Crush et al., 2015, Tshishonga, 2015). What is particular about Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs is that their experience is accentuated by the fact that they struggle with the need to be accepted in South Africa due to language barrier as the business language of South Africa is English (Posel & Zeller, 2016). This place limits on how they interact with locals (Chiswick & Houseworth, 2008). Since language is key when seeking to interact politically, economically, and socially in the host country (Chiswick & Houseworth, 2008, Vigouroux, 2008, Cameron, 2001, p. 11). More importantly, their business success depends on how they create networks with South Africans (Peberdy, 2019; Skinner, 2017; Crush et al., 2015; Tshishonga, 2015). Additionally,

Nonetheless, xenophobia creates tension in diplomatic relationship between South Africa and countries of origin of African immigrant (Adebisi, 2017, p. 89, Mabera, 2017, p. 31). The tension is narrowed at the level of the interpersonal relationships between South Africans and African immigrant (Adebisi, 2017,

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Mabera, 2017). For example, Vrsanska et al. (2017, p. 170) observe that African immigrants who experience xenophobia often "demonstrate anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies which makes it difficult for them to lead a normal life in South Africa.

But Pineteh (2018) claims attacks on African informal immigrant entrepreneurs are a result of frustrations with the ANC Government, competition for resources, joblessness, and poverty. The attacks provide occasions for impoverished South Africans to loot shops belonging to informal immigrant entrepreneurs and steal household goods and foodstuffs. This heightens existing economic barriers against African immigrants as it places limit to their ability to pursue opportunities for fear of being attacked by locals (Pineteh, 2018). Tshishonga (2015, p. 165) attests "the outbreak of xenophobia against African immigrants often force them to go into hiding." Thereby, leaving their business unattended.

Moyo and Zanker (2022) argue sometimes African informal immigrant entrepreneurs who are unable to go into hiding are reduced to onlookers as they watch their businesses looted and burnt down. This reverses economic progress made and render African immigrants more vulnerable to crime. The looting and burning of business belonging to African immigrants take place even when there is evidence that African informal immigrant entrepreneurs create new business opportunities for locals and themselves (Ngota et al., 2018, Mothibi et al., 2015, Tshishonga, 2015). Conversely, xenophobia cast shadow over the socioeconomic contribution of Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria). It makes the government and citizens of South Africa to neglect the multiplier effect of informal business of African immigrants to the economy.

However, Dube (2019) remains adamant to the fact that the perpetration of discrimination, harassment, and attacks against African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa is because "… many South Africans do not like foreigners." Tshishonga (2015), concurring with Dube (2019) argues not all "foreigners" in South Africa experience xenophobia. According to Nyamnjoh (2016), foreigners (immigrants) from Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania do not experience the level of discrimination, harassment, and attacks that immigrants from across Africa experience.

Peberdy (2017) and Tshishonga (2015), suggest that the reason African immigrants in South Africa in general, experience discrimination, harassment and attacks is because South Africans claim they compete with them over the scarce socioeconomic opportunities in the country. Consequently, the recurrence of violent attacks against African immigrants such as the attacks that took place in 2008, which left 62 people dead, 342 immigrant informal businesses looted and 213 burnt down (Ngwenya, 2022). And similar attacks that took place in 2015, 2017 and 2019 (Ogunnoiki & Adeyemi, 2019, Dube, 2019, Peberdy, 2017, Tshishonga, 2015). These attacks demonstrate xenophobia is present in South Africa (Moyo & Nshimbi, 2018, Peberdy, 2017, Ntshiqa, 2018, Crush, 2015). It provokes one to avoid

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the overgeneralization of the experience of xenophobia by looking at the experience of Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria as a category of analysis.

## Method and Data

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria. The participants were chosen based on nonprobability sampling technic between May and August 2022. The technique was used because the objective of the study was to create an in-depth description of the phenomenon rather than generalising the findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 111-112). Purposive and convenience non-probability sampling was applied to recruit participants (Palys, 2008, p. 697-698). The researcher made appointments with participants and communicated with them on several occasions to follow up on the date, time, and place of each interview.

The data were collected at participants' business spots and homes for purposes of confidentiality. The interviews took place across six suburbs in Pretoria (Arcadia, Capital Park, Gezina, Hatfield, Pretoria CBD, and Sunnyside). The researcher used a recorder to record each interview. The recorder helped the researcher to listen to the interviews repeatedly, making it possible to produce verbatim transcriptions from the interviews. The transcription created a base for content analysis (Mayring, 2000) of the experience of xenophobia among Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria.

## Results and Discussion

The research results in this article are presented according to research questions and then discussion. The first research question was; how are Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs discriminated against while conducting their business in Pretoria? The second question was; What type of harassment do Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs experience while conducting their business? The third question was; Why are Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs attacked while conducting their business?

### Francophone Informal Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Discrimination

For logical alignment, the researcher has described how Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria are discriminated against while conducting their business under specific themes as they appear in the testimonies.

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### Direct Discrimination

The experience of direct discrimination included members of Tshwane Metro Police Department (TMPD) impounding goods belonging to Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs even when these informal immigrant entrepreneurs had valid trading licences to conduct business within a designated trading zone. Despite valid trading licences and trading within their designated zone, members of TMPD still arrested and impounded their goods without justifiable explanation of violation of law. It is vital to highlight the fact that such acts by the TMPD were direct act of discrimination because the goods of the informal immigrant entrepreneurs were impounded from designated trading zones while they had valid trading licences to conduct business on that spot. In the case of Respondent, no 6, one could agree it was an experience of discrimination as the respondent mentioned: *[…] when the Metro Police Officers came to seize the goods of people selling on that street corner. […] the Metro Police seized my goods even though I had licence from the municipality to sell there, but he did not seize the goods of South Africans who were selling the same things there without trading licences. […] The metro police officers gave no reason why they were seizing my goods after I showed them my permit […]* **(Respondent no 6, personal interview, Tuesday 14 June 2022, Pretoria CBD)**

### Costly Discrimination

From the testimonies, Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs who lost goods or money in acts they believed was discrimination against them described the experience as costly discrimination. For example, respondent no 11 who conducted informal business at Sunnyside mentioned the following: *[…] I have been renting a municipal stall for about two years. […] Last week a South African lady came with six guys who claimed they were working for the City of Tshwane. They greeted me in the home language, and I responded in English […] When I could not speak the home language with them, they asked for my passport. I told them they were not from home affairs so I would not show them my passport. […] They then said to me the municipal stalls were only reserved for South African citizens. […] Which was not true because I knew foreigners who were also selling on municipal stalls but never experienced such incident. […] The officials of City of Tshwane then took away all the goods that I just bought. […] They refused to look at my permit to sell on this stall […] The South Africans selling beside me were clapping […] I lost all my goods.* **(Respondent no 11, personal interview, Saturday 18 June 2022, Sunnyside)**

The claim of discrimination of respondent no 11 had a couple of issues that validated it as an act of discrimination. If other foreigners conducted business at municipal stalls that never had their goods impounded, this would mean the claim of officials of the City of Tshwane that foreigners were not allowed to conduct business at municipal stalls was rather a discrimination against respondent no 11, as it would give them no legal right to impound the goods of respondent no 11. But if it was a policy of the City of

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Tshwane that the municipal stalls were designated only for South Africans, this would mean that the officials of the City of Tshwane were legally doing their job to ensure no foreigner conduct business at the stalls. This is because adverts saying “no foreigners allowed” is not a new phenomenon in South Africa (Anjofui, 2018).

### Discrimination from Accessing Equal Police Protection

The finding also revealed that Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs have experienced discrimination from officials of the South African Police Service and ordinary South Africans. For example, one is reminded of the experience of discrimination by respondent no 10 who went to the police station to report an incident of a violent attack perpetrated against him, but was detained instead because he did not have valid documentation at the time, even when he presented a slip from the Visa Facilitation Service (VFS) to show that he had applied for permit renewal and was waiting for the outcome. The police officers did not listen, the violent attack committed against the informal immigrant entrepreneur was ignored as the police officer only focused on the fact that the informal immigrant entrepreneur did not have valid documents. The informal immigrant entrepreneur was forced to spend the weekend in police custody leaving his informal business unattended. He was threatened the following Monday, he would be taken to the magistrate court and later to the detention and repatriation centre at “Lindela.” But was instead released the following Monday without being taken to the magistrate court or the detention and repatriation centre.

However, it is the mandate of officials of the South African Police Service to detain immigrants without valid documentation in South Africa in terms of the Immigration Act No 13 of 2002 (Hiropoulos, 2017). It is also the mandate of members of the SAPS to investigate all the crimes reported to them irrespective of whether an immigrant is documented or undocumented (Eghosa, 2020). Also, if the police officers acted according to the law, they should have taken the Francophone informal immigrant entrepreneur to the magistrate court where it would be decided whether he should be taken to the detention and repatriation centre or not. The fact that the Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneur was released without taken to court or detention and repatriation centre validates the claim that the Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneur had experienced discrimination from accessing equal protection by police. The respondent said the following: *[…] I was in the shop when two South Africans came to buy an African Fabric popularly known as “Ankara.” […] they had argument with me because they claim the fabric was not original. […] I said it was original and told them where I bought the fabrics in South Africa. […] They did not believe me, so I asked them to leave my shop. […] But one that was cursing me that I was selling fake Ankara, turned, and said to me, “who are you to ask me to leave this shop? This shop is on South African soil. You are not even a South Africa, he said. He then said show me your passport. The disagreement escalated into both assaulting me. […] I left my shop*

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*immediately and went to the police station to report the matter. […] The officer who came to assist asked me to present my identification document. […] I gave him a valid passport with an expired visa in it. […] He looked at my passport and said I was not supposed to still be in South Africa. […] He said we must first deal with the issue of expired permit. […] He called his colleagues and after they discussed, they said to me they would be detaining me because I was illegal in the country. They refused to listen to what I came to report […]* **(Respondent no 10, personal interview, Tuesday 05 July 2022, Sunnyside)**

### Language Discrimination

Discrimination as a result of language ineptitude was another form of discrimination that emerged during the testimonies. There were instances where poor English proficiency of a Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneur selling cell phone accessories and gadgets was the reason for the perpetration of discrimination against him. Compounded by the French accent when he spoke English. Respondent no 2 mentioned: *[…] There was a South African guy who came to buy a charger and repair his phone at my shop. […] When I tried to explain the problem of his phone. He said he was not understanding what I was saying. […] You know I cannot speak English like South African people! […] The South African client then asked me to write the problem of the phone on a piece of paper so that he should read and understand what was wrong. I told him I cannot write English because I am Francophone. He asked why I did not learn English. I kept quiet, he then said to me, "give me the phone, I am afraid you will not be able to fix it. If you cannot write the problem in English […] I told him I knew how to repair the phone. I said that was what I did every day for the past 4 years I have been in that shop in the CBD […] He took his phone and went across the street to the shop of some guys from Limpopo who were also selling phones […]* **(Respondent no 2, personal interview, Friday 15 July 2022, Pretoria CBD)**

The testimony of respondent no 2 shows how lack of proficiency in English of a Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneur creates an unfavourable circumstance that increases chances of being discriminated. Perhaps, even if the informal immigrant entrepreneur was able to explain the problem of the phone in English and the client left, this might not have been validated as an experience of discrimination because the client did not mention anything regarding the origin of the informal immigrant entrepreneur. However, respondent no 5, who conducted informal business on a municipal stall in Pretoria CBD, also narrated a different experience of prejudicial discrimination that she encountered. She mentioned: *[…] Many South Africans who came to my stand to buy goods often skipped me to buy from my neighbour who is a South African. […] South Africans would always speak to me first in their home language when they come to buy. Sometimes I tried to respond in the local language. At other times I asked them to speak in English. […] When I asked them to speak in English, some of them always behaved as if they were angry. […] Immediately when my neighbour saw what was going on.*

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*She often interrupted the conversation between me and the client. She always spoke to the client in the home language. […] I usually do not know what was said. But one thing I noticed was that clients always skip me to buy from her whenever she spoke to them. […] Even clients who had initially given money to me, often asked me to return their money and they would skip to my neighbour. […] These are clients who sometimes buy and take things on credit when my South African neighbour does not come to sell. The same clients would not skip me to buy from other traders who are not South Africans. […]* **(Respondent no 5, personal interview, Saturday 16 July 2022, Pretoria CBD)**

The testimony of respondent no 5 shows how skipping respondent no 5 to buy from her South African neighbour was the outcome of discrimination. This is because when the South African trader was absent the same South African clients bought goods from respondent no 5.

## Harassment of Immigrants and Immigrants' Conduct of Business

The testimonies revealed diverse types of harassment that Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria have experienced while conducting their business. The harassment can be classified into virtual, verbal, and physical harassment. Nonetheless, verbal, and physical harassment in the form of "name-calling", "accusations" and "threats" were the dominant form of harassment that emerged in the respondents' testimonies, while virtual harassment was spread via social media platforms to harass African immigrants in South African to leave the country. In addition, the perpetration of harassment against Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs along sidewalks, street corners, municipal stalls, and small shops varied. For example, Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs who conducted informal business along sidewalks, street corners and municipal stalls have experienced more verbal and physical harassment than those conducting informal business in front of small shops.

The testimonies also revealed that the experience of physical harassment is more common among Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs with small shops than those conducting business at municipal stalls. Nonetheless, not all Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs have experienced physical harassment in Pretoria while conducting business. But all 30 respondents claimed to have individually experienced verbal harassment while conducting their business. It is therefore, important to analyse the experiences under virtual, verbal, and physical harassment.

### Virtual Harassment

Some of the virtual harassment sent to Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs were not like the regular bullying that takes place on virtual platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The virtual harassment directed at the informal immigrant entrepreneurs often contain xenophobic undertone. For example, respondent no 30 mentioned: *[…] I was selling on the sidewalk in*

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*front of Rietondale high school in Gezina. […] One day, I received a WhatsApp video from an unknown number when I got home. The face of the person speaking in the video was not quite clear, even though his voice was clear enough. […] The message in the video was like, "Wena! you are very selfish. […] You are making money, but you cannot share. […] You must not come to Rietondale tomorrow. You refused to give us credit. […] We will not allow you to sell at Rietondale again. You must go back to your country. You think you are clever. […] If "I you come to Rietondale tomorrow, I will stab you." […] I realized I was the one being harassed. I was the very person who refused to give credits to South African who asked for it during lunch break […]* **(Respondent no 30, personal interview, Saturday 20 August 2022, Gezina)**

The testimony of respondent no 30 shows that the respondent was the targeted person in the harassment. The message in the video was different from the general virtual harassment that often circulate on social media platforms. In the case of respondent, no 30, messages such as "You must not come to Rietondale", "We will not allow you to sell again in Rietondale", and "You refused to give us credit" (see respondent no 30) were clear messages that were destined for a specific individual.

### Verbal Harassment

The most common form of verbal harassment perpetrated against Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs is derogatory name-calling *"makwerekwere."* For example, respondent no 7 mentioned: *[…] A group of South Africans came to buy goods from me. […] When I turned to take a plastic bag to put the goods, they bought. […] One of them stretched his hand and stole a packet of cigarette from my market table. […] Fortunately, before he could put the packet of cigarette into his pocket, I had caught him. […] when I took the packet of cigarette from his hand, he immediately started shouting at me calling me "makwerekwere" go back to your country […]* **(Respondent no 7, personal interview, Friday 19 August 2022, Pretoria CBD)**

The experience of respondent no 7 is described as an act of xenophobia instead of criminality because several studies claim the term *"makwerekwere"* is associated with statements such as "This is not your country" which is a clear demonstration of xenophobia (Nshimbi & Moyo, 2019, Pineteh, 2017). It should be noted that more than 25 of the 30 respondents claimed they have been harassed with the name-calling *"makwerekwere"* while conducting their business. Respondent no 9 also mentioned: *[…] One day a South African came to buy goods with incomplete money. […] When I told the South African that I would not give the good if the money was not complete, he started harassing me, calling me "makwerekwere." […] On another occasion, another South African who begged me to sell him an item for half the price. […] And I refused got angry and started insulting me. I remember, he said to me "you are a kwerekwere, I can take your goods, and nothing will happen to me […]* **(Respondent no 9, personal interview, Friday 26 August 2022, Sunnyside)**

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The testimony of respondent no 9 validates how ordinary South Africans harass Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria while conducting their business for failing to accept half the price for an item or for refusing to sell an item for incomplete money. The form of harassment perpetrated by ordinary South African is mostly associated with the name-calling "makwerekwere." Van der Merwe (2019), Castelyn (2019), Field (2017), and Mlambo (2009) have written on the use of the name-calling "makwerekwere" to perpetrate harassment against African immigrants in South Africa in general.

### Physical Harassment

There are several circumstances revealed from the testimonies where verbal harassment of Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs often led to physical harassment in the form of assaults. For example, respondent no 12 mentioned that: *[…] Another African immigrant lady who also sell with me gave me money to buy stock for her from Marabastad. After I bought my stuff and hers, I hired a bakkie to take me back to Sunnyside. […] The lady who gave me money sells just a robot away from me. The street that the bakkie driver took was supposed to stop at her business location before getting to my business location. […] So, when we got to her business spot, I asked the driver to stop so that I offloaded her stuff. […] When the driver stopped, he said to me, he was going to offload everything at once. He said I should decide whether the goods should be offloaded at the lady's business location or at my business location. […] While we were still talking, the driver started speaking to me in the home language. I only knew he was angry when he started calling me "makwerekwere." I then told the driver he also is "makwerekwere." I said again to him, we are all "makwerekwere" because we all came to Pretoria from somewhere. […] The driver then opened his bakkie door by force and came out of the bakkie and grabbed me on my neck. […] it became very physical […]* (**Respondent no 12, personal interview, Tuesday 9 August 2022, Sunnyside)**

The testimony of respondent no 12 validates the claim that Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria have experienced physical harassment while conducting their business. Respondent no 12 was physically harassed by the South African bakkie driver. The reason is the bakkie driver used the derogatory name-calling of "makwerekwere" against the Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneur. Immediately, when the informal immigrant entrepreneur told the bakkie driver that he was also a "makwerekwere." The bakkie driver became more violent and assaulted him. This is to confirm the depth of the psychological discomfort and intolerance South Africans understand they perpetrate against African immigrants when they harassed them as "makwerekwere."

## Why Francophone African Informal Immigrant Entrepreneurs are Attacked

The testimonies in the subsequent paragraphs establish the reasons Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria are attacked while conducting their business.

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### Failure to Act as a Lender to South Africans

Among the reasons Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs have been attacked in Pretoria while conducting their business. The failure to act as a lender to South Africans appears to be a potential reason the informal immigrant entrepreneurs have been attacked in Pretoria. Such reason is not documented in previous studies that look at the reason African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in South Africa, in general, are attacked. For example, respondent no 18 mentioned the following: *[…] I was attacked by South African guys who wanted to borrow cigarettes from me. I often refused because where I was buying the goods no one has ever given me goods on credit. […] So, two or three months ago, while I was busy selling, one of the guys who attacked me took a packet of chips. […] I was sitting on a chair, so I got up and held his hand to take the packet of chips. […] He said to me, he would take credit by force. I told him that would never happen. […]" While I was struggling to take the packet of chips from his hand, he called his friends and they attacked me. They called me "stinky "makwerekwere." […]* **(Respondent no 18, personal interview, Tuesday 31 May 2022, Arcadia)**

From the testimony of respondent, no 18, South Africans attacked Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs who refuse to lend goods to them. Even when the informal immigrant entrepreneur informs the attackers that where he buys goods, the wholesaler does not give him goods on credit. To politely decline the request. However, that meant nothing to the attackers who claimed he would take goods on credit by force. Thus, showing again how South Africans abuse their privilege as citizens when interacting with African immigrants.

### Calling Police on South Africans

Another reason Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria are attacked while conducting their business is when they involve the police in a confrontation between them and South Africans. Respondent no 1 for example mentioned that: *[…] When the South Africans were determined to search my shop, I then took my phone to dial 10111 to call the police for help. That was when one of them grabbed my phone and saw the number of the police station on it. […] He told his friends that I was calling the police. […] They then became angry and said to me, who are you to call the police on us? They then started slapping me on the face and hitting me multiple times on the neck and stomach. […]* **(Respondent no 1, personal interview, Tuesday 3 May 2022, Pretoria CBD)**

Many South Africans do not take it lightly when informal immigrant entrepreneurs call the police on them. In the case of respondent, no 1, the assailants never attacked the respondent until they realized he had called the police on them. Part of the reason South Africans do not take it lightly is because of the perception that African immigrants in South Africa do not have rights. Therefore, calling the police on them seems like the informal immigrant entrepreneur was challenging their position as "bona fide"

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citizens. Respondent no 12 also mentioned the following in her testimony: *[…] Some South Africans came to my shop claiming they were looking for illegal immigrants. They asked for my passport. I told them my passport was not with me. That I left it at home. […] They said I should walk with my passport everywhere I go. I asked them where are they from? They said they were from Home Affairs City of Tshwane. […] I told them Home Affairs and City of Tshwane are two different offices. I said only officials of Home Affairs, or the Police are allowed to request for my passport […] I took my phone to call the police, that was when the physically attacked me and said, they will make sure I go back to my country […]* **(Respondent no 12, personal interview, Tuesday 17 May 2022, Sunnyside)**

The testimony of respondent no 12 also confirms that Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs are attacked for seeking assistance from the police. As the informal immigrant was also attacked when she tried to call the police. In the case of the testimony of respondent no 12. The reason the respondent was attacked might be because the South Africans might not have acted purely on xenophobic motives. This is because when the assailants said they were coming from the Department of Home Affairs City of Tshwane. There was a clear indication that they sounded like criminal elements because there is no such office as home affairs city of Tshwane. Home affairs offices are distinguished by the street they operate from. For example, the Department of Home Affairs Byrun Place, Sophie de Bruyn Street. Additionally, the fact that the assailants told the respondent that they would make sure the respondent return home, brought in the aspect of xenophobia which is prevalent among South Africans.

## Unofficial Law Enforcers

Many South Africans believe that the reason African immigrants are still in the country is because of corrupt home affairs officials and police officers. To this effect, many have resorted to take the laws into their hands when it comes to dealing with African immigrants in the country. Ordinary South Africans feel it is their responsibility to punish African immigrants who commit crimes or are suspected of conducting illegal activities in the country. In this regard, Francophone African informal entrepreneurs in Pretoria claimed they have been attacked because ordinary South Africans have taken the laws into their hands to decide who stays or leave the country. For example, respondent no 16 mentioned the following: *[…] Three ladies and a guy came to where I was selling. […] One of the ladies said, she sent her son to buy mangoes. But she realized that I took the money and gave her son rotten mangoes […] I said to her the mangoes were not rotten. I even showed her a couple of mangoes and explained to her that the mangoes were the same. I said that was how all the mangoes I sold were. I then asked her, where are the mangoes? With the hope that I may change them to the one she wants. […] She said, she threw the mangoes in the dustbin. […] I then said to her, how then do I know whether the mangoes were rotten? Another lady that came with her stepped in and said to me, "so you have come to South Africa to tell us that we are liars, right? […] While she reached out to grab my money, I pushed her away from my*

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*counter to grab my money bag. […] The situation then escalated and all of them attacked me and scattered the stuff I was selling […]* **(Respondent no 16, personal interview, Monday 27 June 2022, Arcadia)**

Increasingly, South Africans have resorted to taking the laws into their hands when dealing with Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs. The testimony of respondent no 16 shows how South Africans attacked the informal immigrant entrepreneur because they believe they have the freedom to administer justice in a confrontation between them and the informal immigrant entrepreneur. However, if there was an issue of wrongdoing on the part of the informal immigrant entrepreneur. They should have reported the matter to the police station which is an established legal institution to deal with such matters. The assailants rather decided to punish the informal immigrants themselves. Even when the informal immigrant entrepreneur requested that he be willing to change the goods (mangoes in this testimony). Why was it difficult for the South Africans to bring the mangoes so that the informal immigrant entrepreneur can see it for himself? Even when the informal immigrant entrepreneur was still negotiating to change the mangoes, what was the correlation between the mangoes and the money bag of the informal immigrant that one of the ladies wanted to grab? This demonstrates that some South Africans believe it is their right to enforce the law vis-à-vis the informal immigrant entrepreneur.

### Nonsecular Dimensions

Furthermore, some respondents claimed that the reason why Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs are attacked in Pretoria while conducting their business is associated with serious spiritual issues. Respondent no 1, for example, mentioned the following: *"[…] I believe life is spiritual. […] South Africans attacked me because they have shared a lot of blood during apartheid. […] Like the bible says when the blood of a man touches the earth it cries for vengeance. The blood of Abel touches the ground it cried. Can't you see the kind of anger that the youths of South Africa have? I have been attacked several times for no good reasons […] The last time I was attacked was because two guys asked me where I was from, and I said I was from Arcadia. They said, no they mean what country I was from. I then kept quiet. It resulted in them attacking and destroying my goods. There must be spiritual forces manipulating them because how do you attack me because I refused to answer your question? […]"* **(Respondent no 1, personal interview, Tuesday 26 July 2022, Pretoria CBD)**

Respondent no 1 did not see any valid reason he was attacked by the two South African guys. The respondent said the fact that he kept quiet, and they attacked him must be that there has been some sort of spiritual manipulation that made the guys attack him. The reason respondent no 1 gave as a possible cause of the attack is not documented in the pieces of literature on Francophone African immigrants in South Africa. However, the question of spiritual dimensions appeared twice in the testimonies. Respondent no 26 also mentioned the following: *"[…] There was a security guard who was*

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*working at a supermarket opposite the spar around Capital Park. […] He said to me I should give him chicken feet that he would pay when he returns from lunch […] I told him to take the number of chicken feet that he was asking. […] But instead of the chicken feet, he added wings and gizzard for about R30. […] His colleagues also took chicken feet for R15 and R10 respectively. […] Around about 6pm before I left, I went to them to ask for my money. […] The one that I asked for my money said why am I harassing him for peanuts? […] If it was peanut, why didn't you pay when you took the stuff? He got angrier and said, I was asking him money when nobody was asking me to pay rent where I roast chicken and sell. […] He called the two other security guards and asked them to take my stuff and locked in the in the store. […] They pulled my stuff one side, and I pulled it the other side. […] it then resulted to three of the security guards to start assaulting me. The first guy was very angry as if demons were controlling him. If it was not Satan, how would they eat my chicken feet and refused to pay me and assaulted me as well"?* **(Respondent no 26, personal interview, Friday 26 August 2022, Capital Park)**

From the testimony of respondent, no 26. The respondent could not understand how security guards would borrow braai chicken from him to pay on their return from lunch. However, after eating the chicken, they refused to pay him and got so angry as if demons were controlling the first security guard that he asked for his money. Nonetheless, the fact that the security guards told the informal immigrant entrepreneur that he was not paying rent where he conducted his informal business seems to be the reason they did not want to pay. However, refusing to pay the informal immigrant entrepreneur and not assaulting him was one thing. But to refuse to pay and assault him was something the informal immigrant entrepreneur concluded was demonic. Thus, emphasising a non-secular dimension of the reasons Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria are attacked while conducting their business.

## Conclusion

This article has demonstrated ways Francophone African informal immigrant entrepreneurs in Pretoria experience discrimination while conducting their business. The types of harassment experienced, and reason they are attacked while conducting their business. Xenophobia is both a crime and a human rights issue in South Africa. Therefore, the adoption of National Action Plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in South Africa should be taken seriously. The government of South Africa has the obligation to invest more resources on promoting and protecting human rights for everyone living in the county, including African immigrants. The government can initiate partnership between government departments and centres for human rights across the country to train officials on issues of xenophobia. Other actions could include methods to improve xenophobia attacks intervention mechanisms.

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