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The Role of Social Media in Immigrants' Response to Xenophobic Violence in South Africa.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Migration and Displacement Studies, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand

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Declaration

I, Jan Bornman, hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided original work. Where the work of others has been used or quoted, it has been acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that this research report has not been previously in its entirety, or in part, been submitted to any other University in order to obtain any other academic qualification.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

Xenophobia and other forms of discrimination and prejudice has long been a problem in South Africa. When it reached a boiling point in 2008, the country could have been forgiven for thinking that the worst has happened. But since then the country has seen incident after incident and wave after wave of violence against foreigners. Despite all of these incidents, research around xenophobia and responses to it has neglected spending time focusing on the victims themselves. There are bodies of research exploring the responses of government, civil society and other institutions such as the police to xenophobia. By failing to examine the responses of immigrants to xenophobia, research treats them as passive victims. Through resistance and attempts to fight back against the perpetrators of xenophobic violence in recent years, we know that is not the case. Migrants and migrant communities have agency and are active role players in society. Mobilising and responding to xenophobic violence might take different forms including traditional forms such as word of mouth at regular places of gathering and the use of social media. This research not only examines the responses of immigrants to xenophobic violence, but also examines the role social media plays in responding to xenophobic violence.

Table of contents:

1. Introduction 5

1.2 Research questions 11

1.3 Rationale 12

1.4 Structure of the thesis 14

2. Literature review 16

2.1 Responses to xenophobia 16

2.2 Use of social media to respond to discrimination, violence and xenophobic violence 28

2.3 Theoretical framework 34

3. Methodology 35

3.1 Research location and population 36

3.2 Sample size 38

3.3 Sampling techniques 38

3.4 Data collection and analysis 39

3.5 Limitations 40

3.6 Ethical considerations 41

4. Findings 42

4.1 Social media during xenophobia 42

4.2 Immigrant responses to xenophobic violence and lasting impact of these responses 46

4.3 Information and misinformation 53

5. Discussion 56

6. Conclusion 63

7. References 64

Appendix I: Interview Guide 67

Appendix II: Ethics clearance certificate 69

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context: Xenophobic violence in South Africa: Nature and responses

In February 2017, looting in areas in and around Pretoria including Atteridgeville as well as Rosettenville south of Johannesburg culminated in a planned march against drugs and prostitution, as South Africans claiming to be fed up with crime blamed the rise of drugs and prostitution in their communities on Nigerian nationals. In the run up to the march, there were tensions in some communities, with a voicenote circulating on the popular social media messaging service WhatsApp, warning foreign nationals about the planned march and encouraging them to take up arms and defend themselves. The march in Pretoria went by relatively peacefully, however there was a tense stand-off between South Africans, and a group of mainly Somali nationals armed with knives, sticks and stones, ready to defend themselves.

As Misago (2011:444) reminds us: “Despite claims to the contrary, violence against foreign nationals in South Africa did not end in June 2008 when the massive outbreak that started a month earlier subsided. Hostility towards foreign nationals is still pervasive and continues to result in rising cases of murder, injuries, threats of mob violence, looting and the destruction of residential property and businesses, as well as mass displacement”. Countless numbers of foreigners have experienced various incidents of hostility towards them in the cities and rural areas, where they have taken up shop. These hostilities, as Misago explains, range from serious and violent crimes such as murder, robbery and assault, to more subliminal cases including open discrimination and derogatory words used towards foreigners.

Misago and Polzer and Segatti (2011) argue that government, police, civil society and newly established migrant organisations tend to act swiftly, but the interventions are not always

lasting. There are instances from 2015 and 2017 where migrants themselves organised and came together.

With little to no trust in the organisations and institutions that are supposed to protect them, immigrants' responses to xenophobia are quicker than those of the organisations meant to protect them. Although the responses by immigrant communities are more immediate, they are reactionary. As a result, reactionary responses to xenophobia will have an immediate effect on their safety, but there will most likely not be any long lasting impact of the responses. This is highlighted by Somali business owners' reactions in January 2015 to pack up their stock and seek refuge in Mayfair when there were signs of xenophobic looting in Soweto, Kagiso on Johannesburg's west rand, and other townships on Johannesburg's periphery (Sosibo, 2015). But what one would find in these situations, after packing up their stock and fleeing to a safer area such as Mayfair in Johannesburg, immigrants will wait out the spurt of violence before they return to their shops in the very same township where they fled from. This might happen within the space of a few days after the violence and looting had calmed down. Again this was illustrated in 2017 with the mobilisation of foreigners in Pretoria around the time of the planned march and the voice note circulating on WhatsApp. Social media enabled the spreading of messages and information instantaneously, ensuring quicker mobilising and responses to the planned march. But again, the responses would be immediate and reactionary, leaving no lasting impact on the immigrants or their communities.

Looking further back, following 2008's xenophobic violence which saw more than 60 people killed and thousands displaced, South Africans could have been forgiven if they thought the worst was behind them when government and civil society jumped to develop and implement interventions. Misago (2016) writes that unsurprisingly, the violence in May 2008 saw a “frenzy”

of analyses and explanations for what led up to the violence, the causes, effects, and how government and civil society responded.

Further, how these institutions including government set up interventions aimed at preventing this from happening again formed crucial parts of the literature around xenophobic violence. Misago goes on to write that planned interventions and strategies to combat xenophobia didn't work because there was a “lack of government political will” and lack of “civil society political muscle” to hold government accountable. He states:

> “Despite the overwhelming research evidence of a powder-keg of xenophobic sentiment, the issue was largely ignored in public political discourse, until it was too late. Even then, the response of those in government to May 2008 was largely denialist in character. Several prominent politicians initially voiced surprise and concern and acknowledged that xenophobia was a significant problem. They were quickly silenced by an official ‘party line’ from the President‘s office. The attacks were criminal, not xenophobically motivated, said President Mbeki at an official day of mourning for the victims. South Africans were not xenophobic and anyone who said so was themselves being xenophobic” (Ibid 451-2).

This passage sums up what Misago meant with a “lack of government political will”.

Misago further argues that governmental and civil society interventions have failed to address xenophobia in South Africa because strategies and interventions are not evidence-based, not informed by clear understandings of the drivers of violence and they are based on “shaky foundations and untested theories of change” (Misago, 2016, 445). This is further driven home by Misago, Freemantle and Landau's (2015) point that government's response was one

characterized by “denialism” where the violence was referred to as “just crime and not xenophobia”. Misago's (2016) description of “a lack of political” will, has seen government neglect and abandon task teams and units. Although Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) reference some efforts by department's such the department of home affairs and justice and constitutional development's efforts through, for example, a “National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance”, which is still ongoing, other programmes have had no major or lasting impact on society and how the country deals with xenophobic violence.

As a result of failed interventions following the 2008 xenophobic violence, South Africa again faced the same problem in 2015. Following Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini's comments about foreigners and his calls for them to “go back to their countries” in KwaZulu Natal in 2015, South Africa again witnessed outbreaks of violence and looting of foreign owned spaza shops in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng provinces. During this time, foreigners, especially Somalis managed to mobilise quickly, close shop and move all their stock to central areas such as Mayfair. In these incidents, the Somali nationals would organise among themselves to use any means and all resources available to them to load as much of their shops’ stock and leave to safer areas where they were in the majority (Sosibo, 2015).

The 2015 violence culminated in the brutal murder of Mozambican trader Emmanuel Sithole, whose murder was captured by a photojournalist in the streets of Alexandra, an impoverished township north of Johannesburg. Sithole and at least seven other people were killed before the government decided to act, including sending the army into places like Alexandra, to conduct raids. Following the tensions and deaths of at least eight people, Parliament set up an Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Probing Violence Against Foreign Nationals, but as Davis (2015) wrote, the

committee failed to address the problems at hand and instead pointed a finger at foreigners. Davis quoted the committee chair Ruth Bhengu as saying: “In my view, the violent attacks to foreign nationals are the symptom of a problem we have to identify” (2015) but further on Bhengu suggests foreign nationals open themselves up to such actions: “What makes people leave their countries, particularly those that are illegal immigrants?” Davis (2015) wrote that Bhengu said industries such as the agriculture and hospitality were central to tensions between South Africans and foreigners. Davis notes that the committee’s position was that there was a pointed perception that farm work and hospitality jobs in particular were going to foreigners, which resulted in growing tensions.

Comments from the members of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Probing Violence Against Foreigners and their subsequent conclusion deflected from the real problem at hand, attempting to simplify a complicated matter such as xenophobia to random criminal acts. Nicolson (2015) quotes the committee's conclusion as:

> “The main causes of the violent attacks were criminal actions that started with stealing of goods from foreign owned spaza shops by South African criminals who are often drug addicts. The spaza shop owners would react by shooting at those who steal from their spaza shops using unregistered firearms rather than reporting to the police. When this happens and someone is killed, local communities retaliate by looting spaza shops owned by foreign nationals also rather than reporting to the police.”

This illustrates how government’s understanding of a complex problem like xenophobia has often been completely misunderstood. This in turn leads to the “denialism” authors such as Misago talk about which in turn leads to unsuccessful interventions from a governmental point of

view. Often these interventions come too late or as the quotes of Misago earlier in the introduction show, the interventions from government lack political will to last. There is a growing sense among foreigners that they are on their own – with no help coming from governmental institutions, local communities or civil society. This growing perception among foreigners will dictate their actions and reactions during times of xenophobic violence, with more and more evidence showing foreign nationals are willing to take things into their own hands – whether that is clearing their shops of their stocks and running as described by Sosibo, or taking a stand and defending themselves as was seen in the 2017 mobilisation against the mob in Pretoria.

With the above in mind, this research examines migrants' response to xenophobic violence in South. In particular, it investigates the role social media plays in the mobilisation for such response. As the costs of smartphones and internet access decrease, one can assume that social media and the internet is more accessible to more people. Thus, the main aim of this research is to examine the role social media plays in immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence in South Africa.

The literature outlined above and elaborated on later in this thesis points to gaps in the understanding of immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence. With previous research focusing on the responses of government, civil society and the police, the lack of focus on immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence almost implies that they are passive victims, instead of active role players. From recent events in 2017 we know that is not the case, and that there are more and more instances where foreigners look out for themselves and their peers. Therefore one needs to determine what these responses are, what, if any, is the thinking behind

these responses, and if they are reactionary, or have any long term impact on the immigrants and their communities.

The aims are to find out what social media platforms are used by immigrants and for what purposes. This leads to questions around long-distance forms of nationality – are immigrants organising and mobilising along national lines? This would tie in with Polzer and Segatti's (2011) research on migrant organisations, which are generally organised along nationalities, but also with professional networks.

In sum, the main objectives of my research are to examine and describe how immigrants respond to xenophobic violence; what these responses are, and how social media is used to organise and mobilise immigrant responses. Further, the research looks at the effectiveness or the impact these responses have in dealing with xenophobic violence. Lastly, by studying the use of social media by immigrants, the study also examines the role social media plays in rumour, gossip and spreading false information.

1.2 Research questions

The aims of this research is answer to the following questions:

1) What role does social media play in immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence in South Africa?

2) During times of xenophobic tensions and violence, what is the nature of immigrants' responses and does it have any lasting impact?

3) What forms does this organisation and mobilisation take, and how effective is it?

4) What impact does the information and misinformation have on immigrants' responses?

1.3 Rationale

Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) examine the responses of government, civil society and the police, with extensive criticism on government and the police's attempts to label xenophobia as “just crime”. The authors briefly touch on community responses to xenophobic violence. They note:

> “In the absence of effective government and civil society responses, foreign nationals and local communities and their leaders are forging new ways to deal with discrimination and violent exclusion. In a few instances, local communities have resisted violence mobilisation and have actively protected foreign nationals and other groups living in their midst. However, much of this ‘protection’ or ‘welcoming’ of foreigners in the community is motivated by self interest too, rather than a principled stance of tolerance and hospitality. In some places, foreign nationals and local communities have resorted to unlawful compromises such as limiting the number of foreign-owned business in a given locality and setting minimum prices on basic goods” (2015, 29).

The authors also note the “growing concerns” about foreign nationals' acquisition of firearms for self-protection. During my fieldwork for this research, numerous Somali nationals mentioned fighting back with whatever they can get their hands on – whether it was a cold drink bottle, a pool cue, or stones and rocks. At least two respondents mentioned using weapons such as knives and pangas, with one respondent showing a panga he hides under his bed, admitting he has used it before. This will be further discussed in later sections of the report. Polzer and Segatti (2011:208) have written about the history of migrant organisation and mobilisation with

references to Congolese groups organising in professional associations, but it still being along ethnic lines in the 1990s, with Somali communities having seen the same in the late 1990s, while other nationalities have also for years organised along national lines. Polzer and Segatti's research points to the strong organisations that exist within the Somali community with structures such as the Somali Community Board which in recent years has taken on and assisted with academic research on Somali communities in South Africa.

Despite the existence of immigrant organisation and mobilisation as explained by Polzer and Segatti (2011), these formal structures often only exist in the more urban areas and cities such as Johannesburg. Immigrants might find themselves organising and belong to informal networks where their numbers are less dominant, or where they live in smaller communities outside and on the periphery of major cities.

Deumert, Inder and Maitra (2005) examine the role language and informal networks play in social security for migrants. Although their research predominantly looks at urban to rural migration, similar principles can be applied to cross-border migrants moving into South African cities and rural areas.

While Polzer and Segatti (2011) and Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) acknowledge the mobilisation of immigrant communities, a lot of research and literature around responses to xenophobia and related violence tend to focus on the responses of government, police and civil society as described earlier. What this does is assume that a lot of immigrants and those affected by xenophobia are just passive victims, which we know they aren't as touched on by Misago, Freemantle and Landau (ibid).

We live in an increasingly digital age, with more access to smartphones and social media tools. Dekker and Engbersen (2012) have written extensively about migrants' use of social media to create new communication channels in migration networks, and how social media transforms the networks and facilitate migration. They argue that social media enhances the possibilities of maintaining strong ties with friends and family elsewhere, but are also used to address weak ties relevant in organising the process of migration and integration.

Based on the gaps identified here, my research focuses on the role of social media in immigrants' responses to xenophobic tensions. Through existing literature, we know there is some organisation and mobilisation by immigrants during times of xenophobic tensions, and it seems to be becoming more organised with every new wave of xenophobic violence. What the existing literature fails to address is what tools they use to mobilise and respond to xenophobic violence. It also fails to clearly identity and define these responses.. For example, Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015), as already mentioned, talk about the “growing concerns” about foreign nationals' acquisition of firearms for self-protection. But beyond that one line in their article, there is no further discussion around what other responses immigrants have towards xenophobic violence.

My research examines the nature of immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence, how these responses are organised, and their impact (if any) on them (i.e those who get actively involved), their communities, and South African society at large..

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into 7 chapters. This introductory chapter outlines the context of the study, the aim, the rationale of the study. Chapter two provides a review of literature focussing on the

Somali experience in South Africa, responses to xenophobia, and social media's impact on responding to such incidents. Chapter three discusses the methodology: research design, population and sampling; techniques of data collection and analysis; ethical considerations; challenges and the limitations of the study. Chapter four deals with data presentation and analysis while Chapter five provides a discussion of the findings. Chapter six provides a conclusion which summarises the findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As indicated above, there are considerable bodies of work on government, police, civil society, NGO's and other institutions' responses of to xenophobic violence from 2008 to date. Existing literature covers extensively the nature of these responses and how effective and long lasting they were, but also reveals that little research has been done on responses by immigrants.

Similarly, there is a growing body of literature on the use of social media by migrants and immigrants and how it is used to facilitate migration, but very little on how it is used for other purposes, such as organising and mobilising in the face of xenophobic violence, or how it has been used to respond to discrimination in general. This literature review focuses on these two strands of existing literature: that of responses to xenophobic violence, and the role of social media in responding to violence and discrimination. This literature review identifies knowledge gaps this new research hopes to fill

2.1 Responses to xenophobia in South Africa

Steinberg (2018:2) writes that "it is generally possible to make money in South Africa" but "the price of becoming a petty capitalist is to lose your security". Thompson (2015:126) agrees, writing that from its beginnings as a self-employment survival strategy for Somali migrants, spaza shops have expanded into capitalist enterprises with multiple shareholders and up to five employees. "Among the primary motivations for undertaking risky work in the locations are the prospect of making enough money to support family members in the Horn of Africa and the possibility of saving enough money to branch out into other business. The need for remittances was the most common impetus expressed by informants" (Thompson, 2015:127). Grant and

Thompson (2014) have looked at the prospects of migrants to earn a living and build businesses in townships across South Africa. However, the two authors point out that such actions often build tension in communities and led to what they called “the economic focus of xenophobic rhetoric” (Grant and Thompson, 2014:185). “First, many immigrant groups are accepted in official legislation - although immigration laws have become more exclusionary since the original post-apartheid ‘open door’ policies - but vehemently and violently rejected at the local level and even by officials in government offices. Second, immigrants are tolerated because of their potential to bring economic benefits to the country (foreign investment, increased trade of South African goods across borders); yet by local citizens and government officials alike, they are perceived as appropriating South Africa spaces, ‘stealing’ jobs (and sometimes women) from South Africans and instigating criminal activity” (Grant and Thompson, 2014:185-186). The two authors argue that based on these “discontinuities”, key questions around immigrants and urban spaces emerge. Neocosmos (2010) argues that government has been complicit in xenophobic rhetoric, with remarks by the ex-Director General of Home Affairs in 2002 saying “it is quicker to charge these criminals for their false documentation and then to deport them than to pursue the long route in respect of the other crimes committed” (Neocosmos, 2010:99). That is just one of a number of examples listed by Neocosmos. “Human Rights Watch has concluded that ‘in general, South Africa’s public culture has become increasingly xenophobic, and politicians often make unsubstantiated and inflammatory statements that the ‘deluge’ of migrants is responsible for the current crime wave, rising unemployment and even the spread of diseases.’” (Neocosmos, 2010:100). Thus, Steinberg (2018:7) argues: “What is it that Somalis in South Africa do? Landau talks of a theater that the police perform before an audience of the poor. What sort of theater do Somalis perform in the shack settlements of the peripheries of the cities and in rural towns? What is it that the South

African poor see them do? One way to describe them is as extreme versions of Max Weber's Protestants. Weber's Protestants are one-track-minded people. Everything they come across in this world they turn into instruments, into means. And their end is just one: it is accumulation. They have this mentality because their horizons extend far beyond the temporal world. They do not know whether they have been elected for a place in heaven, and this uncertainty makes them anxious" (Steinberg, 2018:7). It is this anxiety that often puts neighbours against neighbours.

In light of this, Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) note that the scope of xenophobic violence has changed considerably, with initial violence targeting all foreign nationals. More recent attacks typically targeted foreign nationals, mainly Somali, Ethiopian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals, operating small businesses in townships and informal settlements across the country. These are often organised following or during 'service delivery' protests or when allegations surface that a foreigner has killed or wounded a local resident" (Misago, Freemantle and Landau, 2015: 21). They indicate that:

> "As in previous years, attacks continue to result in deaths, serious injuries, looting and burning down of foreign-owned businesses. Foreign business owners also continue to receive vicious threats and terrorising eviction notices from local business associations, such as the Greater Gauteng Business Forum (GGBF), and the South African Blacks Association (SABA), and increasingly face the discriminatory and selective enforcement of bylaws by municipal authorities and police" (ibid.).

Muchiri (2016:88) came to the same conclusion, arguing that in recent years, service delivery protests often "end in anger, frustration and xenophobic violence against foreign nationals". Following the violence in May 2008, government called on specialised units, created ad hoc

committees and designated task teams in parliament, ministries, provincial and local government, and the police. Misago, Freemantle and Landau, (2015:25): argue that government responses have been characterised by “denialism”:

“The denialism characterising government response in 2008 continues. Such positions and the lack of sustained political will to address xenophobia led efforts initiated in 2008 to be abandoned or allowed to wither. Task teams and units have been dissolved or are no longer functional and, somewhat ironically, ‘xenophobia’ has been almost entirely excised from the country’s National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance. The unwillingness to recognise xenophobia coupled within the current judicial system has also led to an alarming culture of impunity and lack of accountability for perpetrators and mandated institutions: foreign nationals and others have.”

While Muchiri (ibid.) argues that government responses has been characterised by “exclusivist politics”, Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) argue that denialism is rooted in a discourse where xenophobic violence is labelled as “just crime and not xenophobia”. This point is further driven home by the following quote from Misago: “National government and relevant local authorities have thus far either tended to ignore the problem or to categorise violence against foreign nationals and other forms of xenophobic behaviour as part of ‘normal’ crime with no need for additional targeted interventions” (Misago, 2016: 45).

Muchiri (2015) further argues that important actors such as government have not been able to coordinate effective management plans to deal with xenophobia because of government's unwillingness to acknowledge the problem. Further, a Human Rights First report titled

‘Combating Xenophobic Violence’ has criticized most countries for their shortcomings in dealing with the problem. “For example, two important measures of a State’s response to hate crime (as identified by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Ministerial and other decisions) are: 1) systems for comprehensive data collection on hate crime; and 2) the adoption and enforcement of adequate legislation” (Human rights first, 2011:6).

It is clear that through government's denialism, efforts to address the problem have failed. Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015:26) argue that

“the success of these strategies is uncertain given the consistent lack of coordination and complementarity among different government departments in addressing xenophobia since 2008”. Further, the authors state that: “It should also be noted that some senior officials within the national and provincial governments acknowledge the problem’s severity and have appealed for tolerance” (Ibid: 26).

The authors also quote addresses by former deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa and Gauteng Premier David Makhura. Ramaphosa was quoted as saying:

> ‘‘As the province with the largest number of immigrants, Gauteng must lead the way in combating xenophobia in all its manifestations. The people of this province must, through their actions, underscore the fact that foreign nationals pose no threat to our desire for social cohesion nor do they present any impediment to the achievement of a common South African nationhood” (ibid.).

David Makhura is quoted as saying: “South Africans should self-reflect before blaming all their problems on foreigners”. Despite some senior officials such as former deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa and Gauteng Premier David Makhura speaking out against xenophobia on a public

platform, some researchers have found these responses to be too little too late, or mere political rhetoric. Pillay's (2008) research has also found that government responses to be lacking, especially at a local level. She argues that:

> "Although not holding government directly culpable for the attacks on foreign nationals, a number of exchanges illustrated a general opinion that government bodies, especially at local level, had not been effectively communicating and engaging with residents on a variety of issues ranging from service delivery to probing the community's thoughts and grievances about foreign nationals. Feelings were expressed about government officials ignoring channels through which residents raised general issues of concern (i.e. municipal infrastructure maintenance); not sufficiently communicating with residents about their issues or concerns with foreign nationals in particular" (Pillay, 2008:27).

Pillay further describes how local communities blame government for its role in recent attacks, writing that local communities believe there is an increased pressure by local communities on government's ability to render essential social and economic services such as water, electricity and housing:

> "One respondent blamed the current electricity crisis on 'overpopulation' caused by foreign migration, stating that '…government has enough energy reserves but the problem is due to overpopulation'. In addition, in some cases foreigners and government agencies were criticized for the improper manner in which services were accessed by foreigners. This was perceived as impacting negatively on local residents' access to these same services" (ibid.:28).

Polzer and Segatti (2011) argue that the crisis not only revealed information about the nature and forms of migrant mobilisation (which will be discussed later) but also about the politics and lack of political will as described by other authors:

> "Even a crisis of this magnitude, leading to unprecedented engagement among participants, has not resulted in the institutionalisation of a migrant-state platform, or, indeed, in the legitimization of mobilisation around migrant rights. In fact, dominant governmental and non-governmental institutions consistently meet any claims made on the basis of refugee, migrant or 'foreign' identities with strong resistance and defensiveness" (Ibid:221).

The authors argue this "strong resistance and defensiveness" illustrates both politically and institutionally how there is a lack of legitimate policy space to reflect on these issues: "This lack of legitimate political space is also reflected in the strategic choice of migrant organisations to engage at local community and party political level rather than at national government level" (ibid.). Despite pronouncements by government officials against xenophobia, Misago, Freemantle and Landau remain unsure what effect it will have on communities. They do, however, state that "a series of current policy proposals" intended to deal with migration is a "sign of shift". The authors argue that: "It is important to note that even this general acceptance of xenophobia again reinforces the position that this is fundamentally an issue of immigration and not one rooted in potentially violent divisions within South Africa's population. While UNHCR ROSA has commended the current efforts by the South African Police (SAPS) to prevent and respond to xenophobia, it argues that other government services should be involved in fighting xenophobia in order to enhance on-going responses and contribute to the long-term consolidation of social cohesion. UNHCR ROSA's continued involvement in

programmes to prevent and to protect PoC from xenophobic violence seems unavoidable as socio-political structures evolve" (Misago, Freemantle, and Landau, 2015, 27).

In 2008 and again in 2015 responses to xenophobia were initially slow. There were signs that the police couldn't deal with the problem, and in both years government resorted to deploying the army in an attempt to deal with the situation. Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) argue that although the police are meant to protect all residents in South Africa, they have too often addressed the situation in an "ambivalent" manner: "Rather than grapple with the issue as distinct from high levels of "ordinary" crime, government and police officials have resisted pressure to approach xenophobic violence as anything rooted in attitudes, political instrumentalism, or economic ambition" (Ibid: 28).

The authors quote the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA), which argued that because police and government are quick to label such acts as simple criminality, as has been illustrated earlier in the literature review, they have limited ability to detect prejudicial motives in criminal incidents. They argue that:

"This has serious implications for their ability to counter violence: when the police arrest or bring perpetrators to justice, which they rarely do, the focus is almost exclusively on those caught in the act rather than on instigators behind the scenes. While the instigators are often well known to the community, they have de facto impunity and may – as they have in many cases – act again" (ibid.).

The Human Rights First report reviewed earlier indicates that few immigrants who seek help from the police have ever received the help they required: "Of those who sought protection from the police, many reported being met with little or no assistance" (Human Rights First, 2011:17).

This is further brought home by Misago, Freemantle and Landau's (2015) argument that the police's “evacuation strategy” has failed. The authors argue that the police have limited their role to escorting victims to places of safety rather than protecting them and their property. The authors argue that: “Even where well-intentioned, such activities may inadvertently abet perpetrators trying to remove ‘unwanted’ foreigners from their midst” (Ibid). In some instances in the past, the police have been accused of actively collaborating with such campaigns (see Landau and Haithar, 2007). While appreciating the police efforts to save their lives, some victims of the attacks believe that effort should also be made to protect their property. For them, saving livelihoods is as important as saving lives” (Misago, Freemantle and Landau, 2015:28).

Abatan (2015) further points to the police and military's response following the 2015 spate of xenophobic attacks which saw at least seven people killed, and after which President Jacob Zuma launched Operation Fiela. He argues that:

> “Violence only brings more injustices and dehumanised the perpetrators and those who support them. As a response to the recent xenophobic attacks, President Jacob Zuma launched Operation Fiela. However, the implementation of Operation Fiela has raised various concerns. Many civil society organisations and human rights activists have criticised the operation for targeting foreigners, criticism that the government vehemently rejects” (Abatan, 2015:6).

Abatan (2015) further argues that although the use of the army was an appropriate counter-xenophobia measure, it should not become a long term measure or an excuse for police brutality and human rights abuses and violations. Despite calls from some corners of society to have military intervention, he argues it should not become a long term solution to a

problem that can and should be addressed differently. According to him, the objectives of Operation Fiela should be clearly stated by government, and the given timeframe should be respected. He states:

"The issue should not become militarised and use[d] by politicians for their own political gain. The rest of the world, especially Africa, is watching as South Africans mistreat their fellow Africans in a country that preaches 'ubuntu' and togetherness…There is a need for collective reflection to come up with a sustainable solution to xenophobia. Responsible leadership is crucial" (Ibid:7).

It is perhaps one of the most important reactions and responses to xenophobic tensions, but not a lot of research has looked at the responses of immigrant communities. Misago, Freemantle and Landau (2015) state that in some cases local communities and immigrants have come to unlawful agreements and compromises, such as limiting the number of foreign-owned businesses in a given area. But more worryingly, Misago, Freemantle and Landau refer to a 2014 Amnesty International report which found that there is a growing concern that foreign nationals are making efforts to acquire firearms for self-protection. There have been numerous reports of incidents where foreign shop owners have shot and killed locals who tried to rob them. This points to one of the more negative and worrisome responses by immigrants in the face of xenophobic tensions.

However, according to Polzer and Segatti's (2011) there have been more positive responses among immigrants in South Africa following the xenophobic violence in 2008. In fact, they argue that the 2008 "crisis" was a "catalyst for migrant mobilisation in new or more varied organisation modes" (ibid:212). The authors argue that during the 2008 xenophobic violence, many of the

existing migrant and refugee organisations were, to varying degrees and at various stages, involved in different forms of humanitarian assistance following the attacks:

> "These included basic self-help and protection systems for providing direct accommodation or food support to displaced individuals, the collection of basic goods for distribution to victims of attacks, warning messages sent via mobile phones, and intermediary roles (representation, translation, etc) between authorities and migrant constituents" (ibid.).

However, Polzer and Segatti (2011) further argue that despite the quick mobilisation by migrant groups, they were caught by surprise. They state:

> "However, this was an emergency situation characterised by *ad hoc* decisions made without any preparation. Most leaders interviewed acknowledged that they had been caught by surprise and had sometimes reacted only once the attacks had spread beyond the initial outburst in Alexandra… The two new cross-national organisations, the ADF (Africa Diaspora Forum) and the RH (Refugee Helpdesk), which emerged as a direct result of mobilisation during the attacks are particularly important examples of new organisational modes" Ibid: 212-213).

It is here, where the first gap in the existing literature is identified. Polzer and Segatti state that even during 2008's xenophobic violence, mobile phones played a role in alerting and mobilising people to respond to the crisis. Despite identifying the use of mobile phones in sending messages to alert each other and mobilise responses, the two authors don't investigate the role further. Then, in the run up to the march in Pretoria in February 2017 (already referred to earlier in the report), which local residents said were against "drugs and prostitution", local communities used social media to call more people to mobilise. However, closer to the time there was an

increasing anti-foreigner sentiment to the march, which saw voicenotes circulate, warning foreigners about the plans of the marchers and encouraging them to take up arms and defend themselves. This is one of the aspects that this research is meant to examine, as it would seem the immigrant responses have gone beyond what Polzer and Segatti (2011) identified.

The Africa Diaspora Forum and Refugee Helpdesk already mentioned above, are two "new cross-national organisations" that Polzer and Segatti (2011) identified as important examples of new organisational modes: "While the latter mostly had Congolese organisers and members at first, it moved rapidly to incorporate other nationalities who were present in the official shelters between May and December 2009" (Ibid: 213). The authors argue that one of the most notable outcomes of the 2008 "crisis" was the shifts in migrant organisations about their position. They argue that the first shift came in the form of building closer ties with political actors in government, the second in recognising that interaction required both migrants and the host society to actively engage with each other, and lastly, moving toward community activities in the communities where violence was perpetrated against immigrants (ibid.). The following quote, however, brings attention to the lasting impact of these actions: "We do not yet know whether these cognitive shifts will be sustained. Furthermore, the way in which these shifts are rhetorically presented and practically implemented are often ambivalent in terms of the extent to which migrant organisations include or exclude their new South African interlocutors" (ibid.:217). This is where another gap in the research emerges, as there is a need for examining the lasting impact of these migrant organisations and their shifts in strategy.

2.2 Use of social media in responding to discrimination, violence and xenophobic violence

Morrison (2016) argues that effective early warning and conflict prevention methods depend on building and strengthening community relationships. One of the most efficient ways in building, supporting and maintaining these relationships are through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as social media platforms. Morrison's research argues that often police and other bodies meant to respond to violence aren't always in a position to respond timeously. Thus, he states that:

> "Local civil society organisations (CSOs) are often close to grassroots events and citizen voices, keenly aware of escalating tensions, and able to monitor conflict tensions and 'tipping points'. They may have capacities and wider networks that community members lack. This means that they can be well situated to respond quickly and transform conflict dynamics into opportunities for positive change, by building relationships and enabling communications between conflicting parties and authorities" (Ibid: 2).

Further, he uses an example of how the Diepkloof Local Peace Committee (LPC) used WhatsApp as a tool to mobilise members and deescalate violence against foreigners in 2015. He states:

> "In Gauteng, during an outbreak of xenophobic violence in 2015, members of Diepkloof LPC used WhatsApp as a useful, cheap tech tool to mobilise members of their existing networks of trust in the community to counter mobs of youths intent on looting shops owned by foreigners. Word of mouth was also important, as activists went from door to door. They were able to trigger the formation of barricades that prevented mobs from accessing the streets where the shops were located" (ibid:6).

While social media tools such as WhatsApp exist and their uses to mobilise communities in support of an idea have been well documented, other tools such as Ushahidi have a longer track record of informing people about potential violence and how to respond appropriately. Meier (2016) argues that the Ushahidi platform is not only a valuable tool during violent times, but he goes as far as calling the mapping platform a "liberating" technology. In his words:

> "Bloggers in Kenya and from the Kenyan diaspora launched the platform to map human-rights violations that would otherwise have gone completely undocumented by the mainstream media and official election observers. Those engaged in these mapping projects have included humanitarian and human-rights organizations, media companies, civil society groups, political and environmental activists, and distributed volunteer networks" (Ibid: 95).

The Ushahidi platform saw particular use as a "liberation technology" in Egypt during the country's parliamentary elections in the fall of 2010" (Ibid). Meier argues that social media and other ICT platforms have become such significant tools of organising and mobilising, that they are not "simply used as technology tools" but that they are used to coordinate and document events as it happens. He quotes an unnamed Egyptian activist as saying: "We use Facebook to schedule our protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world" (ibid.).

Gumede (2016) argues that new technologies, the internet and social media platforms have made it easier for people across the African continent to distribute and receive an alternative version of the truth. The states:

> "African governments are increasingly clamping down on the Internet, social media and messaging applications in attempts to silence democratic opposition, civil society and

activists' mobilization against poor governance expressed through these platforms. New technology, the Internet and social media have made it increasingly possible for Africans across the continent to distribute and receive alternative sources of information to government propaganda, disinformation and secrecy" (Ibid: 413).

Gumede further argues that while they have been able to democratise access to information this way, because a vast majority of people in African countries are poor, illiterate and lack access to resources, they lack quality information to make informed decisions and often have to accept the limited information they have. This is where the dangers of rumour and gossip, which is so often found throughout messages and warnings on social media.

Oh, Kwon and Rao (2010) argue that social media platforms such as Twitter have done so well in spreading news and information, it has almost seemed like it would replace legacy mainstream media. They opine that "The strength of Twitter lies not just on the speed of information spread. From the perspective of social media, another advantage is that, in a short period of time, Twitter users collectively cover major facets of disasters from multiple angles" (Ibid::2). They however argue that despite its many advantages, Twitter has also been criticised about the quality of information coming from the platform: During the Haiti earthquake, "rumors circulated that UPS will "ship any package under 50 pounds to Haiti" or "several airlines would take medical personnel to Haiti free of charge to help with earthquake relief" (Leberecht 2010:…). These turned out to be hearsay rather than eyewitness accounts, and subsequently refuted by UPS and airline companies as false information. For this reason, Twitter is sometimes despised as a social media for propagating misinformation, rumors, and, in extreme case, propaganda (Leberecht 2010)" (Oh, Kwon and Rao, 2010:2).

Oh, Kwon and Rao used rumour theory as a framework to examine and evaluate the power and utility of Twitter as a social reporting tool during the Haiti earthquake. During their research, they examined the conditions in which Twitter can be used as a reliable social reporting and social collaboration tool, and the conditions under which news and information on Twitter quickly decline into rumour and gossip and fear mongering. They state that:

> "Rumor theory can give some hints to answer these questions. During the Haiti earthquake, many tweets, which were linked to reliable sources such as pictures, mainstream media, and organizations (such as Red Cross), contributed to reduce informational ambiguities and anxiety among networked citizens. According to rumor theory, during the large scale natural disasters, information quality (ambiguous or not), reliability of informational source, and level of anxiety among citizens are highly correlated" (Ibid: 4).

Further, Zubiaga, Liakata, Proctor, Bontcheva and Tolmie (2015) also argue that the spread of false rumours during emergencies can jeopardise the wellbeing and safety of citizens who are monitoring and relying on the information from social media to not only stay abreast of what is happening, but also to keep an eye out for the latest updates.

Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang, and Liu (2017:4) writing about fake news, rumour and gossip on social media in light of the fake news problem that rocked the American elections in 2016, identified another problem in separating fact from fiction. The authors identified the "Echo Chamber Effect" which has come into existence in the social media age. They indicated that:

> "Social media provides a new paradigm of information creation and consumption for users. The information seeking and consumption process are changing from a mediated form (for example by journalists) to a more disinter-mediated way. Consumers are selectively

exposed to certain kinds of news because of the way news feed appear on their homepage in social media, amplifying the psychological challenges to dispelling fake" (ibid).

They argue that users of social networks such as Facebook tend to follow people and subscribe to pages with similar and like-minded people and views as their own. This, they argue, enables users to "receive news that promote their favoured existing narrative" (ibid.). Thus, the echo chamber effect the authors talk about, like-minded people on social media will form loose fitting groups of like-minded people who consume and believe the same information. "The echo chamber effect facilitates the process by which people consume and believe fake news due to the following psychological factors: 1) social credibility, which means people are more likely to perceive a source as credible if others perceive the source is credible, especially when there is not enough information available to access the truthfulness of the source; and 2) frequency heuristic, which means that consumers may naturally favor information they hear frequently, even if it is fake news" (Ibid). They authors argue the echo chamber effect creates "segmented, homogeneous communities" that become the primary driver of information diffusion and circulation.

Shu, Silva, Wang, Tang, and Liu (2017) write that further studies have shown that an increased exposure to an idea in the echo chamber is enough to generate a positive opinion of it, and thus in this echo chamber, users tend to continue sharing and consuming the same information without verifying its veracity. They opine that: "As a result, this echo chamber effect creates segmented, homogeneous communities with a very limited information ecosystem. Research shows that the homogeneous communities become the primary driver of information diffusion that further strengthens polarization" (Ibid:5). Besides the creation of homogeneous ideas and

thinking in these echo chambers, the authors argue that the extensive spread of fake news, gossip and rumour, which isn't verified and is continuously shared, can have serious and negative impacts on individuals and society. Particularly when it comes to serious and life threatening situations such as those experienced by immigrants during times of xenophobic violence. They note;

"The extensive spread of fake news can have a serious negative impact on individuals and society. First, fake news can break the authenticity balance of the news ecosystem. For example, it is evident that the most popular fake news was even more widely spread on Facebook than the most popular authentic mainstream news during the U.S. 2016 president election" (Ibid: :1).

The authors further argue that fake news intentionally persuades consumers to accept biased, false and wrong beliefs and views:

"Fake news is usually manipulated by propagandists to convey political messages or influence. For example, some report shows that Russia has created fake accounts and social bots to spread false stories. Third, fake news changes the way people interpret and respond to real news. For example, some fake news was just created to trigger people's distrust and make them confused, impeding their abilities to differentiate what is true from what is not. To help mitigate the negative effects caused by fake news – both to benefit the public and the news ecosystem. It's critical that we develop methods to automatically detect fake news on social media" (Ibid).

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This research engages with theories around collective behaviour and the role of social media and other communication tools. Considerable amounts of work has been done around both these topics, but it is Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl's (2005) work around actions based or taken in the pursuit of some "collective good" that is relevant to this research. They argue that "collective actions, or those 'actions taken by two or more people in pursuit of the same collective good' are typically framed as resulting in some shared outcome, or 'public good' (Ibid: 367). This is quite relevant in looking at the collective action taken by migrant communities to response to xenophobic violence in South Africa. As illustrated earlier in the proposal, actions against foreigners have recently been framed around attempts to improve society. Smelser's (1962) work around collective behaviour looks at it as "spontaneous" and "fickle" responses. "Points of reference melt before one's eyes as a crowd develops into a mob, a mob into a panicky flight, and a flight into a seizure of scapegoating" (Smelser, 1962, 4). This description of collective behaviour can and has been witnessed in how groups of South African "protesters" have mobilised and assembled against foreign nationals, and in recent times the development of a crowd, into a mob, into another form and another form as described by Smelzer has been seen in how foreigners mobilised against xenophobia. Based on Smelzer and Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl's work, the research will be grounded in group thinking and how groups acts, whether it be groups or communities in reality, or those created online, and in the social media space.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used the qualitative research method. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000), qualitative research is the research in which words and sentences are used to qualify and record information about the world in which we live. The method was chosen because it is best suited for studies that require deep exploration, collecting information on experiences, feelings and behaviours.

Indeed,this study used an interview guide (see Appendix I) to conduct in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on the experiences of the participants and their stories. The interview guide was meant to act as exactly that – a guide. The interviewer was able to probe additional questions where needed to expand on the case studies and responses by respondents. Dealing with a sensitive topic such as xenophobic violence, almost all of the respondents have had experience with it, including violent episodes. These included having been victims of violence and having witnessed family members, friends or peers being assaulted or killed.

Gemignani (2011) argues that: “When doing research on topics that are sensitive and involve core dimensions of the researcher’s identities and subjectivities, the process of inquiry is likely to generate significant emotions, attachments, and reactions that transgress traditional forms of data and research positions. If embraced and addressed, the researcher’s emotional reactions can be an important source of reflexivity and data as well as creativity, motivation, and engagement.” As Gemignani write, my personal reflections and insights in interviewing victims of xenophobia will add to the research.

Interviewing people who have experienced xenophobic violence, I gained insight and a sense of their experiences and trauma. After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the interviews to identify key themes that will not only align with the aims and objectives of my research, but will

be able to answer the key questions of this research. The empirical data collected together with an extensive review of existing theoretical and empirical research I am able to answer the key questions this research set out to investigate. The rest of the methodology section gives more insight into who the research population were, where the research was conducted, what the size of the sample was, which sampling techniques were used and what the process was to analyse the data.

3.1 Research location and population

Initially, the research population of this research was meant to be Somali community members based in Pretoria who attended the march mentioned in the introduction of the report. Upon further talks with Somali community members, people who attended the march and who didn't attend the march were identified. Social media were used to mobilize people on the day of the march, but the Somali community members also use social media for other purposes including responding to crime in the area and assisting each other with job opportunities. Initial plans included interviewing community leaders, or elders as identified by a Somali community contacts, but they declined being interviewed. The proposal suggested interviewing different migrant groups about their use of social media in Pretoria and elsewhere in Gauteng, but upon further discussion with my supervisor, we agreed to keep the research exclusively with the Somali community in Pretoria West.

I had made contact with and had numerous discussions with a Somali community leader. We had extensive discussions over the phone and via text message about the research and what I want to achieve with it and he agreed to facilitate interviews. However, in early January when interviews were meant to start, he was unreachable. I reached out to Amir Sheikh, the

chairperson of the Somali Community Board, who was out of the country at the time. He put me in contact with another member of the Somali Community Board who agreed to go to Pretoria with me to introduce me to possible participants. As time was running out for fieldwork, I finally secured someone willing to take me around. He was, unfortunately, only available for a few days. The proposal also said I would seek permission to be added to or have access to some of the WhatsApp and Facebook groups used by the Somali community to share information. The request was based on the idea that the information shared in the groups could be studied, the nature of the messages and their content and accuracy be analysed. That request was made to Ali Mohamed, one of the participants in the study who administered one of the WhatsApp groups used in Pretoria, but he declined the request. He explained that community members were suspicious of outsiders not only in the community, but also on social networks. Thus, only participants who live in Pretoria and who had been identified by the community members who agreed to assist were interviewed for this study.

3.2 Sample size

Mason (2010) argues that determining the sample size during research projects can be one of the most challenging aspects of research. He argues that 25 participants are often considered an “adequate” number., Due to time constraints and the unavailability of previously identitified potential participants, I was only able to conduct 19 face to face interviews., . The sample was mainly drawn from the Somali community in Pretoria West, where there is a big Somali community and the location of where the march took place in 2017. Other respondents were selected from Soshanguve, on the advice of one of the community members I met in Pretoria West. The reason he suggested Soshanguve was because there was a sizable number of Somalis living in Soshanguve, all with connections in Pretoria West. These connections varied

from family and friends, to business connections. All the respondents were males and either owned or worked in Spaza shops. There was a missed opportunity to access female respondents and challenge male-centric narratives. Accessing female respondents could have provided a different perspective on community life but also the variety and nature of responses to xenophobia.

3.3 Sampling techniques

Noy (2006) and Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin, and Saidel (2006) argue that the use of snowball sampling as a sampling technique have major benefits as a result of its ability to cover a broad range of a population.

> "Snowball sampling can achieve broad coverage of a population because respondents, including those who do not attend public venues, are reached through their social networks. However, as the respondents are not randomly selected, must be typically found by survey staff, and are dependent on the subjective choices of the first respondents, snowball samples are biased and do not provide the basis for valid generalizations to the populations from which the sample was drawn" (ibid).

Therefore, based on Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin, and Saidel's (2006) argument about the possibility to cover a range of participants and the fact that community leaders have already agreed to assist in the research process, this research project used of snowball sampling. Despite what Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin and Saidel (ibid) say about the limitations in using snowball sampling, the benefits of reaching a broad range of the population outweigh some of the negative aspects.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

Data collection was done through face to face interviews with respondents, with additional data gathered through existing literature. I conducted interviews with all the respondents in English, but my contact into the community assisted me if and when there were questions or misunderstandings. I recorded all the interviews and took notes during the interviews which lasted between 15 minutes and 60 minutes. The main method used to analyse the data gathered through the research process was discourse analysis. Babbie and Mouton (1998:495) argue that using discourse analysis as a method to conduct research allows the researcher to "move beyond the obvious". Babbie and Mouton quote other researchers as saying: "Discourse analysis can be defined as: The act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts" (ibid:495).

To expand on the use of discourse analysis during the research process, one can look at Hastings' (2014: 94) discussion around the use of narrative analysis. He states that:

> "A final, very useful approach to discourse analysis involves examining the stories told by research participants… Although narrative analysis has its roots in literary criticism and history… it is becoming increasingly popular in policy analysis and political science, particularly among researchers interested in how meaning is made between actors."

To achieve this, the narratives of each of the individuals was carefully studied, with codes and themes identified in each transcript. The main themes emerging from the data collected are discussed later in this report under research findings. .

3.5 Limitations

Some of the initial limitations which were identified beforehand included the issue of the respondents' time and that of the researcher. This became even more obvious during the fieldwork phase as contacts who had agreed to facilitate interviews indicated they couldn't stay away too long from their business. This same concern was highlighted by a number of respondents who either declined being interviewed because they were busy, or who agreed to be interviewed but said they only had a limited amount of time. As already indicated, the difficulties finding a reliable contact person in the community became a problem when the initial contact disappeared and failed to answer or respond to the researcher.

Another limitation that arose during the interview process and fieldwork was not only the sample size, but was where the participants were selected from. In reference to the February 2017 march, many respondents said they had friends and family members who came to the march in Pretoria West from townships in other areas of Pretoria West including Atterdigeville and even further east to include Mamelodi. This dynamic might have been useful to study to see how social media assisted to mobilise people from other parts of the greater Tshwane area.

Another limitation was that despite assurances from the researcher and the community facilitator, respondents were still very suspicious, skeptical and hesitant to take part in the study. These suspicions and hesitations might have an impact on the responses by participants.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Having used face to face interviews as the main data gathering technique, there was a risk that respondents might share traumatic stories and be retraumatised. Before interviews started, the researcher explained to respondents that they were able to pause or withdraw from the study at any point. Further, counseling services were made available through Wits University, although

none of the respondents indicated they wanted to make use of this, despite a number of respondents confirming they have had traumatic experiences. One respondent was willing to discuss his responses to xenophobic violence including physically fighting back and confirming that he has used a panga in the past. He took the researcher to his room to show the panga on the conditions that it was recorded or notes taken – the researcher scribbled down some notes after the interaction. Concerns about illegality were minimised as anonymity of respondents was guaranteed. Some respondents who were approached for this study, but never participated, requested compensation for their time. This was denied and the researcher explained to them why it was not possible.

The research adhered to the university' ethics protocol. Ethics clearance application was done concurrently with the research proposal. Research information sheet and consent forms were designed and submitted for ethics approval from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research (Non-Medical) Ethics Committee, which issued the ethics clearance certificate (Protocol number: …..). The ethics clearance certificate is in Appendix II.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Social media during xenophobia

The study finds that the role of social media in immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence ranges from playing an integral role in informing each other, being alerted to incidents of xenophobia, and mobilising and organizing to respond to xenophobia, to no role at all. A large part of the respondents in this study indicated that they often rely on more traditional forms of

communication such as telephone calls or relaying information to each other whenever they attend Mosque.

Despite the use of social media indicating more formal networks among Somalis and other migrant groups, the presence of informal networks where respondents would inform their friends or family members through telephone calls, or their peers in person at the mosque. This aspect will be discussed later on in this section. First, however, the role of social media in immigrants' responses will be discussed in this section, drawing from examples gathered during the interview process.

As already indicated, a large part of the respondents indicated they don't make use of social media, but those who do use social media rely heavily on its power and effectiveness to instantaneously inform each other. The Somalis living in Pretoria West, near the Marabastad Home Affairs offices are more prone to accessing social media and using it to inform each other. They have Somali specific WhatsApp groups to inform each other about xenophobic violence, but also use the groups for other purposes such as sharing information about getting access to the right paperwork or starting a business. Some of the respondents also belong to groups which include other nationalities.

As Polzer and Segatti (2011) indicate, following the 2008 wave of xenophobic violence, there was a rise in cross-national migrant organizations. One of the respondents said he belonged to a number of groups, including a group of various African migrants. He states: "Not just Somalis. I have the group for Africa diaspora, other foreigners, uuu, xenophobic attacks, violence, even now I am chatting to them"[1]. This respondent is one of a number of respondents who believe the

[1] Interview with Participant 17 (P17); a male Somali national. Pretoria West, ... January 2018

best way to inform each other about xenophobic attacks was by using social media. He further states:

"There is a group, we communicate with each other, we get the news, in case we get the informations from united nations, human right, any other information, we get from here… Whatsapp is the best way to communicate, it is the best way to communicate with all the people… Every person, you invite them. Almost 500 people, we invite them. You get the informations, you see"[2].

Another one of the respondents said he was part of a group of people who initiated WhatsApp groups when there was a flare up of xenophobic violence in 2017 in and around Pretoria. In his words:

"We use the WhatsApp. WhatsApp groups… Actually, it was xenophobia last year, it was bad and the people feared for Pretoria West. Even they attack here in Pretoria West, the community, the children, the women, all those. So we opened the WhatsApp groups and we actually give each other information about what's going to happen. What going tell. If there is anything that is going to happen, we tell the police. So actually that group, we work out for the WhatsApp, I mean the WhatsApp, we connect on the WhatsApp"[3].

While a number of respondents talked about the use and effectiveness of WhatsApp groups during incidents of xenophobic violence, others pointed to its usefulness in not only dealing with and responding to xenophobic violence, but to all other aspects of crime the community in Pretoria West face. One respondent said the community near Marabastad in Pretoria West

[2] Ibid
[3]

decided to create a WhatsApp group because they "encountered" a range of other problems. He states: "We are encountering problems every now and then. It is very dangerous where we are doing business, so we decided let's make a group, a WhatsApp group, so if somebody has a problem, he just puts the news there"[4] .

According to this respondent, they also created a WhatsApp group specifically for the flare up of xenophobia that the Pretoria West community witnessed in February 2017: "They arranged themselves at Home Affairs [in Marabastad, Pretoria West], then they come in here [Pretoria West]. During that time, we said let us open this group so that people can say everything"[5] . He further explained that the community dealt with a lot of issues around crime and that it proved quite helpful to them to use WhatsApp groups to inform a citizen patrol car in the area of incidents of crime. He continues:

"So [we] make those groups and then we got a car that goes around and the community will at least donate something every month. We don't have weapons, but at least we can say 'hey there is a group of people here'. There are those people working with the police forum, so we can call the police. So we have that platform so people can help each other"[6].

Despite the reliance on social media networks, especially WhatsApp to inform each other about xenophobic violence, other respondents still rely on more traditional forms of communications and informal networks. One respondent explained that if there was "high tension" happening in the community, it was often times better to inform each other at the mosque, even though he

[4]

[5] Ibid

[6] Ibid

made use of social media. He states: “If there is high tension, then we will announce at the mosque to inform your friends. But in the mosque, we only preach and pray, so it doesn’t tell you what to do with your neighbor”[7] . In a similar vein, another respondent explained: “Mostly we call each other. When the things happen, maybe you are in Soshanguve and I will phone you and tell you the things are happening, watch out” (P15[8], 2018).

In sum, this discussion shows that social media plays an important role in mobilizing Somali community members to respond to xenophobic violence and other matters of common concern or interests. With regard to xenophobic violence, social media provide an immediate and urgent response to mobilise support and communities. But interestingly, the findings also found that despite the immediacy of social media, the respondents still rely on traditional networks such as speaking to neighbours and spreading messages as communal spaces such as the local mosque.

4.2 Immigrant responses to xenophobic violence and lasting impact of these responses

The responses of immigrants to xenophobic violence tend to be reactionary and spontaneous. Through discussions with the respondents, the majority of them indicated that they respond to xenophobic violence as and when it happens. These responses range from locking up their shops if a crowd of potential looters arrive, to running away when the mob is too big. Some respondents indicated that they are willing to fight back with whatever tools they can get their hands on. As the following responses from respondents would indicate, it differs from person to person. Their motivations might be to protect themselves, their stock and business, or the community at large.

[7]

[8] P15 is a Somali male living in Pretoria West

One respondent for example states:

"You know, mostly, when these people come, they will not come five or six guy, they will come a lot. You with your friends, you can be like five or six guys 10 maybe, so how can you fight back? No ways. You call the cops, and some of the cops will say nooooo, if he is good man, he will be here until you take your stuff. But some of the cops, no, we will come back to you, they will just left you"[9] .

Another respondent said something similar:

"Sometimes yes. We fight back. What can you do? Smile like you? You can sleep? I can do. If it's one, two, three, I can. But if it's many people, I take my stock. But sometimes if it's two or three, I will fight until I die. It is yours, it is your shop, you can't let someone just take it"[10] .

As these two respondents indicate, some Somali shopkeepers would determine their response to a xenophobic attack or linked robbery/looting incident on the size of the crowd. The above cited respondent continues: "Nothing we can do. Sometimes maybe when we can to defend ourselves, we will try. But they are over 100, we just run out ourself"[11] .

On the day of the big anti-crime march in February 2017, a number of respondents attended that march for various reasons. Some of them felt "enough is enough" in terms of the number of times they, their friends and family members had been victims of xenophobic violence without

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[11] Ibid

recourse, while others felt it was crucial to defend themselves and the "centre" of Somali life in Pretoria West.

Some acted out of fear, while others made a decision to meet the South African protesters (both groups were armed) because there were women and children who lived in the community. One respondent states:

> "Because people were fearful, fearful. You see, people were trying to break through for that day. Two days before that, there was looting. So people move. Inaudible. So the people, full of the people. Enough is enough, there is nowhere to move, nowhere to move, because this is the people who stay here, children, women, the softer, there is no way, if the attacks happen, we trying to defend them".[12]

This response was echoed by a number of other respondents who said they decided to meet the South Africans face to face that day for a number of reasons. Indeed, another respondent said it was important to show resistance, because if they allowed the South Africans to attack them where they felt strongest, they would remain vulnerable to future attacks. He explained why he was at the front to meet the South African mob. He said it was not just about defending himself and his community, but showing resistance:

"I was at the front. I decided we have to defends my community, myself, my wealth, my economic, all those. Here we have cash and carry, it is not mine, but it belongs to Somali peoples. It is our community. Here is the centre of our backbone of our community. You see those people, hundreds, two thousand people, they came to attacked us. And us, we are almost five hundred, so yes, we must prevent ourselves... We say no, we don't

[12]

allow somebody to enter our territory, you see? Even the police between us. We say police, even you can go, us we don't leave here, ja. You know, we have the small children here, we have the babies here, so if you run here, where are you going to run? Can we run to the location? It's impossible. So we say here, we prevent, we block, this side is a group of people. We have Somali, Bangladesh, DRC people, everything, they blocked. Some people, they even run away from Sunnyside, let us go to Pretoria West. Ja, we say, uuuu, this one, if you run away today, then tomorrow they will come here to burn our houses. Because one we are more, let us prevent ourself. The best way, no we can't run for those people. This is not the locations"[13] .

So based on this extended quote, it wasn't just about defending themselves and their community, but it was about making a point, sending a statement to the South African community that "enough is enough". Almost every one of the respondents related a story about being a victim of xenophobic violence. Whether it was personal, a friend or a family member, each respondent had seen something terrible happen because of prejudice and discrimination. So for the South Africans to come and attack the Somali community where they felt safest and strongest, the Somalis decided they had to fight back. Another respondent explained, with similar motivations as the respondent quoted earlier:

"I was here that day. What happened was, here is the centre of Somalis, it is the core, the heart. We don't have anywhere to go. Our kids are here, everything are here. Here is families, so if someone comes here, inside our kids, we don't do that. Let us come out, the kids and women must stay in door. Let us know and see what is happening and then they

13

come here. We blocked them. What we did is we blocked the whole place. This is the heart. You know, Somalis have that other mentality, when there is a problem, the men don't stay inside. They put the wives and kids behind, the men come in front. So we said, these people, we ran away from them in the locations, now they come here, we stay. This time here, no. The locations, they have the advantage. Here, we are more"[14] (P19, 2018).

Another common reason around pitching up that day and meeting the South African protesters face to face was to protect the community and the most vulnerable in the community as one respondent indicates

"Absolutely I was here. Why did I decide to go? Because when it was happening in the location, it wasn't about xenophobia, it was violence about political issue. So there was some who also come out in that movement and said you have to attack. There are children and women here, so when a man left his children and women behind and he comes to another child and is telling you he is not going to do anything to that child and he is already facing him to do that, no father can leave his child behind. I come from that, we also taught that it must not happen. I don't know what they were doing, these people they came to the defence of the women and children here. This man comes this side and he wants to hit and harm your child, we have to defend".[15] .

The question of weapons has come up a lot in recent years. As quoted in the literature review, there have been concerns about foreigners arming themselves with firearms to protect

14

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themselves during robberies and xenophobic attacks. A number of respondents denied any knowledge of firearms being acquired or used by Somalis, but they have admitted to using whatever weapon they can get their hands on. This ranged from sticks and stones, to knives and machetes (known colloquially as a panga). One participant explained the balancing act of when to fight and when to run: “Mostly the community, some of the community, they start, a few guys, you start fighting with them whatever you can, maybe a panga, maybe plastic bottles. But maybe when the things is over hundred, you just run”[16]. Another respondent admitted to Somalis using knives and stones and even considered using cars as a weapon during the march in February 2017. He states

“The weapons we had that day, they were the stone and knife. That’s the weapon we have, stone and knife, we took to prevent ourself. Some of people took the car, the other weapon we have was the car. The people cross that side [gestures] other people take the car, blocked here and somebody will go in the car, a Somali guy. We say if they come here, I’ll cross them, because maybe I can finish three or four of them.”[17].

One respondent, who told the story on condition that no recordings were made or notes taken during the interview, admitted to not only owning a panga, but having used it before. He took me to his room, where he pulled out the panga from under his bed and showed it to me. He said he has used it before, making a joke about having hit someone over the head with it before. This respondent also said he will fight back against any group of people who attack his shop because he was fighting for his life.

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Despite attitudes of having “enough” of being victims and fighting back, some respondents said it all depends on the situation. Sometimes it’s not possible to fight back. One participant also said his decision to fight, phone or inform his network, or run would be based on the number of people who arrived at his shop and the circumstances. He states: “Ja. Maybe sometimes you run with your shoes, sometimes you don’t have time to take your phone. Ja, I phone. If I have time, I phone, I phone.”[18] .

As this respondent said, the responses depend on the situation. The resistance the Somali community showed to the South African protesters in February 2017 was the result of years of being the victims. But the most common response to xenophobic violence is still to just run. This is also borne out of years of experiences with the police and other South African institutions such as home affairs where the Somali community has lost trust in the institutions meant to protect them. One respondent states: “Only Somali. When we see trouble, most of them we call Somalian, we don’t call police. Because if we call, they won’t come to us, no, they won’t come to us. Also, I tried myself. I tried many times and they don’t come.”[19] . He further explains:

“They come more, like 10 guys, 15 guys or 20 guys, whey they come, that xenophobia, these people are more, they want come you, attack the shop. They think you have something or you are ready to fight, you understand. So, they won’t come to you if you are finished, if they come to you and you alone, two or three, they take your stock. If you see something is happening next door, you call my brothers, my friends, people I know, next my shop, so before they rob me come and help me. Take my stock, so maybe four

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bakkies, three bakkies, come quickly and then they take the stock quickly. That bakkie come with three guys. So 30 minutes, we take stock. We put stock, actually after three days xenophobia finished or one week, then they bring back the stock" (ibid.).

4.3 Information and misinformation

All the respondents who make use of social media groups to respond to xenophobic violence and for any other purposes stated that they believe any and all the information shared on them. They admitted that sometimes there might be incidents where false information was shared, but mostly they trust the information being shared. The respondents had various reasons for trusting everything being shared on social media, from religious beliefs to believing Somalis had no interest or reason to lie to each other. One of the common themes among respondents were that they believed the information shared on their groups to be true because false information could be harmful to themselves and the community.

All the respondents admit that fake news and fake information was a problem. One of them for example states: "There is sometimes fake information. Actually, there is the lot of fake information in the WhatsApp. Remember, the situation, it was bad, so there is people who give you the fake information" (P16, 2018). Another respondent echoed similar sentiments:

"On that group, we don't allow. That was the main principle, we said don't give us the wrong information. It happened once, and then they gave us the wrong information. We called the police and then it wasn't there. So there is elders, you know Somalis, if we have problems in between us, there are elders and they solve the problems. What we do is we listen to the elders. So when that false information was spread, they followed up and

asked who said this. They caught him and punished him because they know that it is very serious to just put false information there. That is the way they work."[20].

Others similarly agreed on the problem of "fake news" in WhatsApp groups. One respondents states: "Obviously fake news is more, there is more fake news. We hear, unfortunately, after two days or three days we will know this information, it was wrong. All same same, after a few hours, we will hear that information was wrong"[21] . He went on to explain that sometimes people provided information that wasn't clear, and it might cause confusion among the community. However, in other instances, when someone sent a message warning about an incident in a particular part of Pretoria, he said they could send a car there to go check on the credibility and believability of the information. He continues:

"They will share the information and then someone who is there will say no it is incorrect. If then,

> I send some information from here in Pretoria West, I say today, violence between the police and the Somalis, they have violence which is wrong information, ne, then maybe the people have friends here they phone it and say no that information is wrong. Then somebody will say no, let me find out, and a few hours later we will know if it is true or not right."[22]

One respondent, who also said he relied more on phone calls for information than on social media, said he does believe each and every message coming from his friends or peers within

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and around the community. This blind belief was based on his trust of other Somali people and his strong sense of belief in Islam. In his words:

"Ja, when it is Somali man tell me, I believe him. Most of the Somali, they don't tell lie each and other. When someone I see this thing, it is already happening, so they are not lying… Even us, our religion, it doesn't allow to tell someone lie. If someone is telling lie, he is making sin to you. Our belief, islam, it doesn't allow someone to tell lie. So that is why we trust each other. Some other guy, he tell lie, he know, it is not good. So that is why"[23]

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23

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As the findings section above illustrated, Somali immigrants use social media for a variety of reasons including to respond to xenophobic violence and attacks. These responses range from organising and assisting in the flight from danger, to countering, fighting back, and mobilising to face the impen`ding danger. The use of social media to respond to xenophobic violence, the nature of these responses and the lasting effects and impacts of these responses are in line with Smelser (1962) and Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl's (2005) theoretical framework for collective behaviour. These authors look at the actions taken in pursuit of some "collective good" or actions taken by a group of people framed around some understanding of a "public good". This is most evident in the responses by the Somali community on the march and counter-march in Pretoria West in February 2017 where the main motivation to respond and meet the South African protesters done on the grounds of protecting the community, the vulnerable – women and children – and individual and community businesses.

Further, the role of social media and thus the implication of "fake news", misinformation and communicating in an echo chamber will be discussed using Shu, Silva, Wang, Tang, and Liu's (2017) work around echo chambers, Oh, Kwon and Rao's (2010) work around rumour theory, and Morrison (2016) work around the use of WhatsApp to respond to emergency situations.

Smelser's (1962) theory of collective behaviour argues that there are four basic elementary groups: the acting crowd, the expressive crowd, en mass, and the public. He defines these as:

> "The first two differ in that the acting crowd (a mob, for instance) has a goal or objective, whereas the expressive crowd (the dancing crowd of a religious sect, for instance) expends its impulses and feelings in 'mere expressive actions'. The mass differs from

> both in that it is more heterogeneous, more anonymous, less organized, and less intimately engaged in interaction; mass behavior is, in fact, a convergence of a large number of individual selections made on the basis of 'vague impulses and feelings'. The public, finally, is a group of people who focus on some issue, disagree as to how to meet the issue, engage in discussion, and move toward a decision" (ibid.:7).

Smelser argues that the public differs from the crowd in that disagreement and rational consideration occupy a prominent place in the development of a public. Based on Smelser's argument about the formation of a group of people and the definitions of collective behaviour, one can argue that both the mobs that attack and loot foreign owned shops, the mobs seen during times of xenophobic violence, as well as the formation to respond to xenophobic violence as witnessed by the Somali community during the February 2017 march, they fit Smelser's definition of an "acting crowd" as well as "the mass".

For the purpose of this research, looking at the responses of foreigners to xenophobic violence, one can argue that despite forming an "acting crowd" or a "mass", the group engages in a "value-oriented movement" (Smelser, 1962:354). Smelser defines this as being

> "engaged in a cause and locked in combat against forces which must be overcome. One of the most important kinds of precipitating factors – which is often heightened enthusiasm and participation in the movement – is any event which gives evidence of a sudden change in the movement's fortunes. Whether this change in fortune is 'good' or 'bad' for the movement seems to matter less than the fact that the event introduces a new bit of evidence for the adherents and thus excites new activities" (ibid.).

This “value-oriented movement” that engages in a “cause” can be seen in the responses by some of the respondents. Responses such as the one by P19 indicate that acting as a collective, with the motivations being to protect the community and the vulnerable, they are willing to engage in something that might be considered “good” or “bad”:

Respondents indicated they were willing to take up arms and defend themselves, their community, business, and the most vulnerable in the community. The “collective behaviour” of the group to not only change their lot – no longer being passive victims as previous research suggested – but to actively act against the perceived threats identifies further characteristics that Smelser (1962) identified in collective behavior when he states:

> “As the definition indicates, collective behaviour is guided by various kinds of beliefs – assessments of the situation, wishes, and expectations. These beliefs differ, however, from those which guide many other types of behaviour. They involve a belief in the existence of extraordinary forces – threats, conspiracies, etc. – which are at work in the universe” (ibid.:8).

From the research and evidence provided in the findings section, Somalis and migrants in general are not passive victims of the violence. Not only are Somali immigrants not passive victims, but they are active role players in the dynamic when it comes to xenophobic violence. Their actions and responses differ depending on their own circumstances and the specific situation, but their responses range from flight to fight. The fight or flight are determined by a variety of reason including the size of the mob they are facing and the size of their own group.

So despite the evidence that Somali immigrants are not passive victims and despite the evidence that they in fact have a variety of responses to xenophobic violence, the evidence

leaves a further gap to be studied. An important part of the discussion around responding to xenophobic violence and the nature of mobilising and organising when it comes to such incidents is to note that the Somali community rely on both new forms of communication such social media to inform each other and mobilise and more traditional forms such as telephone calls. More surprisingly, a number of respondents relied on more informal and traditional networks such as informing each as at the mosque.

In almost every instance, respondents indicated that mobilising and organising against xenophobic violence is almost as spontaneous as the violent spurts of xenophobic violence are themselves. Thus, because of the spontaneity involved with xenophobic violence and the responses, they tend not to have any lasting and permanent impact on themselves or their communities.

A number of respondents not only indicated that they shared social media groups with other foreign nationals, but that they actively engaged with them during times of xenophobic violence. Further, if it comes to "collective behaviour" as identified by Smelser, and acting with a goal of a collective good in mind, foreigners might mobilise together sharing the same common goal. Thus, further research can look at the relationship between different foreign nationalities and how they respond together based on a common goal or collective good.

The second strand of this discussion section looks at the role of social media in immigrants' responses to xenophobic violence and the role of fake news or misinformation in using social media. Before I do however, it is worth noting the role and impact of traditional forms of communication and more informal networks as suggested earlier. A number of respondents indicated that when a xenophobic attack takes place, there is often not time to go on a

WhatsApp group or Facebook to inform other people. In such cases phone calls are used., So it depends on an individual's reading of the situation whether or not there is time to inform his friends, family and peers in the community.

Despite a number of respondents dismissing the idea that they use social media to respond to xenophobic violence, a number of respondents indicated they do use it actively and it plays a significant role in their responses to xenophobic violence. To discuss the role of social media in immigrants responses to xenophobic violence, it is worth framing the discussion around Morrison (2016) work around the use of WhatsApp to respond to emergency situations; Shu, Silva, Wang, Tang, and Liu's (2017) work around echo chambers in social media interactions, and Oh, Kwon and Rao's (2010) work around rumour theory.

Morrison (2016:2) argues that:

> "In many societies affected by violent conflict, the authorities and armed forces frequently only respond after the violence has surpassed critical levels. Early warning aims to reduce the destructive effects of violence and increase opportunities for conflicting parties to engage constructively. Local community members can play a vital role, as they often have a grounded understanding of conflict dynamics and can mobilise their strong networks and relationships. But they also regularly suffer from marginalisation, have weak access to political decision-makers and security forces, lack the capacity to respond effectively, or have little knowledge of technical tools and methods."

Although Morrison's work looks at how effective communities can inform those institutions which are meant to protect them, his work can be applied to how communities can identify threats in the form of xenophobic violence and how they respond to it. Morrison (2016) argues that

communities, and in the case of this study immigrant communities, are in a position to see the signs of danger before they happen. Some of the respondents also talked about this as one states:

"The information, what they do is there is a group of people here in Pretoria. Say we get a call from someone in Atterdigeville and say they got pamphlets, there will be looting. They phone different shops, four, five people, did you receive that information. If those people don't agree, there is a car that goes there and survey how the situation is."[24].

Another respondent said they were often informed about potential looting or xenophobic violence by community members: "Actually, us we are living with the community. Whenever I see something or someone from the community they tell us things which is maybe, you know, some of the community they see five or 10 people, or they tell you on that day they must make group to start violence" (P15, 2018). Thus, Somali immigrants have strong enough networks to be able to predict potential attacks and respond on time. Even if they are not able to do that, some of them talked about the strength and potential of using social media, specifically WhatsApp, to inform each other and respond to xenophobic violence.

Somali respondents indicated that they trusted all the information they received from their peers, friends and families on these groups for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons include the belief that fellow Somalis won't lie to each other because they share the same faith or religion, while other respondents said it wasn't allowed to share false information or fake news. They have set up rules and regulation for using the groups, such as posting links to

[24]

stories. Other respondents indicated that the “elders” of the community stipulated they couldn’t share false information.

All of these responses tie in with Shu, Silva, Wang, Tang, and Liu’s (2017) work around echo chambers on social networks. The authors argue that people tend to surround themselves with people who share a number of similarities including views and opinions. What this does is create a situation where the same views and opinions are constantly circulated. In the context of this study, Shu, Silva, Wang, Tang, and Liu’s (2017) work shows that because the migrants come from the same country and share the same beliefs, they are of the view that all the information shared on their social networks are true. Regardless of the usefulness of social media, Oh, Kwon and Rao’s (2010) argue that based on rumour theory, users of social media will encounter rumours, fake news and misinformation. The respondents acknowledge the existence of this, but say it only happens in a small number of cases.

While the study provides useful insights into the the role of social media in Somali immigrants response to xenophobic violence, it also reveals that many more questions remain and could inform future research. Because of the difficulties of gaining access to respondents, one of the research key goals of gaining access to social media groups was not achieved. Gaining access and studying the various messages and their impact on the group will make for an interesting future study as would the dynamic between social media users and those who rely on more traditional forms of communication might. Some of the respondents who talked about using WhatsApp groups to communicate with each other, warn about and respond to xenophobic attacks also mentioned the use of integrated social media groups with members from other nationalities. It will make for an interesting study to see that dynamic at play and see

if there are any differences in the type of information that is shared between different nationalities.

6 .CONCLUSION

This research set out to explain the role of social media in immigrants' response to xenophobic violence. It clearly illustrates that immigrants – in this instance Somali nationals – are passive victims , but rather active role players in the situation, with their own agency and ability to make their own decisions and act on them. Despite a number of people relying on traditional forms of communication, the influence of social media cannot be denied as it impacts both groups of people on both sides of the line when it comes to xenophobic violence. Social media, with all its flaws and ability to cause confusion, sow division and spread false and misinformation, still play a significant role in immigrants' response to xenophobic violence. It helps to call groups together and mobilise people Because of its reactionary nature, these responses tend to be temporary solutions to the problem. After packing up stock and fleeing, or coming face-to-face with a mob, things will return to normal for those who are victims of xenophobic violence. However, saying that, a more in-depth study with more access to the social media groups and a more diverse sample might provide different conclusions.

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Appendix I: Research guide

1) Can you describe your experience with xenophobia?

2) have you or a family member or someone you know ever been a victim of xenophobic violence? If so, can you tell me more about the experience?

3) Do you belong to any migrant community or neighbourhood groups? If so, can you tell me which ones?

4) Do they or have they assisted in spreading information during times of xenophobic violence?

5) What sort of information is shared?

6) How is it shared?

7) Do you belong to any social media groups such as a migrant community WhatsApp or Facebook group?

8) Can you describe how helpful the information shared on these groups have been?

9) Do you receive information about xenophobic attacks via these groups?

10) How do you know if the information shared on these groups are true, or not? Do you just trust them at face value?

11) Are there, or do you have any ways of verifying information received on these groups?

12) When, if at any point, was a decision made to mobilise and protect yourselves against the marchers? Did you take part? How was it organized, by whom?

13) How has your experience with the police, government and other official structures influenced your decision making, if at all?

14) In your experience, what are ways of mobilising are there besides using social media to spread messages and call for mobilisation?

15) What form of mobilising works best in your opinion? Why?

Appendix II: Ethics clearance certificate