"I'M USED TO BAD THINGS HAPPENING TO ME": THE VICTIMISATION OF LOW-INCOME EARNING FOREIGN NATIONALS LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: South Africa hosts millions of foreign nationals who are often blamed for the country's high crime rate, despite their victimisation being under-reported. Foreign nationals often settle for low-income jobs regardless of their qualifications or work experience. Consequently, these minority groups are vulnerable to victimisation due to their environment and circumstances. Thus, this study reflects on the victimisation of low-income earning foreign nationals living in Gauteng, South Africa. Through qualitative interviews, fifteen foreign nationals shared their experiences concerning their victimisation. Data were analysed thematically and interpreted through a radical victimological lens. The findings suggest that the participants' origin stories set the context for their willingness to endure victimisation in South Africa. Moreover, some participants experienced xenophobia and crime victimisation such as robbery, sexual assault, and witnessing a xenophobic-motivated murder.

Keywords: *victimisation, foreign nationals, xenophobia, migration, low-income, radical victimology*

Introduction

South Africa is encountering a steady incline of documented and undocumented foreign nationals[1] entering and residing in the country. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) is the country's most reliable data source on international migrant flows. Three official censuses (1996, 2001 and 2011) have been conducted while the 2022 census' findings are underway (StatsSA

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1   The present article chooses to use the term "foreign national" as opposed to "immigrant" because most participants do not seek to live permanently in South Africa.

2021). Currently, it is estimated that more than 2.2 million foreign nationals live in South Africa, and at least 53 African nations are represented among them (Molatlhwa 2012; StatsSA 2021).

Newburn (2017: 366) denotes a victim as any person who has "individually or collectively, suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights". Moreover, a person is still deemed a victim despite the perpetrator being identified, arrested, or convicted. Foreign nationals living in South Africa face victimisation. There is an array of reasons postulated to explain the victimisation of foreign nationals. These include competition for employment, housing, and other services with South African citizens (Crush and McCordic 2017; Crush et al. 2017a; Crush et al. 2017b; Gordon 2020; Ideh 2022; Kerr et al. 2019). Furthermore, there is a sense of cultural discrimination emanating from the complexities of dealing with the oppositional 'other' (Dodson 2010). Foreign nationals are often blamed for South Africa's high crime rate (Crush and Williams 2018; Gordon 2020; Moagi et al. 2018), despite their victimisation being under-reported (Crush and Williams 2018).

Foreign nationals living in host countries often succumb to any employment opportunities they can find. Subsequently, these tend to be low-income and informal employment despite education or work experience. These minority communities are more vulnerable to victimisation due to their environment and circumstances (Breetzke and Edelstein 2019; Crush and Williams 2018). Although the victimisation of foreign nationals is widely publicised, it is often documented as secondary data (Kerr et al 2019; Gordon 2016; Pineteh 2017) leaving a dearth of documented narrative experiences. The present article explores the victimisation of low-income earning foreign nationals living in Gauteng, South Africa. Moreover, the plight of low-income earning foreign nationals' voices is accentuated through the narrative accounts of the participants.

The article is organised as follows: the historical underpinning of foreign migration in South Africa and the methodological framework provides a contextual milieu to the findings and discussion. The article is informed by rich descriptive narratives aimed to heighten the issue of participants' victimisation. Moreover, these narratives give a marginalised community living in South Africa a voice. Thereafter, the article concludes with a discussion of the participants' prospects.

Historical Underpinning of Foreign Migration in South Africa

South Africa has a history of colonisation, segregation, and apartheid. Colonialism dispossesses indigenous inhabitants of their agency and enforces various legal structures to subsequently and systematically disadvantage them (Oliver and Oliver 2017). The Dutch Republic, later the Netherlands (1652–1795 and 1803–1806) and Great Britain (1795–1803 and 1806–1961) colonised South Africa before becoming a Union in 1910 under a White government. However, South Africa was still viewed as Great Britain's colony until 1961 when it became a republic commencing more than thirty years of white Afrikaner supremacy over people of colour (Heldring and Robinson 2012). During this era, South Africa encouraged immigration from predominantly white and European countries. However, migration from other African countries was heavily restricted and closely monitored (Vigneswaran 2020).

The colonisation of South Africa detached local people from their history, ancestral heritage, environment, languages, and ways of living. Moreover, these communities were perceived through a philosophy of "othering" thus breeding a mindset of normalising people different from themselves as "less-than" (Shokane and Masoga 2021). Thus, colonisation surpassed colonising land but enabled the colonisation of the mind. The colonisation of the mind entails the subtle and persistent influence and control over the inherent cultural, religious, political and economic values of previously colonised people by their colonisers (Biko 2004; Kgatla 2020). This manifestation of control impairs the need for the desired change to occur. Thiong'o (1986) perceives the colonised mind as the corrosion of human-centric qualities such as self-confidence, self-belief, courage, and integrity. In essence, if not adequately recognised, the colonised mind fails to embrace its holistic heritage and address its subsequent social injustices. Thus, the effects of colonisation embedded a hostile culture of normalising foreign nationals as inferior.

Through the duration of intense and often violent anti-apartheid struggle initiated by various disadvantaged communities throughout South Africa, the country's first democratic election was realised in 1994 (Gordon 2020). Consequently, this contributed to a culture of violence rooted in some South Africans as several unconventional forms of community policing continue to persist when confronted with social, political, and economic distress (Gordon 2020; Lancaster 2015; Maboa 2022). The newly democratic government of South Africa de-racialised and heightened leniency in its immigration policy, thus drastically increasing migration to South Africa (Field 2017; Vigneswaran 2020).

Methodological Framework

The goal of the study is to explore the victimisation of low-income earning foreign nationals living in Gauteng, a province of South Africa having Johannesburg as its capital. This victimisation is categorised into xenophobia and crime victimisation. A qualitative approach to research was used as rich, in-depth, and descriptive narratives based on the research participants' experiences were sought out. These narratives are informed by the research participants' lives as well as their attitudes, motives, and behaviour in order to develop a holistic understanding of their lived experiences (Fouché 2021; Kumar 2019; Leedy and Ormrod 2019).

Phenomenology is invested in the meanings of the lived experiences (thoughts, perceptions, emotions, awareness, and memory) as understood by the participants. This reality is reliant on the research participants because it dissects the phenomenon as observed through their experiences (Zahavi 2019). A descriptive phenomenological methodology was used in this study to describe the ethos of the participants' experiences (Schurink et al. 2021). A non-probability method and purposive sampling technique were applied to obtain research participants. The population size of foreign nationals living in South Africa is unknown (StatsSA 2021). Moreover, the participants were purposively targeted based on their experiences as low-income earning foreign nationals living in South Africa.

The study used semi-structured interviews in order to collect data as relevant literature informed the open-ended questions that were prepared before commencing the interview process. This allowed for rich and detailed descriptions from a small number of participants (Geyer 2021). One-on-one interviews with fifteen participants were scheduled based on their willingness and availability to take part in the study. The interviews were conducted in English and took between 20 and 90 minutes to complete. All the interviews took place at the participants' various workplaces. In some cases, this proved to be challenging as their workplaces were noisy and disruptive. However, to minimise any inaccuracies, the author transcribed the interviews on the same day they took place. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, by the author, with the permission of the participants.

The sample consisted of fifteen adult foreign nationals living in South Africa. Six females and nine males were interviewed with ages ranging from 22–49 years old. They have been living in South Africa between 7 months and 11 years. The countries of origin represented in the sample are Zimbabwe, the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Ghana. Most of the participants (n = 8) are married and/or have children (n = 11). All participants reported having some level of education inclusive of secondary and tertiary education. None of the participants (n = 8) who reported that they had completed a tertiary degree are working in their respective disciplines. Most participants (14) admitted to working in the country illegally. All the participants (n = 15) work jobs that generate low incomes or minimum wage in South Africa (Department of Employment and Labour 2022).

Table 1: Participants

Pseudonym	Country of origin	Gender	Age	Marital status	Children	Education level	Occupation
Florence	Zimbabwe	Female	26	Unmarried	1	Secondary Education	Domestic worker
Mutsa	Zimbabwe	Female	46	Unmarried	2	Secondary Education	Domestic worker
Joseph	Democratic Republic of Congo	Male	48	Married	0	Tertiary degree in Psychology	Car guard
Claude	Democratic Republic of Congo	Male	26	Married	0	Tertiary degree in Education	Car guard
Chipo	Zimbabwe	Male	49	Married	2	Tertiary degree in Agriculture	Waiter
Tawanda	Zimbabwe	Male	44	Married	2	Tertiary degree in Engineering	Security officer
Nyasha	Zimbabwe	Female	38	Unmarried	2	Certificate in Beauty	Beauty therapist
Bienvenu	Democratic Republic of Congo	Male	28	Unmarried	0	Tertiary degree in Medicine	Beauty therapist
Kojo	Ghana	Male	27	Married	1	Secondary Education	Nail technician
Eric	Democratic Republic of Congo	Male	38	Married	1	Tertiary degree in Electrical Engineering	Car guard
Ababio	Ghana	Male	22	Unmarried	0	Tertiary degree in Computer Science	Nail technician

Kwesi	Ghana	Male	35	Married	3	Tertiary degree in Education	Nail technician
Beauty	Zimbabwe	Female	40	Unmarried	1	Secondary Education	Domestic worker
Tendai	Zimbabwe	Female	32	Married	4	Secondary Education	Domestic worker
Farisai	Zimbabwe	Female	30	Unmarried	2	Secondary Education	Domestic worker

The raw data were analysed through thematic analysis delineated by Braun and Clarke (2006). Data was familiarised by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. Preliminary codes were identified and recorded. Themes and sub-themes within the data were extracted and then reviewed. Thereafter, the themes were labelled, and the findings were written in the form of a research article (Maguire and Delahunt 2017). The study received ethical approval from the University of South Africa (UNISA). Ethical principles such as informed consent, voluntary participation, avoidance of harm, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and social and cultural sensitivity were adhered to (Strydom and Roestenburg 2021). The participants voluntarily consented to their involvement in the study and were ensured confidentiality using pseudonyms. Despite the participants' economic status, no incentives were provided for participation in the study to encourage the validity and reliability of the data. However, participants believed that sharing their experiences benefited them as an outlet for their challenges and victimisation. Credibility and authenticity were augmented by documenting the participants' lived experiences truthfully. Dependability was cultivated by structuring the research in a logical, peer-reviewed manner. Furthermore, conformability and transferability were enhanced by contextualising the empirical data to relevant literature (Schurink et al. 2021).

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion of this paper are categorised into the participants' life trajectories: origin stories and their victimisation experiences (xenophobia and crime victimisation) and conclude with their prospects.

Origin story

Participants cited various reasons for migrating to South Africa. All the reasons were rooted in the perceived better opportunities South Africa

appeared to have. Their origin stories provide insight and context into their willingness to endure ill-treatment and victimisation in South Africa and thus set the backdrop for the discussion that follows.

As widely publicised, Zimbabwean participants shared that political turmoil, unemployment, poverty, and poor to no service delivery remained rife in their country (Clayton and Manyena 2020; Mudau and Mangani 2018). This was encapsulated through Mutsa's response:

> Even if you find a job in our country there is no money to pay you. Sometimes your work will give you a payslip with your salary. Sometimes they say they are going to give you a quarter of your pay. After school, I was a temporary teacher. I left teaching because there wasn't any money in the bank. When I went to collect my money, the bank was closed. Thereafter, I started working as a security guard. The clients pay the company. The company didn't want to pay us. I would be struggling without food, but they would want me to come back to work. I ended up cheating at that job. I would run away to do other jobs to find the money. When the problem of food was at a critical stage in Zimbabwe, we would queue just to buy maize meal. These queues were very long. I was a security guard and was supposed to be guarding but sometimes I would run away from the job to join the queue. I saw people who left [Zimbabwe] to go to South Africa working as domestics or gardeners and making a better living than me who worked as a security guard – a job which I thought was nice. (Mutsa, 46-year-old, Zimbabwean female)

Post-independence, in 1980, Robert Mugabe maintained monolithic political power for 37 years in Zimbabwe. He did this through his liberation credentials that contributed to bringing about independence, strict control over his government, and the radical promotion of ethnic, tribal, and racial division. Consequently, the country suffered extreme poverty, unemployment and socioeconomic distress leading to the mass diaspora of Zimbabwean nationals (Clayton and Manyena 2020; Tendi 2019). In 2017, due to increasing pressure from political opposition and Zimbabwean citizens, Mugabe resigned as president. Moreover, political violence continues to prevail among Zimbabwean opposition parties (Moyo 2020). Literature reveals that Zimbabwe, and its people across the globe, hold on to hope for colossal and

tangible change, however, to date, little transformation has transpired (Clayton and Manyena 2020; Rapanyane et al. 2020). Zimbabwean migration to South Africa is recorded as the largest migrant flow in South African history. Geographically, Zimbabwe and South Africa are closely situated and share the Beitbridge border (Polzer 2008). Zimbabwean migrants are described as "mixed migrants" due to economic and humanitarian reasons for migration (De Jager and Musuva 2016).

Ghanaian participants shared similar sentiments to the Zimbabweans as summed up below by Ababio:

> Since I completed my degree, I couldn't find work. I had the mindset that when you go outside of your country you can be successful quickly. In my country, I can't do domestic work or work in a salon but moving to another country, I can do any work. (Ababio, 22-year-old, Ghanaian male)

Poverty and unemployment are cited as the principal reasons why people migrate from Ghana. Due to its geographical location, Ghanaians tend to migrate to countries in Europe or economically stable African countries such as South Africa. Since 2015, migration from Ghana has surged because of the instability in crude oil production and exportation and of crushing debt incurred by the government. Furthermore, as highlighted by Ababio, the misalignment between the education system and employment opportunities contributes to migration becoming a viable option (Dovi 2017).

Congolese participants referred to the severe conflict taking place in their country and maintained that fleeing to South Africa was a life-or-death situation. Eric and Claude express their personal experiences below:

> I left my country because it was very dangerous. In Congo, they were killing people. The government was killing us. No one can talk against the government because they will kill you. You must just keep quiet. There was no freedom. If you talk against the president, they pick you up and take you away. They can kill you. It was very unsafe. That's why I ran away. There's no food. There's no work. You can't complain. Just keep quiet. I chose South Africa because it's better than other countries. I passed through Zimbabwe and Zambia because those countries have similar problems as mine. (Eric, 38-year-old, Congolese male)

In my country, there are many troubles. There's just fighting, fighting, and fighting. When I was still young, the rebels (Mi Mi) used to try to catch us to join them. There are a lot of rebels in Goma – M23s and Mi Mis. This is because my country has many riches like diamonds. These rebels want to eat the riches and we must suffer. It wasn't safe for me. I am too young to do that, so I thought let me run away to South Africa. I chose South Africa because life is better [there] than in other countries. I saw other people who left for South Africa, and they reported that it is nice here. There are no problems here besides xenophobia. (Claude, 26-year-old, Congolese male)

The DRC is known as Africa's greatest paradox because it is a country that is rich in natural resources but critically unstable and poor (World Vision 2022). Violence is rife as armed groups and intercommunal conflict are present throughout the country (Koepp 2022). The situation is a ramification of the intense political tension that dates to the 1800s. Post-independence from Belgium, the DRC has endured human rights violations, several coups, and rebellions. Moreover, a totalitarian government contributed to war (1996–1997) and civil war (1997–2003). The political, financial, and administrative instability, characterised by the inhumane cruelty of armed groups, deprivation, the plundering of natural resources, and sexual violence (Koepp 2022), contributed to migration being a desperate option for Congolese nationals.

Survival refugees are people who migrate because of the severe threat to their or their family's survival in their country of origin. These threats could be political, economic, social, environmental, or accumulative. These migrants often endure treacherous journeys in search of a new life and are likely to be abused and exploited (Betts 2013; Field 2017). This is highlighted by Farisai's experience:

> I came through the bush … with those guys who know the bushes. We were about 20 to 30 people. Some guys must take us because the bush is dangerous. They go with us to protect us so that we can be safe. They also know the way. The journey depends. Sometimes it takes longer because there are soldiers in the bush. (Farisai, 30-year-old Zimbabwean female)

Once the participants arrived in South Africa, they encountered challenges in their living conditions. Nyasha shared that, when arriving in South Africa, she rented a space in a big room and used her bag as a pillow. It was

extremely crowded because they accommodated as many people as possible. Beauty added that when she arrived in South Africa, she slept on a mat in a garage with fifteen other foreign nationals for six months. This showcases that despite the challenges faced by the participants, they endeavoured to continue living in South Africa.

Victimisation

Radical victimology centres on the vulnerability of certain groups. It argues that crimes are committed by the "powerful", or those who occupy more power than the victim, and advocates that structural inequalities breed victimisation (Newburn 2017; Tapley and Davies 2020). Furthermore, structural oppression is underscored, manifested through supremacy and privilege, and exposes how it creates and sustains inequality, abuse, and victimisation in marginalised communities (Heap, 2021). Thus, the findings and discussion of the present article are interpreted with a radical victimology lens as the victimisation of the participants is explored.

Xenophobia derives from Ancient Greek "xénos" meaning strange, foreign, or alien. Consequently, it denotes the fear or hatred of anything viewed as foreign (Adam and Moodley 2015; Field 2017). Field (2017) denotes categories of xenophobia (personal, communal, institutional, and structural) and puts forth that as much as they are different from each other, they are interconnected and fortify each other. The participants' xenophobic experiences are contextualised in the various types of xenophobia.

Personal xenophobia is the individualised hostility and rejection of foreigners. This can be traced back to the philosophy of "othering" (Shokane and Masoga 2021). Chipo, Bienvenu, Kojo and Eric share their experiences of personal xenophobia below:

> When I was working at the hotel, a chef there would use the F-word on us foreigners. I remember I once had a heated argument with her because I was trying to defend my fellow countrymen. She was targeting foreigners because it was easy for her to fight and swear at us. She knew we had nowhere to go. We are so desperate. She would say things like "I'll kick your butt and you will find your way back to Zimbabwe". I told her that I don't regret being a Zimbabwean and I won't regret going back. Some people have an inhumane mentality embedded in their DNA and there's nothing we can do. We cannot change that.

When we talk about xenophobia, people should understand that it's not just physical but there is also emotional harm. In some instances, the emotional harm takes longer to heal than the physical harm (Chipo, 49-year-old Zimbabwean male).

The only problem is, and it is something I am afraid of xenophobia, killing people and burning people. Something happened yesterday. I used Taxify to go back home. In the taxi, the driver didn't treat us well. He is South African. I don't understand if it's anger or jealousy. We were three in that taxi. One of the ladies I was travelling with didn't have her mask on properly. The driver said sister because of what you are doing, I can take my gun and shoot you. Because you don't wear your mask properly, I can shoot you. He started getting angry and swearing saying "fuck you". I just kept apologising. There was no reason for the hatred. The two ladies I was with are from Zimbabwe so after that confrontation, they started talking in their language. I also didn't understand what they were saying. When the driver heard them speaking in their language, he braked hard on the car's brakes and started shouting "You two, what are you talking about, you're talking your Makwerekwere[2] language so that I can't hear. I know what you're talking about. I can kill you...?" I don't think he would've acted the same way if his passengers were South African or even white foreign nationals. There are so many ways of addressing someone, but he used such strong language … saying you will kill someone? I'm always on alert and careful. I avoid walking at night. After work, I go straight home. I don't drink or smoke or hang out with the wrong people because my life is precious. (Bienvenu, 28-year-old, Congolese male)

I always hear of incidents of xenophobia happening to other people. It's very scary to think someone can hate me just because of my nationality … hate me because of who I am. I always remind myself that I am not from this country so I avoid certain places where I can be targeted. (Kojo, 27-year-old Ghanaian male)

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2   The term "Makwerekwere" is a derogatory neologism commonly used in South Africa to refer to African nationals. It stems from the difficulty for South Africans to recognise and understand the languages spoken by foreigners as well as how foreigners speak South African languages. It is a linguistic articulation of xenophobia as it is a stigma to exclude the "other" by classifying them as less-than, primitive, and violent (Field 2017).

> The ones who have a good life help us but those who are poor hate us. They are jealous because they say we are stealing their jobs. Which jobs because we can't get good jobs like them? All good jobs need ID [Identification Document]. In certain areas, they hate foreigners. They can decide to kill you. They will burn you alive just because you are a foreigner. South Africans treat us like we are not all Africans. We should be working together. I ran away because my country was killing people. I had no choice. (Eric, 38-year-old Congolese male)

The extracts provide a grim depiction of the realities faced by the participants. Harmful language, consisting of insults and death threats, fuelled by blatant hatred is used against them. Chipo mentions that the emotional abuse he has undergone has lasting effects. In a quantitative study conducted with Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrants, it was found that lifetime adversity had a significant psychological impact on the participants (Cooper et al. 2021). As a coping mechanism, participants report that they avoid certain behaviour in order to minimise possible victimisation. Avoidance techniques are a common mechanism in the prevention of victimisation but may hamper the individual's quality of life (Janssen et al. 2021). Interestingly, Eric contends that "South Africans treat us like we are not all Africans". This corresponds with the detachment South Africans may experience from their African heritage.

Communal xenophobia often transpires in South African disadvantaged communities (Khan 2021; Ngcamu and Mantzaris 2018; Uwimpuhwe and Ruiters 2018). When communities identify themselves as separate and superior to foreigners, xenophobic attitudes emerge and can develop into mob violence. Florence and Claude report incidences of communal xenophobia:

> Some [people] take advantage of us because we are foreigners. It's like when you are renting, they can charge you more money because you are a foreigner. Even when you are looking for work, they might say they don't want foreigners. The last time people were striking, they were entering those small shops in the locations and taking their things. They were just taking advantage because foreigners don't have power. They [South Africans] have power and can do whatever they want. (Florence, 26 years old, Zimbabwean female)

> I don't like the problems with xenophobia. Tomorrow there will
> be a march against foreigners. Those things make me scared.
> I'm scared to go to work tomorrow because maybe those people
> can catch me. I'm not free. I live in fear thinking something bad
> can happen to me. (Claude, 26-year-old, Congolese male)

Communal xenophobia showcases the power relationships that exist in communities, especially disadvantaged ones. South Africans consider themselves to have more power than foreign nationals living in their communities. Thus, they are of liberty to ransack businesses and invade homes belonging to people deemed less than others. Communal xenophobia provokes fear among foreign nationals as Claude shares that he lives in fear expecting something bad can happen to him. Communal xenophobia is a common practice in South Africa as local news reports document countless attacks since 2008 (Mulaudzi et al. 2022).

Structural xenophobia is expressed through formal constructs. The South African government is responsible for its citizens, thus, logically, citizens are given preference over non-citizens. Tawanda shares the structural xenophobia he experienced:

> It's fortunate that in this recent march, I was almost involved.
> Luckily, I identified it early enough and I could divert the
> route. If I hear that there are going to be riots, I know that this
> month I am going to earn less because I cannot go to work in
> fear for my life. I'd rather be safe and stay home. I won't earn
> money that day because it's not a national issue. (Tawanda,
> 44-year-old Zimbabwean male)

Structural xenophobia sheds light on why xenophobia is not adequately addressed. As Tawanda highlights, and is evident from the literature, because it affects a vulnerable minority group, structural xenophobia becomes a "foreigner issue" and not a national one (Mulaudzi et al. 2022)

Institutional xenophobia is executed by government agencies and transpires in a hostile and dismissive approach to foreigners. This belief system is not legislated but because it is held by officials, xenophobia is reinforced. Institutional xenophobia is illustrated through Mutsa's and Claude's experiences.

> I am a foreigner and don't have options. But there are a lot of things that make me uncomfortable. As foreigners, the things we face are very difficult. But it's better than being home. At least, the children are surviving and not dying. The abuse I receive, I just understand, even though it pains me. I was once bitten by a dog, and I went to the hospital. The nurses were shouting at me as if I was the one who forced the dog to bite me. They didn't advise me properly. I didn't know I was supposed to report it to the police. After treatment, my leg was still paining. I decided to go back to explain to them. The nurse said to me "You foreigners, you come to the hospital every single day. Your president doesn't even pay for this medicine. You are taking the medicine of our country". It does not make sense to argue with the nurses who are helping me. They think they are threatening us so that we don't come back. Illness doesn't care where you are. It will make you feel like they hate foreigners. (Mutsa, 46-year-old, Zimbabwean female)

> When I was sick, I went to a clinic and the doctors didn't treat me well. It's like they can be happy if I die. Because I am a foreigner, I don't get the same treatment as South Africans. (Claude, 26-year-old, Congolese male)

Universal health coverage (UHC) is a global precedence for all people irrespective of citizenship. Due to mass migration across the globe, the healthcare needs of migrants are often not met (WHO 2019). In South Africa, the constitution dictates that all people have a right to healthcare regardless of nationality. However, this is not adequately materialised as the government struggles to provide high-quality healthcare for its citizens. Moreover, healthcare practitioners working in public hospitals may exacerbate the problem further through social exclusion (Matlin et al. 2018). In a study conducted on thirteen public health facilities in South Africa, it was found that nurses and nursing assistants were significantly more exclusionary regarding xenophobic attitudes as compared to foreign national healthcare providers (White et al. 2020). Ergo, ill-treatment from institutional authorities widens the scope of victimisation among foreign nationals living in South Africa.

Crime victimisation

A key attribute of environmental criminology is that crime patterns tend to concentrate on certain areas. Longitudinal research reveals that crime spatially clusters in certain areas and remains consistent over time. Crime is concentrated in South African disadvantaged communities and these concentrations are stable over time (Breetzke and Edelstein 2019). Accordingly, the circumstantial and situational contexts in which the participants function, as low-income foreign nationals, are vulnerable to crime.

When asked about possible crime victimisation, most participants who considered themselves victimised reported incidences of robbery.

> I was walking home from work and some guys pointed a knife at me and said "give us the phone and money". They took my phone and money. I didn't go to the police because I am scared. I am illegal and don't have papers. If you go to the police, they will ask you why you don't come with your passport. If something like this happens to me again, I won't go to the police because I don't have the papers. (Florence, 26 years old, Zimbabwean female)

> One day I was robbed by three men. People stopped me and searched me. They took my phone and money. (Claude, 26-year-old, Congolese male)

> I was once mugged. I met two guys, and they robbed me at gunpoint. They asked me for money, and I gave them what I had. I told them I was going to church, and they said since I am going to church, they won't do anything else to me. (Kojo, 27-year-old Ghanaian male)

> I was walking in the street. Someone came behind me and said don't move or I will shoot you. There were 7 guys. Some guys had knives, and some had guns. They stole everything, my money, bag, and phone. That's why I don't like to go out. I just stay at home. My wife has been robbed 3 times. They took everything. Only God can help us. No one can help you except for God. I reported the robberies to the police, but nothing happened. (Eric, 38-year-old Congolese male)

> I was robbed by 3 men. They held a gun to my back and said they would shoot me, but they didn't hurt me because I did

> what they said. They stole my bag which had my passport and the clothes. I don't have anything of my own. Even the jacket I am wearing now, someone bought it for me. It's been tough. It's not been easy. I've had a hard life and I'm used to bad things happening to me. (Kwesi, 35-year-old Ghanaian male)

Robbery is one of the most feared crimes in South Africa as it is not only pervasive but often associated with violence and additional violations (Bowman et al. 2018; Statistics South Africa 2017). Robbery is defined as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Bowman et al. 2018: 978). Thus, the threatened use of force makes robbery an act of violence. The extent of force, weapon, type of threat and stolen property determine the magnitude of the injury, psychological trauma, and deprivation (Bowman et al. 2018). Moreover, Bowman et al. (2018) demonstrate how robbery is a type of interpersonal violence in South Africa, as it affects the community (acquaintance or stranger) and transpires into various trauma such as physical (physical assault, attempted homicide, or homicide), sexual (sexual assault, attempted rape or rape), psychological (threat of force) and deprivation (loss of property). Farisai recounts her traumatic experience of residential robbery and sexual assault:

> I was living in a shack with two other ladies. They came during the early hours of the morning and got through the window. I was sleeping but the noises woke me up. One guy got in and pointed a gun at me. He told me to go back to sleep. Once he got inside, he opened the door for the other guy. They demanded money, took our phones, and wanted us to give them the passwords. They searched everywhere and took whatever they could take. Then they wanted to rape us … and they did. I was stubborn, I fought back, and they beat me because of it. Nobody helped us. Even if people near us heard what was happening, they wouldn't help. People just keep quiet. I didn't report it to the police. I am illegal, and I knew they wouldn't do anything. (Farisai, 30-year-old Zimbabwean female)

South Africa has one of the highest rape statistics in the world, reporting figures higher than some countries at war (Gouws 2022). Sexual violence tends to be predominant in underprivileged communities, especially those with histories coloured by violence, oppression, and discrimination. In such communities, where poverty, disintegrated families, violence, and crime are rife, women are rendered vulnerable (Altenberg et al. 2018; Ngidi 2022). Moreover, research indicates that men from poor backgrounds are more likely to be socialised into adopting harmful masculine roles (Jewkes and Morell 2018; Ngidi 2022). Furthermore, Farisai's narrative reiterates the powerlessness experienced by foreign nationals. In informal settlements, shacks are made with cheap and easily accessible material, thus soundproofing is not a priority. Moreover, shacks are constructed near each other in densely populated spaces (Joubert 2022). Thus, these factors increase the likelihood of someone hearing the crimes taking place. However, nobody intervened. Additionally, as perceived by Farisai, she is rendered helpless in accessing justice due to her illegal status. Consequently, this contributes to underreported crime, limited intervention and prevention strategies, and no recourse or aftercare facilities for the victims.

Nyasha shares horrifying details of witnessing a friend being burnt alive because he was a foreign national.

> They burnt one friend of ours while we were watching. He was burnt alive, and no one helped. He died in front of me. It was so painful. Until now it still comes back to me. He was Zimbabwean. They were going house to house checking for foreigners. If they greet you and you greet back, they can hear you are not a South African [then] they will start pouring paraffin and lighting all the foreigners' houses. There was nothing we could do. If we had tried to help him, they would've burnt us as well. (Nyasha, 38-year-old Zimbabwean female)

Violent xenophobic-motivated attacks are common in South Africa. Such attacks often transpire as collective violence and follow little logic and limited morality. Key components of collective violence include threats, intimidation, displacement, arson, robbery, looting assaults, and murder (Human Rights Watch 2020; Misago 2019). During violent xenophobic attacks, "necklacing" is often perpetuated against foreign nationals by community members. "Necklacing" is carried out when a tyre is placed around a person's neck and petrol is poured onto them. Thereafter, the person is set alight and

burnt alive (Singh 2020). Nyasha survived to share the story of her friend's heinous murder. The trauma she experienced is exemplified by her feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. However, she reasons that her actions are vindicated as they saved her life. After interviewing 51 people in three of South Africa's nine provinces, Human Rights Watch (2020) detailed reports of violent xenophobic incidents committed by South African locals and by government and law enforcement officials. These attacks include but are not limited to attacks such as retaliation and collective punishment, attacks to provoke government attention, riots, looting, attacks, and harassment against learners and teachers in schools.

Participants' living prospects

Most of the participants reported that they wanted to go back to live in their country of origin, provided the circumstances that caused them to leave changed. Tawanda encapsulated his feelings by stressing that he is "home hungry". While Mutsa said that if she stays in South Africa, she will die a foreigner. The return of foreign nationals to their countries of origin may assist South African citizens in remedying the issues foreigners are blamed for (Gordon 2020). However, the literature indicates that it can also have negative implications specifically in the informal trade sector (Crush et al. 2017).

Conclusion

South Africa is home to many foreign nationals whose primary reason for migration is the perceived opportunities the country has as compared to their countries of origin. Foreign nationals are from marginalised communities and are consequently vulnerable to victimisation. Thus, the present article accentuated the victimisation of low-income earning foreign nationals living in Gauteng, one of South Africa's nine provinces. The findings heightened the victimisation plight of foreign nationals through their narrative experiences. Participants experienced personal, communal, institutional, or structural xenophobia. Moreover, due to their vulnerability as low-income earning foreign nationals, some participants experienced crime victimisation. Ultimately, the study contributes to the scientific knowledge and discourse regarding the victimisation of low-income earning foreign nationals living in South Africa. The article is limited by its sample size, however, the rich and comprehensive narrative accounts shared by the participants offer unique

insights into the African and global audience. Future studies should explore the victimisation of foreign nationals throughout South Africa's provinces in order to gain a broader scope of their victimisation narratives.

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