

Journal of African History, Archaeology and Tourism (JAHAT)

E-ISSN 3049-9623 (Online); ISSN 3049-9615 (Print)

formerly

Journal of African History and Archaeology (JAHA)

E-ISSN 2753-3204 (Online); ISSN 2753-3190 (Print)

Indexed by IBSS, EBSCO and SABINET and accredited by DHET

Volume 4, Number 1, April 2026

Pp 23-41

The (Re)emergence of Anti-migrant Vigilantism, Anti-migrant Populism, and Xenophobia in South Africa: Can Ubuntu be the Magic Wand?

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2753-3204/2026/v4n1a2>

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Abstract

Since the period preceding the run-up to the South African Municipal Elections that took place on 1 November 2021, there has been a notable emergence and re-emergence of anti-immigrant vigilante groups such as Operation 'Dudula', Put South Africa First Movement, the South Africa First Party, March and March Movement, All Truck Drivers Foundation (ATDF), and anti-migrant populist political parties such as the Patriotic Alliance (PA), Action SA, among others. While the search for sustainable solutions to prevent and manage xenophobia and anti-migrant vigilantism continues, a reflection on Ubuntu philosophy's role in healing the wounds of South Africa's apartheid and promoting reconciliation,

anti-racism, and anti-racialism may be instructive and valuable. Making use of secondary data analysis mainly in the form of journal articles, books and media reports, this paper seeks to examine the extent to which Ubuntu philosophy - which articulates key values of respect, human dignity, compassion, solidarity, and consensus - can address the scourge of anti-immigration activism, anti-migrant populism, and xenophobia in South Africa. It investigates the economic hurdles impacting sustainable food security for widows in Tharaka Sub-County, Kenya. Using a qualitative approach, it identifies key systemic barriers and proposes targeted interventions to enhance communal resilience. The concept of Ubuntu provides a conceptual framework of analysis. Findings from the study will be key in contributing towards the debates on the possibility of adopting a ‘humanised approach’ in addressing xenophobia not only in South Africa but in other African and non-African countries in light of heightened international migration.

Keywords: *Ubuntu, Anti-migrant vigilantism, Anti-migrant populism, Xenophobia, South Africa*

Acknowledgement

As authors, we thank participants and organisers of the 15th Humanities and Social Sciences International Conference (HSSIC) - which was hosted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), University of Zululand (UNIZULU), South Africa - under the theme “Problematising UBUNTU as a critical project in the humanities and social sciences: Towards healing and well-being of communities” at Umfolozi Hotel Casino Convention Resort in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa, from 10-11 October 2024. Valuable feedback from participants during the presentation of a longer draft of this paper is gratefully acknowledged and has been instrumental in its refinement.

Introduction

In South Africa, while incidences of xenophobia against migrants have been reported since 1994 (Xenowatch, 2025), there has been a notable re-emergence of xenophobia in recent years, which has been exacerbated and inflamed by waves of anti-migrant vigilantism and anti-migrant populism. Whereas several strategies have been deployed by various governments to address this phenomenon, the continued manifestation of xenophobia, anti-migrant vigilantism, and anti-migrant populism may require a more human-centred approach that is based on transforming the attitudes of migrant-hosting communities, politicians, community leaders, and the broader citizenry in order to foster peaceful co-existence. One of the most-

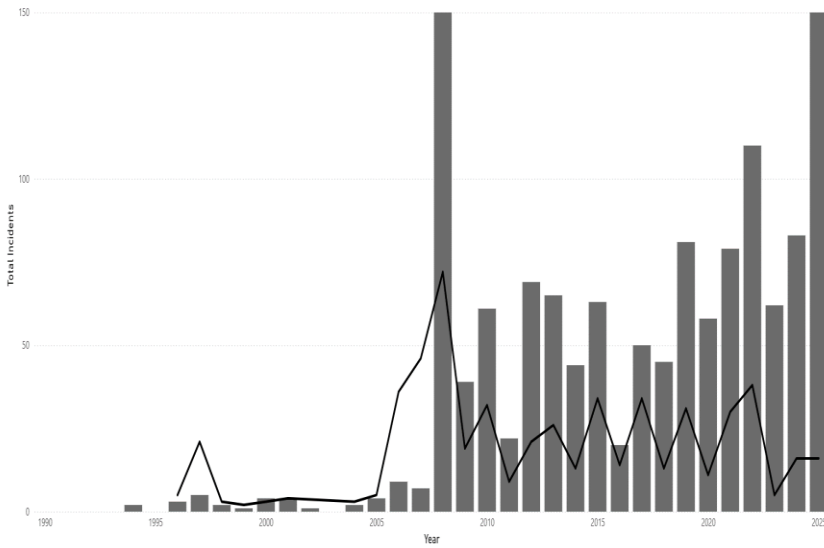
discussed approaches has been the application of *Ubuntu philosophy* to address xenophobia-related conflicts, as suggested by studies by Eyo (2020), Sule (2022), Mlambo *et al.* (2023), Akpan and Mkhize (2022), Vhumbunu (2024), Sande and Mujinga (2024), Mokhutso (2022), Mukwedeya (2022), Taye (2021), and others. However, this suggestion has not been thoroughly interrogated and examined to establish its relevance, suitability, appropriateness, effectiveness, feasibility, practicality, acceptability, and sustainability. Therefore, this article goes beyond mere recommendation of *Ubuntu philosophy* as a strategy to address xenophobia-related conflicts. Rather, it presents a more practical examination of *Ubuntu Philosophy* and interrogates its relevance, suitability, appropriateness, effectiveness, feasibility, practicality, acceptability, and sustainability with respect to addressing xenophobia, anti-migrant vigilantism, and anti-migrant populism in full consideration of South Africa's national conditions and historical, economic, political, social, and cultural reality. The aim is to foster strategic dialogue aimed at developing practical, sustainable solutions to the rise of xenophobia, anti-migrant vigilantism, and populism in South Africa.

The re-emergence of anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism and xenophobia in South Africa: Background and Context

Migration-related conflicts in South Africa are often traced to the history of labour migration in the mid-19th century in South Africa. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 and gold a few decades later in 1886 in Witwatersrand led to the influx of migrant labour into South Africa, mostly from the neighbouring Southern African countries of Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Wilson, 2001; Higginson, 2007). Later, the post-1994 period recorded an influx of immigrants and refugees into South Africa in search of asylum and economic opportunities driven by conflicts, wars, and forced displacement in the Great Lakes Region, economic development challenges, rising unemployment, and poverty prevalence in selected countries in Southern Africa, such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique, among others (Vhumbunu, 2024; Misago, 2017; Vhumbunu, Adetiba, and Mawire, 2023). Thus, there have been incidences of xenophobia since 1994, and these heightened and intensified as a result of various factors such as the notable increase in unemployment, extreme poverty, deep inequalities, competition for scarce resources and shrinking economic opportunities, inflammatory and inciteful messages by the media,

politicians, anti-migrant populist political parties, community leaders, anti-migrant vigilant groups and some civil society groups (Vhumbunu and Mawire, 2023; Misago, 2017; Vhumbunu, 2024; Vhumbunu, Adetiba and Mawire, 2023). Recent data from Xenowatch (2026) - as shown in Figure 1 below - reveals that since 1994, South Africa has experienced 1 295 incidents of xenophobic violence, resulting in a total of 696 deaths, looting of 5 648 shops, and displacement of 128 758 migrants as of 12 December 2025.

Figure 1: Incidents of xenophobic violence in South Africa (1994 – 01 December 2025)



Source: Xenowatch (2025)

To date, several anti-migrant vigilant groups and movements have emerged in South Africa, and they include the Operation Dudula Movement, the March and March Movement, leaders of the South African First Campaign, and the All Truck Drivers Foundation (ATDF), among others. These have been conducting vigilante operations intended to forcibly expel undocumented migrants from South Africa, often targeting documented migrants and township business owners in the process. For instance, the Operation Dudula Movement – which has opened branches in almost all the provinces of South Africa—has been targeting foreign-owned businesses, mostly ‘spaza’ shops in townships (Sithole, 2024; Makhetha, 2024; Simelane, 2024). In addition to this, anti-migrant populist political parties have also emergence and continue to gain traction, visibility and popularity such as the Patriotic Alliance (PA), Action SA,

among others. For instance, the PA - whose mantra on migration is “Abahambe”, meaning “let them go” - indicated in its Election Manifesto for the South African General Elections for May 2024 that it maintains a “zero tolerance to migration” policy position (Patriotic Alliance, 2024:5). The manifesto stated that “the PA will ensure illegal migrants are sent home and not allowed to return”, adding that “the party [PA], while in government, will build a wall to protect its citizens against illegal migration” (Patriotic Alliance, 2024:5).

Research Methodology

The study explored whether the philosophy of Ubuntu provides the 'magic wand' required to address elusive solutions for xenophobia prevention, while creating opportunities for social reconciliation in the wake of past tensions. In doing this, the study utilises secondary data for analysis, in the form of a broad range of extant literature, mainly in the form of journal articles, books, online articles, government publications and media reports. As argued by Elliot (2015), secondary data facilitates access to large and often reliable datasets from reputable sources and allows for cross-national, cross-population and cross-regional analysis of trends over time; which all enriches analysis.

Ubuntu as a philosophical framework for conflict resolution: A conceptual framework

Conflicts, which have now become common across the world, remain pervasive in light of global political, economic, social, ecological, cultural, and religious challenges. Scholars share an almost similar view of conflicts as situations and/or circumstances where two or more parties (as individuals, groups, communities, or countries) struggle and contest over access to, or distribution of, scarce resources; control of power; values; ideology; identity; religion; and claims to status, as they seek to neutralise, damage, injure, or eliminate rivals in pursuit of incompatible or divergent interests (Coser, 1956: 6; Fischer *et al.*, 1997: 268-269; Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2024). A conflict trend analysis by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) reveals that 2023 recorded the highest number of state-based conflicts since 1946 - with a total of 59 conflicts experienced across the world - making it one of the most violent years since the Cold War ended (Rustad, 2024). With migration-related conflicts also on the rise across the globe, as evidenced by several reports that point to frequent cases of xenophobia, racism, and human rights abuse against

migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers along migration routes and in migrant-hosting communities, it may be timely to re-think and re-visit the adopted conflict resolution methods, approaches, and strategies (United Nations News, 2024).

Conflict prevention entails various interventions—including policies, programmes, and institutions—designed to deter individuals and groups from engaging in disputes, whereas conflict resolution involves transforming existing conflicts by addressing their root causes and establishing structural mechanisms for sustainable relationships (Fischer *et al.*, 1997: 268-269). As argued by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2024), conflict prevention and conflict resolution can be made more sustainable through strategic peacebuilding, which begins with an assessment of local issues, challenges, and strengths of relevant communities or conflict settings, followed by the creation and nurturing of positive and constructive relations within the various sub-groups in communities and transforming their structural conditions that generate or fuel conflict through conflict prevention, management, resolution, transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation.

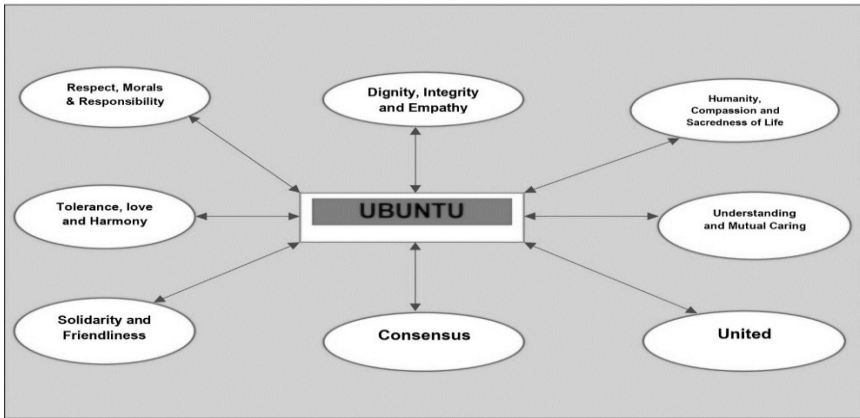
The Ubuntu Philosophy is generally considered a collection of values, principles, and practices that belong to, and originated from, African people—specifically the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa—which place emphasis on the connectedness, inter-connectedness, interdependence, and universal bond of people through collectivism (as opposed to individualism) and showing humanity towards each other. In the concept of *Ubuntu* lies African-oriented epistemological, ethical, logical, and metaphysical manifestations, as argued by Mangena (2016). Two distinguished figures—who played a prominent role in South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle and post-apartheid reconciliation initiatives—popularised the concept and practice of *Ubuntu*. These are former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and Desmond Mpilo Tutu, the late South African Archbishop of the Anglican Church and theologian. It is not surprising that these two were Nobel Prize winners in 1983 and 1993, respectively. It is Desmond Mpilo Tutu who described *Ubuntu* as “I am because we are”, itself a fitting description of how individuals are connected to the collective well-being of others in the community (Tutu, 2000).

Ubuntu is defined by Khoza (2005:269) as “an African value system that means humanness or being human, a worldview characterised by such values as caring, sharing, compassion, communalism, communocracy, and related predispositions”. The philosophy stresses the essence of being human, as explained in the apophthegm: “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”,

which in Nguni languages means “a person is a person through or because of other people” and that “you are who you are because of how you relate to those around you” (Mlondo, 2022:1; Makhanya, 2023:59). In short, we affirm our humanity as human beings when we acknowledge the humanity of others. Paraphrasing Ramose (1999:37) and Battle (1996:99), *Ubuntu* affirms that human essence is ideally expressed through communal relationships, necessitating the recognition of others' humanity as a prerequisite for meaningful connection.

In terms of its essential features, principles, values, and attributes, various scholars such as Mbigi (1997), Broodryk (2005), Mangena (2016), Murithi (2009), and many others, including prominent advocate of *Ubuntu*, Desmond Tutu, have submitted that *Ubuntu* comprises the values, principles, tenets, and attributes of humanity, compassion, human dignity, respect, integrity, honesty, solidarity, friendliness, survival, understanding, tolerance, harmony, caring, empathy, sympathy, unity, consensus, justice, and redistribution—as presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Values, principles, tenets, and attributes of *Ubuntu*



Source: Constructed by authors based on values, attributes, principles, and tenets of *Ubuntu* adapted from Mbigi (1997:33), Broodryk (2005:175), Ramose (1999:37), Tutu (2000), and Battle (1996:99).

Ubuntu, as manifested in the above values, attributes, tenets, and principles, provides lenses through which Africans place humanness at the centre of all human engagement and human interaction. Unlike most Western or Eurocentric philosophies, which eulogise and promote individualism, *Ubuntu* promotes a sense of community, communality, communal relationships, group solidarity, and co-responsibility. For instance, Western or Eurocentric philosophies are laden with individualistic

philosophies such as the Western market economic philosophy of capitalism, which perpetuates accumulation, liberalism, which emphasise, among others, individual rights and liberties, et cetera (Mukwedeya, 2022).

When it comes to its application to African conflict resolution, dispute settlement, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding, *Ubuntu* principles and values of *humanity, compassion, human dignity, respect, integrity, solidarity, friendliness, hospitality, understanding, tolerance, harmony, caring, sharing, empathy, sympathy, and unity* are collectively handy. It is *Ubuntu* that encourages warring parties and groups to dialogue, cooperate, and reconcile to ensure peaceful co-existence, social cohesion, harmony, and stability. Murithi (2006) argues that *Ubuntu* advocates for forgiveness of past wrongs while discouraging revenge or ‘an eye for an eye’ approach. Even scholars such as Metz (2011) have argued that *Ubuntu* can assist in resolving contemporary moral, social, and human rights dilemmas in South Africa and beyond.

Addressing anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism, and xenophobia in South Africa: Can Ubuntu be the magic wand?

The grand question that this study sought to answer was:

Can Ubuntu be the magic wand in addressing the current wave of anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism, and xenophobia in South Africa. This key research question was pursued by evaluating the following three salient aspects: (a) *relevance, suitability and appropriateness of Ubuntu philosophy*; (b) *effectiveness of Ubuntu philosophy based on relevant historical case studies (mostly Rwanda and South Africa)*; and (c) *Feasibility/practicality of Ubuntu philosophy (within the context of its assumptions vis-à-vis the complexity of the root causes, drivers, and triggers of anti-migrant vigilantism, populism, and xenophobia in SA).*

The central argument adopted in this analysis is that while *Ubuntu philosophy* presents a great opportunity to create tolerance, harmony, peaceful co-existence, communities, compassion, human dignity, mutual respect, solidarity, friendliness, empathy, sympathy, unity, good neighbourliness, understanding, caring, justice, and redistribution, which may prevent and eliminate xenophobia, xenophobic tensions, and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa; there remain serious—but surmountable—challenges in practically translating the concept into practice in South African communities in order to deliver desired results on the ground. Thus, the analysis argues that it is possible but might be highly improbable to successfully utilize *Ubuntu philosophy* to prevent and eliminate xenophobia, xenophobic tensions, and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa in the near future.

Relevance, suitability, and appropriateness of Ubuntu as a tool and pathway for peaceful co-existence

As discussed and revealed in the broad extant literature on *Ubuntu philosophy* and conflict resolution, it is a truism that *Ubuntu* ideally remains a suitable and appropriate framework for managing the current wave of xenophobia, xenophobic tensions, and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa. It is incontrovertible and indisputable that the values, attributes, principles, and tenets of Ubuntu—which include humanity, compassion, human dignity, respect, integrity, honesty, solidarity, friendliness, survival, understanding, tolerance, harmony, caring, empathy, sympathy, unity, consensus, justice, and redistribution—are the missing link in sustaining peace and social cohesion and cultivating harmonious relationships in communities. Since *Ubuntu*, as argued by various scholars such as Mbigi (1997:33), Broodryk (2005:175), Ramose (1999:37), Tutu (2000), and Battle (1996:99), promotes peaceful resolution of conflicts and dialogue and encourages conflicting parties or societies to treat each other with dignity, humanity, respect, collaborative problem-solving, empathy, and reconciliation, then *Ubuntu* presents an invaluable framework, tool, and pathway for communities to initiate genuine and frank conversations towards post-xenophobia peacebuilding while discouraging hostile and inflammatory anti-migrant populist narratives and destructive anti-migrant vigilantism. All the values, attributes, principles, and tenets of *Ubuntu* facilitate the nurturing and creation of constructive and positive relations among community members regardless of race, colour, creed, migration or refugee status, class, religion, and ethnicity, which, as argued by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2024), are fundamental in the prevention, management, resolution, and transformation of conflicts. Thus, *Ubuntu* can be the starting point to then build institutions, policies, plans, and programmes that address the fundamental structural economic, social, political, and legal problems that facilitate the restoration of human dignity and create equal and equitable opportunities that improve the lives and livelihoods of all people living in South Africa.

Questions of practicality and feasibility of operationalising Ubuntu philosophy in South Africa

While the suitability and appropriateness of *Ubuntu philosophy* as a tool and pathway for peaceful co-existence is axiomatic as argued above and in the reviewed literature, what remains a point of contention is the practicality and feasibility of operationalising *Ubuntu philosophy* in a manner that can

effectively address the current wave of xenophobia, xenophobic tensions, and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa. Understanding the fundamental drivers and origins of the prevailing xenophobic climate and anti-migrant sentiment in South Africa remains a vital step for this analysis. Several studies by scholars such as Eyo (2020), Sule (2022), Mlambo *et al.* (2023), Akpan and Mkhize (2022), Vhumbunu (2024), Sande and Mujinga (2024), and Mokhutso (2022), among others, have all concurred that the phenomenon of xenophobia in South Africa can only be fully explained from a multi-causality perspective, as it is driven by a multiplicity of factors. From the above literature, this study can categorise these causes and drivers of xenophobia into seven main factors, namely *economic factors* (related to unemployment, extreme poverty, deep inequalities, competition for scarce resources, and shrinking economic opportunities), *historical factors* (related to South Africa's apartheid history of isolation and locals' lack of international exposure to migrants/'strangers'), and *nationalist factors* (related to identity issues and nationalism). Currently, unemployment in South Africa has reached 33.5 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 2024), and an estimated 30 percent of South Africans are living in extreme poverty (Devereux, 2024), with the country remaining the most unequal state in the world. Such a context results in stiff competition for jobs and economic opportunities as well as pressure on public services. Regarding historical factors, it is argued that South Africa's prolonged isolation during the apartheid era—which severed ties with much of the continent and the wider world—continues to foster xenophobic attitudes (Vhumbunu *et al.*, 2022:13).

On the other hand, there are *cultural factors* (related to tendencies of some sections of the society to resort to violence and criminality), *legal and criminal justice administration factors* (related to the absence of deterrent consequences for individuals convicted of xenophobic crimes and general impunity for perpetrators of xenophobic violence), *operational factors* (related to weak enforcement of the migration regime, labour laws and refugee laws, weak border control systems, and prevalence of corruption at South Africa's ports of entry and exit), and *trigger factors* (related to reckless, inflammatory, inciteful, and often provocative messages by the media, politicians, anti-migrant populist political parties, community leaders, anti-migrant vigilant groups, and some civil society groups). With respect to cultural factors, there are arguments that some individuals in South African communities that have since apartheid been subjected to racism and criminality have attributes and attitudes of racism, prejudices, discrimination, and stereotyping through social learning, which often manifest through xenophobia (Vhumbunu *et al.*, 2022:15). Trigger factors

have often been attributed to politicians, anti-migrant populist political parties, and community leaders whose public pronouncements—even though they may not have had any xenophobic intentions and purposes—are misinterpreted and misconstrued as encouraging and inciting communities to engage in xenophobic acts and violence. A case in point is that of King Goodwill Zwelithini, who had stated—at a moral regeneration event organized and hosted by uPhongolo Municipality in Zululand, northern KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province in March 2025;

We are requesting those who come from outside to please go back to their countries...I know you were in their countries during the struggle for liberation. But the fact of the matter is that you did not set up business in their countries...We are requesting those who come from outside to please go back to their countries.

However, the King's statement was argued to have been distorted and misinterpreted by the media, civil society organisations, political analysts and commentators to insinuate that he encouraged xenophobic attacks, which erupted soon after. Even the inquiry by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2016: 82-84) later found out that even though the King's remarks were "hurtful and harmful" and "could potentially perpetuate discrimination against foreigners", they "did not constitute hate speech or incite violence".

All the above causes were even acknowledged by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)'s report (2009:22) on the investigation into issues of rule of law, justice and impunity arising out of the 2008 public violence against non-nationals which stated the following:

These [causes of xenophobia] point to factors like the violent and xenophobic climate of South Africa, impunity and failure to maintain the rule of law; livelihood and resource competition; relative deprivation; stereotypes about foreigners; a lack of knowledge about foreigners' rights; weaknesses in the immigration regime; and inadequate service delivery in poor communities.

A sophisticated examination of the underlying causes behind South Africa's prevailing xenophobic climate and anti-migrant vigilantism is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The analysis also considers the dynamic that these phenomena are largely confined to the townships and informal settlements.

Structural and socio-economic challenges remain a potential barrier to Ubuntu in practice

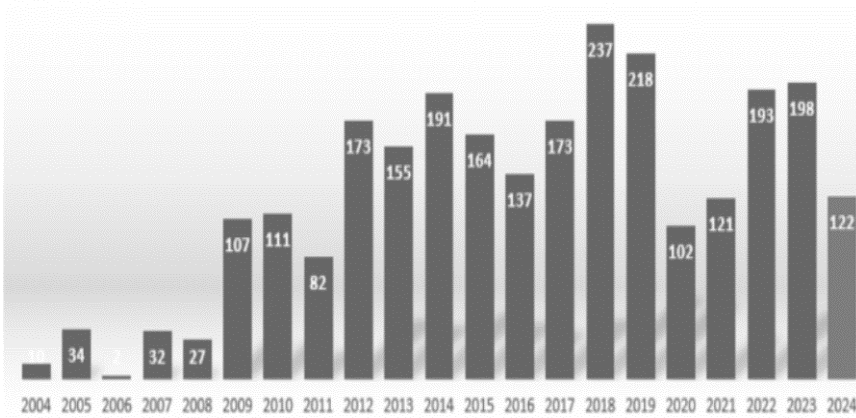
Ubuntu philosophy has a limit in addressing some of these causal factors behind the current wave of xenophobia, xenophobic tensions, and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa. As the SAHRC Report (2009:22) noted, the concentration of xenophobia in townships and informal settlements¹ was due to the “micro-politics” of these spaces, as communities are more frustrated with socio-economic circumstances and squalid living conditions, and this is triggered by the social heterogeneity of communities and opportunistic individuals/local groups that seek to claim and/or consolidate power (*see also* Mlambo *et al.*, 2023; Misago, 2019). *Ubuntu philosophy* is unlikely to serve as a panacea for the current wave of xenophobia and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa unless it is implemented alongside measures that target the systemic and underlying causes of such tensions.

The socio-economic conditions for South Africans, especially for those staying in townships and informal settlements, continue to worsen. For instance, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) released by Statistics South Africa (2024) in August 2024 revealed that unemployment currently stands at 33.5 percent in the second quarter of 2024, and there are 16.7 million unemployed people in South Africa. In terms of poverty prevalence, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, 2024) estimated that 18.2 million (around 30 percent) of South Africans were living in extreme poverty, surviving on less than US\$1.90 per day (Devereux, 2024). South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, with a Gini-Coefficient score of 63 (Dyvik, 2024). In South Africa, wealth is highly concentrated, with the top 0.01 per cent of the people (just 3,500 individuals) owning roughly 15 per cent of the country's entire wealth (Valodia, 2024). It is also a reality that 99.8 per cent of bonds and stocks in the country—which accounts for 35 per cent of the total wealth—are owned by the richest 10 percent in South Africa (Valodia, 2024). Public service delivery is deteriorating, and most municipalities are experiencing public service delivery protests, as shown in Figure 3 below. This is because residents are agitated by a lack of adequate and decent housing,

¹ Xenophobic violence, as evidenced by several media reports and SAHRC reports, has mostly been experienced in townships of Gauteng (Soweto, Alexandra, Diepsloot, Orange Farm, Vosloorus, Atteridgeville, Yeoville, Soshanguve, Mamelodi, Hammanskraal, and Tembisa), KwaZulu-Natal (Durban Central, KwaMashu, Umlazi, Chatsworth, Inanda, Ntuzuma, Clermont, and Chesterville), and Western Cape (Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Delft, Nyanga, Langa, Mitchells Plain, and Philippi).

overcrowding in city hostels and informal settlements, poor sanitation services, a lack of maintenance of public facilities, poor waste management and refuse collection, high levels of crime rates, electricity blackouts, rising corruption at the national level and in municipalities, and other causes (PPSA/SAHRC, 2021).

Figure 3: Service delivery protests in South Africa (2004 – June 2024)



Source: Municipal IQ Data (2024). Available at: <https://www.municipaliq.co.za/index.php>

Given the above reality, it becomes an onerous and strenuous task to inculcate the *Ubuntu* values, principles, tenets, and attributes of human dignity, solidarity, friendliness, togetherness, tolerance, harmony, and unity when the socio-economic conditions on the ground already strip citizens of their sense of human dignity. Scholars such as Metz and Gaie (2010) have even argued that “a sense of togetherness is difficult to foster when some have greater wealth than others” and when others are in deep poverty.

Conclusion and recommendations

The analysis in this study concludes that whilst *Ubuntu* cannot be the magic wand in addressing the current wave of anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism, and xenophobia in South Africa, attempting to address this problem through *Ubuntu philosophy* is not entirely obdurate. Whereas it is very possible, as evidenced and demonstrated by previous successes in *Ubuntu*-guided post-Apartheid national reconciliation processes and interventions, it should not be considered as a simplistic and facile process given the associated complexities relating to social, political, cultural, and technical barriers that confront the application of *Ubuntu* in South African

communities. Therefore, we emphatically argue that the success of *Ubuntu* amidst the current surge of xenophobia, anti-migrant populism, and anti-migrant vigilantism depends largely on the comprehensive addressing of the various aspects highlighted in this analysis. These aspects include complementing *Ubuntu* with institutions and policies that address the fundamental structural socio-economic challenges in South African societies; addressing the root causes and drivers of xenophobia; and improving service deliveries, especially in townships and poverty-stricken communities. Given the above analysis, this study submits five recommendations.

Firstly, the application of *Ubuntu* to address the current wave of anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism and xenophobia in South Africa should study, understand and borrow useful, valuable and relevant lessons from the *Ubuntu*-guided post-Apartheid national reconciliation processes and interventions so as to understand how, why and when the *Ubuntu philosophy* can be adopted to address the current problem at hand. The lessons have to distinguish why and how *Ubuntu* has not been succeeding in preventing xenophobia, xenophobic tensions, and anti-migrant vigilantism in South Africa since 1994.

Secondly, while *Ubuntu* remains a suitable and appropriate tool and pathway for peaceful co-existence given the current wave of anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism, and xenophobia in South Africa, it has to be concurrently implemented together with national policies, programmes, and plans that address the socio-economic and political conditions of communities, especially those in townships and informal settlements, by addressing poverty, unemployment, inequality, and social service delivery challenges.

Thirdly, interventions that are meant to address anti-migrant vigilantism, anti-migrant populism, and xenophobia in South Africa should involve a bottom-up, multi-stakeholder, and participatory approach in addressing the *historical factors, nationalist factors, cultural factors, legal and criminal justice administration factors, operational factors, and trigger factors* that are sustaining the phenomenon.

Fourthly, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education need to consider substantively integrating *Ubuntu* into the national education curriculum in both primary school and secondary school, beyond just merely recognising it in the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Orientation (LO) and Social Sciences. In Zimbabwe, the National Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) Framework for Primary and Secondary Education and the National Strategy for Community and Human Development in Education all

embed the Ubuntu value system (“*Unhu*” in Shona), especially in citizen education, moral and spiritual education, and life skills education. Kenya also introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2017, which integrates *Ubuntu* values of “care for others”, “African ethics”, and “community living” in religious education and life skills subjects, while Botswana also adopted the “Education for Kagisano” (Education for ‘Making Peace’ and ‘Social Harmony’) in 1977, which incorporates principles of botho (humanness), unity, social cohesion, collective responsibility, development, self-reliance, and democracy. Outside of the African context, insights from China are equally instructive; the Government of the People’s Republic of China has integrated Confucian pedagogies and philosophies directly into the national school curriculum (Hagen, 2022).

Fifthly, the *Ubuntu philosophy* values should be used to re-think, revisit, and reframe the Code of Conduct for political parties and CSOs so as to prevent and manage extreme and damaging populism in election campaigning that stokes fires of xenophobia and anti-migrant vigilantism. The implementation of *Ubuntu* has to also be concurrent with the effective enforcement of the *Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media* to ensure responsible reporting in the media on migration-related matters.

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