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To cite this article: M. Alugbin & A. Osisanwo (2025) “We Are All Migrants”: Ideological Construction of Xenophobia in Nigerian and South African Newspaper Reports, African Journalism Studies, 46:3, 258-274, DOI: [10.1080/23743670.2025.2533827](https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2025.2533827)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2025.2533827>



Published online: 31 Jul 2025.



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# “We Are All Migrants”: Ideological Construction of Xenophobia in Nigerian and South African Newspaper Reports

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## ABSTRACT

Fear and animosity towards asylum seekers and migrants have experienced a worldwide increase in recent decades, with xenophobia being the recent particular experience in South Africa. This study analyses how discursive strategies in Nigerian and South African newspaper reports ideologically frame people, actions, and events, displaying a biased portrayal influenced by prejudiced ideologies. Using Wodak’s discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis, the study examines 80 news articles from two Nigerian (*Nigeria Tribune* and *Punch*) and two South African (*The Times* and *Daily Sun*) newspapers, published during the xenophobic violence of 2008 and 2015. Findings reveal a shared Pan-African ideology in both countries’ media; however, South African reports often exhibit extreme nationalist sentiments that justify attacks on foreigners, while Nigerian reports express retributive ideology, threatening retaliation and seeking legal accountability. Discursive strategies, including nomination, predication and argumentation, and sub-strategies of assimilation, unification, dissimilation and blame shift reveal complex ideological interplays regarding African unity, national identity, and responses to xenophobic actions. Nigerian and South African news reports employ various discursive strategies, which reflect differing national approaches to migration and xenophobia, reflecting the ongoing struggle for social cohesion within African nations. This reveals the media’s role in shaping people’s attitudes in discriminatory discourses.

## KEYWORDS

xenophobia; discursive strategies; migration; nationalism; African unity; newspaper reports

## Introduction

Xenophobia, an attitude characterised by hatred and fear towards foreigners, is an acrimonious phenomenon, which is capable of destabilising a country. It requires an understanding of the underlying political, economic, and ideological factors (Mbetga 2014). In recent years, Nigerian and South African newspapers have been increasingly engaged in discourses about xenophobia, sequel to the series of onslaughts on black foreigners in South Africa. Such discrimination, which is based on cultural origin or ethnicity, has

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