



The policing of microaggression experienced by naturalized South African women residing in Johannesburg municipality in South Africa

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Abstracts: Discrimination is a barrier to social inclusion in society. Vulnerable groups are often discriminated against and blamed for high unemployment or poverty in countries with super-diversity. Some South African municipalities that are viewed as economic hubs are associated with high incidences of crime against migrants. Naturalized South African citizens that were once migrants continue dependent of these economic hubs for livelihood. The relational dynamic between migrants and South African are the basis of most discourse on social equality and human right. How individuals are categorised, identified in terms of ethnicity, at times disrupts their sense of belonging and threatens their livelihood. South Africa's history of tension between migrants and citizens necessitates ongoing discourse on principles of tolerance. The principle of tolerance is enshrined in the philosophy of Ubuntu. Historically South Africans accepted Ubuntu as a way of life that guaranteed peaceful co-existence of individuals. The principles of Ubuntu once made South Africa a haven. Hence the resurfacing tensions between locals and foreign nationals demand police vigilance. The objective of the study was to establish the type of microaggression commonly experienced by naturalized South African women residing in Johannesburg municipality. The qualitative phenomenological research used an interpretive paradigm. The sample consisted of nine female participants who consented to being interviewed. The thematic content analysis conducted established three dominant themes, and these were verbal abuse, racial discrimination, and intimidation. Results showed that microaggression against naturalized citizens was common in Soweto township, a context historically associated with discriminatory social practices that promote group hierarchies based on race and culture. The study raises awareness of the threats to women's rights and provides insight into the microaggression experienced by naturalized South African women. The study recommended that the police should educate citizens about the negative consequences of microaggression to promote social cohesion in Johannesburg municipalities.

Keywords: Diversity, equality, intolerance, microaggression, migrants, naturalized citizens.

Introduction

Historically, indigenous communities were known for their unity and close relations across tribal lands. The unity of African communities is widely articulated in the South African policy frameworks and literature. The preamble of the South African Constitution [40] states as follows:

“We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustice of our past; honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”

Mbiti, a famous African philosopher uses an ethical construct termed ‘Ubuntu [moral theory]’ to elaborate on this unity, experienced by South Africans [19]. Ubuntu is a Zulu term that means ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ [8]. Ubuntu is a moral theory with a maxim ‘I am, because we are, and we since we are, therefore I am’. Ubuntu articulates the co-dependence of humans and postulates that reciprocity of human compassion, dignity and justice expressed in co-existence builds and maintains harmony in the community. This communal worldview is articulated as ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu or a human being is a human being because of other human beings’. Ubuntu principles not only advocates respect for diversity but also calls for compliance with various laws that regulate South Africa’s diverse communities [19].

South Africans’ interaction with migrants must embody Ubuntu to promote social cohesion [8]. Integration and inclusion of migrants in various social contexts can promote social cohesion. Migrants can integrate through assimilation. Assimilation explains the process of integrating and incorporating migrants in communities. Compliance with the laws and regulations is one of many ways migrants could reciprocate positive relations with a host country such as United States of America, Canada, Italy, Germany, South Africa, Tanzania and etcetera. Assimilation does not necessarily protect immigrants from hate crimes and other acts of violence fueled by anti-immigration sentiments [18]. All forms of violence against anyone including migrants undermine social cohesion and must be policed. Section 205(3) of the South African Constitution mandates the police to combat crime [40]. However, policing certain types of crimes might be challenging given their discreet nature. The problem of attributional ambiguity of microaggression makes reporting and policing challenging in any context [7].

Literature Review

Crimes committed against vulnerable groups must not be justified at the expense of social cohesion regardless of the strain of transformation. The indigenous ethnic groups of Sub-Saharan countries were historically collectivistic. Modern societies in most sub-Saharan were diversified over time by collectivistic and individualistic ethnic groups [1]. The South African constitution safeguard the concept of diversity nationwide [40].

Diversity is multidimensional and it refers to the numerous attributes that differentiate people. Diversity is constructed at both individual and collective levels. The individual-level attributes used to differentiate an individual include age, gender and race. The collective level attributes used to differentiate individual within a group may overlap with the individual-level attributes depending on the similarity or dissimilarity of members of the group. Cultural norms and indigenous language are examples of collective level attributes that can be used to differentiate individuals with the same citizens who belong to distinct tribes [50]. The collective level attributes pertaining to the cultural norms can be used to differentiate the Xhosa people, a South African indigenous group made up of nine chiefdom clusters namely: the Bhaca, Bomvana, Mfengu, Mpondo, Mpondomise, Ntlangwini, Thembu, Xesibe and Xhosa [29]. South Africa is a multicultural and its indigenous groups include the Swati, Venda, Pedi, Ndebele, Tsonga, Xhosa and Zulu. South African ethnic groups that are not labeled as African include Afrikaans, Indian, Coloured and English groups [1].

The term ‘diversity’ in the preamble of the South African constitution makes refers to South Africans. The Immigration Act of No.13 of 2002 recognises three types of South Africa citizenship: Citizenship by birth in South Africa, citizenship by birth outside South African borders, and naturalization [42]. Migration has imposed super-diversity on South Africa. The term ‘super-diversity’ was coined by Steven Vertovec in 2007. Super-diversity is a complex concept that describes a transformative modern society characterised by multifaceted diversity such as cultural, language, race, and other social factors associated with migration. Super-diversity contributes to multiple ethnicities and shift in social hierarchical positions which may result in the integration or segregation of some social groups [55]. The South African moral principle of Ubuntu compels academics, the government and the relevant stake holders to acknowledge super-diversity of South African communities. Ideally, the notion of ubuntu in super-diversity must facilitate social and economic equality for all social groups in South Africa. The notion of equality must be examined within a specific context since it is often subject to law.

Equality is highly sought as a key characteristic of utopia, in a peaceful and democratic society [6]. Equality can be difficult to achieve when paired with diversity. The various factors governing group dynamics highlight the complex nature of diversity. In the past, a status hierarchy could manifest when the behaviour and social practices of the ruling party enforced policies that legitimized unequal relationships between the Whites group and Black groups in South Africa [11]. Another example of the complex nature of diversity is the hierarchies in chieftaincies across sub-Saharan African countries. The hierarchies in chieftaincies and dynasties were telling of rationed equality [22]. Ethnic conflict and disputes were one of many devastating consequences of inequality. Recently, the Zulu monarch has committed to dispute resolutions that promote the peaceful co-exist of tribes and the restoration of traditional hierarchies [34].

Despite various peace efforts and integration programmes, rationed equality, and subtle intolerance are still evident in South Africa. Some social practices promote oppressive structures, contribute to discrimination and intolerance [24].

Intolerance may be disguised as policies, cultural norms and values. A case in point is the affirmative action policy [3]. Harmful cultural values and policies promote harmful behaviours that threaten human rights. Behavioural intolerance undermines women's rights. The vulnerabilities of the naturalized South African women must be unpacked when opportunities arise. The term "naturalized citizen" refers to a person who was once migrant with permanent residence and later acquired South African citizenship through the provisions of the South African Immigration Act [42]. The rights of all citizens are articulated in various policies including the Bill of Rights, which guarantees freedom, dignity, and prohibits discrimination. Human dignity and discrimination are articulated in sections 9 and 10 of the South African constitution. Section 10 provides that "Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected". Section 9(3) and (4) provide that:

"The state may not discriminate unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth. No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3)." [40].

Elaborating on the Constitution facilitates awareness of acts of intolerance perpetrated in various setting across South Africa. Intolerance is defined as the inability or unwillingness to accept belief, cultures or views that differ from yours. The three types of intolerance are as follows:

"(a) Prejudicial intolerance based on rigidity, closedmindedness, and antipathy toward a group of people; (b) intuitive intolerance involving disapproval of out-group beliefs or practices based on unreflective responding; and (c) deliberate intolerance, which involves interfering with specific beliefs or practices that are considered to violate moral principles and values" [56].

The three types of intolerance have three dimensions namely, an effective state, psychological process and behavioural outcome. Consequently, intolerance can manifest as subtle or overt violence [56]. Overt violence in South Africa has been linked to ethnocentrism and xenophobia. Ethnocentrism and xenophobia contribute to negative intergroup relations because behavioural intolerance is conscious and intentional. Ethnocentrism is a misconception of cultural superiority, and a tendency treat other ethnic groups as inferior. Xenophobia is broadly defined as attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that disregard or vilify a person based on their national identity. In the recent years South African had been associated with xenophobia [26]. The study focuses on subtle and unintentional behaviour, specifically microaggression in South Africa.

Lilienfeld defined microaggressions "as subtle snubs, slights, and insults directed toward minorities, as well as to women and other historically stigmatized groups, that implicitly communicate or engender hostility". The three categories of macroaggression are as follows: (a) 'microinsults' denigrate a person because of the identity such as belonging to a foreign ethnic group (b) 'microassaults' are intentional verbal attacks directed at members of vulnerable groups, and (c) microinvalidations entails ignoring the feelings, views or experiences women or minorities. The three categories are differentiated by the element of intentionality. Microassaults is intentional whereas microassaults and microinvalidations are regarded as negligent behaviour [57]. Microassaults such as verbal abuse and intimidation are criminal offences in terms of the South Africa Domestic Act 116 of 1998 [41] and the Intimidation Act 71 of 1982 [38]. Merely uttering words that induce fear or are perceived as threatening the livelihood or property of the targeted person is prohibited in terms of the Intimidation Act 72 of 1982 [15, 38]. The Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011, and the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Act 16 of 2023 also prohibits various undesirable behaviour towards women [43, 47]. The Global Peace Index rated South African as one the countries with the highest rate of violence against women [49]. Microaggression affects various social groups as people can be victimized based on diversity attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, level of education, status, ethnic, nationality and etcetera [55].

The microaggression committed against vulnerable groups such as foreigners is concerning. The term 'foreigner' refers to a person who is in a country where he or she has no citizenship. This term includes the following category of persons: the non-residence, temporary residence, permanent residence immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees [48]. South Africans use the word 'foreigner' as an umbrella term to refer to anyone who does not originate from South Africans [21]. A migrant is defined as a person who engages in remunerative activity in a country which they have no citizenship. The rights and privileges of migrants with permanent residence are equivalent to those of South Africa citizens [28]. Section 25(1) of the Immigration Act permits migrants with permanent residence to acquire South

African citizenship through naturalization [42]. This legal transition from migrant status to citizen accounts for the multi-identities of some residents, but this super-diversity is not always celebrated by indigenous South Africans.

South African indigenous terms used to define migrants include 'Makwerekwere' which refers to their rare foreign language [8]. The Zulu term Makwerekwere is regarded as derogatory unlike the term 'Abantu bogufika' meaning 'people who just arrived', or 'Omvela pandle' meaning 'someone who comes from outside' [13]. These Zulu terms are often used to refer to all foreign nationals not just migrants. Derogatory terms undermine social cohesion. Terms like national unity and Ubuntu downplay the complexities of economic pressures that frustrate cohesion in communities stifled by various inequalities [8]. South Africa is a welfare state struggling to redress disadvantages some of which result from the apartheid legacy [33, 54]. Most Black indigenous communities, namely townships and rural communities face persisting social challenges because of discriminatory social practices that promoted group hierarchies based on race and culture [3].

Migrants can either be documented or undocumented. Undocumented migrants either do not have a valid permit or may have a type of permit that does not allow them to work, and this makes their participation in socio-economic sectors controversial [28]. Migrants are a permanent feature in economic hubs worldwide. Migrants were integrated into South Africa's labour market since 1980s [26]. Statistics indicate that between 2016 and 2021, the net immigration was 852 992 people in South Africa, and the Gauteng province retains the highest migrant population in comparison to other eight provinces. Data showed that migration accounted for the high population growth in the Gauteng province because the province reported the lowest fertility rate [16].

The term migrant sometimes carries negative connotation in unequal communities across South Africa. In recent years anti-immigration sentiments have resurfaced in across South African communities. Migrants are associated with crime and unemployment across South Africa. The Human Science Research Council (HRSC) argued that it is a misconception that foreign nationals threaten job security and the economic prosperity of South African. The assumption that immigrants contribute to unemployment is still widely debated by various stakeholders [16]. The recent outrage on social media followed a parliamentary sitting that revealed universities across South African were hiring foreign nationals over Black South Africans who were either jobless or stagnant in junior positions. The Parliament portfolio committee on higher education established that universities had employed foreign nationals in non-scarce skills position regardless of the fact some South African academics qualified for the positions. Ashley Sauls, a parliamentarian, has since called for further assessment of universities' compliance with transformation and employment equity laws of the state. Criticism of the employment trends in South African universities should be cautioned because universities worldwide must strive for international academic representation [2]. Migrants significantly impact on the economic, political and social status of communities and countries worldwide. The significant impact of migrants on societies has contributed to policy development and structural adjustments aimed at managing the influx of migrants in South Africa. In 2023 President Ramaphosa launched the Border Management Authority (BMA) to strengthen border law enforcement functions at all ports of entry [46].

Inefficient border management and a dysfunctional immigration system over the years have contributed to the influx undocumented immigrants in South Africa [26]. Regardless of the influx of immigrants, the police and citizens are prohibited from violating the rights of all foreign nationals. Several laws provide for the humane policing of undocumented migrants. Immigration Act No.13 of 2002 (South Africa 2002) regulates the status of foreign national, their rights to certain social services, and access to employment. In April 2025, Minister Leon Schrieber established an Immigration Advisory Board (IBM) boarded to expedite evidence-based policy developments and decisions regarding immigration practice that contribute to backlogs in visa and permit applications [10]. The Employment Service Act No. 4 of 2014 [45] regulates the employment of foreign employees to ensure that candidates that meets requirements of critical roles, when a permanent residents or South Africans cannot meet the job requirements. The 1951 United Nation Refugee Convention provides guidelines on providing protective status and protecting rights of people fleeing war, persecution and other forms of life threatening situations [9, 26]. The 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa provides guidelines for regional cooperation between African states on the management of refugee [21]. The South African Police Service Act No. 68 of 1995 [39] mandates the police to prevent and combat crime. The South African Police Service (SAPS) also has a constitutional mandated to enforce the law which encompasses providing support to governments departments responsible for border management [40, 46]. The above legislative provisions enable foreign nationals and South African citizens with multiple identities to peacefully coexist and positively contribute to superdiversity in communities nationwide.

Problem statement

The discourse of negative perceptions and intolerance of undocumented foreign nationals is not unique to South Africa [4]. The influx of migrants is unsustainable in South African communities with high unemployment and poverty. In unequal communities, migrants are perceived as a burden to public services such as schools or clinics, and hinder employment opportunities [27]. Documented and undocumented foreign nationals continuously experience pushbacks from South African residence in urban, township and rural settings [25]. Negative perceptions coupled with unwarranted stereotype fuel intolerance towards foreign nationals [27]. The pervasive nature of intolerance makes discrimination inevitable in some communities with super-diversity [56]. The harmful consequences of unfair discrimination are widely discussed worldwide. Discrimination has negative effects on psychological and psychical health of victims [20]. The multiple forms of discrimination necessitate vigilance and understanding of the characteristics and consequences of the discriminatory [5]. Microaggression is one of many forms of measurable intolerance. Certain criteria can be used to for determining individual negligence or guilt of committing microaggression [7]. Microaggression entails subtle violence, and can be perpetrated as microinsults, microassaults or microinvalidations of vulnerable groups or individuals [57]. From 1994 to 2025, 1.171 xenophobic discrimination were recorded in South Africa, and the Gauteng province (441) cases in comparison to other provinces. Furthermore, Johannesburg (247), Ekurhuleni (94), and Pretoria (67) had the highest cases in comparison to other district municipalities in the Gauteng province [58]. Hate crimes tend to affect naturalized South African citizenship as their multiple identities do not guarantee protection from aggressors during violent surges in the Gauteng province. Microaggression entail subtle violence, and violence is linked to intolerance [7]. When women are aggressed against, the violence might infer inequality based on race, sex and gender. Discrimination propelled by hierarchies based on race and culture are embedded in South Africa's national being [3]. It is inconceivable for any human being to experience intolerance or live in fear in a democratic society. Therefore, United Nations member states such as South Africa must strive to eliminate all forms of violence and promote tolerance [26, 51]. The police must strive to protect women's right and maintain peace in communities across South Africa [23, 52].

Research objectives and questions

The study focused on the policing of microaggression experienced by South African women. The objective of the study was to establish the most common type of microaggression experienced by naturalized South African women in Johannesburg municipality. The research questions are listed below:

1. Is microaggression a common experience in your residential area?
2. What type of microaggression do you often experienced in public?
3. How do you manage microaggression when you encounter it?

Research Methods

Research Methodology is defined as a strategy that maps out a researchers approach to evidence based problem-solving. Research methods refer to the type of technics and procedures used to collect data, analyse and interpret finding [17].

Research paradigm and design

The study was qualitative research that used a phenomenological method and an interpretive paradigm to gain insight on the phenomenon of microaggression. Phenomenological research is concerned with human experiences and perception of specific phenomena [31]. The study used a qualitative research method to obtain descriptive information that would facilitate in-depth understating of microaggression as experienced by South African women. The study was located in Johannesburg municipality in the Gauteng province. South African had nine provinces [49]. The rationale for selecting Johannesburg for the study was informed by the reoccurring surge of violence against vulnerable groups [58]. The study population was South African women in the Gauteng province. The target population was the naturalized South African women who residing in Soweto a township that is located in Johannesburg municipality. The study applied purposive sampling to identify and invite participants for face-to-face 30-minute interviews. Phenomenological research conducted by students tend to have small sample size of 4-10 participants. There is no consensus on the correct sample size in phenomenological research conducted by academics [31]. The sample size of this qualitative study consisted of nine (9) participants, and the sample size was determined by data saturation. The rationale for the small sample size is informed by the concept of data saturation. Qualitative research use saturation to determine the adequacy of a sample. The data collection exercise stopped when the interviews stopped producing new information [14].

Participants and consent procedures

The study was approved at the University of South Africa by the College of Law Research Ethics Committee (CLAW_RERC). In compliance with research ethics code on human research, the study ensured respect for all participants' dignity, rights, and well-being. Participants who met the research criteria were recruited based on their availability. Face-to-face interviews were scheduled, and participants were informed of the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and anonymity identifiable information. Written consent was obtained from all participants by issuing hard copies of the consent forms. All participants were above the age of consent, which is 18 years in South Africa.

The nine participants were informed of ethical considerations such as the right to voluntarily participate or withdraw, the right to be respected and not be harmed, the right to privacy and to remain anonymous, and data protection. No financial incentive was provided for participation. All participants provided the study with written consent.

Data collection and data analysis methods

The study used an interview schedule with semi-structured questions to collect information from participants. The interview scheduled was administered during face-to-face interviews with participants. An interview is a method of gathering information through interpersonal engagement using oral communication. Furthermore, the discussion is restricted by the research timeframe and topic [17, 49]. Data analysis involved Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) using Atlas ti. TCA facilitated the identification of common themes in text, and it facilitated understanding of descriptive data [35]. To ensure legitimacy of the data, biases were prevented by applying reflectivity. Ethical mindfulness and code verification are ethical considerations that were also applied to the study. The data analysis process was iterative. To ensure transparency, transcripts were uploaded on Atlas ti unaltered to avoid errors that are prone to reconstruction of textual data, then coding was automated on Atlas ti. The coding of categories was repeated to establish consistency of results pertaining to the grouping of common themes. The verification of categories merged into one code was reiterative. The ethical mindset of bracketing was applied to prevent personal biases throughout the coding process. Additional ethical consideration applied included engaging peers, not accepting funding for the study, and ensuring that no conflict of interest arose in conducting the study [30]. All descriptive data was anonymized for future data sharing on online opensource. Data integrity adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) No.4 of 2013 [44]. Data integrity was informed by the trustworthiness criteria of qualitative research, which included credibility, reliability, transferability, and confirmability [12].

The processes of mitigating internal biases of the data collected were as follows: The study acknowledged the worldviews of all participants which entailed not expressing any value judgment about any verbal data and textual data. The study administered interview scheduled to nine participants, and used interviews to collect data, hence verbal data was transformed into transcripts with textual data. The interview scheduled contained the textual data of actual responses to the research questions. Participants were requested to read the final transcripts to verify the accuracy of the textual data before the interview was concluded [59]. The study was not concerned with the language proficiency of participants hence the spelling and grammar errors in textual data did not invalidate a participant's response. Grammar errors were verified with the participants before concluding each interview to make sure that data would be captured accurately during the coding and cleaning phase which preceded the identification of emerging themes [35]. The mitigation of internal biases of visual data was not a prerequisite as the study did not involve participant observations. Fieldnotes were taken to document the ethicality of the research process and to capture the information generated. Fieldnote were also taken for reflective purposes.

The summary procedure of the research is outlined below:

1. Identify and define the problem: The study identified instances of intolerant behaviour by the locals towards undocumented foreign nationals and naturalized South African citizens. The study defined this behaviour as microaggression which is a phenomenon that involves subtle aggression directed at vulnerable groups [57]. The discussion under problem statement identifies and also defines the research problem.
2. Enquire evidence: The processes of obtaining evidence are explained in the section titled data collection and data analysis. Ethical considerations were applied and consent obtained from all participants interviewed. The management of qualitative descriptive data in the format of physical transcripts to online resources was diligent and anonymous [35].
3. Appraise the evidence: The phenomenological studies focus on the lived experiences of individuals. The credibility of the data was informed by the thorough application of ethical consideration which involved asking participants to read through their responses to authenticate the data. The discussion on data collection and data

analysis method outlines how evidence was appraised, an example being the application of TCA and measures of trustworthiness. Furthermore, direct quotes of participants responses are provided to substantiate the value of the interviews used to obtain information centred on the research problem.

4. Apply the evidence: This study is not intervention research. Phenomenological research in general aims to describe findings hence the application of evidence or research findings is not a rigid prerequisite [31]. To apply the evidence of this study entailed coding and describing meaningful text extracted from the data.
5. Evaluate outcomes describing evidence-based research: Phenomenological studies do not seek to quantify findings hence evaluating outcomes was restricted to application of the Social Identity Theory which facilitated insight on the participants responses [31,36]. The identification of themes or patterns was the outcome of evidence-based research as each theme has theoretical and practical meaning. The outcome of the phenomenological study was context specific hence the meaning of each emerging theme was corroborated by existing literature and South African legislative frameworks. The outcome was that the data provided answers to key research questions. An overview of the outcomes is also discussed under findings.

The research theory applied

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) coined in 1970 by Henri Tajfel argues that a person's identity originates from the social group they subscribe to, and the group has distinguishable features that the individual identifies with. This social identification is the basis of self-concept, and it influences norms, emotions and behaviour. The theory facilitates understanding of interpersonal behaviour by explains the role of personal identity in intergroup behaviour, when group dynamics manifest as prejudicing and discrimination of individuals or social groups [36].

Results

The demographic information was as follows: All nine (9) participants self-identified as South Africans who spoke an indigenous African language. All participants were Black African women who resided in Soweto Township. Their ages were between 29 and 50 years. The level of education was primary (1), secondary (6) and tertiary (2). The response rate was positive as all questions were answered completely by the nine participants. Three dominant themes were identified in the data include verbal abuse, racial discrimination, and intimidation.

Theme 1, Verbal abuse. This is also termed verbal violence. It entails the use of words to disregard a person in order to prejudice them or cause emotional harm and psychological harm. The categories of verbal abuse include "ridiculing and teasing, name calling, yelling, verbal putdowns, negative prediction, negative comparison, shaming, cursing and swearing, and threats" directed at a person [37]. Verbal abuse in the context of this study encompasses inappropriate communication directed at a person to cause harm or discomfort. A few quotes are presented below to elaborate on this theme.

Table 1: Theme1 - verbal abuse

No	Quotes	Participants
1.	"Yes."	X1
2.	"Yes."	X9
3.	"Shouting."	X4

Table 1 above provides responses to the question "is microaggression a common experience in your residential area?" Data showed that one participant provided an ambiguous response and most participants (8) responded "yes."

Theme 2, Racial discrimination. "Racial discrimination refers to unequal treatment of persons or groups on the basis of their race or ethnicity". Discrimination is a behavioural manifestation of attitude that is motivated by prejudice and stereotypes about minorities [32, 53]. The study conceptualizes racial discrimination as stereotype-based behaviour directed at targeted minorities, such as naturalized South African citizen, with the intention of causing harm. Some quotes are presented below to elaborate on the theme.

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Table 2: Theme 2 - racial discrimination

No.	Quotes	Participants
1.	“Shouting”	X1
2.	“They beat and argue verbally”	X2
3.	“They insult with words”	X3
4.	“Shouting and being rude”	X4
5.	“Pushing”	X5
6.	“They often tend to insult”	X6
7.	“Insult”	X7
8.	“Insulting and shouting”	X8
9.	“Insulting and fighting”	X9

Table 2 above provides responses to the question “what type of microaggression do you often experienced in public?” Data showed that participants reported swearing (5), shouting (3) and pushing (1). Data showed that the microassaults were the most common type of microaggression experienced by the participants, who are naturalize South Africans. The findings showed that participants’ constitutional right to be treated with respect and dignity was undermined by other South Africans.

Theme 3, Intimidation. Section 1(1) of Intimidation Act (72 of 1982) provides that:

“(b) Any person who acts or conducts himself in such a manner or utters or publishes such words that it has, or they have the effect, or that it might reasonably be expected that the natural and probable consequences thereof would be that a person perceiving the act, conduct, utterance or publication -

(i) fears for his own safety or the safety of his property or the security of his livelihood, or for the safety of any other person or the safety of the property of any other person or the security of the livelihood of any other person. Shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding R40 000 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten years or to both such fine and imprisonment.” [15].

The study defines intimidation as conduct that involves uttering or publishing words that induce or have potential to cause a juristic person to perceive the conduct as threatening to the self or their family’s mental health, safety, livelihood, or property and is punishable by law. The table below presents a few quotes that elaborate on this theme

Table 3: Theme 3 - intimidation

No	Quotes	Participants
1.	“I Ask for help from other”	X1
2.	“I call other to help me”	X2
3.	“I keep quiet”	X3
4.	“I leave the place to avoid more aggression”	X4
5.	“I inform the police”	X5
6.	“I stay quiet and the walk away”	X6
7.	“I exercise self-control and walk away”	X7
8.	“I do to him what he is doing to me”	X8
9.	“I walk away”	X9

Table 3 above provides responses to the question “how do you manage microaggression when you encounter it?” Data showed that most participants walked away (4), reported (3), insulted the aggressor (1), and tolerated the insults (1). The strategies participants used to address the inappropriate behaviour are not indicators of the severity of the threat. The findings do however indicate that microaggression was underreported. The under reporting of criminal behaviour has negative implications on policing in the Gauteng province. The study cautions against the generalization of the findings because the study had a small sample. Furthermore, the study used a research paradigm that was context specific which contributes to limitations on the generalizability of the findings.

Discussion

The significance of the findings of verbal abuse, racial discrimination and intimidation indicate that the wellbeing and rights of naturalised female citizens were undermined in the Johannesburg municipality. The key themes identified in the data reflect the phenomena studied, microaggression [30]. The perpetrators and the victims of microaggression

were indigenous Africans, which highlight the complexities of super-diversity in Soweto Township. Microassaults was the most common types of microaggression experienced by migrants who became South African citizens through naturalization. A social identity theoretical interpretation of the microassaults is that South Africans were intolerant towards naturalized citizens. The microassaults were probably a defense mechanism against a perceived threat, discomfort, or opportunity to assert social dominance towards naturalized citizens. The display of intolerance could be interpreted as an attempt to restore order, rectify behaviour, or force the naturalized citizens to conform to social role expectations that are align with the aggressor's worldview. Group dynamics are inevitable, so social circumstances should not be a justification for intolerance. The study could provide numerous explanations to theorize the microaggression directed at participants, but the key point is that the behaviour constitutes intolerance. In addition to that, the discrimination of naturalized citizens is inferred from the data.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Verbal attacks or verbal insults are inappropriate behaviour that express intolerance. Verbal insults are classified as microassaults since the perpetrators commit these acts with the intention to harm the victim. Microaggressions like microassaults may at times constitute hate crimes hence the police must be vigilant to protect vulnerable groups. Although all microaggressions have negative consequences on victims it is not easy to police individual perpetrators because at times microaggression occurs unwittingly or unintentionally. The two types of unintentional microaggressions include microinvalidation and microinsults. Perpetrators of microaggression should be educated on negative consequences of microaggression to protect the wellbeing of naturalized citizens and to promote social cohesion in South African communities. Ubuntu values should be reinforced amongst all South Africans to promote social cohesion in Johannesburg municipality. Most importantly, the state and all stakeholders must continuously encourage social practices that promote unity in communities with super-diversity.

The processes of mitigating internal biases of data was informed by the processes used to generate and evaluate data. Firstly, the process of generating the qualitative data had to be complete and objective. Completeness entailed accurate recording or transcribing participants responses to ensure authenticity or rather credibility. The interview technique involved documenting reflective notes, bracketing of personal worldviews to prevent unconscious bias, and treating all participants equality. The interviewer respected the worldviews of all participants and accepted all claims presented by them meaning that information provided was not altered or modified [59]. To maintain the integrity of the interviews there was no value judgement of responses provided by participants. The data was descriptively adequate as it satisfied the research questions. Secondly, the process of evaluating the data involved assigning pseudo names to ensure anonymity of participants, and to prevent unconscious biases. Software was used for data coding to prevent errors [35,59]. Finally, conclusions derived from the data were informed by the iterative data evaluation process which relied on the identification of emerging themes and the application of the SIT to provide interpretations. Therefore, the qualitative conclusions were reiterative and summarized meaningful findings on the experiences of naturalized South African women.

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Biography of Author

Dr. Nomisa Ingrid Zikalala is affiliated with the University of South Africa (UNISA). She trained at the UNISA Institute for Social Sciences and Health Sciences (ISHS). She studied Community Safety and Socio-legal studies – specialization in Offender Profiling, and Community and Health Psychology at UNISA. She also obtained Policing Masters and Doctorate degrees at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). Has volunteered as a researcher at the Department of Military Veterans in South Africa and worked at the State Security Agency (SSA). She served as a Deputy Director at the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency and provided research support to Minister Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma’s advisors. In 2023, she worked as a junior lecturer at UNISA and is currently a Postdoctoral student at the UNISA College of Law – Department of Police Practice. The lectured modules termed “Professionalism for policing” which promotes ‘ubuntu’ principles throughout the criminal justice system. Prof. JT Mofokeng, Prof. and SA Mabudusha, and Prof. D Masiloane mentored her. Her research interests include the utilization of digitization in promoting efficient and accountable policing in South Africa, naturalized citizens and immigrants encounter with law enforcement and the locals, and the impact of immigration policies on human rights.