

'Heavy Yoke': Policing commercial burglary in Bronkhorstspuit, South Africa

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Abstract

Business owners within the Bronkhorstspuit commercial establishment have been experiencing burglaries, which do not only affect the businesses but business employees and community members as well. For this reason, it was crucial to evaluate strategies and, a quantitative approach following a convenience sampling was adopted and a cross-sectional design was employed. The data-gathering instrument was a paper-based, self-administered structured questionnaire, which included a standardised measuring instrument using a five-point Likert scale. A sample of 206 comprised of 35 business respondents, 72 business employees and 99 community members. The findings of the survey revealed that the majority of respondents were of the view that faster police response times and tougher sentences as the best strategies to reduce crime. It was also shown in the results that the relationship between role players in community policing forum (CPF) is very low, which only serves to exacerbate crime challenges in the area.

Keywords: Commercial burglary, Policing, Strategies, Strategic approach, Victimization.

Introduction

The spatial variation of crime is well established in criminological research and is increasingly recognised as a major predictor of crime risk. Some places experience numerous incidents of crime while others experience little to none (Eck & Weisburd, 2015; Shaw, 2001; Gerell, 2016). Compared to violent crime, burglary may appear to be a minor crime. However, the consequences of this crime are often serious. It can be very costly (Yang, 2006). This is especially true for burglary, partly because its targets are fixed places rather than mobile people or vehicles. Two important mechanisms have been identified as contributing factors that produce spatial concentrations in burglary. First, a large proportion of victims are repeat victims and past victimisation is often the best predictor of future victimisation (Tseloni & Pease, 2010). Repeat victimisation, which means the same person or place suffers from more than one crime incident, is an important issue

in crime analysis for several reasons. First, there is considerable potential for reducing overall crime rates by reducing or eliminating repeat victimisation (Yang, 2006:2). As a result, repeat victimisation substantially contributes to the development of burglary hot spots (Sidebottom, 2012). Secondly, research has examined the impact of land use on spatial concentration, usually focusing on predatory crimes such as robbery (Attermann, 2017). It is noted that there are two modes of enquiry among some of the research conducted in South Africa that adopt the non-spatial approach (Mulamba, 2020).

Seo, Kang, Byun and Ha (2018) argue that research on burglary and place has largely overlooked the effects of two important principles of environmental criminology. First, most studies have examined residential burglary, or burglary in general, failing to distinguish the different mechanisms that drive residential and commercial burglary. An important tenet of situational crime business characteristics influence activity patterns and in turn the distribution of crime opportunities (Sung-suk V & Maxfield, 2014). Although there has been considerable research in recent decades on the identification of factors that may contribute to crime and burglary at residential places in South Africa, few studies have considered business victimisation. This paper does not estimate the incidence and costs of burglary in Bronkhorstspuit, South Africa. This paper sought to fill a gap in the research in describing the views of respondents, regarding the challenges brought by burglary and based on the findings, what role-players can do to reduce the level of victimisation.

Research problem

The Bronkhorstspuit commercial establishment has been the target for burglaries. The area (Bronkhorstspuit) consists of a variety of businesses (retailers, manufacturers, factories, banks, repair shops and other services), which are an attraction for burglars. This has affected businesses and instilled fear of crime in the area. When fear of crime is on the rise, the public turn to the police for help. The police are then expected to respond to crime reports. When a member of the public reports a crime, it is expected that the police act on it by means of commencing investigations and making arrests. Research indicates that police crackdowns are one specific strategy of zero-tolerance policing (Coomber, Moyle, & Mahoney, 2017; Morales, Rafful, Baker et al. 2020). Police crackdowns involve the sudden increase in police threats, sanctions and arrests for general or specific offences in particular places, for example, drug consumption in open drug markets (Ediomo-Ubong, 2018; Morales, Rafful, Baker et al. 2020). Although calls for police to crack down on crime might satisfy citizens, not all police crackdowns have been proven as effective as one would have hoped.

Therefore, strategies other than police crackdowns need to be considered to respond to burglaries and evaluate their effectiveness. Burglaries threaten tourism and investments in Bronkhorstspuit (Kungwini Local Municipality, n.d). Business burglaries also threaten the economic growth of the area, business opportunities and community development such as job opportunities and business developments. Generally, it is common knowledge that in high crime areas, especially in commercial establishments, there are fewer investors as some might be afraid of losing their funds to crime. Existing investors are likely to pull out as crime escalates, to protect their

investment returns. A less or no crime area attracts more investors, which contributes to economic growth of the community and employment opportunities. Nzimande, as quoted by Corrigan (2008), reveals that the tourism industry has indicated that if there were not such high crime rates in South Africa, the industry would have been conducting 25 percent more business than presently.

Literature review

Commercial burglary and its impact

A criminal act of breaking and entering a building illegally for the purpose of committing a crime is referred to as burglary. In this case, commercial burglary would refer to the intentional and unlawful entry and/or breaking into business premises for the purpose of removing, unlawfully taking or stealing cash or any other movable property and/or items from the premises (SAPS Communication Nodal Point, 2015). Mawby (2014, p. 279) concurs that the legal definition of burglary varies between countries and notes,

someone enters property without permission in order to steal something. That is, there is no need for forced entry, but rather it is the 'entry without permission' that distinguishes burglary from theft. Accordingly, a number of burglary scenarios can be distinguished:

- Forcible entry through a door, window or roof;
- Use other method (for example, credit card) to enter through locked door or window without causing damage;
- Enter through an open door or window; and
- Enter with permission, where the offender used trickery to gain access.

Just like any other crime classified under the South African criminal law, each crime is defined according to elements. Burglary also has elements that qualify it to be a criminal act. The elements of burglary are identified as trespassing and breaking and entry. Trespassing signifies that it must occur without the consent of the victim. If the perpetrator gains entry by presenting false identity, an element of trespassing is satisfied. Breaking consists of creating an opening for entry into the building. It can be accomplished by removing an object that is blocking an entry or by blasting open a wall (SAPS Communication Nodal Point, 2015). The breaking element is satisfied if access is obtained by opening a closed door or window, regardless of whether they are locked. Entry occurs when there is physical intrusion into a building by any part of the trespasser's body. In considering the extent of commercial burglary, two questions are preminent. First, do commercial premises experience more burglary than residential property? Secondly, how does burglary compare with other crimes against businesses? Overwhelmingly, research has found that businesses experience more crime than do individuals and the evidence for burglary parallels this (Gill, 2016).

The costs of crime are borne by many different segments of society – starting with the victim whose loss often far exceeds the value of goods stolen or property damaged (Miller, Cohen, Swedler, Ali & Hendrie, 2021). Lewis (2013) argues that crime statistics seem to be discussed more than figures for other social phenomena. Mulamba (2020)

points out that a few issues regarding crime data in South Africa need to be pointed out. First, the property crime counts used to calculate crime rates are crime counts as reported by crime victims or communities to police stations. One can expect that these individual or community-reported crime counts underestimate actual crime because of underreporting, which itself is caused by many factors (Moreira, Kassouf & Justus, 2018; Mulamba, 2020). There are two main hypothesised justifications for not reporting a crime. First, rational choice emphasises that victims of crime consider the benefits and costs of reporting the crime. The benefits are related to police protection, the possibility of the criminal being detained and a reduction of the risk of future victimisation. The costs, in turn, are the inconveniences associated with legal proceedings, the fear of revenge and retaliation. The victim will report the crime only if the net result of this cost-benefit analysis is positive.

The second reason for not reporting a crime is that the victim may not trust the authorities to which the crime should be reported (Moreira, Kassouf & Justus, 2018). For instance, there is a perception in communities that the South African police are not efficient and effective in resolving cases. Berg, Slocum and Loeber (2013) and Murphy and Barkworth (2014) concur that several individual, situational and contextual factors reliably predict whether or not victims mobilise police services. Hence, Mulamba (2020) emphasis that there is reluctance by community members to report property crime, in particular when the victims of crime perceive that the additional emotional pain they will have to endure until a case is solved outweighs the damage inflicted by the crime itself. However, Hiropoulos and Porter (2014) state that property crime, including other non-violent crimes, is the offence reported the most to the police. Property crime is made up of crimes that involve the removal (theft) of property, where these crimes do not involve force or threat of harm to the victim (Bhorat et al. 2017). For the purpose of this article, this definition covers commercial burglary.

Regarding under reporting by victims of crime for various reasons, Mulamba (2020) argues that generally, community members are encouraged to report a crime of which they are victim at the nearest police station. It is on this basis that this study assumes that crime counts reported to police stations located within the boundaries of a municipality have occurred in said municipality. Hence, it is important to understand the relationships between socio-economic, demographic and deterrence variables and crime conditions prevailing in a municipality, along with reported crime that occurred within the boundaries of said municipality. However, Bhorat et al. (2017) argue differently, stating that South Africa has some of the highest reported crime statistics in the world, making the study of crime and its determinants of particular interest in this context.

A study commissioned by the South African Presidency (2008) provides a snapshot of the experience of firms in three urban locations, namely Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg/ Gauteng. The survey focused on businesses operating in five industrial sectors (retail, personal services, professional services, small manufacturing and construction) with the potential to contribute to economic growth and to support job creation. It covered businesses located in inner city areas, large townships and informal settlements and densely developed suburban areas such as shopping centres

and business parks. The findings of this study, highlighted that burglary made up the largest proportion of incidents for the smallest and the largest businesses. Businesses in the smallest turnover category are largely informal and probably have limited access to secure storage facilities for stock or equipment and less money available for security measures. On the other hand, businesses in the highest turnover band, with sophisticated equipment on site in addition to stock, are likely to present an attractive target for criminals (South African Presidency, 2008).

They also generate more activities and thus present a broader target. While only just over half of businesses in the sample had been victims of crime in the past year, the level of repeat victimisation among these was high. The 243 businesses that had been affected by crime had experienced a total of 578 incidents, an average of 2.4 incidents per effected business. Almost a third of businesses in the sample had been victimised more than once. Of these, 18 percent had been victimised three or more times; they had experienced an average of 4.8 crimes over the past year and perhaps more telling, accounted for 61 percent of all crimes experienced by businesses in the sample, including 57 percent of burglaries and one third of robberies. They also accounted for 81 percent of fraud and 87 percent of shoplifting incidents. In areas characterised by high crime levels, two thirds of businesses had experienced multiple incidents of crime and businesses operating from city centre locations were most likely to be victims of repeat crime. While location is important, the size of the business appeared to have little relation to the number of times victimisation occurred (South African Presidency, 2008).

With such disadvantages of burglary incidents that the police come across, a strategic approach in resolving burglaries would play a prominent role. There are a variety of policing strategies around the globe, however, not all are effective (Braga & Brunson, 2015; Braga & Weisburd, 2010; Lum, Koper, Gill, Hibdon, Telep & Robinson, 2016; Meijer & Wessels, 2019). What works elsewhere might not necessary mean it would work in South Africa. Nevertheless, in some cases, countries may share solutions according to common crime experiences, which could have a good impact, as some of these attempts might provide clear guidelines, frameworks and systems that could be utilised to improve the process involved in managing knowledge utilisation (Mofokeng, 2020) by law enforcement agencies to enhance the effectiveness of the tried and tested strategies.

This is an attempt by policy makers and researchers to determine what works, what has potential and what needs improvement or be revisited, although Bruce (2003, pp. 1-16) warns that care should be taken regarding "cut-and-paste" reforms in police environments without identifying the uniqueness of the current policing environment. The same applies nationally; South Africa has nine provinces and the same strategies may be applied in all provinces and be effective, however, in some cases, they may result in opposing outcomes. The town of Bronkhorstspuit in not different in this case. Hence, the problem that was identified, particularly in Bronkhorstspuit, was important for the researchers to look into, with regard to the manner in which commercial burglaries are policed, focusing on this area.

Responses and environmental design

The manner in which the police deal with crime impacts on crime in general as well as the public. The concept of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) focuses on areas that often become the targets of acts of crime and then emphasises on techniques that could reduce acts of crime in the affected areas (Marzbali, Abdullah, Razak & Tilaki, 2012; Sakina, 2020). CPTED is a different approach in crime prevention. It may be expressed as physical environmental designs that may reduce opportunity for criminal acts and thus reduce fear of crime through natural, mechanical and procedural means. This is based on physical environmental characteristics that influence (Galanou, Ioannis & Vasilagos, 2019; Yates & Ceccato, 2020). It can be argued that crime statistics and the police personnel numbers are used to measure the capacity of the police and strength to successfully respond to crime.

However, the manner (strategies employed) in which crime is policed determines the outcomes, regardless of the capacity and other resources. Cordner and Scarborough (2010) integrate burglaries as discovery crime because they are discovered after the fact. With discovery crimes, rapid police response is unlikely to matter because the incident would have occurred a long time before the call to the police. Therefore, the resource capacity would have little or no impact in such situations. Clarke (2006) argues that an effective strategy will improve the implementation of several different responses. Deployment of directed police patrols, portable high-tech devices, CCTVs that record pictures and sound only during the periods of activity and portable silent alarms that alert the police when activated, could assist the police in reducing burglary events and increase the chances of arresting suspects right on the scene.

Although burglaries may seem to occur randomly, they actually involve a selection process. Businesses are selected based on particular factors, such as the type of goods sold, occupancy, surveillance, accessibility and security to determine vulnerability (Office of Neighbourhood Involvement, 2015). Burglars choose retail establishments based on the desirability of merchandise, environmental design, preferably expensive items (Ariel & Partridge, 2017). The perpetration usually occurs when there is little or no activity or movement in the surroundings (Ceccato & Nalla, 2020; Yates & Ceccato, 2020). The determinants of crime rates can be divided into human dimensions (psychological and physical elements, the pathological characteristics of criminals) and environmental dimensions (such as socioeconomic, demographic and physical factors).

However, from the perspective of prevention, human dimensions are difficult to address in advance, because doing so can violate individual rights. Hence, it may be more fruitful to focus first on environmental factors and clarify their effects on crime (Byun & Ha, 2016). The physical environment is especially important, because it affects a broad spectrum of citizens equally and the visible effects of lowering crime are maximised. Crime has a geographic attribute (Byun & Ha, 2016). It is not easy to apply crime prevention techniques such as controlling access and activities in open spaces; urban street environments are one example. It is especially difficult to strengthen crime prevention efforts on footpaths in commercial districts used by the

general public (Seo, Kang, Byun, G & Ha, 2018). An alternative to this approach is implementing sociological crime prevention concepts such as the 'eyes on the street', coined by Jacobs (cited in Byun & Ha, 2016, p. 74).

Factors contributing to commercial burglary

Numerous factors influence an individual's decision to commit commercial burglary; for instance, the need for money. Determining factors associated with commercial burglary would lead to better chances of establishing and developing strategies and to eliminate those factors. It needs to be noted that some of the factors, such as need for money caused by unemployment, are beyond the control of the police. However, factors related to safety and security measures, vulnerability and lack of police visibility are within the powers of the police to control. Burglars usually have common characteristics and motivation, the need for money may be considered as the primary reason for offenders to commit commercial burglary (Blevins, Kuhns & Lee, 2012, p. 07). Furthermore, the need for money can be for various reasons, such as to feed drug habits, poor family background, hunger or poverty and so on.

Findings of the study of Kuhns and Blevins (2013) highlight that burglars were interviewed to gain an insight into their motivation to commit burglary. The study revealed that 88 percent of respondents (interviewed convicted burglars) indicated that their main reason for committing burglaries was related to their need to acquire drugs or money (51% for drugs and 37% for money). As stated earlier, burglaries occur when the premises are unoccupied and when there is little or no movement at all; night time is the most likely time for burglars to be active. Gilbert (2007) attests that burglaries take place during the night and such burglars are likely to be skilled and professional criminals. Similarly, Prenzler (2009) adds that 80 percent of these burglars are young males aged 15 to 25. They are likely to have had a record of school failure, poor parenting, substance abuse, are unemployed and unskilled with weak bonds to conventional society and little or no empathy for victims. The majority of the offenders are introduced to burglary by peers.

With such contributing factors, businesses are vulnerable. To decrease vulnerability, the majority of businesses must have, at least, proper security; however, that does not prohibit an experienced and highly motivated burglar. Among other contributing factors, Prenzler (2009) identifies two characteristics influencing an offender's decision to commit burglary: the area and the opportunity. According to Prenzler (2009), non-residential burglary rates are likely to be higher in low-income areas and in low social structures, however, burglary can also occur across all types of areas, even wealthy areas, although such areas have high and tight security measures. Wealthier industrial areas that are accessible to offenders from poorer areas can also experience higher rates of burglary. Factors contributing to commercial burglary seem stronger than the security measures employed by business owners. This is where the involvement of the police is highly required as there is little the business owners can do to secure their business premises.

Theoretical framework

The study of criminal events at places is influenced and supported by three complementary theoretical perspectives: rational choice, routine activities and environmental criminology. According to rational choice theory, the commission of a crime requires that an offender have knowledge and information, though incomplete, that allows him/her to weigh the costs and benefits of offending at a specific place and a particular moment in time (Michael, Hull & Zahm, 2001). The theory further assumes that offenders seek to benefit themselves by their criminal behaviour, that this involves the making of decisions and choices, however rudimentary on occasion these choices may be and that these processes, constrained as they are by time, the offender's cognitive abilities and, by the availability of relevant information, exhibit limited, rather normative rationality (Braga, Weisburg, Waring, Mazerolle, Spelman & Gajewski, 1999). Additionally, routine activity theory posits that a criminal act occurs when a likely offender converges in space and time with a suitable target (e.g. victim or property) in the absence of a capable guardian.

Rational offenders come across criminal opportunities as they go about their daily routines and make decisions whether to take action or not (Braga et al. 1999). Given that criminal opportunities arise out of routine activity and rational behaviour, it is not surprising that the commission of a crime is a process that follows a pattern. Patterns vary by types of crimes and to some extent by locations because, as mentioned previously, situational factors such as surveillance, occupancy, accessibility and security to determine vulnerability play a role in the crime as well. Environmental theory claims that crime happens when five elements come together, namely a law, an offender, a victim or target, at a time and place. It explores patterns of where, when and how crimes occur (Yang, 2006). Four elements are important to understand crime patterns. They are (a) event process, (b) crime activity, (c) readiness/willingness, and (d) interaction of all the former elements. Therefore, in order to prevent crime one must understand (a) the routine activities that bring offenders into contact with targets, (b) the pattern that an offender follows in the perpetration of a specific type of crime, and (c) those environmental site features the offender uses to reduce effort and risk and increase reward. Together, the three allow for identification of potential points of intervention and suggest possible strategies for preventing crime.

Research materials and methods

For this study, the research paradigm was rooted in positivism. Consequently, a quantitative approach was adopted and a cross-sectional design was employed. The data-gathering instrument was a paper-based, self-administered structured questionnaire, which included a standardised measuring instrument using a five-point Likert scale. The survey was divided into two sections. Respondents in the survey were asked to state their level of agreement with those given statements, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data collected were analysed by coding and were computerised. Answers within the questionnaire were assigned numerical codes and entered into Microsoft Excel. The codes from Excel were

subsequently transferred into the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) (International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), [sa]; SPSS, [sa]) for coding and further analysis (Bryman, 2012). The quality of the data was ensured through demonstrating validity and reliability. Ethical considerations are an important aspect of any research, especially research that deals with human respondents. Hence, all research requires ethical clearance and approval in order to be conducted. For the purposes of this study, ethical clearance was granted by the university, initially on the condition that the business owners, business employees and community members approved the request to conduct research. This was later changed to full ethical clearance following the approval of the research request by all respondents. The population size of the study comprised of 206 respondents from and around Bronkhorstspuit in the Metsweding District Municipality. The targeted population was divided into three groups; business owners, business employees and community members. There were 35 business respondents, 72 business employees and 99 community members. The targeted population is knowledgeable of the burglary situation within the area and affected by it, either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, a non-probability purposive sampling was used to explore the perspectives on strategies used by the SAPS in policing commercial burglary that the businesses are experiencing and which the community members and employees are being affected by. Businesses within the Bronkhorstspuit commercial establishment were populated using the Internet. Information (contact details and addresses) on businesses gathered was validated telephonically and where possible, appointments were scheduled. Information on the business employees was gathered through business owners. Information on community members was not gathered procedurally, members were randomly approached on the street. Data were collected from respondents through a set of questions (survey). Bryman (2012) describes survey as a set of questions that are used to collect a body of quantitative data in connection with two or more variables, which are examined to detect patterns of association. The surveys were distributed to those who could not schedule for face-to-face interviews. Distributed surveys were collected from the respondents at scheduled times.

Research findings and discussion

Awareness regarding commercial burglary is crucial for the CPTED to succeed. For the purpose of this paper, the below statements were formulated with the intention to explore how broad the business owners, business employees and community members' awareness regarding commercial victimisation is, how effective the relationship between the police and the community is, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the police current strategies to policing commercial burglary, in general. Statements 1 to 6 of the questionnaire provided valuable information about the awareness of community policing as well as partnerships, which include its existence and to what extent CPF programmes have been publicised and supported. The following discussion focuses on how each of these statements is understood in the community policing context and raises key questions about their effective implementation.

Statement 1: Evaluating the effectiveness of the police current strategies to policing commercial burglary

46.6 percent of respondents agreed that the evaluation of the effectiveness of police current strategies to policing commercial burglary is crucial. 15.0 percent disagreed, whereas 37.9 percent of the respondents were not sure. Interpreting the results, it was found that little is known on the strategies used by the police, which leads to the perception that there is a need for improvement of police transparency with the public. The findings also revealed the necessity to compare strategies used in the past five years until present. This was because it is believed as time changes, so does crime. It is therefore important for the police to keep up with the changing times, especially when it comes to new ways (strategies) of committing crime. There are contributing factors to crime developments; therefore, the comparison of strategies five years back and recently would assist in measuring the level of effectiveness and evaluating if the strategies are still relevant. If found not effective, then new and better strategies matching burglary challenges can be determined. In this manner, there would be the likelihood of successfully combating commercial burglary.

Some strategies were found ineffective and some, such as police visibility, were questionable. Police visibility is an important practice of policing in preventing crime and quick response to immediate criminal events. The visibility of police officers in areas acts as both proactive and reactive policing. In regard to commercial burglary, police visibility would play a crucial role in proactive policing to effectively protect business premises from being burgled. The outcomes of proactive and reactive policing through police visibility benefits both the SAPS and the public at large. Through the two approaches (proactive and reactive policing) the police would be able to effectively fight burglary without having to put so much effort into investigations and other strategies that could take a lot of time, leaving the targets vulnerable and offenders enough time to flee. The availability and visibility of the police puts the community at ease and places less burden on witnesses having to testify in court, especially when there is fear of being exposed to criminals. Therefore, the visibility of police works effectively as the primary strategy for crime prevention and reduction (Palmary, 2001). Newburn (2005) argues that the visibility of the police (police patrols) cannot always be effective in preventing crime but can assist in restoring order in affected areas. On the other hand, it has not been proven if the strategy (police visibility) is deployed for specifically commercial burglary (and other property crimes) in Bronkhorstspuit or is deployed as a general policing strategy by the SAPS.

Statement 2: Gaining the overview of community members concerning the problem

Community members are of the perception that commercial burglary is prevalent in Bronkhorstspuit. 86.9 percent of the respondents were of this view, 4.8 percent were against it and 8.23 percent were not sure. In line with the statement, findings indicated that the community is willing to cooperate with the police to fight commercial burglary. It was found that burglary incidents are always being reported to the police and the police were attending to such reports. The level of response of the police to reported burglaries impacts on the official crime statistics. On the

contrary, crime statistics do not always reveal the realistic status of crime levels. For instance, burglary statistics can be misleading; thus, the majority of business owners do not report the incidents (Federation of Small Businesses, 2005: 14). This implies that statistics in this case would refer to the statistics of burglaries that the police attended to, excluding those that were not reported or not attended to.

Furthermore, an overview from the community concerning the problem revealed that the police are transparent to the community, which may be linked to the courage to report burglaries. However, on the evaluation of the effectiveness of police strategies (as discussed above), some respondents were not sure if the strategies were effective or not, stating that the police are not transparent enough. Openness and transparency is part of the Batho Pele principles laid out by the Department of Public Service and Administration (2014) that must be complied with by governmental departments in South Africa. In this regard, the SAPS was found in compliance with the principles, regardless of the view that police strategies are not known because of lack of transparency. Because the police were found to be transparent, the community had confidence in the police and had the view that the police could be relied on to deter commercial burglary in the area.

Statement 3: Assessing the awareness level regarding commercial burglary

93.2 percent of respondents were of the view that awareness on commercial burglary would contribute to preventing it. 2.4 percent disagreed and 5.3 percent were not sure. According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (2014), the public must be informed of the services provided by the department (SAPS) and services made available to them for use. When the community is aware of the services provided to them in regard to commercial burglary, it empowers awareness. In this case, awareness would mean access to information to all (residence community and business community). As part of burglary awareness, the business community needs to be alerted on common methods of operation to protect the premises from burglary. The residence community needs to be supplied with information on signs indicating that a burglary has taken place, is about to take place or is in progress. Moreover, burglary prevention guides supplied by the police would maximise the chances of reducing burglaries and provide opportunities to prevent it.

The level of burglary awareness was found lacking in the community and the affected structures (commercial establishment). The finding reflects that there is not enough information provided to the business community on how to prevent commercial burglary and minimise the opportunities of being seen as vulnerable and to be targeted. Furthermore, the finding indicates a lack of communication, which would impede progress on combating commercial burglary. Effective communication in awareness plays a major role in information sharing. The use of information shared would impact positively on alerting both the business owners and the police on burglaries. Therefore, communication amongst business owners is vital.

Statement 4: Effectiveness of the relationship between the police and the community

It was found that 56.3 percent of the respondents agreed that there is an effective relationship between the police and the community. 28.2 percent of the respondents disagreed, whereas 15.5 percent were not sure if the relationship was effective or

not. According to the respondents, the existence of the community policing forum (CPF) in the area is evidence that there is an existing relationship with the police. The CPFs in South Africa are created to establish a crime-fighting relationship between the police and the community. Community policing can be conceptualised as a police-community partnership where local communities become key stakeholders in preventing crime (Albrecht, 2012; Edwards & Zambuko, 2007).

Even though the relationship was found to be effective, there are still issues that need to be addressed. It was further found that there is a lack of cooperation between the police and the business community. To combat commercial burglary, the police would need information from business owners affected by the crime. Business owners would also need to provide information to the police in order to be able to identify gaps and challenges that are stumbling blocks to combating burglary. Effective strategies would assist in tackling burglaries; therefore, the establishment of such strategies would need the identification of the gaps, challenges, causes and common methods of operation so that the strategies would be suitable and relevant to resolve the problem. This would be a challenge to accomplish without the cooperation between the police and the business community. The fundamental reason for the lack of cooperation was found to be the lack of proper training that the SAPS receive to enable them to deal with the public.

Statement 5: Impact of commercial burglary on commercial organisations, employers and employees

It was identified that burglary has a negative impact on the growth of businesses, which would lead to the retrenchment of employees. This is because the more burglaries that occur the more money has to be spent on replacing stolen items and fixing damaged property, rather than spending the money on remunerating employees. 52.0 percent of the respondents agreed that the majority of businesses in the area experience burglaries at least once a year. 12.6 percent disagreed, whereas 35.4 percent were not sure. Employers rely on the businesses to make profit to be able to remunerate employees. Therefore, continuous incidents of burglary were found to have potential negative impacts on the employers to retain all employees. Brand and Price (2000:40-48) reason that the financial burden on business owners to replace stolen items and repair damaged property suppresses business finances.

Impacts of burglary incidents were also found not only to affect the businesses but also instil the fear of losing jobs amongst employees, affecting the economy of the area and suppressing the financial stability of employees. Elaborating on the finding, Breetzke (2008) is of the opinion that lack of financial stability has the likelihood of leading one to criminal behaviour. According to Breetzke, there is a strong relationship between the levels of unemployment and the financially benefiting crimes. It can be argued that some of the burglars are depressed, unemployed individuals who commit burglaries to gain money. Therefore, cutting jobs (retrenchments) would add fuel to other socio-economic issues that the police do not have control over.

Statement 6: Factors contributing to commercial burglary

Rationally, monetary gain is expected to be the most common factor contributing to commercial burglary; however, results revealed that the highest ranking factor is in relation to the response of the police to burglary reports. 78.4 percent of the

respondents are of the perception that rapid response by the SAPS is a necessity to control commercial burglary in Bronkhorstspuit. 3.9 percent of the respondents were against the view and 27.2 percent were not sure. In a similar vein, the identification of gaps, challenges, causes and methods of operation would assist in establishing relevant strategies. Identifying contributing factors would also impact positively on the relevancy of strategies. Furthermore, lack of proactive response strategies by the SAPS was linked as a contributing factor to the occurrence of commercial burglaries. Additionally, lack of trust between the police and the community was addressed as a contributing factor. The finding stipulates that lack of trust between the police and the community motivates offenders.

Study limitations

The researchers could not reach the desired number of responses due to the following challenges: 1) not all questionnaires collected from the respondents were completed, 2) some of the questionnaires were either lost or completed incorrectly, which were then regarded as null and void. In some cases, authors were confronted with critics about the study and respondents gaining misleading perceptions on the purpose of the study. Due to that, authors were forced to give an extensive explanation about the objectives of the study, which prolonged and delayed the targeted time frame of data collection.

Conclusion and recommendations

The research findings have provided that the SAPS is fully responsible for the safety of business premises in the Bronkhorstspuit commercial establishment. However, that does not imply that business owners should be negligent of their business premises, especially when unoccupied. Even though the SAPS is responsible for the safety of properties, the findings stipulate that it is the responsibility of business owners to ensure that their business premises are secured with proper security measures. The responsibility of the SAPS lies upon applying necessary measures on strategies to deal with the commercial burglary in the Bronkhorstspuit commercial establishment. On the other hand, effectiveness of current policing strategies by the SAPS, in response to commercial burglary, was questionable. Findings addressed that some strategies, such as police visibility and awareness of the problem, were lacking. Regardless of the gaps in strategies, respondents still believe that commercial burglary is preventable in the area.

In resolving the matter, it was clear from the respondents that it is important for the SAPS to evaluate and assess its strategies to ensure a positive impact on burglary. A comparison of strategies employed five years ago and currently was recommended in this regard. So far, other than improving the strategies used by the police, it seems awareness on the problem, cooperation and the relationship between the SAPS and communities (residential and business communities) would have an impact on resolving the matter. In order to accomplish this, the SAPS members would need to be trained on how to handle and deal with the public in terms of interacting with

them, providing feedback and information.

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