



Received: 13 February 2023
Accepted: 03 August 2023

*Corresponding author: Zandile Faith Mpofu, Discipline of Criminology and Forensic Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban, South Africa
E-mail: zandilempofu19@gmail.com

Reviewing editor:
Heng Choon (Oliver) Chan,
Department of Social Policy,
Sociology, and Criminology,
University of Birmingham, UK

Additional information is available at
the end of the article

LAW, CRIMINOLOGY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Communal responses to burglary at residential premises in the Cato Crest informal settlement, South Africa: Implications for community policing

Zandile Faith Mpofu^{1*}, Nomathemba Nomakhosi Sibisi¹ and Nonhle Tracey Sibisi²

Abstract: Violence and crime in countries such as South Africa are shaped by deep socio-economic inequalities; however, urban areas and housing spatial also play a role, but often in differing ways. Housebreaking is unlawfully and intentionally breaking into and entering the building or structure with the intention of committing a crime. There is limited qualitative research published on communal responses to burglary in informal settlements where the hyper-permeability of housing structures directly shapes residents' crime experiences. The study adopted a qualitative

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Zandile Faith Mpofu

Zandile Faith Mpofu is currently a PhD candidate in Criminology and Forensic Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban, South Africa. She holds a Bachelor's, Honour's and master's degree in Criminology and Forensic Studies. She has been recognized as one of the top 15% scholars and is a member of the Golden Key International Society. Zandile is a budding researcher whose research interests are focused on forensic criminology, fraud, burglary, restorative justice, criminal law and crime prevention.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Residential burglary is a property crime that has the most elevated occurrence rate of all violations in South Africa. It might in this way significantly affect individuals' discernments and sentiments of well-being. Residential burglary has the highest frequency of all crimes in South Africa and the current trend in the number of residential burglaries indicate that this type of property crime will probably remain a serious problem in society for the foreseeable future. The study reports on impact of residential Burglary and interventions to curb residential burglary in the area of Cato Crest Informal settlement in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study focused on community members and community leaders of the area in order to address the exclusive concepts around which the research question was centred. The findings of the study highlighted that contact crimes such as burglary are social or domestic in nature and occur primarily within the social environment, such as private residence, the victims of such crimes can be left in a traumatic state, also that the community needs more than the Neighbourhood Watch Programme for burglary to lessen. Criminals must be arrested, and cases should be investigated, and convictions must be done so that the criminals would not take this offence lightly. The study recommends a need for police and clinic-based counsellors who can be trusted by the community, a need for additional programs that will help to curb crime in the area.

approach within the interpretivism paradigm. Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with a total number of ($n = 15$) participants, consisting of ($n = 11$) members of the Cato Crest informal settlement community and ($n = 4$) community leaders who were selected through snowball and purposive sampling strategies respectively. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. This study revealed that alarming crime incidences affect the social life of community members. Community members have resorted to changing their house locks frequently; using weapons to defend themselves; and setting up Neighbourhood Watch Programmes and/or Community Policing Forums to detect and curb crime. We recommend that law enforcement officers be proactive in their approach to dealing with crime as they are the first respondents to crime. Community leaders, community members with law enforcement officers should monitor activities to protect people/property by patrolling around the area, investigating crimes and apprehending suspected law violators.

Subjects: Criminology - Law; Crime Control; Criminal Justice; Police; Violent Crime; Crime and Crime Prevention; Criminology and Law

Keywords: burglary; residential burglary/housebreaking; informal settlements; community policing

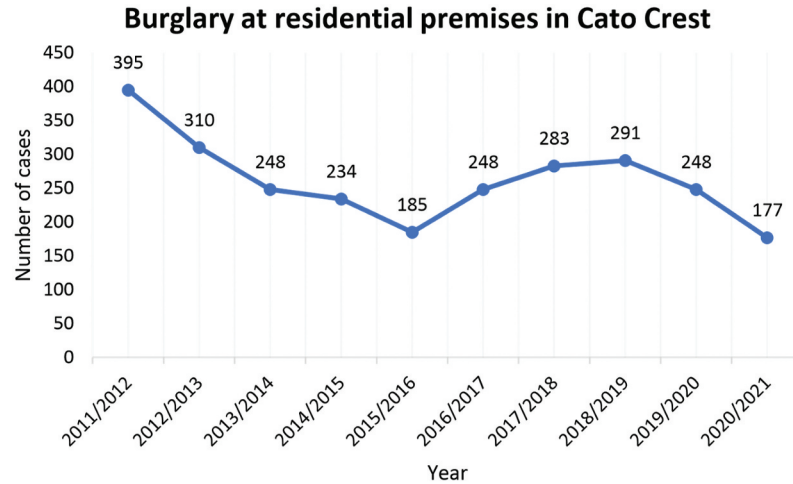
1. Introduction

Residential burglaries are daily occurrences in most societies (Govender, 2016). Burglary at residential premises is a huge crime, with 240 000 burglaries each year in South Africa (Zinn, 2017). House robbery is the term formulated by the South African Police Service (SAPS) to describe a residential burglary where the perpetrators gain unlawful entry into a residence and then overpower, detain and rob the occupants of the residential premises while inside the residence (Govender, 2016). There are numerous studies exploring crime prevention measures and burglary impact (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013; Huigen, 2020; Mabasa & Obioha, 2020; Mundlovu et al., 2021). There are also studies investigating key factors that contribute to residence vulnerability (Breetzke et al., 2014; Van Zyl et al., 2003). However, at the time of writing, the literature regarding community policing and burglaries in informal settlements which are areas characterised by poor social cohesion and poverty has not been so thoroughly explored. Against this backdrop, this study explores communal responses to burglary at residential premises in the Cato Crest informal settlement and its implications for community policing.

1.1. Problem statement

Cato Crest, an informal settlement located approximately 11 km from Durban's Central Business District (CBD), is known for its violence and high rates of burglary cases which often remain unpunished. People living in Cato Crest are confronted with a variety of difficulties on a daily basis, including poverty and the socio-economic decay of the legacy of apartheid (Ngidi, 2019). In this study, a problem of residential burglary was identified; the reason for this is that residential burglary is still a significant issue in Cato Crest and is likely to continue to be so for whatever length of time individuals are experiencing poverty and relative deprivation (South African Police Service, 2021). Individuals from Cato Crest and other informal settlements are at risk of becoming a victim of residential burglary and yet an adequate communal response to reduce residential burglary is lacking. As evidenced in the literature, one of the advantages of community policing is the improved positive views of citizens on police and the way in which they view them as legitimate authorities in their communities (Crowl, 2017; Mabasa & Obioha, 2020; Mundlovu et al., 2021). Over the past years, community policing has gained significant attention from police, professionals, and academics. However, there is a general lack of consensus regarding how community policing should be conceptualized and implemented to reduce burglary rates (Crowl, 2017).

Figure 1. Burglary at premises in Cato Manor, Source: South African Police Service (2021).



1.2. Study aim and objective

Through a synthesis of research evidence and primary data collected through semi-structured interviews, this study explores communal responses to burglary at residential premises in the Cato Crest informal settlement. The purpose was to explore evidence-based research and implications for community policing interventions concerning burglaries at residential premises in the Cato Crest informal settlement.

2. Literature review

2.1. The extent of burglary at residential premises in Cato Manor

The figure below presents crime statistics released by SAPS annually. The data was obtained from the recent SAPS financial year (covering cases received from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021). The figure below illustrates a graphical representation of the changes that occurred over the past 10 years in burglary at residential premises in Cato Manor. The x-axis represents the years and the y-axis represents the total number of burglary cases. The changing slope of the line segments emphasizes changes, trends, and patterns.

Figure 1 depicts the instability and fluctuation of burglary at residential premises for the past 10 years (2012–2021). The figure above illustrates that burglary was at its highest between 2011 and 2012 ($n = 395$) and decreased thereafter. The year 2015/16 marked the period where burglaries in Cato Crest started to increase. They reached their peak in 2018 with 291 cases before decreasing again. Recent statistics on burglary cases (2020–2021) indicate a decrease in burglaries in Cato Crest (South African Police Service, 2021). Although there has been a decrease, it is essential to note that Cato Crest contributes a large number of cases to provincial burglary statistics.

2.2. Impact of burglary

Crime has significant, yet fluctuating effects for victims and communities. The effect of crime on victims brings about emotional and mental, physical, financial, social and spiritual consequences. Huigen (2020) asserts that residential burglary victims suffer from emotional and mental trauma. It is further revealed that although victims may not be physically assaulted, emotional, social and financial impacts leave victims with detrimental effects (Huigen, 2020). While there are no consistent findings about victims' difficulties adapting to the aftermath of criminal exploitation, a victim's capacity to adapt to the effect of crime relies upon a variety of factors.

Waller (1984, p. 23) contends that trauma from residential burglaries is one of the most common and overlooked issues in criminal justice. He states that approximately 1 in 20 burglary cases involve severe trauma. Maguire (1980) noted that residential burglary harms victims' health

and mental well-being. Burglary victims suffer more than victims of other property crimes because burglary involves the interruption and invasion of predominantly secure territory. Altman (1975) identifies three primary types of areas with which people come into contact. Primary territories, such as the home or house, are considered of the utmost importance to an individual. In contrast, secondary territories, such as the workplace or neighbourhood streets, are perceived as having less mental “centrality” (Altman, 1975). Burglary is an invasion of the primary territory and an assault on the victim’s security. Victims react differently based on the individual, the stolen goods, and the burglary itself. Studies have found that some victims react differently to the belief that stolen items can simply be replaced compared to crimes such as murder or assault where victims may suffer adverse effects (Bachem & Maercker, 2016; Wollinger, 2017). However, if the objects are of high value, others may be affected emotionally and financially (Bachem & Maercker, 2016).

2.3. Review of interventions to curb burglary

A fairly substantial amount of research has been published over the years on different interventions to curb burglary at residential premises (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013; Hedayati-Marzbali, Maghsoodi Tilaki, et al., 2017; Huigen, 2020; Mabasa & Obioha, 2020; Mundlovu et al., 2021). Previous studies similarly and consistently identified neighbourhood gate as a measure used to prevent and reduce burglary (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013; Breetzke et al., 2014; Huigen, 2020; Mabasa & Obioha, 2020; Mundlovu et al., 2021). Gated communities restrict access to entry points into the community. This includes locked gates, booms barring entrance for vehicles, entry codes and/or entry cards, and security guards who work 24 hours to limit access for non-residents to the neighbourhood (Breetzke et al., 2014). In an extensive research review (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013), examined the relationship between burglary victimisation and gated communities in Tshwane, South Africa. The goal was to determine whether neighbourhood gates are a useful strategy for lowering burglary rates. The results showed that burglary rates are higher in gated neighbourhoods.

A study by Santos and Santos (2015) evaluated whether evidence-based police strategies reduce residential burglaries in micro-time hot spots. The findings indicated that tactical response by police to micro-time hot spots led to considerable reductions in residential burglary incidents. Additionally (Govender, 2016), explored the role played by physical protection systems in preventing residential burglaries. These systems include security guards, armed response services, security lights, dogs and closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance systems. Govender (2016) found that residential burglaries continue despite physical protection systems in place. It was found that burglaries occur when victims are away from their homes, during the night and in the early hours of the morning. There are extant studies on Neighbourhood Watch Programmes which is a contemporary form of community policing where people can look for each other’s houses and report any suspicious activities.

2.3.1. Community policing

Community policing has rapidly emerged as one of the most well-received and widely adopted crime prevention measures in the South African Police Service (SAPS). It has transitioned from reactive policing to a community-based approach since community policing implementation (Dlamini, 2020). This method of policing has been found to be more proactive (Dlamini, 2020). Community policing is defined as a framework that advocates for proactive organizational solutions to address the proximate circumstances that result in public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime (United States Department of Justice, 2009). Furthermore, Crowl (2017) asserts that community policing incorporates a wide range of distinct characteristics. These characteristics include the decentralization of authority, the use of problem-oriented strategies, public involvement in law enforcement decision-making and encouraging residents to take an active part in the fight against crime within their own communities through the provision of necessary resources (Crowl, 2017). All of these factors, taken together, highlight the importance of strong relations between communities and law enforcement in working together to limit crime

in neighbourhoods. As evidenced in the literature, communities can help police by engaging in operational planning, neighbourhood patrols, providing information on crime investigations, assisting police officers in making an arrest and providing testimony during prosecution (Crowl, 2017; Mabasa & Obioha, 2020).

Mabasa and Obioha (2020) conducted a study to explore public participation and the challenges facing community policing in burglaries in Eldorado, South Africa. Mabasa and Obioha (2020) discovered that community members were willing to support the police in the fight against crime by participating in safety and security matters. However, other community members exhibited an uncooperative attitude toward community policing, such as a lack of willingness to assist the police and hiding criminals in the neighbourhood (Mabasa & Obioha, 2020). On the other hand, Mundlovu et al. (2021) explored the nature and extent of residential burglaries in the Namakgale policing area. The findings indicated that traditional policing methods such as foot patrolling and vehicle patrolling by SAPS officers was ineffective. This was because the number of burglaries continued to be on the rise despite these measures in place. Mundlovu et al. (2021) recommended that security systems and rebuilding trust in police from community members can play an essential role in deterring burglaries.

The above indicates that there is a plethora of literature on burglary at residential premises that can be used for redesigning and establishing effective prevention strategies. This study explores community policing and neighbourhood initiatives to combat burglary. Neighbourhood watch in the current study is conceptualised as a concept that people living in the same neighbourhood can work together to curb crime. They can also report suspicious activity. The study explores communities' efforts to achieve the goal of Neighbourhood Watch Programmes to reduce crime and promote safety. This is done through increased community involvement and the dissemination of information about potential safety measures.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Rational choice theory

Rational Choice (RC) theory was employed as a theoretical backdrop for the study. The RC is rooted in the argument that offenders make rational decisions when committing a crime where they weigh up the potential benefits, risks and costs (Clarke & Cornish, 1985; Cornish & Clarke, 1987). Offenders' decision-making is also structured by the physical and social environment (Clarke & Felson, 2017; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson & Cohen, 1980).

Rational choice theorists believe criminal behaviour is motivated by opportunities, and these opportunities might take the shape of exploitable capabilities or vulnerabilities, as well as shortcomings or shortfalls that can be exploited (). A residential burglary, in accordance with rational choice theory, necessitates the perpetrator engaging in a series of continuous decision-making processes during the crime (Govender, 2016). The primary decision to commit a burglary may be motivated by opportunities presented by personal needs; however, the selection of a suitable house is made after proper reconnaissance work has been undertaken on potential targets, and is based on experiential knowledge and environmental cues associated with "good" targets (Govender, 2016).

Burglars may use multi-level search strategies to identify a target. They may pick a particular neighbourhood and then a particular residence within the neighbourhood (Bernasco, 2010; Cornish & Clarke, 2014). Residences deemed attractive with valuable items to burglars and less secure are often targeted (Govender, 2016). According to Zinn (2017), burglars tend to search for a suitable house in the area that they know best. If they have detailed information about a certain house and the people who live there, or if they have gained access to confidential information as a result of their reconnaissance work, that house will be more susceptible to attack than other potential targets for which they have no information (Govender, 2016; Zinn, 2017).

Previous studies on burglary consistently indicate that burglars often target residents close to their current residence, because of their familiarity with the area. This allows them to easily identify ideal targets (Brantingham & Brantingham, 2017; Townsley et al., 2016). Evidence suggests burglaries are opportunistic (Govender, 2016; Zinn, 2017). In addition, Zinn (2017) reports that most burglaries occur during the day when most people are at work. Similarly, Armitage and Joyce (2019) found that burglars go from house to house searching for unlocked doors and windows. The strategy they use to determine whether or not anyone is home is ringing the bell at the gate. They also knock on the door, or bang on the gate. If no one answers, the criminals break into the home. If someone answers, they usually refer to a certain person by name, then pretend to be at the wrong house by asking for the wrong person. Furthermore, Davies and Johnson (2015) state that burglars also consider the ability to easily escape from the crime scene. They further explain why burglaries are higher on more connected streets and informal settlements (Davies & Johnson, 2015). In the present study, rational choice theory was used to investigate how offenders interpret and weigh up the costs and benefits associated with their offending decisions. It also explored how communities could deter burglaries through community policing.

3.2. Routine activities theory

In addition, a Routine Activities Theory (RAT) was adopted to explain why community members resort to informal approaches to keep their communities safe. The RAT was coined by Cohen and Felson (1979), and it posits that crime occurs as a result of routine activities (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The most essential element of the RAT is the “opportunity” to commit a crime. According to Clarke and Felson (2017), opportunities to commit crime are driven by the environment, method and vulnerability of the victim. RAT includes three primary elements that explain why crime is likely to occur namely the motivated offender, the suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. The theory posits that crime is neither random nor accidental, but rather is contingent on the availability of opportunities to carry out an offence (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013). In essence, it is the day-to-day activities people engage in during the day and night that increase their susceptibility to crime.

In the context of burglary at residential premises, an offender may frequently navigate around particular neighbourhoods seeking residences that seem like suitable targets for burglaries (Purpura, 2013). Residents who are frequently vacant throughout the day due to work and school commitments are good targets for burglaries (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013; Purpura, 2013). Moreover, residents lacking access restrictions or other security measures can also be targeted (Breetzke & Cohn, 2013). Due to the socioeconomic constraints in the area, Cato Crest is an informal settlement without private security or surveillance. Neighbourhood Watch programs are thus primarily responsible for street safety (Purpura, 2013). A capable guardian may be law enforcement, security officials, or regular citizens who can step in or act as witnesses (Turvey & Freeman, 2014). In this study, residents, neighbours, community members, and others on the streets can become capable guardians.

4. Methods

4.1. Research approach

This study adopted a qualitative approach further located within the interpretivist paradigm to understand subjective world of human experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This approach is appropriate to the study’s aim, which is to describe and comprehend human behaviour instead of clarifying it.

4.2. Selection of participants

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilised in this study. As indicated by Creswell and Creswell (2017), purposive sampling is a procedure which is reasonable for specific cases. It is used to improve understanding of selected group encounters, and snowball sampling technique expects that a “bond” or “connection” exists between the underlying example and others in a similar objective populace, enabling a progression of referrals to be made within a circle of colleagues (Berg, 1988).

For this study, the researcher recruited a sample of 15 participants who were either community members or community leaders in the Cato Crest informal settlement. In soliciting data using purposive sampling, the researcher approached a community councillor and other community leaders. In soliciting data using snowball sampling the researcher was referred by the councillor to a community member. Data collection continued through referrals from community members.

The qualities of the required sample were: community members who lived in lower socio-economic areas of Cato Crest in Durban, community leaders, and a significant number of male and female participants. The purpose behind involving both male and female participants in the study was that the study was to understand the perspectives and responses of both sexes. These perspectives and responses may be different or vary in degree and intensity. Participants included were either victims or non-victims of residential burglary. The reason for including the two categories (victims and non-victims) was to build up an understanding of the perspectives and responses of participants holding distinctive interpretive frames and good reference points created on burglary. Some potential participants were not interviewed because of time and resource constraints. The effect of this on the credibility of the study was remunerated by reaching saturation on information obtained from accessible participants.

4.3. Demographics of study participants

Pseudonym	Position in the community	Age
CL (1)	Councillor	43
CL (2)	Community Leader	35
CL (3)	Community Leader	38
CL (4)	Community Leader	60
CM (1)	Community Member	25
CM (2)	Community Member	36
CM (3)	Community Member	40
CM (4)	Community Member	27
CM (5)	Community Member	40
CM (6)	Community Member	35
CM (7)	Community Member	28
CM (8)	Community Member	45
CM (9)	Community Member	30
CM (10)	Community Member	27
CM (11)	Community Member	48

4.4. Data collection and analysis

This study was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: HSS/0803/018 M). All ethical protocols were observed, and pseudonyms were used for anonymity purposes and informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to each interview session. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection method. The semi-structured interview was suitable for this study since it allowed for a free and open dialogue with the interviewees and gave the researcher an opportunity to acquire in-depth information about burglary concerns in the area. The data collection tool was a semi-structured interview guide generated after a thorough literature search to establish a gap in the body of knowledge.

In this study the data were transcribed in sequence. The next step was to analyse data utilizing a system of qualitative analysis known as thematic analysis. King and Brooks (2018) indicated that thematic analysis is a procedure of analysing data using themes emerging from the data. In this process, the researcher(s) read through the data and categorized key thoughts and words into connected themes and views. The responses were categorised into separate themes. Categorising the data into themes was done through thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts and grouping similar information together. The study harnessed two major themes namely (i) security measures implemented to curb burglary and (ii) community policing programmes to curb burglary. Researchers (NTS and NNS) reviewed the coding process and its outcomes and no key diversions were noted. According to Nyambuya et al. (2021) when coding is done by different researchers, it is important to ensure inter-coder reliability.

5. Findings

The study was guided by one objective and two major themes were generated from the objective. These are security measures implemented to avoid burglary, and community policing programs to curb burglary in this area. The participants for the study will be referred to by codes: CM represents comments by community members of Cato Crest informal settlement and CL represents comments by community leaders of Cato Crest.

5.1. Security measures implemented to curb burglary

Participants indicated that after a burglary, victims would feel safe after installing some security systems to protect themselves from repeat burglary. In this case, the participants were asked if there were any measures taken by the victims or by the community members to protect themselves from being burgled again. Most of them believed that there were some measures that could be taken by community leaders or individuals to protect themselves from being victimised. The participants had the following comments about security measures installed after a burglary:

Considering the set-up of the houses in this area, it is impossible for one to install CCTV cameras and electric fences because most of the people that live in this area can hardly afford security gates what more these expensive measures. So, it is up to an individual to protect their household from the criminals. (CL-1)

5.1.1. Change of house locks

High-density areas such as Cato Crest have a very high crime rate and most of the time the community members know or suspect the people behind the crimes. People from this community could hardly afford the most effective security measures, so they settled for the ones they could afford; something that they thought could work for them. People from these kinds of areas believe in mob justice and having a team of people participating in the Neighbourhood Watch Programme suggested that if they were to catch a criminal, the community members will punish the criminal by beating them up.

Another participant added that:

Most of us cannot afford installing security measures as it is expensive; the only option we are left with when a burglary occurs is to change our house locks and sometimes put security gates, of which that is also a problem because of affordability. The only thing we do is just to make sure that the criminals won't come to our houses again. (CM-8)

The trauma experienced by burglary victims in Cato Crest was inevitable. Victims felt unsafe in their own houses and became extra careful each time they entered their houses. Some victims had multiple locks in their houses, and some ensured they closed doors and windows early evening during summer when it is hot.

Having to change locks in your house and have multiple locks is the only option most of us are using right now, you find that a burglar guard gate has three locks at the top, in the middle and at the bottom and the door as well, the door lever lock is changed and replaced with a new one for extra security. (CM-6)

5.1.2. *Use of weapons*

Some of the victims slept with weapons under their beds ready to attack the perpetrators. This becomes a big problem because one cannot feel safe in their home.

We have had people entering my home more than three times, I have reported this to the police station and nothing is being done about it, so I have resorted to sleeping with knives, and any other sharp object I can find under the pillow or under the bed. (CM5)

Some of the participants raised the point that most burglaries are completed within minutes of entry. This means chances are high you might not get help prior to you having to defend yourself.

we sometimes do not have a choice during these encounters with the perpetrators, we keep weapons in our houses to protect ourselves. For example, having a pepper spray, you know that it keeps you safe from afar, so once you use the pepper spray on the perpetrator, the next thing you can use is maybe a bat or a knife to scare them away, but I know some people go to the extent of beating the perpetrators up of stabbing them as self-defence. (CM-4)

5.2. *Community policing programs to curb burglary*

5.2.1. *Community Policing Forums*

Implementation of community policing in South Africa is done through the establishment of CPFs which is the responsibility of SAPS. It is stated in the SAPS Act (Act 68 of 1995) that the Provincial Commissioner, who is the head of the police at a provincial level, shall be responsible for the establishment of CPFs or any other structure in the community to involve the community in the fight against crime. To some, it was done haphazardly. However, the community is said to have been involved through invitations to participate in choosing their community members to serve on the CPF and sector forums. Others find it challenging to unite such a diverse community and get them to come together with the police to discuss crime-related matters.

It is difficult because you find that mostly there are people who complain most of the time and then when it comes to participation and then doing something about their complaints, they do not wanna come forward. (CL-3)

CPF's and sector forums are structures established as partnerships between community members and police officials. According to the objectives of CPFs and boards, forum members are supposed to sit together, look at the crime challenges and statistics of the policing area. They are supposed to analyse them and come up with projects that will help prevent crime. Should the community experience challenges, for example, complaints that are attended to late or not attended to at all, or misuse of resources, the forums are used as a platform to discuss the challenges. In South Africa, the responsibility for establishing these forums lies with the SAPS. The SAPS, in this instance the Station Commander, is expected to convene a meeting whereby the whole community is represented and get the community to nominate community members who will represent them at the forum. From the SAPS, the station commander and members nominated by the station commander, will form part of the forum. These are forums established to address crime issues, including addressing social ills such as poverty, and abuse among others which may lead to crime.

Yes, we do have a CPF in Cato Crest. (CL-3)

Yes. We have Cato Crest Community Police Forum. We have other organisations in our area that also assist us to fight against crime such as Juluka Tsotsi, Sesifikile, all these forums assist us to

fight crime in our community. We also have private security companies that are also involved around our area such as Boss Security, Blue Security and ADT all fall under our CPF. (CM-4)

Yes. The Cato Manor CPF. We have sector commanders that are able to communicate with the CPF; this is done before they communicate with the station commander. These structures can communicate with the police and address crime issues in each sector. If the CPF can resolve the complaint they are able to provide the police station with a report or the police can intervene. (CL-2)

The community choose these people self to represent them and sometimes some community members volunteer to be part of these programmes. There is no segregation in this instance anyone who wants to be part of the programme is allowed to be. (CM-2)

5.2.2. *Neighbourhood watch program*

The intolerable levels of crime continue to impede peace and stability in South Africa and weaken economic growth and tarnish the image of the Republic (Meth, 2009). There is a need for measures to be taken to curb residential burglary in residential areas. Some felt the measures that have been put in place by law enforcement agencies are not enough, and that communities sometimes take their own measures to curb burglary. The participants raised concerns that there were not many programmes in this area to help reduce burglary in this area as the police were not involved much in this community. The programmes were started by community members on their own. The participants voiced the following about the programmes:

A participant voiced the following:

As the community, we came up with an initiative that will benefit us because we saw that the police usually neglect us. We decided that we should have a Neighbourhood Watch programme and, in this way, the community members will feel safe when they are within the community. (CL-3)

CCTV cameras are usually installed in upmarket suburbs and for a high-density area like Cato Crest, it emerged that it was unsustainable for residents to install these measures. People living in Cato Crest could hardly afford a living for themselves which meant installing CCTV cameras was beyond their capacity.

The participant believed:

We came up with the alternative of a Neighbourhood Watch programme because we could see that most of the families could not afford expensive security measures, yet burglary rate yet escalating. This programme is voluntary, and it is advisable that only males should be part of it as they are believed to be stronger than the females. (CM-4)

Participants indicated that the police took burglary lightly, and every time people reported such crimes, they were not taken seriously. Community members then come up with their own initiatives to benefit themselves.

The next participant was of the view that:

I believe that there are more programmes in this area. For example, I have heard people talking about them, but the problem is that they are not implemented because of the lack of finances. The one that is successful is the Neighbourhood Watch programme because I am also part of it. We usually have meetings before our patrols because of the number of people who are committed. Since we know that this a voluntary initiative some people attend when they feel like doing so and this becomes a challenge to us as we won't be able to safeguard the whole area. (CM-1)

Through the neighbourhood watch initiative, residents willingly participated in night patrols and provided crime and criminal information to security personnel, particularly police officers. Night patrols and passing of criminal information helped a lot in crime prevention as one participant stated that:

Through the neighbourhood watch initiative, the community members willingly accepted to participate in night patrols and to provide criminal information on any irregularities arising in our area. Community members were ready to do it since it reduces criminal incidences in our area. (CM-7)

Cato Crest is an informal settlement. It emerged that community members wanted to have very effective programmes, but they had financial restrictions because most of the people in the area did not have jobs. The Neighbourhood Watch programme itself was not as effective as it was supposed to be because of being a voluntary programme, hence people attended when it suited them.

The participant was of the view that:

The Neighbourhood Watch programme is the only initiative that we have as a community. This initiative involves mostly the male figures in this community as we believe that they are the strong ones and they can fight the criminals. The programme was started by a group of unemployed men from the community because they believed that they can help the community in a positive way as they are around the area all the time. They know what is happening within the community. (CL-1)

Cato Crest is an informal settlement. It emerged that community members would want to have very effective programmes, but they had financial restrictions because most of the people in the area did not have jobs. The Neighbourhood Watch programme itself was not as effective as it was supposed to be because of being a voluntary programme, hence people attended when it suited them.

The participant was of the view that:

The Neighbourhood Watch programme is the only initiative that we have as a community. This initiative involves mostly the male figures in this community as we believe that they are the strong ones and they can fight the criminals. The programme was started by a group of unemployed men from the community because they believed that they can help the community in a positive way as they are around the area all the time. They know what is happening within the community. (CL-2)

Neighbourhood Watch was a male-dominated programme because it required physical strength. Community members involved chased the perpetrators, so it required fitness and brave people.

The participant believed:

We have an initiative called the Neighbourhood Watch programme. So far we are 15 and we try and divide ourselves amongst the sections of the community. We came up with this initiative when we saw that burglary rates were escalating in the community. We usually meet every day in the evening at around 6 pm when its summer and around 5 pm when its winter because we know that it will be getting darker at those times and the criminals will start patrolling and targeting their possible victims. (CM-8)

Considering Cato Crest informal settlement already has active community policing forums, this makes it easier for the community to fight against crime. The organisations that form community policing forums are already established and have been working for years, these organisations were the most effective in helping fight and curbing against burglary crimes in Cato Crest informal settlement. The Neighbourhood Watch programme required consistency to scare away the

perpetrators. Participants shared that perpetrators would obviously study their victims' routines so that they could know where they were and how many they were. The programme required a number of people in order to cover the entire neighbourhood.

6. Discussion

The nature of residential burglary involves physical contact, usually of a violent or threatening nature between criminals and their victims. The most vulnerable people in the area of Cato Crest are those that are never home, those that don't usually lock their houses and those that do not have security in their houses for example burglar guards, alarm systems and dogs. Also female victims are most affected as they are considered to be more vulnerable and not physically strong to fight the perpetrators. In the area of Cato Crest, perpetrators are very aggressive, especially when they come in contact with the victim. There is use of weapons during the incidences and victims either get stabbed or beaten up by the perpetrators. The perpetrators usually familiarise themselves with houses and the residents' daily routines. Being familiar with an area, a house or the routines of the targeted residents makes it easy for them to burgle at any time of the day. Given that burglary is a passive crime, the offender will always choose times and places that will limit the probability of an encounter with victims. For the community to be functional, it must have strong measures in place to curb any form of crime that puts the community members at risk. The findings revealed that there is not much that the government is doing to help curb burglary in this area, so the community members take matters into their own hands. Sorenson (2003) & Hope (1995) claimed that programs such as neighbourhood watch do not seem to have any proven crime-reduction value. The main problem with neighbourhood-watch programs is that they are voluntary. They are likely to work in neighbourhoods where residents are already well-connected to each other but are unlikely to demonstrate much effectiveness in high-crime neighbourhoods already suffering from social disorganisation. In this case, the study revealed that community members came up with an idea of having a neighbourhood watch programme which consists of community members who participate voluntarily. These community members take turns at night to guard or to walk around the community looking for suspicious activities. The study revealed that it is a bit of a challenge because this is a voluntary programme and people participate when they feel like doing so because they don't get paid for it, according to (Mawby, 2013), keeping neighbourhood watch in working order is a hardship as well, due to the dwindling of enthusiasm from the residents or high people turnover in the area, Neighbourhood watch programs are mostly ineffectual due to the fact that many people do not want to participate.

The study revealed that the neighbourhood watch programme is becoming effective and needs more time because it is new. The study revealed that burglaries are decreasing in this area. This shows that the programme is effective, though there are still some cases reported but it is no longer the same as before. A neighbourhood watch requires dialogue and collaboration between the occupants and the police, and residents must ensure it works properly. The study also found that the community needs more than the Neighbourhood Watch Programme for burglary to decrease; instead the criminal justice system (CJS), especially the police must treat burglary with the seriousness it deserves. Criminals must be arrested, and cases should be investigated, and convictions must be made so that criminals do not take this offence lightly. Walker et al. (2006) found that offenders on pre-trial or pre-incarceration bail commit a significant number of burglaries, in addition to other crimes. In view of this finding, there seems to be some value in debilitating specific offenders. This is if for no other reason than to physically prevent a particular individual from involvement in more crimes for a brief time frame. Townsley et al. (2015) stated that some police conduct observations and curfew checks on offenders under court supervision. Truancy reduction initiatives may be a component of this strategy. Given the high rates of recidivism, burglars are likely to reoffend. In one study of primarily semi-detached dwellings, arresting repeat offenders (and hardening targets) resulted in a 60 per cent decline in burglaries (Walker et al., 2006). Targeting repeat offenders has produced more indictments and convictions, and longer sentences.

Claims are also made that CCTV provides public reassurance and reduces fear of crime, which may, in turn, increase the use of public spaces (Bennett & Gelsthorpe, 1996). Tilley et al. (2015) suggests that CCTVs may reduce crime as people are deterred from visiting CCTV-covered areas, believing them to be too dangerous. The study revealed that most people in the area cannot afford

security measures like CCTV cameras and electric fences. This is because of their house design and general affordability. Cato Crest area is a low socioeconomic area and most people live in shacks, which makes it difficult to install these security measures. The study revealed that the only way victims can protect themselves is through changing locks. Those that can afford security gates do so but there are only a few households that can afford burglar guards. According to a study by Tseloni et al. (2014), which examined the effectiveness of burglary security devices, extra locks and external lighting are the most effective. Door locks increase the effort and time needed for breaking into a property and thus the risk of the potential burglar being interrupted by passers-by or neighbours (Chenery & Pease, 2013). Alarms, surprisingly, appears to offer less protection than having no security measures at all. When combined, extra door or window locks with either security chains or external lights offer the most effective protection.

Conceptually, the findings demonstrate that if the fight against crime is to have any meaning, community policing, especially CPFs be thoroughly understood. This is particularly important in the South African context because community policing without a clear focus on crime risk factors generally has no effect. These risk factors include the “root causes” of crime.

7. Conclusion

This study revealed that alarming incidences of crime affect the social life of community members. Therefore, much needs to be done to detect and curb crime incidences within the community. The Criminal Justice System (CJS) must strive to be proactive in their approach to dealing with crime. The participants voiced that relevant staff must maintain an open dialogue with community members by being approachable and helpful. The criminal justice system is designed to deliver “justice for all.” This means protecting the innocent, convicting criminals, and providing a fair justice process to keep order across the country. In other words, it keeps our citizens safe. Law enforcement officers are considered first responders to crime. On a daily basis they respond to emergency calls, patrol assigned areas, conduct traffic stops, issue citations, and more. Officers may need to restrain suspects and even chase them on-foot. They also need to deter crimes and assure the community through high-visibility policing. Monitor and patrol assigned areas to ensure the safety of people and property. Investigating crimes and apprehending suspected law violators. They should work collaboratively with community members and community leaders to design proactive methods to deter crime. They should also create a safe environment that nurtures professional citizens who shy away from crime, no matter what the circumstances are. There is a need for further research to address the issue of burglary within the communities. Researchers, community leaders, community members and police officers should work closely together to design proactive methods to deter crime and create a safe environment that nurtures professional citizens who shy away from crime, no matter what the circumstances are.

Funding

The authors received no direct funding for this study

Author details

Zandile Faith Mpofu¹

E-mail: zandilempofu19@gmail.com

ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7217-8711>

Nomathemba Nomakhosi Sibisi¹

Nonhle Tracey Sibisi²

¹ Discipline of Criminology and Forensic Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

² Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Data availability statement

Data analysed in this study were a re-analysis of the existing data which are openly available at the university repository <https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/18765>.

Ethics approval

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of the University of KwaZulu Natal for studies involving humans with protocol number: HSS/0803/018 M.

Statements and declarations

Cato Crest community leaders and members who participated in the study are hereby acknowledged for their invaluable contribution.

Citation information

Cite this article as: Communal responses to burglary at residential premises in the Cato Crest informal settlement, South Africa: Implications for community policing, Zandile Faith Mpofu, Nomathemba Nomakhosi Sibisi & Nonhle Tracey Sibisi, *Cogent Social Sciences* (2023), 9: 2246209.

References

Altman, I. (1975). *The environment and social behaviour: Privacy, personal space, territory, and crowding*. Cole Publishing.

- Armitage, R., & Joyce, C. (2019). Why my house?—Exploring the influence of residential housing design on burglar decision-making. In R. Armitage & C. Joyce (Eds.), *Rebuilding crime prevention through environmental design* (pp. 23–57). Routledge.
- Bachem, R., & Maercker, A. (2016). Self-help interventions for adjustment disorder problems: A randomized waiting-list controlled study in a sample of burglary victims. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 45(5), 397–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2016.1191083>
- Bennett, T., & Gelsthorpe, L. (1996). Public attitudes towards CCTV in public places. *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention*, 5(1), 72–90.
- Berg, S. (1988). Snowball sampling—I. *Encyclopedia of Statistical Sciences*.
- Bernasco, W. (2010). Modeling micro-level crime location choice: Application of the discrete choice framework to crime at places. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 26(2010), 113–138. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-009-9086-6>
- Brantingham, P. L., & Brantingham, P. J. (2017). Environment, routine, and situation: Toward a pattern theory of crime. In *Routine activity and rational choice* (pp. 259–294, Vol. 2017). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315128788-12>
- Breetzke, G. D., & Cohn, E. G. (2013). Burglary in gated communities: An empirical analysis using routine activities theory. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 23(1), 56–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567713476887>
- Breetzke, G. D., Landman, K., & Cohn, E. G. (2014). Is it safer behind the gates? Crime and gated communities in South Africa. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 29(1), 123–139. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-013-9362-5>
- Chenery, S., & Pease, K. (2013). Understanding Domestic Burglary in Leeds, Safer Leeds Executive Repr. Unpublished. *Applied Criminology Associates*.
- Clarke, R. V., & Cornish, D. B. (1985). Modelling offenders' decisions: A framework for research and policy. *Crime and Justice*, 6, 147–185. <https://doi.org/10.1086/449106>
- Clarke, R. V., & Felson, M. (2017). Advances in Criminological Theory. In R. V. Clarke & M. Felson (Eds.), *Routine activity and rational choice* (pp. 1–14). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315128788-1>
- Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588–608. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2094589>
- Cornish, D. B., & Clarke, R. V. (1987). Understanding crime displacement: An application of rational choice theory. *Criminology Crossref*. ISI. 4, 25, 933–948. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1987.tb00826.x>
- Cornish, D. B., & Clarke, R. V. (2014). *The reasoning criminal: rational choice perspectives on offending (ix-xvii)*. Transaction Publishers.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Crowl, J. N. (2017). The effect of community policing on fear and crime reduction, police legitimacy and job satisfaction: An empirical review of the evidence. *Police Practice & Research*, 18(5), 449–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2017.1303771>
- Davies, T., & Johnson, S. D. (2015). Examining the relationship between road structure and burglary risk via quantitative network analysis. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 31(3), 481–507. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-014-9235-4>
- Dlamini, S. (2020). Citizens' satisfaction with the South African police services and community police forums in Durban, South Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Humanity Studies*, 12(2), 593–606.
- Felson, M., & Cohen, L. E. (1980). Human ecology and crime: A routine activity approach. *Human Ecology*, 8(4), 389–406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01561001>
- Govender, D. (2016). Improving physical protection systems to prevent residential burglaries. *African Security Review*, 25(4), 356–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2016.1225582>
- Hedayati-Marzbali, M., Maghsoodi Tilaki, M. J., & Abdullah, A. (2017). Assessing the effect of neighbourhood structure on residents' perceptions of safety in gated communities: A case study of Iran. *Safer Communities*, 16(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SC-09-2016-0019>
- Hope, T. (1995). Community crime prevention. *Crime and Justice*, 19, 21–89. <https://doi.org/10.1086/449229>
- Huigen, B. (2020). Territorialising homes: Prolonged and return burglaries in South Africa. *African Security Review*, 29(3), 225–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1826333>
- King, N., & Brooks, J. (2018). Thematic analysis in organisational research. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative business and management research methods: Methods and challenges*, 219–236.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1989). Ethics: The failure of positivist science. *The Review of Higher Education*, 12(3), 221–240.
- Mabasa, H. M., & Obioha, E. Community participation in crime prevention: Perceptions and challenges from Eldorado Park, South Africa. (2020). *Journal of NationBuilding & Policy Studies*, v1(1), 83–110. Special issue, 83–110. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-3132/2020/v1n1a5>
- Maguire, M. (1980). The impact of burglary upon victims. *British Journal of Criminology*, 20(3), 261–27. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjc.a047171>
- Mawby, R. (2013). *Policing images*. Willan.
- Meth, P. (2009). The gendered contradictions in South Africa's state housing: Accumulation alongside erosion of assets through housing. In C. Moser (Ed.), *Gender, Asset Accumulation and Just Cities* (pp. 100–116). Routledge.
- Mundlovu, M., Khosa, D., & Zenzile, E. (2021). Evaluating the nature and extent of burglary at residential premises in Namakgale Policing Area, South Africa. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 10, 1367–1377. <https://doi.org/10.6000/19294409.2021.10.157>
- Ngidi, M. (2019). “Unravelling the complex history of Cato Manor”, “PressreaderPress reader, [Retrievedonline December 24, 2022]. <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/post/20180627/281702615448398>.
- Nyambuya, V. P., Nyamaruze, P., Dube, M., & Shumba, K. (2021). Rethinking education in the age of ‘social distancing’: A qualitative inquiry on University of KwaZulu-Natal students' responses to online learning in the context of COVID-19. *Journal of African Education*, 2(1), 107.
- Purpura, P. P. (2013). *Foundations of security and loss prevention. PP purpura, security and loss prevention (6 ed.)*. Heinemann. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-387846-5.00003-6>
- Santos, R. G., & Santos, R. B. (2015). Practice-based research: Ex post facto evaluation of evidence-based police practices implemented in residential burglary micro-time hot spots. *Evaluation Review*, 39(5), 451–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X15602818>
- Sorenson, D. W. M. (2003). The nature and prevention of residential burglary.

- South African Police Service. (2021). Police recorded crime statistics: Republic of South Africa. Accessed from: https://www.saps.gov.za/services/downloads/April-toMarch%202020_21-presentation.pdf
- Tilley, N., Thompson, R., Farrell, G., Grove, L., & Tseloni, A. (2015). Do burglar alarms increase burglary risk? A counter-intuitive finding and possible explanations. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 17(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cpcs.2014.17>
- Townsley, M., Birks, D., Bernasco, W., Ruiter, S., Johnson, S. D., White, G., & Baum, S. (2015). Burglar target selection: A cross-national comparison. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 52(1), 3–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427814541447>
- Townsley, M., Birks, D., Ruiter, S., Bernasco, W., & White, G. Target selection models with preference variation between offenders. (2016). *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 32(2), 283–304. Crossref. ISI. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-015-9264-7>
- Tseloni, A., Wittebrood, K., Farrell, G., & Pease, K. (2014). Burglary victimization in England and Wales, the United States and the Netherlands: A cross-national comparative test of routine activities and lifestyle theories. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44(1), 66–91. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/44.1.66>
- Turvey, B. E., & Freeman, J. (2014). Victim lifestyle exposure. In B. E. Turvey, (eds.) *Forensic Victimology: Examining Violent Crime Victims in Investigative and Legal Contexts*. (2nd edn) (pp. 143–176). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2012-0-06694-X>
- U.S. Department of Justice. 2009. Community Policing Defined. Accessed from: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/community-policing-defined-0>
- Van Zyl, G. S., Wilson, G. D. H., & Pretorius, R. (2003). Residential burglary in South Africa: Why individual households adopt reactive strategies. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, 16(3), 107–123.
- Walker, J. T., Golden, J. W., Ervin McLarty, G., & Mall, O. C. (2006). *Free to burglarize: The effects of pretrial and pre-incarceration release of burglars in burglary activity*. NCJRS Publication (NCJ 226311).
- Waller, T. G. (1984). *Reading research: Advances in theory and practice*. Academic Press.
- Wollinger, G. R. (2017). Choice behavior after burglary victimization: Moving, safety precautions, and passivity. *European Journal of Criminology*, 14(3), 329–343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370816661738>
- Zinn, R. (2017). The policing of robbery with aggravating circumstances: Case studies of incarcerated offenders of home invasions, carjackings and cash-in-transit heists in South Africa. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, 30(2), 12–26.