

A CRIMINOLOGICAL STUDY OF RETAIL ROBBERY

by

NADINE PATRICIA STEWART

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Supervisor: Dr Linda Davis**

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TITLE: A criminological study of retail robbery.
BY: Nadine Stewart
SUPERVISOR: Dr Linda Davis
DEPARTMENT: Criminology
DEGREE: Magister Artium

SUMMARY

In South Africa, there has been a steady increase in the number of armed robberies within the retail industry which have many negative consequences for the victims, their families, and the community. Materialism and economic advantage are major factors, as these robberies are very lucrative, although socio-economic factors such as unemployment, poverty, and relative deprivation can also contribute to the phenomenon. The climate of violence prevalent in South Africa, the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system, as well as the availability of illegal firearms also contributes to this climate of lawlessness. The intense fear aroused by these robberies, as well as the extent of this crime necessitates empirical research in this regard. A literature search of South African databases reflects that no specific research regarding retail robberies has been undertaken. In order to fill this void, it was decided to investigate the *modus operandi* of retail robbers from the victims' perspective, as well as relevant situational factors, victim reactions and the consequences of these robberies. The **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** (see Figure 2) was formulated to serve as a theoretical framework to give direction to the study and interpret the findings.

In order to actualise the set research expectations, various victims of retail robberies within Gauteng were selected to participate in this study. The sample was drawn according to the purposive theoretical and snowball sampling methods. The sample consisted of 20 victims. Individual interviews were conducted with these respondents.

Upon analysis and interpretation of the data, it was found that most retail robberies occur in areas with a high crime-rate. The main reason for the selection of a specific target seems to be the obtaining of money. The findings further indicate that retail robberies are committed by groups of offenders who predominantly make use of handguns during these robberies and usually have getaway vehicles waiting outside the



stores. It was also apparent in the study that verbal threats and violence are usually employed during retail robberies in order to ensure compliance by the victims and that victims are less likely to resist if the offenders are armed with firearms. Findings indicate that the robbers become more aggressive when resisted and that aggression is influenced by the size of the group.

The findings further show that stores with few customers are more likely to become the victims of retail robberies. It was found that security measures such as armed response, alarms and panic buttons do not necessarily deter retail robbers, but most stores improved their security following a robbery. Stores with no surveillance appear to be more vulnerable. Another situational factor pertinent to the study was that most of the stores' interiors were visible to passers-by from the outside. Finally, the impact of retail robberies upon the lives of the victims in terms of financial, physical, emotional and social consequences was also investigated.

Based on the findings, recommendations are made with regard to further research. Stemming from this, various suggestions concerning the prevention of retail robberies are also made.

KEY TERMS

Retail robbery

Modus operandi

Victims

Routine activities

Suitable targets

Vulnerability

Motivated offenders

Guardianship

Situational crime prevention

Target hardening



TITEL: 'n Kriminologiese ondersoek na kleinhandel roof.
DEUR: Nadine Stewart
STUDIELEIER: Dr Linda Davis
DEPARTEMENT: Kriminologie
GRAAD: Magister Artium

OPSOMMING

In Suid-Afrika is daar 'n geleidelike toename in die aantal gewapende rooftogte in die kleinhandelbedryf. Hierdie rooftogte hou negatiewe gevolge in vir die slagoffers, hulle families asook die gemeenskap. Aangesien dié rooftogte baie winsgewend is, is materialisme en ekonomiese voordeel belangrike faktore, alhoewel sosio-ekonomiese faktore soos werkloosheid, armoede, en relatiewe deprivasie ook kan bydra tot dié probleem. Die klimaat van geweld wat in Suid-Afrika heers, die oneffektiwiteit van die regsplegingsstelsel, asook die beskikbaarheid van onwettige vuurwapens dra by tot die klimaat van wetteloosheid. Die geweldige vrees wat deur die rooftogte veroorsaak word sowel as die omvang van dié misdaad noodsaak empiriese navorsing in dié verband. 'n Literatuursoektog van Suid-Afrikaanse databasisse het getoon dat geen navorsing oor kleinhandelroof in Suid-Afrika onderneem is nie. Ten einde hierdie leemte te vul, is besluit om ondersoek in te stel na die *modus operandi* van kleinhandel rowers vanuit die slagoffer se perspektief, asook die situasionele faktore, slagoffer reaksies en die gevolge daarvan. Die **Model van die slagoffer se ervarings na 'n kleinhandel roof** (sien Figuur 2) was ontwerp om die navorsing te rig en die bevindinge te interpreteer.

Ten einde gestelde navorsingsverwagtinge te toets, is verskeie slagoffers van kleinhandel rooftogte in Gauteng geselekteer om aan die studie deel te neem. Die steekproef is volgens die doelgerigte-teoretiese en sneeubalmetodes getrek. Die steekproef het uit 20 respondente bestaan. Onderhoude is individueel met die respondente gevoer.

Op grond van die ontleding en interpretasie van data is gevind dat die meeste rooftogte plaasvind in gebiede met 'n hoë misdadafsyfer. Die verkryging van geld blyk die primêre rede vir die seleksie van 'n spesifieke teiken te wees. Die bevindinge dui verder daarop dat kleinhandel rooftogte deur groepe oortreders gepleeg word. Hierdie



groepe gebruik hoofsaaklik handwapens tydens hulle rooftogte en het gewoonlik 'n voertuig buite om mee te ontsnap. Verbale dreigemente en geweld word ook gereedlik tydens kleinhandel rooftogte gebruik om insiklikheid van slagoffers te verseker. Bevindings toon aan dat slagofferweerstand meer aggressie by die rowers veroorsaak en dat aggressie deur die grootte van die groep oortreders beïnvloed is.

Die bevindings dui verder daarop aan dat winkels met min klante meer geneig is om slagoffers van kleinhandel roof te word. Daar is ook gevind dat sekuriteitsmaatreëls nie noodwendig kleinhandel rowers afskrik nie, maar dat winkels sonder beskerming tog meer kwesbaar is. Daar is bevind dat die meeste winkels in dié studie hulle sekuriteit verbeter het na 'n rooftog. 'n Verdere situasionele faktor wat oënskynlik nie teikenseleksie beïnvloed nie, is die sigbaarheid van die winkels van buite af. Ten slotte is die impak van kleinhandel roof op die lewens van die slagoffers in terme van finansiële, fisieke, emosionele en sosiale gevolge, ook ondersoek.

Na aanleiding van die bevindings is aanbevelings gemaak vir verdere navorsing, asook voortspruitend daaruit, voorstelle tot die bekamping van kleinhandel rooftogte.

SLEUTELWOORDE

Kleinhandel roof

Modus operandi

Slagoffers

Roetine-aktiwiteite

Geskikte teiken

Kwesbaarheid

Gemotiveerde oortreder

Beskerming

Situasionele misdaadvoorkoming

Teikenverharding

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