



An Assessment of Neighborhood Safety Concerns in South African Peripheral Urban Communities

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Abstract: *Given the current crime situation in South Africa, this present study investigates the nature of residents' neighborhood safety concerns, the social and demographic determinants, and how to ameliorate the situation in peripheral urban communities. The study used a sample of 110 participants drawn through a stratified random sampling technique from the adult population of peripheral urban communities of Libode and Ngqeleni in South Africa. The study adopted a mixed method approach, dominated by a quantitative approach, where a survey instrument (Questionnaire) was mainly used to collect data. The study found youth unemployment in the area, night walks, absence of organized neighborhood watch, lack of police visibility, and abandoned houses as major critical safety concerns in the communities' neighborhoods. Notably, most residents expressed safety concerns, but higher neighborhood safety concerns were significantly associated with marriage, lower number of years living in the neighborhood, and femaleness. On the other hand, even though more urbanized locations, being old (over 60 years), being employed, salaried, and of high school level are associated with higher safety concerns in the neighborhood, but not at a statistically significant level. While residents believe that more job creation and community participation in organized neighborhood watch could be a source of solution, this study's major implication lies in the importance of addressing these critical factors in the relevant policies and practices in the country.*

Keywords: *Safety Concerns; Neighbourhoods; Communities; Peripheral-Urban; Africa*

A. INTRODUCTION

Neighborhoods are communities where people reside in. It is important to ensure that neighborhoods are safe. Protection from crime against a person and property for residents of an area is considered safety in neighborhood design (Piedmont, 2014). Regarding social and physical issues, neighborhood safety is linked to having a positive mind and, consequently, a positive attitude, which is a key to living a positive, fulfilled life. Neighborhood safety understands that communities are complex systems that require high degrees of social cohesion for residents to fight crime and violence. This is where different neighborhood stakeholders play essential roles in attempting to minimize crime and violence by sharing responsibility for ensuring everyone's safety.

General observations around neighborhoods in South Africa suggest that people can no longer take long walks or go for a jog alone. They must be accompanied by someone else or do their group activities. Compared to the previous generations, children do not spend much time doing outdoor activities or simply playing outside. Adults can no longer leave children alone in their homes because they can be kidnapped or raped, also the elderly (those who are 65 years and above) cannot be left alone in their homes because the same can happen to them. This, therefore, raises the importance of maintaining a safe neighborhood and a corresponding concern over unsafe ones.

In more recent times, a total of 1 304 people were murdered across the Eastern Cape in just a quarter term, according to the most recent provincial crime statistics released by the South African Police Service provincial top brass (11 March 2022, Mthatha Express, cited in Ndamase 2023). Going by the most recent data on murders, the number of homicides in the province increased by 8.3% when equated to the same time the previous year. In some cases, the perpetrators of the crime are usually people who are close to or known to the victims from and within the neighborhood. It has been testified that the escalating rate of crime in the Eastern Cape continues to be a cause for concern that is barely explored from a sociological point of view as a topic of scholarly inquiry, where Libode is among the top five stations for rape cases (Herald LIVE, 2021 cited in Ndamase, 2023). Crime statistics also placed Ngqeleni on the list of worst towns in the country when it comes to assault with the intention of causing serious bodily harm (Ndamase, 2023).

Given the prevailing alarming situation in South Africa regarding the crime situation around neighborhoods but without an understanding of how residents comprehend the situation as it affects their daily lives, this present study investigates the nature of residents' neighborhood safety concerns and how to ameliorate the situation in one of the country's peripheral urban communities. Against this objective, this study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the nature of residents' neighborhoods' safety concerns?

RQ2: To what extent do residents' neighborhood safety concerns vary by social and demographic variables (location area, gender, household type, age, education, and length of stay)?

RQ3: How can Neighbourhood Safety Concerns be ameliorated

Following the above questions, this study found youth unemployment as a significant critical safety concern in the communities' neighborhoods. Notably, while most residents expressed safety concerns, higher neighborhood safety concerns were found to be significantly associated with being married, having fewer years living in the neighborhood, and femaleness. On the other hand, even though more urbanized locations, being old (over 60 years), being employed, salaried, and of high school level are associated with higher safety concerns in the neighborhood, but not at a statistically significant Level.

In the following sections of this paper, the method, an understanding of neighborhood safety, and a theoretical overview are provided to foreground the understanding of the subject matter.

B. METHOD

Nyandeni Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape of South Africa has a population of 309,702 residents (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The study population consists of adult community residents in Libode and Ngqeleni communities in Nyandeni, a peripheral urban Local Municipality in the Province of Eastern Cape, South Africa, who live in the neighborhood full time and are aware of the societal changes and living in the neighborhood. This study used a combination of probability sampling and a stratified random sampling technique, which was applied to locate a sample of 110 (55 From Libode town and 55 from Ngqeleni town) participants from different sub-groups and strata of the communities' population. This sample size was selected based on a quota basis, where the two towns in the local municipality are equally represented. It was the researchers' way of balancing the rural versus urban divide. On a different note, the choice of this sample size was also informed by the minimal resources available to the researcher, convenience, and the saturation point of the participants. Given the nature of the locality, it was very difficult to reach a willing and bigger number of participants. It was, therefore, not based on pure mathematical or statistical calculation.

The study adopted a mixed method approach, which was dominated by a quantitative approach, where a survey instrument (Questionnaire) was used to collect relevant data regarding the first and second research questions. It was mainly a close-ended Likert scale design, consisting of a demographic section and sections that test the participants' disposition to crime situations, as well as an open-ended section on how to ameliorate crime in their neighborhood. The first section of the Questionnaire consists of demographic and personal profile questions. The following section contains the Neighbourhood Safety Concern, derived as a composite index consisting of fifteen (15) proxy items measured on a Likert Scale. The questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test based on Cronbach's Alpha method. The reliability test produced a very high internal consistency and reliability with Average Cronbach's Alpha= 0.726 for the Neighbourhood Safety Concerns composite, consisting of the fifteen items used as proxy indicators for measuring it. The questionnaire was self-administered, but since some illiterate folks were in the sample, the researcher reached out to administer the instrument to that category of people. An in-depth interview guide was utilized to obtain the relevant information required to address the third objective. For the quantitative data from the survey, an analysis was performed using relevant statistical tools, such as descriptive, regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and independent samples t-test. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed through content and thematic analysis and sorting.

C. LITERATUR STUDY

In South Africa, the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 envisions that the citizens of the country feel protected and do not fear crime in 2030. Understandably, the most fundamental element of existence continues to be neighborhood safety. The community that determines their social and economic situations is where people spend most of their lives. According to Berk (2005), cities, towns, and other rural or urban areas are divided into neighborhoods. In its most basic form, a neighborhood is a place where people live. People who live close to one another form communities. These neighborhoods distinguish themselves from the

rest of the towns by particular physical or sociological characteristics. Ejemeyovwi (2015) averred that victims, perpetrators, and property must all simultaneously be at the scene of the crime for a crime to occur. Any crime requires a determined perpetrator, a suitable victim, and the absence of anything or anyone that could serve as a deterrent. Criminality is a significant threat to human security ((Ukoji & Okolie-Osemene, 2016)). Everyone is affected by crime, whether they are a direct victim, a friend, or a family member ((Eidell & Elis, 2010)).

The social level is where crime has a particular significance. The threat posed by rising crime to order and coherence causes it to elicit such strong public responses since it might be interpreted as a sign that the foundational moral order is in danger. Men seemed to hide their levels of fear, according to Sutton & Farrall (2005), and when this was considered, men were shown to be more scared than women were. This shows that there may well be a victimization-fear link given that males are more frequently to be victims than women are but that men's suppression of concern has concealed it. Violent crime only happens in a few hot spot areas inside neighborhoods, yet only select areas of communities have high concentrations of crime; the entire neighborhood is rarely (if ever) criminogenic (Groff et al., 2010)). Based on a qualitative study in Adelaide neighborhoods, Palmer et al. (2005) emphasized how stigmatized neighborhoods with high crime rates may limit social engagement and trust due to a fear of crime. This association might be self-reinforcing perceptions of rising crime rates that cause a rise in criminal dread, which lowers social contact and organization and raises crime rates even more.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the demographic information of respondents. In the study, more female respondents comprised more than half of the sample. The majority of the respondents were people ages 36-45 years, as they have a higher percentage than other categories. Regarding employment status, half (50%) of the respondents are unemployed and depend on social grants to get money. Entrepreneurs in Nyandeni Local Municipality consisting of farmers, tenders, hawkers, mechanics, or small spaza shop operators constitute 20.9% of the respondents. Respondents who have never been married are more numerous than those who are married, widowed, or divorced/separated. A majority of the respondents have some level of education, and more than half of them have secondary or tertiary qualifications.

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents

Demographic information	Frequency (n=110)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	44	40.0
Female	66	60.0
Total	110	100.0
Age (years):		
18-35	18	16.4
36-45	63	57.3
46-60	21	19.1
61+	8	7.3
Total	110	100.0
Employment status:		

Unemployed	55	50.0
Self-employed	25	22.7
Employed	30	27.3
Total	110	100.0
Marital status:		
Never been married	52	47.3
Married	31	28.2
Divorced	9	8.2
Widowed	18	16.4
Total	110	100.0
Source of income:		
Social grant	57	51.8
Stipend	7	6.4
Entrepreneur	23	20.9
Salary	23	20.9
Total	110	100.0
Level of education:		
Never been to school	12	10.9
Primary school	31	28.2
High school	23	20.9
Tertiary/University	44	40.0
Total	110	100.0
Neighbourhood stay (years):		
Less than 5	6	5.5
6-10	14	12.7
11-15	34	30.9
16+	56	50.9
Total	110	100.0
Location of residence:		
Rural	67	60.9
Urban	43	39.1
Total	110	100.0
Religion:		
Christian	72	65.5
Muslim	4	3.6
Traditional	20	18.2
Other	14	12.7
Total	110	100.0

Slightly over half (50.1%) of the sample have lived in the research area for more than 16 years, while 5.5% have lived there for less than five years. More than half of the respondents live in the rural countryside, while the others live in areas closer to the Libode and Ngqeleni towns. Most respondents are Christians, while the least are Muslims; the rest belong to other religions.

2. Nature of Residents' Neighbourhood Safety Concerns

Neighborhood safety concerns are an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associated with crime (Grinshteyn, 2013). Perceived safety pertains to the social environment in which an individual may differ. As Emile Durkheim's Social Solidarity Thesis would want us to believe, high-felt safety is frequently linked to communities with strong social relationships and cooperative conduct. In contrast to metropolitan regions, where social networks are regarded to be less permanent, rural and peripheral urban communities are usually thought to be based on networks of enduring personal ties. The results of neighborhood safety

concerns are shown in Table 2, in order of ranking from the most important to the least important concern. Most of the respondents in this study agreed that high youth unemployment is of great concern in their community because it contributes to the high crime rate, while a few disagree. However, this neighborhood safety concern had the highest mean score of M= 3.21, followed by walking in the neighborhood at night, which is of great concern (M= 3.03). Belief in the absence of neighborhood watch comes next in the basket of neighborhood safety concerns, with M= 2.92, which is the third highest mean score. Police officers' patrols not being visible in the neighborhood with M=2.95 and fear of crime, which is of a psychological dimension, are also essential concerns. Based on what most respondents have said regarding abandoned houses, it is imminent that they will lead to crime because criminals use them to perform some of their criminal activities or as hideouts and places to keep their dangerous weapons. With the regularity of burglary, mugging, and murder, residents are concerned for their safety. Most of the roads in the rural districts lack sufficient traffic signs, which creates opportunities for cars and pedestrians to become confused and ultimately cause accidents, which is a security concern.

Table 2: Neighbourhood safety concerns in order of importance

Statement	SD	D	A	SA	T	X
The high youth unemployment rate is of great concern in my neighborhood because it contributes to the high crime rate	0	9 (8.2)	69 (62.7)	32 (29.1)	110 (100)	3.21
It is not safe to walk in the neighborhood during the night	2 (1.8)	23 (20.9)	55 (50.0)	30 (27.3)	110 (100)	3.03
There is no organized neighborhood watch in my community.	2 (1.8)	28 (25.5)	57 (51.8)	23 (20.9)	110 (100)	2.92
Police officers' patrols are not visible in my neighborhood.	10 (9.1)	23 (20.9)	50 (45.5)	27 (24.5)	110 (100)	2.85
Fear of crime in the neighborhood has got a negative impact on how I live my life.	10 (9.1)	31 (28.2)	42 (38.2)	27 (24.5)	110 (100)	2.78
Abandoned houses are used by criminals to do some of their criminal activities in my neighborhood	1 (9)	33 (30.0)	66 (60.0)	10 (9.1)	110 (100)	2.77
Crime (burglary, mugging, murder etc.) occurs regularly in my neighborhood	5 (4.5)	34 (30.9)	59 (53.6)	12 (10.9)	110 (100)	2.71
Lack of clear signage and markings on roads in my neighborhood cause accidents	3 (2.7)	37 (33.6)	63 (57.3)	7 (6.4)	110 (100)	2.67
I know some people who are raped in my neighborhood	8 (7.3)	38 (34.5)	51 (46.4)	13 (11.8)	110 (100)	2.63
Taxi violence continues to take lives of people in this neighborhood	4 (3.6)	53 (48.2)	40 (36.4)	13 (11.8)	110 (100)	2.56
Ex-convicts are still committing crimes in the neighborhood	7 (6.4)	40 (36.4)	59 (53.6)	4 (3.6)	110 (100)	2.55
The rate of rape continues to escalate in my neighborhood	10 (9.1)	45 (40.9)	45 (40.9)	10 (9.1)	110 (100)	2.50
It is not safe to walk in the neighborhood during the day	6 (5.5)	50 (45.5)	50 (45.5)	4 (3.6)	110 (100)	2.47
Immigrants are of safety concern in this neighborhood	11 (10.0)	51 (46.4)	38 (34.5)	10 (9.1)	110 (100)	2.43
Human trafficking has been on the rise in the past few months and my neighborhood is affected	18 (16.4)	56 (50.9)	33 (30.0)	3 (2.7)	110 (100)	2.19

Key: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA), Total (T), Mean or Average (X)

While knowing someone who has been rapped makes the local community members concerned for their safety, the rate of taxi violence in the Eastern Cape, more especially in the peripheral urban Local Municipality area, has been on the rise in the past few years. In addition to the above safety concerns, the notion that ex-convicts are still committing crimes and the perception that rape is escalating in the communities are relevant concerns to the community members, but not like the previously mentioned ones. On the other hand, despite some preconceived notions, the study revealed to the contrary that walking in the day time, immigrants, and human trafficking acts are of no significant concern in the communities, even though they occur in the neighborhoods.

3. The influence of residents' demographics on neighborhood safety concerns

This section aims to see whether different groups have more neighborhood safety concerns than others do through an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results in Table 3 show no significant variation ($P = 0.865$) among people of different ages in the communities. However, the safety concern level was highest for the senior citizens (people older than 60 years) and the youth.

Table 3: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of neighborhood safety concerns based on employment status, marital status, source of income, level of education, neighborhood stay, and religion

Age (years)	Mean	Std.	Variance	Sum of sq.	Df.	Mean sq.	F	Sig
18-35	2.714	.352	Between-group	.085	3	.028	.245	.865
36-45	2.681	.320	Within group	12.296	106	.116		
46-60	2.644	.367	Total	12.381	109			
61+	2.750	.399						
Employment status	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance	Sum of sq.	Df	Mean sq	F	Sig
Unemployed	2.684	.354	Between-group	.038	2	.019	.165	.848
Self-employed	2.656	.353	Within group	12.343	107	.115		
Employed	2.708	.297	Total	12.381	109			
Marital status	Mean	Std. dev	Variance	Sum of sq	Df	Mean sq	F	Sig
Never married	2.689	.336	Between-group	1.305	3	.435	4.162	.008
Married	2.793	.319	Within group	11.077	106	.104		
Divorced	2.733	.242	Total	12.381	109			
Widowed	2.459	.321						
Source of income	Mean	Std. dev	Variance	Sum of sq	Df	Mean sq	F	Sig
Social grant	2.687	.350	Between-group	.098	3	.033	.281	.839
Stipend	2.638	.335	Within group	12.284	106	.166		
Entrepreneur	2.646	.360	Total	12.381	109			
Salary	2.730	.290						
Level of Education	Mean	Std. dev	Variance	Sum of sq	Df	Mean sq	F	Sig
Never been to school	2.694	.421	Between-group	.313	3	.104	.916	.436
Primary	2.610	.274	Within group	12.068	106	.114		
High school	2.762	.403	Total	12.381	109			
Tertiary/ University	2.693	.314						
Neighborhood Stay	Mean	Std. dev	Variance	Sum sq	Df	Mean sq	F	Sig
Less than 5 years	2.977	.182	Between-group	1.286	3	.429	4.096	.009
6-10 years	2.866	.221	Within group	11.095	106	.105		
10-15 years	2.680	.330	Total	12.381	104			
16 years+	2.610	.348						
Religion	Mean	Std. dev	Variance	Sum sg	Df	Mean sg	F	Sig
Christian	2.741	.278	Between-group	.723	3	.241	2.192	0.93
Muslim	2.683	.469	Within group	11.658	106	.110		
Traditional	2.566	.386	Total	12.381	109			
Other	2.561	.450						

Similarly, no statistically significant variation exists with the P value= 0.84 regarding respondents' employment status despite the highest safety concern associated with employed people in the area. On the other hand, a statistically significant variation was revealed among respondents of different marital status based on neighborhood safety concerns at a p value= 0.008. Respondents who are married have the highest mean score and, therefore, express more safety concerns than the other categories. The analysis found no significant variation among respondents of different sources of income based on neighborhood safety concerns (p value= 0.839), even though salaried residents are most concerned about safety in the area. Similarly, neighboring safety concerns also did not vary significantly based on residents' education level. This means that the educational status of people does not predict their neighborhood safety concerns.

This study revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between the number of years stayed in the neighborhood and the Level of safety concern (p=0.009). This implies that the length of stay in Nyandeni's peripheral urban neighborhoods and communities influences the level of safety concerns. The fewer years, the higher the neighborhood safety concern and vice versa. Interestingly, neighborhood safety concerns did not vary by religion.

In addition to the ANOVA test, an Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to determine whether safety concerns differ based on gender and location of residence. The results in Table 4 show a significant difference (p= 0.040) between male and female respondents based on the level of neighborhood safety concerns. Women folk in the local communities were found to be more concerned or higher in neighborhood safety concerns than males. This revelation can be explained in greater detail by relating it to the differentials in culturally defined gender contexts.

Table 4: Result of Independent Samples T-Test analysis showing the difference in Neighbourhood safety concerns based on gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Dev		Mean diff	t	df	Sig
Male	2.6530	.38326	Equal Variances Assumed	-.05303	-.807	108	.040
Female	2.7061	.30359	Equal Variances not assumed		-.771	77.525	

Results in Table 5 show no significant difference in neighborhood safety concerns based on location of residence. However, respondents who live in more urbanized communities tend to have more neighborhood safety concerns than those who live in rural countryside.

Table 5: Result of independent samples T-Test analysis showing the difference in neighborhood safety concerns based on location of residence

Gender	Mean	Std. Dev		Mean diff	t	df	Sig
Rural	2.6530	.34968	Equal Variances Assumed	-.01597	-.241	108	.651
Urban	2.6946	.32013	Equal Variances not assumed		-.246	95.366	

4. Ameliorating the neighborhood Safety Concerns

A glen from the analysis in the previous sections indicates that most respondents had a clear understanding and knowledge of neighbourhood safety concerns they face in their communities and what actions can be taken to deal with the situation. Regarding physical development, Nyandeni's peripheral urban municipality is mainly peripheral urbanized or rural, with no street lights. One issue that is considered in this study by the respondents is the self-help mechanism of encouraging residents to illuminate their neighborhoods. Some residents felt that taking responsibility for and caring for the neighborhood contributes to its safety. One of the community leaders expressed: "*This is our neighborhood, and we are the active participants in it. Every resident should have a positive role to play in ensuring its safety. If a new person is to reside in the community, the headman of the area must be notified so that they can be known and be told about the nature of the community and its rules.*" A sense of ownership or territoriality and self-help options is frequently regarded as important in making a place safer. Insecurity is exacerbated by not knowing who has formal ownership because it is unclear to whom to report problems.

Residents highlighted neighborhood watch as an important action in the right direction towards boosting the sense of safety and reducing the fear of crime in these peripheral urban areas. One of the community members narrated the absence of police in their areas, hence the need for a community to organize the system in place: "*The police do not stay in our communities. As the residents, we know exactly what crimes occur and when. Having a neighborhood watch can scare criminals or make them stop creating crime.*" With this idea in place, residents can provide surveillance by volunteering and forming watch groups or forums looking for suspicious activities.

The present study investigated what could be the main safety concerns for residents in Nyandeni Municipality. From a variety of safety concern indicators drawn from the literature on which the research inquiry was based, the study revealed high youth unemployment as the leading cause of safety concern in the communities. This finding is in line with the earlier positions of Azeng and Urbain (2013), which substantiated that youth unemployment causes violence and crime in communities. Similarly, Raphael & Winter-Ebmer (2001) noted that youth unemployment is a significant confounding factor for youth involvement in armed groups, political violence, and general crime. Many young people without work have a propensity for committing violent crimes and crimes motivated by money. This could also be the case in this peripheral urban area, where unemployed youth could constitute an army of miscreants in the communities. Young people who become criminals due to youth unemployment are a risk to social safety, economic efficiency, and general safety (Nordin & Almén, 2017). To sustain themselves and their family, a life of crime may be alluring to unemployed youngsters (Mazorodze, 2020). Accordingly, Mazorodze concludes that youth unemployment can, therefore, act as a catalyst for violent crimes.

Walking alone during the day or with a group at night will always be less risky than walking at night, as the results from the present study have revealed. This was proven accurate as residents feel unsafe walking at night than during the day in neighborhoods. Indeed, this has been of grave concern to the residents in the neighborhood, as it is the second most critical cause for safety concerns in the area. From a broader South African perspective, the eNCA reported in 2022 that only 40%

of South Africans feel safe walking alone in their neighborhoods at night (Ndamase, 2023). Walking in the night is an act that may expose community members to great dangers, including coming into contact with harmful individual groups and gangs who usually operate under darkness. Statistics South Africa (2021), in its Governance, Public Safety and Justice survey 2020/21, conducted between April 2020 and March 2021, found that more South Africans felt insecure walking alone in their neighborhoods at night than they did the year before. The findings of this study are not surprising.

The study also found an absence of an organized neighborhood watch in their communities as a huge safety concern. An organized self-help model neighborhood watch brings confidence and psychological feelings to residents of neighborhoods where they exist by creating an air of protection, as someone else watches over someone's back and shoulder. While a neighborhood watch group's job is to educate the community about criminal activity, they also support the formal policing structures in security and safety matters. They ought to know what to watch out for, how to keep an eye on unwelcome behavior, and how to file complaints. The community's levels of safety will increase as a result of this. Because there are no police patrols in most of the Nyandeni local municipality communities, as revealed in the analysis, which is also a safety concern, neighborhood watch groups serve as the police's eyes and ears because they are often the first to learn about local incidents. The absence of neighborhood watches decreases the chances of criminals being known to the community and handed over to the justice system. Because the police cannot effectively combat crime and all public safety issues on their own, community policing, which invariably involves the community-organized neighborhood watch, promotes interactive partnerships with all relevant parties, especially vulnerable populations. From this point of view, to engage communities in preventing and combat crime, the South African Police Services (SAPS) have created the Community Policing Strategy (South African Police Service, 2014). The importance of community members in their organized systems as key stakeholders when fighting crimes in communities and working with the police cannot be overemphasized. Through the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, the South African government declared that the police should enlist the communities' voluntary engagement (Zhao et al., 2002). Police and residents should, to achieve the desired safety, consult with one another as part of the partnership and community policing (United Nations, 2015). According to this United Nations document, this collaboration can be successful only when appropriate communication between the parties (stakeholders). The absence of a capable guardian, as emphasized by criminological theorists, can exacerbate the fear of crime, which will have a negative impact on how residents live their lives.

The study revealed that inundated abandoned houses are a security concern as they are used by criminals to do some of their criminal activities. This observation is consistent with those who averred that the youth perceive abandoned houses as places for hiding out and to conceal drug use. According to Teixeira, residents withdraw and become more fearful as unattended property becomes "fair game" leading to more crime and incivilities. Taxi violence has also become worrisome in recent times in South African communities. There has been a series of Taxi violence in Nyandeni, as was observed by some residents. Some residents believe that taxi violence continues to take the lives of people in their communities, similar to what

obtains in other South African communities. South African taxi drivers frequently fight for control of lucrative routes. On the 15th of August 2022, Malibongwe Dayimani of News24 reported that 29 taxi owners and operators died as a consequence of the constant taxi violence in the Eastern Cape between March 2021 and March 2022.

The question of whether neighborhood safety concerns vary or differ by some relevant social and demographic variables was investigated in this study. The study found a significant relationship between marital status and neighborhood safety concerns. Married residents exhibited higher safety concerns compared to those who are not married. Understandably, marriage is most likely linked to more household members needing protection and safety. In this regard, unmarried individuals may not have many worries or be bothered about safety, unlike married people. Especially with the prevalence of men's labor migration in Nyandeni, there is usually concern regarding what could go wrong in absence in the homes, mainly when it entails crossing international boundaries, where these men leave their spouses, children, and extended families for long periods – months or even years (Ghuman, 2003).

The present study revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between the number of years stayed in the neighborhood and the level of safety concern. This implies that the length of stay in Nyandeni neighborhoods and communities influences the level of safety concerns. The fewer years there are, the higher the neighborhood safety concern and vice versa. It may be interesting to do research in the future to understand what has contributed to lower safety concerns among longer-stayed residents compared to those who have stayed for a short time.

The gender of residents was also found to influence their safety concerns. Women folk in the Nyandeni communities were found to be more concerned or higher in neighborhood safety concerns than males. Literature confirmed that women are typically characterized as having greater personal safety fears than men ((Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014; Logan & Walker, 2021)), which may be a result of the resources (A. L. Jackson et al., 2017). This revelation can be explained in greater detail by relating it to the differentials in culturally defined gender contexts. It has been asserted that women experience more dread due to their social and physical vulnerability (Jackson & Gray, 2010). Gender roles and norms are established when the idea of gender is ingrained in a culture. Based on these societal ideas, men and women are assigned traditional or stereotypical duties (Amato, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity and highlighted femininity define male and female identities, with violence and dominance being considered typical features of men (Flecha et al., 2013). Gender perpetuates culture through gender-specific expectations and behavior. According to hegemonic masculinity, males should not exhibit feminine features like exhibiting anguish or feelings like grief because doing so will make them "rejected by true men". Men should strive to be aggressive, abrupt, nasty, and emotionally apathetic (Flecha et al., 2013).

Even though the location of the residence does not significantly influence neighborhood safety concerns, residents in more urbanized communities tend to have more neighborhood safety concerns than those who live in rural countryside. The present finding concurs with previous studies that have demonstrated how people's perceptions of safety are influenced by their sense of place (Hope & Sparks, 2012). People all over the world consider rural environments to be safer than urban environments (Bradford & Myhill, 2015).

The study delved into scoping to ameliorate the security concerns in the neighborhood. The youth unemployment concern is to be tackled by creating more jobs for the youths, especially through youth development agencies. This is against the expansion of social security grants that contribute to redundancy and lack of zeal to be productive among unemployed youths and other community residents. The explanations on how street lighting helps prevent crime are based on situational crime prevention, with a focus on decreasing opportunity and raising risk, natural, in-person observation, and investment in neighborhood situations (Clark, 2006). Ideas about ownership participation in crime control were eminent as ameliorating interventions, as indicated in previous studies (Mabasa & Obioha, 2020). Community members are unequivocal about their role in securing their environments and communities. Understandably, the formal police structure vested in the South African Police Service cannot deal decisively with rising neighborhood safety concerns without the participation and involvement of community members. This has been promoted in national strategy documents (South African Police Service, 2014) and prescriptions for intergovernmental agencies (United Nations, 2015b).

E. CONCLUSIONS

This study found prevailing youth unemployment in the area, night walks, absence of organized neighborhood watch, lack of police visibility, and abandoned houses as major community safety concerns. In more general terms, higher neighborhood safety concern was significantly associated with marriage, lower number of years living in the neighborhood, and femaleness. On the other hand, even though not statistically significant, the revelation that more urbanized locations, being old (over 60 years), and being employed and salaried are associated with higher safety concerns points to the specificity of vulnerability in society. Interestingly, residents' ideas on ameliorating the unacceptable safety concerns are predicated on employment creation, physical infrastructural development of the area, and organized neighborhood watch that will support the formal policing structure. While some of the findings of this study corroborate previous studies, others are relatively novel findings, owing to the research context. It expressly points to issues that should be tackled and the priority of policy engagements on community safety in peripheral urban settlements in South Africa.

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