

Influence of Victim-Offender Relationship on Reporting of Property Crime to the Police by Victims in Gilgil Ward, Nakuru County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The security and economic expansion of countries are seriously threatened by property crime. It is occasionally linked to victims' hesitation to file a police report. In Gilgil Ward, property offenses are the most common kind of crime. Property crimes, however, make up a relatively tiny portion of reported offenses. Why victims don't report property crimes is a mystery. As a result, the study established the impact of the victim-offender relationship on property crime reporting to the police in Gilgil Ward. The research study's methodology was mixed-methods. The study's research instruments included questionnaires and interview schedules. The intended audience consisted of victims of property crimes who had reported their crimes to the police. For the research investigation, 96 people were the sample size. Respondents were chosen using stratified random selection, purposive sampling, and snowballing sampling. For quantitative data, descriptive analysis was used; for qualitative data, theme analysis was used. The study found that the type of property crime investigated was affected by the victim-offender relationship differently in terms of reporting property crimes. The majority of respondents reported being "to a small extent" impacted by the victim-offender relationship in robbery and theft offenses. Besides, the majority of the respondents claimed that the victim-offender relationship had no bearing on whether they reported a house-breaking or burglary. This study recommends educating Gilgil Ward inhabitants on the need of reporting property crimes to the police to foster successful policing.

Keywords: Police, Property Crime, Reporting, Victim-Offender Relationship.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Crime is a global issue, and controlling crime is one of any government's primary responsibilities (Baumer & Lauritsen, 2010). Authorities consider that reporting crime is essential for reducing crime (Eze *et al.*, 2019; Kimenju, 2015; Yoon, 2015). The first legal authority to respond to criminal activity in any social situation is the police (Tyler *et al.*, 2014), and they also have a role in crime prevention and management (Lum & Nagin, 2017). In most instances, they depend on the public to report crimes, and in a few cases, they will be present as witnesses at a crime scene. Property crime victims, in particular, are more frequently the source of police reports (Hart & Rennison, 2003). This is evident in research conducted by Hart and Rennison (2003) research, which found that 60% of reported robberies came from victims, compared to 40% from bystanders, police officers, relatives, or acquaintances. As a result, criminology experts have considered crime reporting as an important role in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Kroovand *et al.*, 2019; Xie & Lynch, 2017). However, a large percentage of criminal victimization goes unreported to the police (Chaudhary *et al.*, 2019; Yoon, 2015). Property crimes, in particular, were less likely to be reported in a study conducted by Tarling and Morris (2010). As a result, many offenders will never be apprehended or prosecuted. Understanding the circumstances that lead victims to choose to report a crime will serve as a bridge for the creation and execution of crime control strategies.

Crime-reporting action is generally regarded as a manifestation of a willingness to report crimes to authorities (Avdija & Giever, 2012). According to a review of the existing research on crime-reporting behavior, people's readiness to report a crime to the police is influenced by a number of interconnected factors. The victim-offender relationship is a primary factor in this research that impacts one's readiness to report property crime to the police. A large number of studies have found that the victim-offender relationship is an important factor influencing crime reporting behavior (Bunei *et al.*, 2012; Felson *et al.*, 2002; Hautala *et al.*, 2015). However, most studies on the effect of the victim-offender relationship on

crime reporting have focused on sexual offenses, leaving a gap in the literature on property crime reporting studies, which this study intends to fill.

There is a 50% or lower chance that a crime will be reported (Chaudhary *et al.*, 2019; Yoon, 2015). Globally, Netherlands has a 35% reporting rate (Centraal Bureau Voor de Statistiek, 2011). Additionally, more than 5% of vandalism and 10% of property crimes against property affected Dutch citizens in 2017. (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2017). Additionally, 24% of the traditional crimes were reported to the police. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) estimates that in 2010, property crimes accounted for around 39.3% of all crimes reported United States (Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 2011). In Musa (2016)'s citation of a National Bureau of Statistics of Federal Republic of Nigeria report of 2012, it was stated that 172,396 crime cases in total were recorded to the police in 2006 as opposed to 108,245 crime cases in 2012. Given that one in every three people are victims of crime, according to data from the CLEEN foundation (2012) quoted in Musa (2016), these findings point to a worrying reduction in crime reporting.

Failure to confront criminal activity may result in neighborhood unrest (Rinehart & Weisburd, 2019). Per Dirikx and Bulck (2014), cited in Musa (2016), giving the police information about the crime can aid in ensuring community safety. Crime analysts research criminal activities and police operations to help with budget allocation and program evaluation (Kringen *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, thorough reporting of crime can help governments develop better tactics that will have a positive impact in the fight against crime by assessing crime rates, crime trends, and the cost of crime (ABS, 2004). This implies that the distribution of CJ personnel, like the police, in the battle against crime might be influenced by the official crime reporting data. Therefore, a low victim reporting rate will encourage additional crimes, and the police officers will lose their effectiveness, for instance, when stationing a few of them in a crime hotspot region.

In Kenya, the primary responsibility of the police is to uphold the law. Crime events have been on the rise; as of 2018, there were 88,268 reported crime cases, a 14% increase from 2016, and it is anticipated that this number will continue to rise in 2020 (National Police Service (NPS), 2018). The National Crime Research Center, NCRC, (2017) found that there were often weak relationships between the numbers of offenses reported to the police and those reported in surveys of crime victims.

The Rift Valley region had the highest crime reporting in Kenya, with 19,802 cases (NPS, 2018), and Nakuru County has seen an increase in crime rates (Mkutu *et al.*, 2016; NPS, 2018). Nakuru County was named the top crime hotspot in the Rift Valley, with 4,329 reported crimes, and stealing is the most common crime, accounting for 935 reported cases (NPS, 2018). Gilgil is a Ward in Nakuru County and is considered an urban setting (RoK, 2013). Researchers discovered a link between urban areas and high crime rates (Boggs, 2005; Brennan-Galvin, 2002; Sijuwade, 2014).

Property crime is the most commonly convicted crime in Gilgil Ward (Gilgil Police Station, GPS, 2018). However, convicted cases involving breaking, housebreaking, and burglary have decreased by 57% between 2016 and 2018. (GPS, 2018). Furthermore, the monthly estimate is that 20% of reported crimes are property crimes (GPS, 2020). Besides, Gilgil has received media attention for the crimes related to property crime, such as robbery with violence (Asiba, 2018) and unlawful acquisition of land (Ogemba, 2020), and its location in Nakuru County makes it vulnerable to more property crime incidents. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the high number of convicted property crimes is due to a low or high reporting rate at the police station, necessitating the study.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This research used a mixed-methods approach. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in the mixed-method study design for the collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2012). Concurrent embedding methodology was employed by the researcher. In the concurrent embedded methodology, the research study is guided by a primary method that is either quantitative or qualitative, and the research study is supported by a secondary method (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative methodology was the main strategy used in this research study to gather data from the intended audience. The qualitative approach, which was the secondary methodology, was designed to gather data to aid in comprehending the reporting behaviour of the target population.

B. Location of Study

The study took place in Gilgil Ward, Nakuru County, Kenya, between July and September the year 2021. Property crimes are the most prevalent type of crime in Gilgil Ward (GPS, 2020). However, property crimes make up about 20% of reported offenses in Gilgil Ward (GPS, 2020). Sometimes victims' hesitation to file a police report is linked to an increase in property crimes. Although victims are required to report crimes to the police for action, it is unclear why property crimes are not being reported by victims, leading to the need for the study.

C. Sample Size

The group that was targeted was made up of property crime victims who had reported their victimization to the police. Key informants were also included in the study to help researchers better understand the behavior of the target demographic. 96 respondents made up the study's sample size. Using Cochran's (1977) formula, which is given in (1), for calculating the sample size for an unknown population, the sample size was chosen.

$$n_0 = (z^2 pq) \div e^2 \quad (1)$$

where,

$$n_0 = \{(1.96^2) (0.5) (1-0.5)\} \div 0.1^2$$

$$n_0 = 96$$

Only 81 of the 96 distributed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 84.4%, which was sufficient as recommended by Kothari (2010).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study on how victim-offender relationships affect reporting of property crime are presented in this section. It was measured by utilizing descriptive statistics. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the victim-offender relationship affected their decision to report property crimes (such as theft, burglary, and robbery) to the police. Whether the victim reported a property crime because the offender was a friend or a stranger was one of the factors that determined the victim-offender relationship. The researcher afterwards integrated the two determinants during the study with the aid of SPSS to produce a composite result. The scale had five points: 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 representing not at all, small extent, moderate extent, large extent, and very large extent, respectively. The researcher also conducted interviews with key informants, whose responses were then thematically examined. The results are presented below:

A. Influence of Victim-Offender Relationship on Reporting Property Crime

The descriptors Not at All (NA), Small Extent (SE), Moderate Extent (ME), Large Extent (LE), and Very Large Extent (VLE) were used to calculate a composite index of the means and standard deviations of the influence of victim-offender relationships on reporting of property crime. These descriptors are represented as 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the SPSS input spread sheet respectively. The interpretation of the scores $0 < \mu < 0.5$, $0.5 < \mu < 1.5$, $1.5 < \mu < 2.5$, $2.5 < \mu < 3.5$, and $3.5 < \mu < 4$, where μ denotes the mean that in regard to the provided metric; the respondents generally tended to not at all, small extent, moderate extent, large extent, and very large extent.

On the other side, the standard deviation interpretation with the scores $0 < \sigma X < 0.5$, $0.5 < \sigma X < 1$, and $\sigma X \geq 1$ meant that the replies were clustered around the mean (high consensus), responses were spread evenly, and there was no consensus on the supplied measure respectively. As shown in Table 1, when it comes to the victim-offender relationship impact on reporting property crime to the police metrics, respondents tended to be at a "small extent" except burglary and housebreaking, which were "not at all," and theft of farming tools, which was "moderately" influenced by relationships.

The victim-offender relationship metrics' responses were generally distributed at "moderate" consensus in terms of standard deviations, except the following: influence of victim-offender relationship on reporting robbery crime, the influence of victim-offender relationship on reporting vehicle theft, the influence of victim-offender relationship on reporting theft of building tools, the influence of victim-offender relationship on reporting theft of farming tools, the influence of victim-offender relationship on reporting cheating, and conning, or swindling of money that was widely distributed due to standard deviations of 1.071, 1.054, 1.354, 1.422, and 1.334 respectively were equal to or above standard deviation of 1.000.

Key informant interviews provided conclusive evidence that the victim-offender dynamic has an impact on how property crimes are reported to the police. If the perpetrator is a friend, some victims could decide not to report a property crime to the authorities to preserve the friendship. In certain instances, the perpetrator seeks out alternative conflict resolution procedures, admits to the crimes, and makes a compensation plan to the victim to save their connection.

Victim-offender relationship has an influence on decision of a victim to report property crime. The victim and the offender might be related by blood and they might view taking the matter to the police as not socially right, and the family will be a laughing stock to the community since their family will be labelled as a "conflicting family". In this case you will find they might take the matter lightly to avoid embarrassment from the community (K.I-001).

Yes, victim-offender relationship has an influence. Some victims find it hard to report a close friend to the police. Victims find it hard to do away with the fact that they are friends and remember that the offender took advantage of their friendship and denied them their rights to own their property (K.I-002).

Yes, the relationship between the victim and offender has an influence on reporting property crime. There are some instances where the offender comes to our office and admits the crime they have committed to a person known to them, and pleads we talk to the victim not to take the matter to the police since they are willing to compensate the victim. For criminal cases we always encourage the victim to report to the police. However, we can inform the victim about the offender's statement but, we always encourage this to be done in writing so as to bind the offender to their promises. This written document can be used as an evidence when the offender fails to abide by the terms (K.I-004).

Yes. This can happen in different ways. Example, a victim might opt to do away with the stolen property if he or she has a close relationship with the offender, to maintain their relationship. In some cases the victim might not consider this as a crime, or may consider it as so petty to be reported to the police, as compared to when the crime is committed by a stranger. Another instance is, when the victim does not know the offender the victim may opt not to report because the offender is not known, hence the victim sees it as a waste of time. However, if the victim knows the offender it might be easy to report the case to the police and arrest of the offender is made and justice will be served (K.I-005).

On the other hand, one crucial informant had a distinct viewpoint regarding the effect of the victim-offender relationship on reporting property crime. The informant claims that a victim-offender relationship may be advantageous if the victim is familiar with the offender, suggesting that it will be a straightforward case for the victim. The victim-offender relationship may, however, only slightly affect the victim's decision to notify the police about property crime.

Victims go through financial/emotional pain when their property is stolen or damaged. Hence, the biggest motivating factor is to find their property. Victims will opt to report the crime to the police with the hope that they will get their property back. Also, reporting the case to the police makes the offender, if it's his or her friend, to see that the victim is serious with the case. In most cases you will find the victim might be restituted or the offender will be arrested and charged with property crime (K.I-003).

Less empirical research has paid attention to the impact of victim-offender relationships on reporting crimes, with most studies concentrating on sexual offense crimes (Baumer *et al.*, 2003; Guadriaan, 2006; Felson *et al.*, 2002). Others have drawn attention to assault crimes (Sidebottom, 2015) and racial factors (Hautala *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, by revealing the extent to which victim-offender relationships influence reporting property crimes to the police, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on reporting crimes.

According to Bunei *et al.* (2012), 46% of victims of agricultural crimes chose not to report the incident because they knew the offender or were related to them. This demonstrated how the victim-offender dynamic affected how agricultural crimes were reported. The results of this investigation confirmed the findings of Bunei *et al.* (2012). By revealing the extent to which victim-offender relationships affected the decision to report some agricultural crimes, the study added to the corpus of knowledge in this area. The composite result revealed that the victim-offender relationship influenced reporting of theft of farming tools and livestock theft to a "moderate" and "small extent", respectively. This was due to the mean of 1.75 for theft of farming tools and 0.5 for theft of livestock.

Based on the findings, a large percentage of the respondents indicated that victim-offender relationships had no impact on reporting burglary and house-breaking, with the majority of responses being "not at all." As a result, the researcher suggests that future research investigate the extent to which other factors influence the reporting of burglary and house-breaking crimes.

TABLE I: COMPOSITE INDEX OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR THE INFLUENCE OF VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP ON REPORTING PROPERTY CRIME TO THE POLICE

	N	Mean	Respondents on average tended to be	Std. Deviation	St. Dev Responses distributed
Influence of victim-offender relationship in reporting robbery	28	1.04	Small Extent	1.071	Widely
Influence of victim-offender in reporting burglary	26	0.31	Not at All	0.549	Moderate
Influence of victim-offender in reporting housebreaking	31	0.35	Not at All	0.608	Moderate
Influence of victim-offender in reporting vehicle theft	9	1.11	Small Extent	1.054	Widely
Influence of victim-offender in reporting electronic theft	45	0.80	Small Extent	0.991	Moderate
Influence of victim-offender in reporting theft of building tools	29	1.76	Small Extent	1.354	Widely
Influence of victim-offender in reporting theft of farming tools	24	1.75	Moderate	1.422	Widely
Influence of victim-offender in reporting theft of livestock	6	0.50	Small Extent	0.548	Moderate
Influence of victim-offender in reporting conning	54	1.35	Small Extent	1.334	Widely
Valid N (list wise)	6				

Source: Field Data (2021)

IV. SUMMARY

The study showed that the victim-offender relationship has a varying impact on certain property crimes. The victim-offender dynamic to a “small extent” influenced the robbery victims' choice to contact the police. Most respondents did not consider victim-offender relationships when reporting burglary and housebreaking incidents to the police, as the majority of the response was “not at all”. The majority of respondents claimed that the victim-offender dynamic at a “small extent” impacted their decision to contact the police in cases of theft offences.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

A victim's decision to report a property crime was somewhat influenced by the victim-offender dynamic, with the exception of burglary and housebreaking offenses, where respondents said they were not at all influenced.

B. Recommendation

The study suggests educating Gilgil Ward residents on the importance of informing criminal justice professionals about property crimes. The police can better enforce Kenyan laws if crimes are reported. For instance, every person in Kenya is guaranteed the right to possess property by the constitution. As a result, everyone, regardless of relationships, must respect other people's property. The police should also respect and safeguard the citizens' property. If the public is made aware of the value of reporting crimes to the police, this action can be successful.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author affirms that there are no conflicts of interest.

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