

Exploring the Burden of Property Related Crimes among the Basotho People of Lesotho: A Case Study of Roma Valley Communities of Lesotho

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ABSTRACT Property crimes are considered as the most serious types of crime in Lesotho. These include burglary, theft, robbery and many other criminal activities that have elements of economic motivations and gains. The dimension and extent of these aspects of crime in Roma Valley area of Lesotho requires scholarly attention, given the heterogeneous nature of the area. The main objective of this study was to find out the extent, nature and prevention of property crimes in Roma valley, Lesotho. The study investigated the kinds of property crimes that are most prevalent in the area, the predisposing conditions and the social background characteristics that are most commonly associated with property crime. The data for this study were collected using survey instrument, which was administered to a selected sample population of 100 respondents from ten villages/locations in Roma Valley. Secondary data on crime incidences within six months time period were extracted from the Police record in the Roma Police station. In-depth interviews were also conducted among selected members of the community. The results from the study showed that while property related crimes accounted for more than half of the total number of reported cases in the area, housebreaking tops the list as the most common crime in the area, which is usually attributed to students. The study further revealed poverty and peer influence as the most prominent disposing factors to property crime. Other factors commonly associated with various categories of crime include childhood experience and jealousy, which is mainly associated with car theft.

INTRODUCTION

Even though there is no commonly accepted definition of crime among various scholars in criminology and related disciplines, crime is universally conceived as an unacceptable human behaviour, which contravenes or violates the common values, rules and laws of specific human societies. Irrespective of whether crime is perceived from formal (legal) or informal (culture specific) perspective, the underlying facts are that crime attracts various forms of reactions from the society but most importantly, punishment, which ranges from legally stipulated actions according to formal laws or sanctions in the case of informal based systems. Both the Positivist and Classical Schools take a consensus view that crime is an act that violates the basic values and beliefs of society, which are manifested as laws¹ that society agrees upon. This view differs

from those of the left wing scholars, the Marxist Criminologists, the Critical Criminologists and other human right interest groups, who perceive crime as a consequence of non-consensual relationship between the state that works in the interest of the ruling class and the common people (Obioha 2009).

However, from the researchers' perspective and in relation to this paper, crime is conceived as a behaviour that is prohibited by law and can be punished through the application of formal sanctions (Popenoe 1995). Such behaviour has been traditionally divided into several main categories, namely - crime against persons, crime against property, and victimless or moral crime, organized, white collar and cooperate crimes which have also received substantial attention in the recent time. The distinction between these categories of crime and their interpretation is usually defined and relative to laws of specific countries like Lesotho where there is a clear categorization.

Among other categories of crime, property related crimes appear to be assuming epidemic proportions in Southern Africa and Lesotho in particular, where there is an assumption that it is

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rare to encounter a person whose house has not been burgled into or whose car has not been stolen. Property crimes involve intentional coveting of another person's personal property or goods with the intention to permanently withholding them from the rightful owner (Cloete and Stevens 1996). It includes crimes such as theft, burglary, damaging of property, arson, fraud and forgery. Property crimes are usually attributed to socio-economic factors like youth unemployment, urbanization, squatting and population explosion together with influx of illegal immigrants who are often unemployed. Also, the fact that criminals nowadays have access to increasingly sophisticated technology contributes a lot to the increase in the rate of property crimes. The Lesotho Mounted Police Service reported the presence of a number of armed gangs. Lesotho's high unemployment rate, aggravated by the return of large numbers of unemployed miners from South Africa, and the ongoing effects of social upheaval due to high HIV/AIDS rates of infection, continue to contribute to an increasing number of reported crimes. These types of crimes occur primarily in the capital city of Maseru, but can occur elsewhere in Lesotho. Although there are a number of reasons for this, the lack of community involvement and the security measures of so many private residences and business premises are definite contributory factors (Government of Lesotho 2008; Thakhisi 2009).

Crimes against property have been described as being so profitable to the perpetrators which have led to stepped-up police action in form of control², heavier sentences and more sophisticated security measures which do not deter the prospective thief. Besides, enormous financial implications of property crimes for the short-term insurance industry, they cause trauma and fear among the victims when they realize that their houses have been burgled, damage has been done to the business premises or the family car has been stolen, (Government of Lesotho 2008). Crime scenes for these categories of crime include popular restaurants, pedestrian overpasses, unlit or poorly lit roads, and other locations foreigners are known to frequent. Similarly, major reported victims include foreign diplomats, volunteer workers, employees of non-governmental organizations, and nationals of Lesotho. On this note, foreigners are advised to avoid large groups and demonstrations, walking and driving at nighttime if possible, and walking in the capi-

tal city of Maseru even during daylight (Thakhisi 2009).

The overwhelming rate of property crimes proves that a lot of people in Lesotho might be victims of such crimes, especially in areas such as Roma Valley that have high population heterogeneity content. There are very high possibilities that this type of crime might have occurred many times than recorded in this area, as not all crime incidents are recorded. The contextual population heterogeneity in Roma Valley, which includes sizable number of categories of people that are susceptible to criminal attacks (foreigners and strangers) and seemingly unemployed youth population, including students portends a descriptive context for vibrant property related crimes, according to the earlier expositions (Thakhisi 2009). However, the dimensions and definitive pattern in which property related crimes occur in Roma Valley is not yet known, as what already exists in literature is broad context of property related crime in Lesotho where the contribution of Roma Valley in the statistics has not been previously articulated. Against this background, this paper responds to emerging broad questions such as - What type of property crimes is mostly committed at Roma Valley. What are the descriptive nature of property crimes in the area with regard to the victims and perpetrators? What are the major predisposing considerations? Among other issues, appropriate research based response to the above questions will enable a clear view and understanding of the nature and extent of property related crimes in Roma Valley in particular and Lesotho in general.

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out at Roma Valley, which falls under the rural part of Maseru district, Lesotho. The name 'Roma Valley' derives from the geographical landscape of the area. It consists of a group of 16 villages that are found at Roma area, which is located between two ranges of plateaus, such that the location assumes the shape of a valley. Roma valley has its own police station which assists the community members if they experience offence of any kind. The police work together with the local chief and the community at large in trying to prevent crime occurrence in this area. Also, the police are in

collaboration with the National University of Lesotho's management as it is located in this area and has a great number of youth who are in mainly the reported culprits in most crimes. There are also primary and high schools found in this region of which their teachers are in partnership with the police in trying to educate the children about the dangers of being involved in criminal activities.

The population of this study consists of the police, all households and local residents in Roma valley. Thus, the study was victim based assessment because everyone residing in this area is a potential victim of crime like in most other locations in Lesotho. Stratified sampling technique was used in this study to determine the research respondents. This technique is very relevant for this particular study because it is an appropriate method for obtaining a greater degree of representativeness thus, decreasing the probable sampling error, as described in Babbie (2002). From this location, ten different villages or locales (*Ha-Tabutle, Ha-Scoute, Lengoeleng, Mafikeng, Ha-Mafefooane, Ha-Maama, Ha-Seqoma, Ha-Basieane, Mahlanyeng* and NUL Campus) were randomly chosen as distinct strata for sampling. A sample of ten households was selected from each stratum (village), which amounts to a total sample of 100 households. Survey instrument in the form of closed ended questionnaire was the main primary source of data, which was distributed to selected households and residents in the area. In addition, secondary data and crime statistics on incidence of crime from Roma Police Station were collected and used to support the primary data. The secondary data from the Police records is limited to the period September 2008 to March 2009. The researcher also engaged on limited oral interviews with immediate victims while interrogating the respondents, which provided comprehensible scenery of the incidence of property crime in the study area.

Data generated from the field were analysed through various steps. First, coding was performed for summarizing the gathered data before the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyse the data collected through the survey instrument. Results from the analysis are presented in frequencies and percentages; also, a bivariate cross tabulation analysis was further used to reveal the relationship between various variables studied. For

the qualitative data collected through various oral interviews conducted and the secondary data sources consulted, content analysis was adopted to deduct relevant information.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The presentation in Table 1 revealed that there are different categories of respondents studied. The study revealed that, males constituted a larger proportion of the sample studied (54.6 percent) while 45.4 percent were females. Also, a larger proportion of the sample are aged 40 years and above (37.1 percent), followed by people aged 36-40 years (27.8 percent) and 23.7 percent which constituted people of ages 31-35 and lastly 11.3 percent who are of ages 26-30. Occupationally, quite considerable numbers of the respondents are employed, which constitute 37.1 percent of the sample, followed by those who are self employed (29.9 percent). While 23.7 percent of the sample was unemployed, 9.3 percent were students. The reason for these trends might be due to the fact that the study target was mainly the heads of families. The study further revealed that Roma valley is not only populated by Basotho but also foreigners who are also potential victims of property crimes. Even though 90.7 percent of the sample studied constituted Basotho people, 9.3 percent are foreigners. With exception of Ha-Maama where due to some limitations only 7 households responded (7.2 percent), in the other villages namely; Ha-Tabutle, Ha-Scoute, Lengoeleng, Mafikeng, Ha-Mafefooane, Ha-Seqoma, Ha-Basieane, Mahlanyeng and NUL Campus there was 10.3 percent response rate from each location sampled.

Extent of Victimization on Property Crimes and Case reporting to the Police at Roma Valley

To have a clear view of the extent of property crimes in Roma, the issue of whether people have been offended and whether they know of someone who has been offended was considered. Moreover, the point of whether the victims do report when they have been offended or when someone who they know was offended was put into consideration.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable		N	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	53	54.6
	Female	44	45.4
	Total	97	100
Age (in years)	26-30	11	11.3
	31-35	23	23.7
	36-40	27	27.8
	40+	36	37.1
	Total	97	100
Occupation	Scholar	9	9.3
	Employed	36	37.1
	Self employed	29	29.9
	Unemployed	23	23.7
	Total	97	100
Origin	Mosotho	88	90.7
	Foreigner	9	9.3
	Total	97	100
Location	Ha-Tabutle	10	10.3
	Ha-Scoute	10	10.3
	Lengoeleng	10	10.3
	Mafikeng	10	10.3
	Ha-Mafefoane	10	10.3
	Ha-Maama	7	7.2
	Ha-Seqoma	10	10.3
	Ha-Basicane	10	10.3
	Mahlanyeng	10	10.3
	NUL Campus	10	10.3
	Total	97	100

With regard to whether respondents have been offended and whether they reported the incident to the Police, the study (Table 2) revealed that out of 97 respondents, more respondents 51 (52 percent) has never been victims of crime, compared with less number 46 (47 percent) who have been victims of property crime. The study fur-

ther revealed that out of the people who reported to have been offended, most of them (45.7 percent) maintained that they often report the matter to the police, while 8.7 percent have never reported the matter to the police. The general trend with regard to reporting crimes to the police shows that fewer people do not report offence committed against them to the police, compared to greater number of people who do report.

Considering the rate at which residents know of someone who has been offended, Table 3 indicates that almost all the respondents know of someone who has been offended, while very few do not know. Out of those who know of the victims, few of them (8.9 percent) maintained that they never report such cases of property crime to the police. As the table further revealed, more than half of the respondents who do not know of any victim maintained that though they do not know of anyone who has been offended, they have heard that people often report such matters to the police. About two third of respondents in this category maintained that they never report to the police.

The preponderance of non reporting property related crimes to the police as a direct victim or witness could be explained from the people's worldview and attitude towards themselves and others. Further interrogation on why people do not report property related crimes to the police when they have been offended or when they witnessed such incident revealed the residents lack of confidence and trust in the police personnel who are supposed to ensure that their lives and

Table 2: Victimization rate and reporting to the police

Whether they have been offended	Whether they report				Total
	No	sometimes	Often	Frequent	
Yes	4(8.7)	11(23.9)	21(45.7)	10(21.7)	46(100)
No	6(11.8)	21(41.2)	16(31.4)	8(15.7)	51(100)
Total	10(10.3)	32(33)	37(38.1)	18(18.6)	97(100)

Source: Survey 2009

Table 3: Knowledge of known victims of property crime and reporting to police

Whether they know someone who has been offended	Whether they report				Total
	No	Sometimes	Often	Frequent	
Yes	8(8.9)	30(33.3)	34(37.8)	18(20)	90(100)
No	2(28.6)	2(28.6)	3(42.9)	7(100)	7(100)
Total	10(10.3)	32(33)	37(38.1)	18(18.6)	97(100)

Source: Survey 2009

property are secured. The implication of this is that there is no vote of confidence and confidentiality on the police personnel. In other words the police personnel would have betrayed the trust reposed upon them at one point in time. The respondents also maintained that they do not see any need to report such cases to the police due to the alleged undue release of the suspects by the police in a very short period because the police usually adduce that there is no concrete evidence to hold the suspect as being guilty. One of the interviewees alleged vehemently, "there is no need to report because we are actually the victims of the police we report to since they are in collaboration with the offenders; therefore they do not inflict any form of punishment that would deter these people."

Victims Based Report on Property Crimes Committed in Roma Valley

The presentation of the categories of property crimes committed in Roma valley as suggested by the respondents is revealed in Table 4. The table implies that, house breaking (39.2 percent) is the most common type of property crime committed in Roma Valley, followed by stock theft (25.8 percent). Robbery and burglary were also indicated as important types of property crime that happens according to 23.7 percent and 10.3 percent response rate from the residents, while car theft was not reported at a high rate. The reason behind the non prevalence of car theft is not far fetched from the reality on ground in Roma Valley where there are comparatively very few cars when compared to the number of students and residents. Besides, common wisdom suggests that thieves and property related criminals usually target goods and items that are either of immediate use or easily disposable without complications and security implications.

Table 4: Distribution of types of offences committed as reported by respondents

<i>Offence committed</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
House breaking	38	39.2
Stock theft	25	25.8
Robbery	23	23.7
Car theft	1	1.0
Burglary	10	10.3
Total	97	100

Source: Survey 2009

Extent of Property Crimes and other Categories of Crime Considered

The extent of property crimes in comparison to other criminal offences in Roma Valley was determined by considering the available record of reported cases in the Roma Police Station. The rationale for this aspect of investigation is mainly to validate and put in the proper perspective the views from the respondents viz-a-viz the archival information or the documented data which provides perhaps near objective information that could be used as the basis of inferences and conclusion. In this regard, police records were collected which reveal the overall extent of crime in Roma valley and comparison of the extent of property crimes as opposed to other forms of crime. It further highlighted the most prevalent forms of property crimes. Table 5 reveals that the overall occurrences of crime in the months of September 2008 to March 2009 as reported to the police.

According to the police records, property related crimes are indeed the most prevalent types of crime in Roma Valley. This is evident from the fact that, out of 571 reported cases, a total of 299 constitutes property crimes while the remaining 272 constitute other forms of crime. It may be further deduced that out of the proportion that constitutes other crimes some of them are somewhat related to property crime, mainly from economic point of view, though they can not be classified as property crime in their classic description and occurrence. Second to property crimes is common assault which has 94 reported incidences, followed by traffic offences and Assault GBH which constitute 56 and 47 respectively. Sexual offence is another form of crime reported to the Roma police, thus, for this period there were 33 reported incidences. This was followed by 12 murder cases and 9 cases relating to internal security. Furthermore, from additional information, it was revealed that, deserting children and spouse is another form of crime and this type of crime falls under the child protection unit. In the case of Roma valley, there have been 5 reported incidences of child protection crimes. Lastly, it was also discovered that there is prevalence of the use of false currency in Roma Valley, with 2 reported cases.

Table 5: Incidences of crime for September 2008 to March 2009

<i>Property crime</i>	<i>Month of occurrence</i>							<i>Total</i>
	<i>Sept 2008</i>	<i>Oct 2008</i>	<i>Nov 2008</i>	<i>Dec 2008</i>	<i>Jan 2009</i>	<i>Feb 2009</i>	<i>Mar 2009</i>	
Theft by false pretence	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	8
Sexual offence	6	8	0	4	4	6	5	33
Unlawful possession of fire arm	3	2	0	1	1	1	2	10
Theft from car	1	0	0	0	1	9	9	20
Arson	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	6
Culpable homicide	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Stock theft	7	9	7	4	9	6	9	51
Damage to property	5	3	3	4	2	3	5	25
Robbery	6	5	2	4	7	5	3	32
False currency	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
House breaking	18	5	12	20	15	3	16	89
Common assault	9	18	16	15	15	7	14	94
Theft common	12	11	7	10	9	7	12	68
Assault GBH	8	6	5	10	9	9	0	47
Traffic offence	6	2	11	9	9	10	9	56
Murder	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	12
Child protection	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	5
Internal security	1	3	3	1	1	0	0	9
Total	90	77	74	87	84	72	87	571

Source: Fieldwork Underlying Data from Roma Police Station

Comparison on the Extent of Occurrence among Various Categories of Property Crime

In comparison among the property crimes, Table 6 revealed that, within the category of property crimes, there are some which are more prevalent than the others. In this regard, house breaking has been found to be the most common type of property crime with the frequency of 89 out of 299 reported cases in Roma Valley. The next to housebreaking, is the common theft with the rate of 68. Further more, stock theft followed at the rate of 51 incidences, while robbery, damage to property and theft from car are at the rates of

32, 25 and 20 in that order. Theft by false pretence and arson are found not to be very common in Roma valley thus they constituted only 8 and 6 incidences out of the 299 reported cases.

Further interpretation of the data from the point of view of the 'flash period' revealed that December and January have the highest records of occurrences of property related crimes, especially with regard to common theft. This result makes some sense and thus reflects what happens in the real life situation in Roma valley villages, which has a heterogeneous population consisting of university students, teachers and other economic immigrants to the location. The Police personnel in the Roma Police Station al-

Table 6: Incidences of selected property crimes for September 2008 to March 2009

<i>Property crime</i>	<i>Month of occurrence</i>							<i>Total</i>
	<i>Sept 2008</i>	<i>Oct 2008</i>	<i>Nov 2008</i>	<i>Dec 2008</i>	<i>Jan 2009</i>	<i>Feb 2009</i>	<i>Mar 2009</i>	
Theft by false pretence	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	8
Theft from car	1	0	0	0	1	9	9	20
Arson	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	6
Stock theft	7	9	7	4	9	6	9	51
Damage to property	5	3	3	4	2	3	5	25
Robbery	6	5	2	4	7	5	3	32
House breaking	18	5	12	20	15	3	16	89
Theft common	12	11	7	10	9	7	12	68
Total	52	35	35	43	44	35	55	299

Source: Fieldwork Underlying Data from Roma Police Station

leged that the preponderance of common theft over other categories of property related crimes and the revealed flash months is not unconnected to the University seasonal arrangement, whereby most students leave and return to their various residences in Roma valley in December and January Respectively. Collaborative information from the Police Personnel revealed that the students of the National University of Lesotho who stay in hostels are usually the victims to these property crimes. According to the Police, the off-campus students' hostels are usually susceptible to being burgled in the month of December when they have gone home for Christmas holidays and also in January when they come back to school for the second semester activities.

It is implied that the perpetrators believe that students usually leave some valuable property behind when they travel in December and return to school in January with quite considerable amount of money and new property. The Police further alleged that the reason behind students being the highest victims and the hostels being the target spots is due to a common understanding that the student fall victims of the nefarious activities of their fellow students, who know their movements and even their financial worth at any point in time. Experience from reported cases has shown that the perpetrators usually have the spare keys or have access to the victims' residences in one way or another.

Occurrence of Categories of Property Crime in Roma Valley Neighbourhoods

In order to determine the prevalence of property crimes in different locations or villages of the Roma valley, the researchers analysed the respondents view from different locations with regard to property crime prevalence in their neighbourhoods. Table 7 reveals the trends in which property crimes are distributed in this valley ac-

ording to respondents' views. Among the types of property crimes that are committed in Roma Valley, there are high rates of house breaking in *Ha-Mafefooane* with the percentage rate of 18.4 percent, while *Ha-Seqoma* has high rates of stock theft rating to 20 percent, when compared to other locations. On the other hand, NUL Campus has prevailing rates of robbery at 21.7 percent. Lastly Ha-Scoute has high rates of burglary as reported by 30 percent of the respondents from that location. As buttressed by the respondents for additional information, villages like Ha-Seqoma, Ha-Maama and Mahlanyeng experience mostly stock theft. Respondents further maintained that this might be due to the fact that, animals are among most valuable properties in such villages and are very accessible to perpetrators as there are no proper kraals. Villages close to the National University of Lesotho on the other hand experience mostly house breaking and robbery. For this case, the respondents added that it might be due to the fact that the area around the NUL campus has higher population heterogeneity, especially those of students and economic migrants and are trading post, therefore most valuable properties are found within the households. Besides, most houses around these areas are occupied by the NUL scholars who somehow seem to be the target victims in this area.

Timing Periods Associated with Property Crime Occurrence in the Neighbourhood

Life experience shows that there might be more preferable period or hour of the day when property related perpetrators usually strike. Timing period for each operation counts for the perpetrators and determines to a large extent the possibilities of success or failure of the operation. Table 8 reveals the result of interviews with respondents who are either residents or victims of various property related crimes in Roma Val-

Table 7: Occurrence of property crimes by location in Roma Valley

Type of offence	Location of residence of respondents										Total
	Ha-Tabutle	Ha-Scoute	Lengo-eleng	Mafi-keng	Ha-Mafe-fooane	Ha-Maama	Ha-Seqoma	Ha-Ba-sieane	Mahlan-yeng	NUL Campus	
House breaking	6(15.8)	2(5.3)	5(13.2)	5(13.2)	7(18.4)		2(5.3)	2(5.3)	5(13.2)	4(10.5)	38(100)
Stock theft	1(4.0)	2(8.0)	3(12.0)	1(4.0)	1(4.0)	4(16.0)	5(20.0)	3(12.0)	4(16.0)	1(4.0)	25(100)
Robbery	3(13.0)	3(13.0)	2(8.7)	2(8.7)	2(8.7)		2(8.7)	3(13.0)	1(4.3)	5(21.7)	23(100)
Car theft						1(100.0)					1(100)
Burglary		3(30.0)		2(20.0)		2(20.0)	1(10.0)	2(20.0)			10(100)

Source: Survey 2009

ley. According to the respondents, a larger proportion of crime occurrences happen in the dark, during the night followed by those which occur any time of the day and those that occur during the day. The revelation from this study that most property crimes are committed in the night hours or in darkness revalidates the common assumption that criminals prefer to operate in isolated hours when human activities are limited. There is usually a greater chance of a stock theft or any other related property crime succeeding in the night than in the day time. Furthermore it is deducible from this findings that all the property related crimes occurred in the night except for robbery (34.8 percent) and housebreaking (50 percent) in which the indication from the respondents seems to suggest that it also occurs at other hours.

Table 8: Relationship between type of offence and the time it is committed

<i>Type of offence</i>	<i>Time committed</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Day</i>	<i>Night</i>	<i>Anytime</i>	
House breaking	3(7.9)	16(42.1)	19(50)	38(100)
Stock theft	3(12)	17(68)	5(20)	25(100)
Robbery	4(17.4)	8(34.8)	11(47.8)	23(100)
Car theft		1(100)		1(100)
Burglary		7(70)	3(30)	10(100)
Total	10(10.3)	49(50.5)	38(39.2)	97(100)

Perpetrators' Social Background and Predisposing Conditions associated with Property Crime in Roma Valley Neighbourhoods

There are many reasons why people commit crime, which most times are attributed to either the perpetrators' social background or other predisposing conditions that make the planning and execution of the operation possible. Table 9 is a presentation on the types of crime and what influences perpetrators to be engaged in property crime. Poverty has been found to be the main reason why people commit crime, that is to say, they resort to crime as a survival strategy. Forty six percent of the respondents indicated that poverty is the main cause why the perpetrators decided to commit the crimes, especially for housebreaking and stock theft. On the other hand, 15 percent of the respondents blame the condition of the perpetrators on peer pressure, which according to them leads people to committing crime. For instance, people engage in crime just

to feel being part of their peer group and this applies mainly to the youth. The common types of property crime affected in this case are housebreaking and robbery, which are in the real life situation offences that are committed by energetic group of people, especially robbery. Another condition that predisposed the perpetrators into their criminal activities is drug abuse. It is a common and also validated opinion that some criminals commit property related crime in order to secure money to procure drugs. Besides, the influence of drugs usually affords a 'Dutch courage' to the criminals which make them to forget the consequences of committing crime. In relation to various crimes, burglary is the one that is mostly done under the influence of drugs when compared to other predisposing factors. Furthermore, 9 percent of the respondents maintained that, people commit property crimes especially because the properties are easily accessible to the perpetrators, thus, there are no effective security measures to prevent occurrences. However, accessibility at this juncture could mean both forceful and premeditated access in form of collaboration with some insiders or having full knowledge of the victims' activities. This factor is particularly more important when considering the predisposing factors to housebreaking and stock theft, for example. Four percent of the respondents also believe that people commit crime because they are jealous that other people possess some property. This factor accounts mainly for the stock theft, where half of the respondents concur that jealousy is very prominent in that case. Similarly, property that relate to life style is also affected by jealousy. For instance, the only reason that is given to the occurrence of car theft is jealousy. Childhood experiences and upbringing also account as important predisposing factors to property criminality according to the respondents, especially for robbery. It is a common societal believe that it is because of childhood experiences that people commit various crimes, either because they were abused as children or that they were completely neglected. The other reason could be that one of their parents or any of the significant others has been a criminal hence the children learnt the habit by default.

Relationship between Age and Common Types of Property Offence Committed

As revealed in Table 10, for many unrevealed reasons, 50 percent of the respondents believe

Table 9: Property offences and the predisposing factors

<i>Influence</i>	<i>Type of offence</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>House breaking</i>	<i>Stock theft</i>	<i>Robbery</i>	<i>Car theft</i>	<i>Burglary</i>	
Childhood experiences	3(27.3)	3(27.3)	5(45.5)			11(100)
Peer influence	6(40)	3(20)	5(33.3)		1(6.7)	15(100)
Drug abuse	4(57.1)	1(14.3)	1(14.3)		1(14.3)	7(100)
Poverty	19(41.3)	12(26.1)	10(21.7)		5(10.9)	46(100)
Accessibility	3(33.3)	3(33.3)	2(22.2)		1(11.1)	9(100)
Jealousy		2(50)		1(25)	1(25)	4(100)
I do not know	3(60)	1(20)			1(20)	5(100)
Total	38(39.2)	25(25.8)	23(23.7)	1(1)	10(10.3)	97(100)

Source: Survey 2009

that people of ages of 20 and below are involved in house breaking, 3.8 percent believe they are involved in stock theft, 34.6 percent for robbery and 11.5 percent for burglary. On the other hand, 39.0 percent believe people of ages 21-25 are involved in house breaking, 17.1 percent believe they are in stock theft, 26.8 percent for robbery, 2.4 percent car theft and then 14.6 percent for burglary. While 14.3 percent believed people of ages 26-30 are engaged in house breaking, 85.7 percent of them believed in stock theft and then there were no entries for the remaining types of property crime. Furthermore, 25 percent of the population believed that people of age range 31-35 are involved in house breaking and then 75 percent in robbery. In this case also there were no entries for other types of property crime. People of age ranging among 36-40 were believed by 12.5 percent of the respondents to be involved in house breaking while 75 percent believed they are involved in sock theft and the remaining 12.5 percent associates them with burglary. For the people of 40 years and above, 66.7 percent of the public believe that they are involved in house breaking while the remaining 33.3 percent associated them with stock theft.

Common Property Offences and associated Parental Marital Status of Perpetrators

In order to determine the influence of parental marital status of the perpetrators on types of crime, the marital statuses of their parents were considered against common categories of property offences. As presented in Table 11, 43.8 percent of respondents maintained that people from broken homes are mostly involved in house breaking, compared to response for others like those from stable home (29 percent), where both parents are deceased (33.3 percent) and 12.5 percent for single parent families. The table also reveals that 22.6 percent of respondents believe that people from stable homes are involved in stock theft, 29 percent of them in robbery and 19.4 percent in burglary. Similarly, 25 percent of respondents further maintained that people from broken families commit stock theft and another 25 percent associated them with robbery and lastly 6.3 percent with burglary.

Permanent Residential Location of Perpetrators and Type of Crime Mentioned

To make prevention of crime easier the issue of where the offender comes from should be ad-

Table 10: Common property offences committed and associated age

<i>Age of offender</i>	<i>Type of offence</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>House breaking</i>	<i>Stock theft</i>	<i>Robbery</i>	<i>Car theft</i>	<i>Burglary</i>	
20 and below	13(50)	1(3.8)	9(34.6)		3(11.5)	26(100)
21-25	16(39)	7(17.1)	11(26.8)	1(2.4)	6(14.6)	41(100)
26-30	1(14.3)	6(85.7)				7(100)
31-35	1(25)		3(75)			4(100)
36-40	1(12.5)	6(75)			1(12.5)	8(100)
40+	2(66.7)	1(33.3)				3(100)
I do not know	4(50)	4(50)				8(100)
Total	38(39.2)	25(25.8)	23(23.7)	1(1)	10(10.3)	97(100)

Source: Survey 2009

Table 11: Parental marital status of offender and common property offences

<i>Parents Marital status of offender</i>	<i>Type of offence</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>House breaking</i>	<i>Stock theft</i>	<i>Robbery</i>	<i>Car theft</i>	<i>Burglary</i>	
Stable	9(29)	7(22.6)	9(29)		6(19.4)	31(100)
Broken	7(43.8)	4(25)	4(25)		1(6.3)	16(100)
Widowed	2(50)	2(50)				4(100)
Single parent	1(12.5)	3(37.5)	3(37.5)		1(12.5)	8(100)
Both parents deceased	3(33.3)	3(33.3)	1(11.1)	1(11.1)	1(11.1)	9(100)
I do not know	16(55.2)	6(20.7)	6(20.7)		1(3.4)	29(100)
Total	38(39.2)	25(25.8)	23(23.7)	1(1)	10(10.3)	97(100)

Source: Survey 2009

dressed, Table 12 therefore gives the distribution of the views of respondents with regard to where the perpetrators come from or live. According to the result in Table 12, 41.2 percent of the respondents maintain that most house breaking were perpetrated by students from National University of Lesotho, while 44.3 percent believe they were Roma residents and 21.1 percent believe people from outside Roma valley come to break houses in the area.

More critical analysis of the data indicates that while housebreaking is an offence that is believed to be perpetrated by people that reside in various villages of Roma Valley, excluding NUL in this case, the loss of stock by residents through stock theft and burglary are carried out mainly by people who live permanently out side Roma Valley. Robbery is an offence in which most respondents believe that the perpetrators are from NUL campus. Car theft which sparingly happens is blamed on outside residents, rather than those from Roma Valley.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND THEORETICAL LINKAGES

From the study, it was discovered that, property crime is the most prevalent type of crime in Roma valley and the most prevalent type of property crime is house breaking, which is supported by the police records that out of 571 crime inci-

dences, 299 of them were property related crime. This varies from house breaking, theft and stock theft. The experience and knowledge of property crime in the study area was overwhelmingly high in the sense that almost every one in this valley has either been a victim or that they know of someone who has been victimized in the recent time. The reasons behind the present condition in the neighbourhoods are interrelated strings of social and economic factors and conditions that prevail in the area, which may be understood more clearly by relating the reality to what has been document by authors from different locations and scholarly inclinations.

Notwithstanding the fact that the rate of property related crime has been high in the area, surprisingly the rate at which victims or witnesses of these crimes report the incidences to the Police does not correspond with the reality of occurrences on ground. The impression from this study is that not at all times that people report when they have been offended. In other words, victims and witnesses inclination to report crime incident to the police depend on a lot of factors, which range from the circumstances, the magnitude of the offence and the damage done by the perpetrator, the level of self assurance of safety after the report and the willingness of the reporter to stand in as a witness if the case is eventually charged to court for prosecution. These determinant factors of crime reporting to the police were

Table 12: Common property offences and where perpetrators come from

<i>Perpetrators' residence</i>	<i>Offence</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>House breaking</i>	<i>Stock theft</i>	<i>Robbery</i>	<i>Car theft</i>	<i>Burglary</i>	
NUL scholar	7(41.2)	1(5.9)	8(47.1)		1(5.9)	17(100)
Roma valley residents	27(44.3)	15(24.6)	13(21.3)		6(9.8)	61(100)
People from out side	4(21.1)	9(47.4)	29(10.5)	1(5.3)	3(15.8)	19(100)
Total	38(39.2)	25(25.8)	23(23.7)	1(1)	10(10.3)	97(100)

Source: Survey 2009

not further interrogated in this study. However, the emerging facts from the study area suggests that residents do not report when there has been an offence because they are usually afraid of revenge from the perpetrators. According to them, the police usually ask them who their suspects are, in which case revealing the suspects puts them in further risks because there is no trust and confidence in the police as they usually inform the suspects the exact words of the victim. Thus, when released, if ever apprehended, the suspects go back to revenge on the victim or witness once again to perpetrate another offence.

The present finding of this research that crime incidences are under reported by either the victims or the crime witnesses in the study area suggests that even the available statistics on reported crime might obviously be extremely lower than what obtains on reality. This assumption largely consents with what exists in previous studies and grey literature that statistical records of crime are probably the least reliable of all officially published figures of social issues since there are those offences that are not captured in the official statistics, which are referred to as “the dark figure of unrecorded crime”, (Giddens 2004). Roma Valley can be adjudged based on the present low crime reporting rate as a fit and closer analogue of Giddens’ terminology of “dark figures”.

The preponderance of property crime when compared to other categories of crime in Roma Valley suggests that the social environment of the area might be conducive for such crimes. Crimes, especially property related ones thrive in areas where there are avenues and opportunities to plan and implement the actions and also in areas that have population characteristics and values that support criminal activities. Descriptively, Roma valley area largely possesses some of the predisposing factors that promote crime, if the ecological theory of the Chicago school is considered, for example, Shaw and McKay (1969) demonstrated that social disorganization was endemic to urban areas which were the only places the newly arriving poor can afford to live. In these areas there was high rate of turnover population which is also regarded as residential instability and the mixes of people from different cultural backgrounds, most referred to as ethnic diversity. It is evident that Roma valley area has many of the inbuilt characteristics of a crime prone area such as high population turnover, heterogeneity which results to value inconsistency

in a socially disorganized community, where students and strangers come and go at a regular basis.

Similarly, the extent of property crime in Roma Valley and other predisposing conditions to property crime have been revealed in this study. These include poverty, jealousy, and accessibility to the victims or targets among other factors. The poverty and jealousy nexus as joint predisposing factors in Roma Valley relate to what have been copiously linked in the theory of Differential Opportunity and Delinquent Gang. According to Curran and Claire (2001), the Delinquent Opportunity theory specifically linked sense of injustice from actual or anticipated failure of achieving status set by conventional standards to be the major condition for criminals’ self justification for their actions, especially on economic or property related crimes. For instance, linking this assumption with the criminals’ self justification in Roma Valley makes some sense from the point of view that jealousy was indicated as one of the motivating factors behind property crime. Besides, the area is descriptively highly heterogeneous with glaring difference in personal achievements and economic inequality. There is a population mixture of achieving students, accomplished middleclass university workers and the very poor village members, which consists mainly of youth population who were either dropped out of school or not economically prosperous at the moment.

Accessibility to targets has been consistently reported in literature to be one of the main motivations to crime contemplation, in which case the reality and situation in Roma Valley is not strikingly different. According to Delinquent Opportunity theory, the dangerousness of a particular environment relates to four factors, and these four factors either largely or relatively present in Roma Valley neighbourhoods. First is the accessibility of the victim or target, which implies that, if a property like a car is not put in a garage or fencing, it becomes clear that, people might get tempted to steal it just because it seems easy to do so, thus, they see an opportunity of stealing the car without being caught. Most housebreaking and stealing incidences in Roma Valley have been sometimes linked to accessibility of the target to the perpetrator, where in some cases the perpetrators do possess the house keys of their victims, who are usually either their friends or acquaintances among the students, for

example. Secondly, Curran and Claire posited that, the perceived attractiveness of the target increases its chances of being tempered with. For instance, the latest model of a car of which every one in the community wants to own is highly likely to be stolen if it is to be seen around such a community. This could also be evident in the cases of rape where attractive women and girls are the ones who are mostly raped. In the like manner, the proximity of the target to potential perpetrators puts property under their spot light. Even if they did not intend to tamper with a certain individual, the fact that he or she is closer to them puts the potential victim at risk. Roma Valley in this regard is a relatively small settlement where there is no hiding place for the economic prosperous people and their property. The intensive level of interaction between students and colleagues in the area suggests that every-one's possessions are known to most people in the neighbourhoods.

The level of security in the Roma valley area is also very indicative of the high rate of property crime compared to other categories of crime. The absence of capable guardian is the last factor that tempts offenders according to the classical assumption of the Delinquent Opportunity theory. This relates to the fact that if offenders realize that they can operate with lower chances of being caught then they tend to take the opportunity that is available to them. There may be no wonder then in the revelation of this study that property crimes do occur at any time of the day but mainly during the night when the perpetrators feel that they would not be caught. Similarly, most property crime perpetrators in Roma Valley operate with the realization that there is apparently absence of tight security in the area. This study revealed that the residents do not have confidence in the police for some obvious reasons of ineffectiveness in delivering their mandates, which is known to the perpetrators who take opportunity of the no cordial relationship. There seem to be laxity from the perspective of the criminal justice system in handing out appropriate punishment to the perpetrators, which some community members believe has not impacted remarkably positive in discouraging the perpetrators. The Roma residents maintained that the perpetrators do not usually get the punishment they deserve, therefore, after completing their trials, perpetrators go back to commit more crimes, which implies that the punishment they

receive does not perform its function of deterrence. Most houses, especially those that are occupied by students are usually first targets to housebreakers, especially during the holidays or weekends. These houses do not have adequate crime preventive measures like alarms, security dogs and burglar proofs so as to reduce the chances of being offended, as earlier suggested by Curran and Claire (2001).

Furthermore, answers of who commits these crimes in Roma Valley have been provided by this study. The study revealed people from both stable and broken homes as the perpetrators alike. However, people from broken home were more implicated as being mainly involve in house-breaking in the area. This has been documented in the literature by Lauer (1998) that, broken homes are found to be an incentive to engage in delinquency and the rates are high among those whose families are disrupted by severe conflict, unemployment and divorce. Lauer (1998) further buttressed that, broken families usually earn little income which can not afford to satisfy all the needs of the family, thus, children from such families feel obliged to go out and find means to make ends meet at home. For many unrevealed reasons, 33.3 percent and 66.7 percent of the respondents believe that people of ages of 20 and below and 40 years and above are involved in committing property crimes in Roma valley. The preponderance of people in these age groups in the property crime cases is not unconnected to the apparent financial and economic pressure that people of these ages face in Basotho society and culture, where it is expected that they should be able to provide for their family of orientation and procreation.

The study further revealed that most of the perpetrators for most crimes are people from Roma valley, who are invariable products of the socially disorganized community. This goes along with the ecological approach which examines the consequences when a community is unable to conform to common values and to solve the problems of its residents. This revelation somewhat validates previous study among youths and juveniles in the United States (Niskanen 1994), -Lesotho (Obioha and Nthabi 2011), and youths in South Africa (Small 2012) where social disorganization among other factors and conditions was linked to various crimes and criminal behaviours. According to the exponents of this theory, Shaw and McKay who applied

Sutherlands' theory of systematic criminal behavior, delinquency or criminality is not caused at the individual level; it is rather a normal response by normal individuals to abnormal social conditions. Therefore, if a community is not self policing, some individuals will exercise some unrestricted freedom to express their desires and dispositions which often leads to criminality (Fleisher 1995).

Based on the above it could be argued that criminal motivation alone was not sufficient to cause property crime in Roma Valley neighbourhoods. In addition to motivation for instance, the perpetrators require the opportunity to pursue their plan to full implementation. In this regard, the physical and social environment of the perpetrator and the victim encourage or limit criminal opportunity. Criminals therefore sort to identify environmental factors that provide the opportunity to commit crime as has been the case with Roma Valley.

CONCLUSION

Lesotho is a developing country with high poverty level hence people will always try to find as many alternative ways of survival as possible, where resorting to criminal activities will also be included. This study found some predisposing factors to criminal activities in Roma Valley, which revolve round the nature of economic situation in the area. This reechoes what has been previously established in the literature that property crimes are mainly linked with economic gains, thus, since quite a number of people in Lesotho live below the poverty line, they therefore resort to property crimes as they tend to satisfy economic needs faster. It is only if means to minimize poverty are employed that property crime rates will reduce, thus, well paid jobs should be established as literature has revealed that low paid jobs can not help in the alleviation of poverty. Similarly, the increasing crime situation is found to be further compounded by the descriptive lax, inactive, non-proactive and reactive policing in the area. The evidence from the study suggests that the community members do not have absolute confidence in the Police as the protector of their lives and properties, which has led to the exploitation of the situation by some criminal networks based on the understanding of this prevailing situation.

NOTES

- ¹ There are two types of laws: namely 1) Natural laws that are rooted in core values shared by many cultures, which protect against harm to persons (e.g. murder, rape, assault) or property (theft, larceny, robbery), and form the basis of common law systems. 2) Statutory law or Statutes that are enacted by legislatures and reflect current cultural mores, albeit that some laws may be controversial.
- ² Crime control is one of the prominent functions of the police in Lesotho. The communities have to put a hand in helping the police to prevent any kind of crime. Cooperating and working in partnership with the police is an integral part of effective crime prevention, given the wide ranging nature of the causes of crime and the skills and responsibilities required to address them. Police stations are categorized into three regions namely; Central Region which includes Maseru Urban, Maseru Rural and *Thaba-Tseka*, the Northern Region which comprises of *Berea*, *Leribe*, *Botha-Bothe* and *Mokhotlong* and the Southern Region which includes; *Mafeteng*, *Mohale's-Hoeks*, *Quthing* and *Qacha's-Nek* (Bureau of statistics, 2008).

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