

The Relationship Between Crime and Infrastructural Gaps Within the Golf Course Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Housing Estate in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study sought to explore the association between crime and infrastructural gaps in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses with a case of the 2013 RDP Golf course study. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and adopted a case study and mini survey designs. The study was explorative, explanatory and descriptive in design. Twenty-four (24) participants were subjected to one –on-one interview while 50 respondents answered a questionnaire interview. The findings from this study indicated that there were immense crime attributed to inadequate infrastructure such as having no streetlights; no feeder roads while the existing ones were deplorable; and there were no police services instituted near these houses; These shortcomings compelled these researchers to recommend to the government and other development partners to consider working for infrastructure such as making feeder roads and improving the existing ones; expediting the installation of street lights and ensuring police services are instituted. These researchers believe that the results from the study will ring a bell to policy makers and non government organizations to brainstorm and come up with a plan to bolster the infrastructure around the RDP houses.

INTRODUCTION

Indubitably, housing is considered to be an essential basic need that must be provided to every human being (Kaplan 1996; Galtung 1978). It is even a human rights resource that every individual should enjoy and guard jealously (UN HABITAT 2009). Unfortunately, many parts of the world continue to witness huge challenges around the provision and access to housing (UN HABITAT 2003). To say the naked fact, millions and millions of people in many countries of African continent are in dire need of housing if their lives will ever improve (UN HABITAT 2003, 2009). It is also important that the housing provision also considers the quality, at least to benchmark the quality befitting human dignity (Mutume 2004). In South Africa, for example, the housing problem can be rooted from the Apartheid government that had discriminative policies that ensured that only the whites benefited while the blacks had to continue living in ghettos, shanties and in squalor conditions (Patel 2005; Mafukidze and Hoosen 2009). In an endeavour to address this challenge, the Post Apartheid government introduced the Recon-

struction and Development Programme to redress these housing inequities and imbalances (Republic of South Africa 1994). It is also worthy of applause that the target of providing one million houses before the year 2000 was met (Republic of South Africa 1995). However, the disturbing fact regards the infrastructural gaps surrounding these houses such as lack of street lights, roads, policing services etc. These essential infrastructures are very important for every community as they ensure safety and security of the people. Apparently, the RDP projects in many parts of the country appear to have not taken seriously the task of bolstering the houses' state of infrastructure especially the road networks and the street lights around the housing estates. To say the least, the state of infrastructure has largely compromised the state of security and therefore the psychosocial welfare of the dwellers.

This is saddening considering the fact that the rate of crime in South Africa is unfortunately higher than any other part of the globe (Durheim 2011). Literature sources seem to associate some level of crime surrounding most RDP housing estates to the poor state of infrastructure such as lack of street lights (Vlok 1996).

This is because most housing projects that lack street lights and roads make it conducive for criminals to roam the areas with ease and easily hideout in the dark. For example, lack of lights can form a fertile opportunity for culprits to carry out mayhem deeds such as rape and other kinds of crime (Seemise 2013). To this end, some RDP housing residents in Mahikeng in North West Province have been reported complaining about lack of roads and street lights making the crime thrive in the housing estate (Rantlha 2012). It is therefore hoped that this paper will likely provoke the government to strengthen its efforts to bolster the state of infrastructure surrounding the RDP houses in South Africa.

Aims and Objectives

Although the broad research study from which this paper has been derived sought to explore the perceptions of the RDP Housing beneficiaries on the extent to which the housing project meets their housing needs in Golf Course Estate in the Eastern Cape Province, this paper's succinct aim is to explore the association between the rate of crime and infrastructural gaps in the RDP houses.

Problem Statement

The problem of access to adequate and safe housing is a global phenomenon that all the countries are striving to achieve (UN HABITAT 2003, 2009). Although the country of South Africa has millions of its people lacking access to adequate and qualitative housing, the government has however instituted low cost housing programmes such as the RDP to make sure that the needy and the vulnerable have access to houses ((Mafukidze and Hoosen 2009; Manomano 2013). However, although every Province in the country is a recipient of these projects, several documented pointers and subjective information from the RDP housing beneficiaries seem to agree that these houses display immense infrastructural gaps such as lack of feeder roads and street lights, that form a fertile grounds for crime various kinds of crimes. This paper, therefore, seeks to explore the association between the rate of crime and the infrastructural gaps in the Golf Course RDP houses in South Africa.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This is with the aim of getting a deeper understanding on the association between the rate of crime and the infrastructural gaps. The use of mixed methods was very important because the two methods served to corroborate, strengthen and confirm the findings and therefore increased data and result validity and reliability (De Vos 2005; Karkukly 2011). The quantitative approach was pivotal in eliciting the quantitative magnitude of people's perceptions on the rate of crime and infrastructural gaps (Neuman 2006); while the qualitative approach was very important in collecting the thoughts, views, perceptions and opinions of the participants in order to make meaning of their feelings towards the rate of crime and the infrastructural gaps (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 11 as cited by Fottler et al. 2008).

Methods of Data Collection

The quantitative design took the form of a mini survey design while the qualitative design took the form of a case study. The study was explorative, descriptive, and explanatory in nature.

Research Instruments

The study utilized a likert scale designed questionnaire to capture the quantitative opinions and perceptions of the respondents; while an interview guide with unstructured questions was used to gather data from the study participants on their perceptions, views and attitudes on the association between rate of crime and infrastructural gaps in the RDP houses.

Units of Analysis

In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with one social worker; one RDP housing administrator and 22 purposefully selected beneficiaries of RDP houses. 50 residents were subjected to a questionnaire interview. The social worker was essentially important as it is the social workers who are concerned with the social functioning and welfare of the people while the RDP Housing Administrator was especially

important because RDP Housing Administrators are knowledgeable about the housing project and hence these two served as key informants for the study.

Sample Selection Methods

The study utilized both probability and non-probability methods in selecting the study participants and respondents. The study utilized stratified and simple random sampling to select respondents to respond to the questionnaire interviews; and purposive sampling for in-depth interviews. Simple random sampling enables the researcher to maximize the validity of the data while stratified sampling is pivotally useful as it reduces probability error and also increase generalizability and representativeness of the results (Babbie 2007). Purposive sampling is very important where there is need to collect information from the samples that have rich attributes that the researcher is seeking (Neuman 2006).

Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

The researcher was assisted by a research assistant from Social Work Department to carry both the task of collecting the data and also to do the translation. This is because virtually all the data was collected in Isixhosa language. The researcher utilized an audio tape recorder for recording the actual spoken words from the participants. This data was transcribed, organized, grouped and categorized into themes according to the perceptions of the respondents and participants as depicted by the content thematic analysis for analyzing qualitative data. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in analyzing the quantitative data which was presented in graphs, charts and tables for clearer meaning.

Research Domain and Justification of Choice

The data for this study were collected in November 2012. The researchers chose this

study domain because of the numerous subjective complaints by the residents of the estate on issues of infrastructural gaps and rate of crime. Being the RDP housing estate near the university, it was easier for information from the estate to reach the University of Fort Hare and therefore formed an opportunity to make the site a research domain. It was then easier for the researchers to conduct the research without many transport impediments. There were 1233 RDP houses in the Golf Course Estate during the time of research.

FINDINGS

Profile

Gender and Race

The findings from this study indicated that there 88 percent of the study participants were Black South Africans; 12 percent were colored and 62 percent were females; while 38 percent were males (see Table 1). These findings reveal an uneven gender difference in that there were more females than males. There were also more blacks than coloreds and this concurs with the national South African statistics that indicate that there are more blacks in South Africa than coloreds (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010).

Marital Status

On marital status, the findings indicated that those who were single, married and widowed constituted 60 percent, 28 percent and 6 percent respectively; while those who were either divorced or separated constituted 2 percent each respectively. These findings revealed that most of the study participants were single. Since these houses are for redressing the state of lack of housing due to poverty, lack of jobs, or under-employment, or having very low paying jobs, it is then pertinent that the government in cohort with other development practitioners engage and

Table 1: Gender of the study participants

S. No.	Race	Frequency	%	S. No.	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Black	44	88.0	1	Male	19	38.0
2	Coloured	6	12.0	2	Female	31	62.0
3	Total	50	100.0	3	Total	50	100.0

consult one another to come up with ways and approaches of how to better the lives of this segment of the population. Having so many single people and especially among the youth in a state of poverty in a country is like having the country sit on a time bomb that can explode any time. This is because poverty, unemployment as well as having very little to occupy oneself could easily lead to people adopting other illicit ways of earning livelihood such as engagement in crime, prostitution etc. Perhaps the issue of the government only accessing most of this people with grants is appreciable as a remedial measure, but they need to be occupied. Having business skills and training them in various manual related skills can probably raise their employable capacity as well as capacities to venture into small scale businesses (Table 2).

Table 2: Marital status

S. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Single	30	60.0
2	Married	14	28.0
3	Divorced	1	2.0
4	Widowed	3	6.0
5	Windowed	1	2.0
6	Separated	1	2.0
7	Total	50	100.0

Socio-economic Status

The findings from this study indicated that 52 percent of the study participants revealed they were unemployed; 6 percent were casual laborers; 8 percent were students; 2 percent were self employed; and 32 percent were employed. These findings indicate that most of the study participants were unemployed. This is a scenario that affects the whole of South Africa especially among the poor. It therefore calls for the government to consider coming up with alternative ways of economically helping these people. This is because unemployed and especially those who have been out of jobs for long are likely to engage in various illicit ways of survival such as crime and prostitution. These researchers suggest that the government needs to consider funding income generating projects especially to the poor who are unemployed as well as increasing funding for advanced education for those from poor backgrounds (Table 3).

Table 3: Socio-economic status

S. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Employed	16	32.0
2	Unemployed	26	52.0
3	Casual	3	6.0
4	Self	1	2.0
5	Student	4	8.0
6	Total	50	100.0

Lack of Street Lights Encouraging Criminal Activities

The findings indicated that all the participants and the respondents revealed that there were no streetlights around their houses (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"You can't freely move outside your house in Golf Course because of the lack of streetlights; it will be very dark outside and we do not know what to do",

"There are a lot of house breakings here and you can be robbed whilst you are walking at night. It's dark! Dark! Everywhere."

The findings indicated that lack of streetlights posed the challenge of insecurity around Golf Course RDP houses. It made criminal activities to thrive. This was the reason why there were many cases of housebreakings, theft and robbery especially when it gets dark. This has made people to always live in fear and therefore compromising the quality of their lives. Rape cases were especially happening when it gets dark. It therefore raises questions as to whether the government is really concerned with ensuring that its people are safe and free from crime.

Poor State of Roads Encourages Thieves and Robbers

Virtually all the participants revealed that the state of roads was deplorable especially after the rains. Feeder roads were especially not there making people sometimes-make passages just around the unfenced houses. This further exacerbates the security of people with unfenced houses (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to one-on-one in-depth interviews:

“We have very poor roads and no feeder roads around our houses; this makes the criminals comfortable because they know the police would have challenges to reach some corners of the estate.”

“Lack of feeder roads around the houses make people make passages around the unfenced houses. This exacerbates the security situation of such dwellers”.

“The poor state of roads is even detrimental to business activities. Perhaps this is why commodities are very expensive here. Vehicles do not want to come in here”.

“The taxis charge us very expensively. They say the state of our roads is poor and therefore they have to charge us higher because of higher wear and tear of their vehicles”.

These findings indicate that poor roads and lack of feeder roads make communication a challenge and heightens the state of insecurity around the houses. This is a very bad situation given that construction must have started more than 5 years back. By now there are no reasons why roads are in a very deplorable state or why feeder roads are still not constructed. This indicates that the estate has experienced a “dumping syndrome process”. The dwellers feel that the government besides giving the houses never mind about improving the welfare of the houses. The sad part is that thieves and robbers and other criminals are taking advantage of the lack of roads because even if police vehicles are to come when called, they will take long to get the criminals because the roads are difficult to travel. It is therefore important to realize that the problem of crime needs to be addressed. Those infrastructural gaps that encourage crime needs to be filled up. The lack of roads could also be discourage people from venturing into any business activity. These researchers, therefore, think that the government needs to consider expand-

ing its road works to these program houses; as well as a way of encouraging investment in these areas which will possibly create employment and trade opportunities for these beneficiaries. This in turn could also reduce crime around these areas.

Police Service is Critical

The findings from this study revealed that 34 percent of the study participants indicated that the police station was very far; 52 percent indicated that it was far, while 14 percent revealed it was not far (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

“These houses that we live in do not even have a police post and not even a police tent; so how can the thieves stay away if those structures are not there”

“The thieves increase because there is no police. It is like the cat and mouse myth or a joke where the mice take control in absence of a cat”.

The findings from this study indicated how serious the service of the police is required. The RDP houses have no police services and this scenario is catalytic to encourage and promote crime. This is because the policing services mitigate crime and ensure that the people are safe and secure from any threat of possible harm and invasion. They also enable restoration of lost goods as well as ensuring that criminals if caught will be surrendered to the courts to face the full wrath of the law. Therefore, their importance cannot be over emphasized. The scenario calls for the government to consider putting up a police service infrastructure if the security of the estate is to be beefed up.

Table 4: Provision of infrastructure within RDP houses in Golf Course

S. No.	Roads	Frequency	%	S. No.	Street lights	Frequency	%
1	Not provided	50	100.0	1	Not provided	50	100.0
2	Total	50	100.0	2	Total	50	100.0

S. No.	Police services	Frequency	%
1	Not far	7	14.0
2	Far	26	52.0
3	Very far	17	34.0
4	Total	50	100.0

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study indicated a skewed gender discrepancy in that there were more females than males which is a characteristic feature of the South African population as females are more than males generally (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). The findings indicated that there were more blacks than colored which is also a predominant feature of the racial representation in South Africa as Blacks outnumber the coloreds (SSA 2010). There were also more people who were single residing in these houses than the married, divorced, widowed as well as the separated. According to these researchers, the findings agree with sentiments from other researchers that indicate that these single people constitute the group which is most affected by poverty. It is also scaring in that it is increasingly the youth especially the single who are becoming infected by HIV/AIDS. With the cost of maintaining and managing HIV/AIDS hurting the economy of the country, it is important for the government to affirmatively consider investing in this segment of the population (Rodgers 2006 as cited by Manomano 2013; Barnett and Whiteside 2006; Kang'ethe 2013, 2014).

Research findings revealed that most of the study participants were unemployed. This is a very bad state as it concurs with sentiments that indicate that the rate of unemployment is high in South Africa especially among the poor (Trie-gardt 2008: 485; Segal and Brawley 2009; Larson et al. 2002 as cited by Kamper and Badern-host 2010). Unemployment poses a huge development challenge in South Africa. However, it presents an undeniable fact that there is an inextricable relationship between unemployment and levels of crime (Crime Statistics 2013). This is because areas which are seriously hit by crime record very high levels of unemployment especially in RDP houses (CRIMESTATS 2013). The government needs to debate its employment creation plans and strategies to see what needs to be done. Otherwise, the country appears to be in a sorry state of affairs, on one hand recording the biggest GDP in the continent, and at the same time, mirroring unprecedentedly higher levels of unemployment and crime. Perhaps also the system of agriculture needs to be revisited. This is because allowing very high state of mechanization also results to higher job cut. The country needs to promote policies that encourage

job expansion and job creation. This scenario calls for the government to probably consider expanding Income Generating Projects "IGPs" as a means to create employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Entrepreneurial education is especially of paramount importance (Mafela 2009).

Findings indicated deplorable state of roads or total absence of feeder roads, giving the thieves, robbers, and criminals a conducive atmosphere to engage in crime. This state has made many complaints and grievances in various parts of the country. For example in Soshanguve, Pretoria, residents complained about the few roads and streetlights around their houses (Greyling 2009 as cited by Manomano 2013). In these researchers' contention and observation, the government of South Africa appears to spend a lot of money to react to issues of insecurity, but not doing or investing handsomely in prevention endeavours. It is ironical that although billions are being spent on efforts towards reducing crime, no one wants to answer the question why the government cannot ensure there are streetlights and better roads as a way of bolstering the state of security in many RDP estates of the country (Balduff 2007). The state of insecurity in many RDP houses estates in Mpumalanga are experiencing higher crime rates. The province was in 2012 reported to experience very high levels of crime such as burglary, robbery and assault. For example in Delmas, Mpumalanga, the RDP houses are increasingly being broken into (Solomon 2008; CRIMESTATS 2013). Moreover, in Braamfischer-ville, Gauteng, the attacker just kicked the door open of an RDP house and a girl aged 11 was stabbed multiple times raped and in the early hours of the morning sending a strong message to the government on the poor state of the RDP houses and the state of insecurity surrounding them (Roane and Mbangeni 2013).

Lack of police service around the RDP housing estates was also found to increase the state of insecurity around the RDP houses. In Lehae, Gauteng, for instance, the RDP Houses have been reported to be without a Police Station. Perhaps the government should ensure that police services are increased in areas of RDP houses where a bigger chunk of poor people in the country could be residing. An inextricable relationship between poverty and unemployment as well as in residing in RDP houses is not

in doubt (The South African Police Service Strategic Plan 2010 to 2014 2010: 05). It also demonstrates the failure of the government to utilize the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in the implementation of these RDP housing projects because of the lack of policing services. It is however important that upon instituting policing services that the police officials are monitored by other safety state organs. This is because the police are increasingly being accused of not being transparent. To this end, statistics indicate that one in four police officers have been involved in bribery in Johannesburg (CRIME STATISTICS 2013). This behaviour could stall the safety, security and proper implementation of the RDP housing projects because the entrusted law enforcement agencies would be failing to handover those who commit crime to face the full wrath of the law.

CONCLUSION

Bolstering and beefing up security and communication infrastructure are critical factors that the government of South Africa needs to consider around the RDP houses in all the parts of the country. The RDP housing environment, usually inhabited by people of low socio-economic status also suffers from higher rates of crime. Therefore, proper street lighting, securing proper roads and feeder roads could facilitate the enhancement of security and possibly lead to lowered rate of insecurity. This, therefore, calls for more efforts from the government in partnership with other development partners such as the NGO sector and other line ministries to speed up efforts towards addressing infrastructural gaps around these houses as a goal to reduce crime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These researchers informed by the problems of crime and infrastructural gaps besetting the beneficiaries of RDP houses have put forward the following recommendations

Crime Prevention to be Made a Priority

Amid high rates of unemployment among the RDP dwellers and South Africans generally, it is recommendable that the government in cohort with other development partners such as the NGOs consider educating and mobilizing communities on ways of curbing crime in their area.

This is through local participation in crime prevention. The RDP dwellers need to be helped to start vigilante groups that could work hand in hand with the security agents.

Overcoming Crime Calls for a Collaborative Effort of Different Stakeholders

Since it is pertinently clear that crime cannot be addressed by the Police Forces alone, the government should facilitate a collaborative effort of fighting crime with the support of various stakeholders such as Integrated and Development Plan (IDP). This is because the Ministry of Human Settlements alone cannot address the challenge of housing holistically, but it takes the combined collaborative efforts from other Ministries. For example, the Ministry of Health can assist with the deployment of medical and mobile clinics to assist those that are abused and raped; as well as to embark on community message dissemination and mobilization against abuses of various kinds. The commissions or ministries related to roads can also work towards ensuring that road facilities are made and existing ones improved in these housing programmes as most programme beneficiaries lament the lack of them and their effect on crime. The Eskom department could also pull up its sleeves to embrace access to electricity for all. All these actions and plans if carried out successfully could hopefully reduce the levels of crime.

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