

An exploratory study on the experiences of crime of female youth during load shedding
in Site C, Khayelitsha

By

Megan Dike

DKXMEG001

In fulfilment of master's degree: Criminology, Law & Society

Department of Public Law,

Faculty of Law

University of Cape Town



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Supervisor: A/Prof Irvin Kinnes

Co supervisor: Dr Sisanda Mguzulwa

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

Load shedding has become a common problem in South Africa, resulting in daily disruptions affecting every sector of life. Load shedding is a planned and temporary disruption of energy supply to specific areas. The present study explored the experiences of crime of female youth during load shedding at night in Site C, Khayelitsha. While there is extensive literature on the impact of load shedding on crime, no attention has been given to its impact on crime against female youth in Site C, Khayelitsha. The study fills this gap in the existing literature. Although males can experience crime too, the focus of this study is on the experiences of the female youth. Using a qualitative research approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 female youth residents of Site C, of which 8 out of the 15 participants directly experienced crime during load shedding and the other 7 participants had not directly experienced crime, but were witnesses of crime during load shedding. The findings of this study indicate that load shedding is associated with higher levels of robberies, with house robbery being the most common crime during load shedding. Furthermore, the research underscores the role of environmental factors in shaping crime opportunities and highlights the disproportionate impact load shedding has on the female youth. The study also emphasizes the urgent need for targeted interventions to protect vulnerable groups during load shedding.

DEDICATION

To myself, I did it again!

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This thesis is the evidence of God's wonderful grace and faithfulness in my life.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

Load shedding has become a frequent phenomenon in South Africa, affecting various sectors such as crime (Lambongang, 2023). The present study explores the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. In this chapter, the background on load shedding in South Africa, South Africa's crime landscape in a historical context, experiences of victimization among female youth, problem statement, rationale, research aim and objectives, location of study, motivation of study, research questions and importance of study, are all presented. The chapter ends with a summary of the overall structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background on load shedding in South Africa

Electricity is a fundamental commodity in every community globally (Shokoya & Raji, 2019). Every economy must have a reliable and continuous supply of electricity. As economies expand, the need for electrical energy increases due to growing populations, industrialization, and higher incomes (Umar & Kunda-Wamuwi, 2019). In 1998, concerns were raised about Eskom's ability to generate enough electricity and accurately forecast the maximum demand in ten years' time (Surtees, 1998). It was emphasized that without proper conservation, the existing power plants would not be sustainable over the next decade (Surtees, 1998). The rapid population growth in South Africa highlighted the urgent need for new power plants (Nowakowska & Tubis, 2015). As a result, the first electricity shortages occurred in 2007, which became known as 'load shedding'. This periodic load shedding started in 2007 and 2008 when Eskom, the national electricity provider, struggled to manage the increasing demand for electricity without resorting to load shedding (Pitikoe-Chiloane & Dondolo, 2024; Ritchie, Engelbrecht & Booysen, 2024). Since 2007, Eskom has been dealing with the imbalance between electricity demand and supply, leading to the implementation of load shedding.

Eskom assured the public that it could handle the increasing demand for electricity without resorting to load shedding (Lawson, 2022). However, due to Eskom's focus on maintaining power supply, maintenance was neglected for several years (Gibbs, 2014; as cited in Lawson, 2022). In 2014, a series of infrastructure-related issues occurred at various Eskom plants and mines, leading to the closure of facilities that supplied a significant portion of the grid and resulting in consistent load shedding in December of that year (Niselow, 2019). Additionally, load shedding is characterized by different stages of blackouts, as the electricity grids face

excessive strain (Lawson, 2021). As a result, South Africans have experienced prolonged periods without electricity due to load shedding (Khoza, 2024). Load shedding became more severe since 2019, with South Africa experiencing higher stages of load shedding for the first time, such as stage 6 (Mabunda et al., 2023), resulting in shedding up to 6000 MW on a 6-hour rotational basis (Du Vegane, 2020). This translates to individuals being without electricity for 6 hours every day.

Though this research focuses on South Africa, it is essential to acknowledge that load shedding is not a problem unique to South Africa. The electricity crisis has been a global issue for many years, and South Africa is part of this crisis (Naidoo, 2023). In several African countries, access to electricity is limited. For instance, in countries like Burundi, Malawi, Chad, Niger, and the Democratic Republic, over 75% of the population lacks access to electricity, which means that 573 million people are without electricity (Mutezo & Mulopo, 2021). This lack of access is attributed to the countries' energy infrastructure and diverse energy supply sources (Mutezo & Mulopo, 2021). Excessive demand or disruptions in the energy supply strain the electrical infrastructure, resulting in power outages in numerous African and global countries (Lambongang, 2023). Additionally, Winkler et al. (2020) attribute the implementation of load shedding in South Africa to various factors such as a lack of maintenance, overdemand, corruption, internal mismanagement, design flaws in power stations, capital expenditure shifts, poor quality coal, and cable theft (Ateba et al., 2019; Winkler et al., 2020; Schoeman & Saunders, 2018; Kusakana, 2020).

1.3 South Africa's crime landscape: A historical overview

The history of South Africa has been marked by violence, dating back to the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652 and the subsequent implementation of the apartheid regime (Hoosen et al., 2022). According to the World Health Organization (2021), violence is defined as the use of physical force or power on purpose that results in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006). Violence is a harmful process that impedes human growth, limits development, and has been historically used as a tool of power and governance by colonialists to control indigenous people (Bulhan, 1985; Yesufu, 2022).

Marginalized and disadvantaged population groups in South Africa have experienced the imposition of violence since the arrival of the first Dutch settlers, with the San and Khoikhoi being the first to suffer the consequences of colonialism through forced dispossession of their lands (Boucher, 1991; Bredenkamp, 1991). The architects of apartheid legislated severe

oppression and violence into the rule of law, using violence as a means to gain and maintain social and political control (Global Peace Index, 2018).

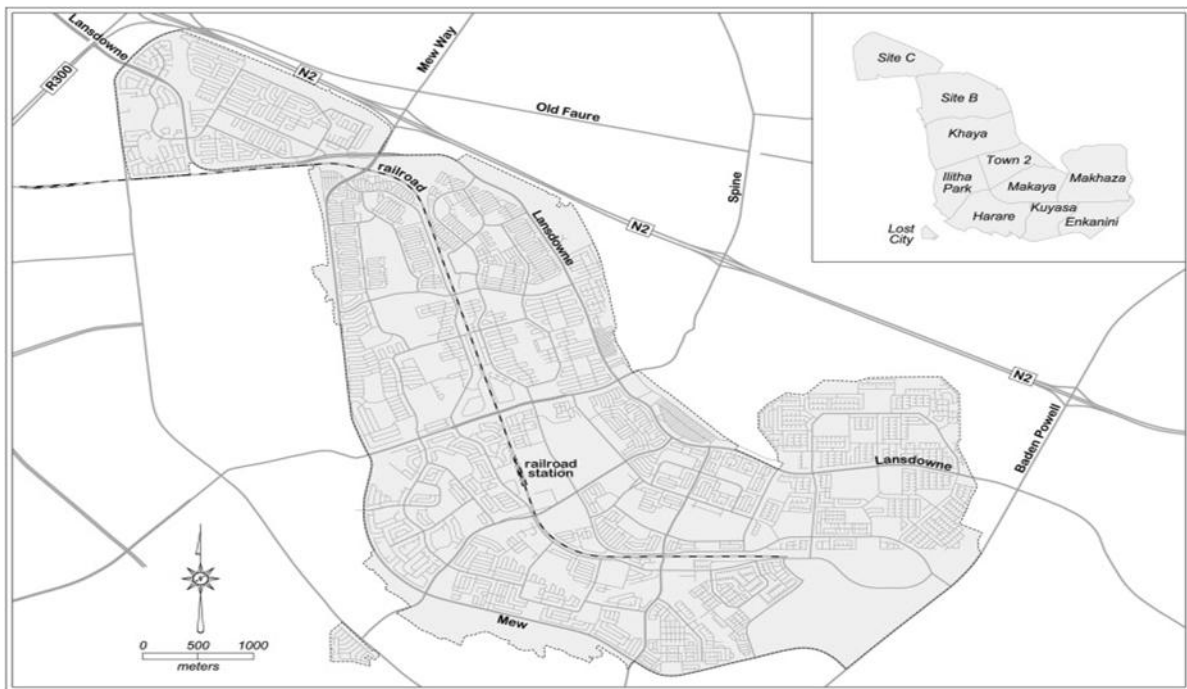
Despite the expectation that violent crime would decline after the end of apartheid and the transition to democracy in 1994, violence remains alarmingly high in South Africa (Kynoch, 2016; Singleton et al., 2023). This is a concern in South Africa and globally (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2017) and the World Health Organization (2014) both report that a large proportion of young people under the age of 24 are killed as a result of violent acts, and a large number of others suffer severe injuries. In addition, South Africa reports some of the highest rates of violence globally, with low-income urban communities of colour being the most affected (WHO, 2016; Subica et al., 2018). According to Hamber (2000), the rates of violence in impoverished areas are greater than those in developed neighbourhoods. Approximately 82% of all incidents of violence that are reported to occur in African communities take place in these places (Ward et al., 2012).

1.4 Experiences of victimization among female youth

Studies show that the most vulnerable demographic in the country is the youth, particularly those residing in communities with low socio-economic status (Mguzulwa, 2022; Hallman et al., 2015; Hamber, 2000). Youth is the “transitional phase between childhood and adulthood” (Spence, 2005; cited in Mguzulwa, 2022:18). The National Youth Policy of South Africa and the National Youth Commission Act (1996) often define youth as individuals aged 14 to 35 (Lujabe, 2018). In certain areas, the female youth encounter various forms of violence within a complex social context. This encompasses violence within private and public domains, including homes, schools, and neighbourhoods (Savahl et al., 2019) and other environments like parks, shopping centres, and public transportation (Sui et al., 2018). Recent crime statistics (SAPS second-quarter crime statistics for 2023/2024) reveal alarming numbers, with 10,516 reported cases of rape, 1,514 cases of attempted murder, and 14,401 assaults against female victims from July to September 2023, along with 881 murders of women (South African Government, 2023; Felix, 2023; Mpako & Ndoma, 2023). In 1998, the South African government prioritized addressing violence against women (VAW) by implementing crime prevention strategies and laws aimed at preventing and assisting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) (Smart, 2022). Despite these efforts, GBV remains a serious and escalating problem (Smart, 2022).

1.5 Location of study: Site C, Khayelitsha

Figure 1: Sections of Khayelitsha



Source: Brunn and Wilson (2013)

The present study is based in Cape Town, South Africa. The chosen site for this research is Site C, a subarea in Khayelitsha (see Figure 1). Khayelitsha is a semi-formal township located in Cape Town, South Africa (Rodina, 2013). It is the largest township in the Western Cape province, located on the southeastern periphery of Cape Town, approximately 30 kilometres from the city centre, with its geographical position serving as a continual reminder of apartheid (Theron et al., 2023; O'Regan-Pikoli Commission of Inquiry, 2014). The 2011 census indicated that Khayelitsha has a population of approximately 400,000 residents. However, this statistic has changed due to the influx of new immigrants to the township throughout the years (Seekings, 2013; Mguzulwa, 2022). According to Richmond (2018), an estimated 2,400,000 people live in Khayelitsha. Moreover, Khayelitsha was founded in 1983, marking the final region of the city designated for African inhabitants during the apartheid era (O'Regan-Pikoli Commission of Inquiry, 2014). Khayelitsha is frequently referred to as a 'township', a term that evokes the apartheid-era designation for urban 'group areas' allocated to individuals categorized as 'black' (Seekings, 2013). Most of its formal and informal housing is derived from the era following the repeal of the Group Areas Act in mid-1991 (Seekings, 2013). Khayelitsha is

predominantly ethnically and linguistically homogeneous, with 98.7 per cent of the population being black and isiXhosa-speaking (Super, 2016).

1.6 Research aim

The overall aim of this research was to explore the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. The study also aims to inform policymakers about developing strategies for mitigating the repercussions of load shedding, particularly those related to crime in Site C, Khayelitsha.

1.7 Problem Statement

Load shedding has posed many challenges in South Africa, from worsening the economic development of the country (Timilsina et al., 2018) to businesses shutting down and retrenchment of employees (McCain, 2022) to exacerbating social problems like crime (Guo, 2024). In Site C, Khayelitsha – already characterised by high crime rates (Ndingaye, 2005) – load shedding creates criminogenic conditions – such as unlit streets and houses that put female youth in risk of crime during load shedding. The absence of light due to load shedding is a key factor that emboldens criminal activity because it reduces visibility, making it difficult to identify and apprehend criminals. Payne (2022) and Lamb (2023) support this by noting that load shedding, especially at night, creates an environment that facilitates robbery and theft because of the reduced visibility. Female youth in Site C, Khayelitsha face intersecting vulnerabilities related to gender, age, and the socio-economic conditions of their environment, placing them at risk during load shedding.

1.8 Importance of Study

This study is important because it fills a notable gap in the current literature on the impact of load shedding on crime and vulnerable populations. The impact of load shedding on crime has been studied by several scholars before. However, these studies have primarily focused on the impact of load shedding on crime, with limited attention given to the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. For example, Lambongang (2023) and Mlambo (2023) examined the relationship between load shedding and crime but did not specifically explore the experiences of crime of female youth. Lenoke (2017) concentrated on the impact of load shedding on South Africa's economic growth, while Marope and Phiri (2024) studied its effects on the housing market. Schoeman and Blaauw (2024) delved into the impact of load shedding on Small, Medium, and Micro enterprises (SMMEs), and Lawson (2022) focused on the effects of electricity blackouts on residential properties and measures of

institutional quality. Consequently, most studies, particularly within Africa, have overlooked the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding. Therefore, this research contributes to the existing literature by exploring this gap in the existing literature.

1.9 Research questions

This research is driven by the core question: *What are the female youth experiences of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha?*

1.9.1 Sub-questions

1. How do female youth respond to crime to protect themselves?
2. What influence does load shedding have on existing patterns of crime in Site C, Khayelitsha?
3. What interventions have been implemented to help the victims of crime?

1.10 Conclusion and outline of thesis

The present study aimed to explore the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. In this chapter, the origins and causes of load shedding are discussed. The chapter highlights load shedding as a global concern and its detrimental impact on the female youth. The experiences of the female youth are also discussed in this chapter.

- **Chapter 2** discusses socio-economic drivers of crime in South Africa, crime in post-apartheid South Africa, vulnerabilities of youth to crime, global research on violence against women, broad literature on risk factors of violence against women, a review of global studies on load shedding, the impact of load shedding in South Africa, the critical role of street lighting, the impact of load shedding on crime in South Africa, the emotional responses of women to crime, existing crime patterns in Khayelitsha and a review of previous crime prevention initiatives in Khayelitsha.
- **Chapter 3** covers the methods employed to gather data for this research. It also details the research design, data collection, analysis, theoretical frameworks and validation processes. The chapter concludes by explaining limitations of the study.
- **Chapter 4** presents the findings of this study.
- **Chapter 5** serves as the concluding section of this study. It summarizes the research findings and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Although the broader objective of this thesis was to explore a broad spectrum of crime experiences - specifically house robbery, street robbery and assaulted robbery as experienced by female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha, the focus of this thesis on female youth necessitates understanding their experiences of crime through a gendered lens. Studies show that women are disproportionately affected by violence compared to men (Pushkarna et al., 2024; Smart, 2022). Accordingly, the literature review draws heavily on literature related to violence against women. This is not intended to narrow the study's focus, but rather to draw on literature that illuminate the gendered vulnerabilities of females.

2.2 Socio-economic drivers of crime in South Africa

South Africa is known for having one of the highest crime rates globally (Draper et al., 2025; Tsaneva & LaPlante, 2024). The surge in crime in South Africa has been linked to the country's shift from apartheid to democracy in the 1990s (Kynoch, 2005). Additionally, Kynoch (2005) notes that during the apartheid era, there was inadequate policing, a lack of trust in law enforcement, and political instability, which contributed to the rise of crime in South Africa; as such, these factors perpetuated a cycle of violence. The enduring consequences of apartheid policies have been identified as a major contributor to the heightened levels of violent crime in South Africa (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). The system of apartheid significantly contributed to the persistence of income poverty and intensified income inequality (Seekings, 2007). The African population experienced significant dispossession of their land, encountered limited opportunities for both employment and self-employment and were often relegated to substandard public education and healthcare systems (Seekings, 2007). They found themselves physically confined to poor areas in rural settings or urban environments (Seekings, 2007). The establishment of racial segregation and oppression within institutions has led to profound socio-economic disparities that continue to exist in contemporary society. The socio-economic disparities manifest as poverty, unemployment, and insufficient access to essential services, particularly within townships and informal settlements (Seekings, 2007). South Africa is now widely recognized for having some of the highest unemployment rates globally (Bhorat et al., 2017).

Unemployment in South Africa is regarded as structural, a phenomenon deeply rooted in the historical context of apartheid. The apartheid legacy has shaped the economic growth trajectory that is heavily reliant on specific skills, which are notably scarce within the country (Bhorat, 2004; Bhorat & Hodge, 1999; Bhorat & Mayet, 2012; Burger & Woolard, 2005; Edwards, 2001). As a result, these socio-economic inequalities established a foundation for crime patterns in the post-apartheid era, with marginalized communities becoming environments that foster crime. Consistent with this, Chalfin and McCrary (2017), as well as Rufrancos et al. (2013), observe that unemployment rates and income inequality play a role in influencing crime rates, issues that remain pervasive in South Africa (Tsaneva & LaPlante, 2024). Ponnar (2018) emphasizes that the ongoing rise in South Africa's crime rate can primarily be linked to the persistent levels of unemployment in the country, along with other unspecified factors that complicate the efforts of South African policymakers (Akinola & Ohonba, 2023). The strong correlation between limited job opportunities and poverty is significant, as individuals facing unemployment may turn to alternative means of sustenance, often resorting to criminal activities (Akinola & Ohonba, 2023). The interplay between employment status and violence is intricate and multifaceted. Qualitative research has shown that individuals, particularly young people, frequently cite the absence of reliable employment, income, and educational opportunities as significant factors contributing to violence (Ward, 2007).

A large portion of South Africans experience low incomes. Several studies indicate that the poverty rate in South Africa is among the highest in the world, compared to other developing nations, resembling conditions typical of low-income countries (Altman, 2006; Budlender et al., 2015). For instance, Bhorat et al. (2017:1) found that in 2010, almost half of the households in South Africa (47.3 per cent) and over one-third (37.9 per cent) were living below the upper (R577) and lower (R416) poverty lines, respectively. Additionally, there are significant inequalities in poverty rates among different racial groups, with the majority of Africans below the poverty line, followed by Coloureds (Bhorat et al., 2017). Most individuals in South Africa face difficulties fulfilling their basic needs.

Inequality in South Africa is remarkably high by international standards. A study analysing 108 economies revealed that South Africa had the highest Gini coefficient - 0.62 - calculated as an average from 1960 to 1992, which includes the apartheid era (Deininger & Squire, 1996). However, estimates from the post-apartheid period indicate that inequality has worsened: the Gini coefficient increased from 0.66 in 1993 to 0.70 in 2008, according to research by Leibbrandt et al. (2012). By 2010, the Gini coefficient was estimated to be 0.69 (Bhorat et al.,

2017:2). Given these severe socio-economic challenges, it is unsurprising that South Africa has high levels of crime.

2.3 Crime in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Crime is one of the most alarming issues in post-apartheid South Africa (Demombynes & Özler, 2005), with violent crime being prevalent and prominent in the perceptions of citizens (Shaw & Gastrow, 2001). Violent crime encompasses activities such as homicide, assault, and sexual offences (Bhorat et al., 2017:2). Violent crime, particularly homicide, ranks among the highest globally. The World Health Organization (2018) indicates that South Africa's homicide rate far exceeds the global average, highlighting the critical nature of violent crime in the nation. Homicide serves as a vital indicator reflecting broader crime and violence levels. The high prevalence of violent offences remains a significant concern within South Africa's crime landscape. Recent crime statistics from the South African Police Service (SAPS) for 2023/24 reveal an increase in violent crimes, including a 2.1% rise in murder rates, resulting in 7,710 homicides during that timeframe. The SAPS crime statistics (2023/24) indicate a 1.5% rise in contact crimes—encompassing murder, rape, assault, and shoplifting - within the same period (SAPS crime statistics 2023/24). Additionally, over 1.8 million instances of severe and violent crimes were reported in South Africa during the 2022/2023 financial year (SAPS crime statistics, 2022/23).

2.4 Vulnerabilities of youth to crime

Given the high prevalence of violent crime in South Africa, it is the youth that is disproportionately affected by these incidents. The World Bank (2018) asserts that youth are more susceptible to violence than adults. This vulnerability arises from multiple factors, including socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse. Bellis (2017) asserts that such factors heighten the probability of violence such as interpersonal violence and social conflict, which subsequently intensify poverty and hinder investment and development. These inequalities also create divisions, leading to obstacles, feelings of injustice, and a lack of trust among individuals and communities (Bellis, 2017). Such events undermine a community's social cohesion, and social disorganization theory posits that weaker social bonds contribute to criminal activity (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Where there is a shortage of resources, competitiveness may incite violence. Similarly, when specific individuals or groups are deprived of economic, political, or other opportunities, it may lead to emotional susceptibility, discontent, and the pursuit of alternative (possibly violent) means to rectify injustice (Bellis, 2017). This factors into community violence. Many young individuals face

community violence, which includes sexual violence, gang-related activities, and burglary (Petrich, 2024). The experience of community violence involves various contextual and personal factors, such as being a victim or a witness of severe incidents like shootings, stabbings, weapon possession for criminal purposes, assaults, thefts, hate crimes, and drug-related activities (Chauke, 2023). Additionally, existing studies indicate that female youth report higher levels of overall violence exposure compared to their male counterparts (Ford et al., 2011; Hazen et al., 2009; Tubman et al., 2011; Walrath et al., 2004). Kennedy and Adams (2016) support this and assert that young women are the primary targets of violence, especially sexual abuse, in their communities, often before they even turn 13. The WHO (2023) also indicates that a significant number of youths have experienced sexual abuse, with an estimate of one in eight claiming to have experienced such abuse.

Furthermore, the youth from marginalized and poor communities face a heightened risk of violence. In support of this, Alers-Rojas (2024) asserts that youths from disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience high levels of communal violence compared to their counterparts from wealthier areas. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that low-income communities in South Africa are profoundly affected by a cycle of violence, leading many young individuals to either fall victim to crime or engage in criminal activities within their community (Hinsberger et al., 2016). Low-income communities in South Africa are marked by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse (Smith, 2024). These socioeconomic conditions elevate the probability of youth in these neighbourhoods' experiencing crime and violence (Smith, 2024). The risk of exposure to violence is frequently increased by systemic poverty and unemployment, which are prevalent in low-income communities (Smith, 2024).

Globally, approximately 176,000 youths aged 15–29 lose their lives to homicide annually, which ranks as the third most prevalent cause of death for this demographic (WHO, 2023). In addition to suffering from violence, young people also often witness it, as evidenced by the participants in this present study. Previous studies indicate that youth in South Africa witness and experience violence in various environments, such as homes, schools, and communities (Shields et al., 2009).

As a result, young people who are exposed to violence face significant risks for various forms of physical, emotional, behavioural, and mental distress (Flannery et al., 2024). Research on exposure to violence in neighbourhoods and communities shows that these youths often suffer from distress, anxiety, depression, and symptoms related to post-traumatic stress (Osofsky et

al., 1993; Freeman et al., 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1993; Singer et al., 1995). Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between exposure to violence and the likelihood of exhibiting aggression and violence towards others, indicating that such exposure may create a cycle of increased victimization and violence perpetration (Song et al., 1998; Weist et al., 2002; Flannery et al., 2004; Turner et al., 2021; Finkelhor et al., 2021).

2.5 Global research on violence against women

While crime affects individuals across all demographics, the female gender is consistently identified as a risk factor in GBV cases (Abir & Zrizi, 2023). Compared to other types of crime, research has shown that GBV is one of the most prevalent forms of violence experienced by women and girls (Airaoje, Aondover, Uchendu, Obada & Akin-Odukoya, 2025). Women and girls, irrespective of age, class, or ethnicity, experience various forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse (Abir & Zrizi, 2023).

VAW continues to be a pressing issue all over the world (Devries, Mak, Garcia-Moreno, Petzold, Child, Falder, Lim, Bacchus, Engell, Rosenfeld & Pallitto, 2013). The gravity of this issue has been acknowledged by the international community ever since the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. This problem has been recognised as an important public health, social policy, and human rights concern (Devries et al., 2013). International definitions of VAW and gender-based violence (GBV) have been produced since the early 1990s (Allwood, 2016). These definitions have continued to develop throughout the years. The United Nations define VAW as "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (WHO,2024:1). This definition applies to situations in which women are subjected to physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering.

VAW impacts individuals across all cultures, ages, and socioeconomic groups (Sutherland et al., 2024; Ellsberg et al., 2015). However, violence's magnitude, nature, and dynamics are unequally distributed throughout the community (Sutherland et al., 2024). Growing research suggests that the prevalence and intensity of violence are greater among women facing various forms of inequality and marginalization (Brownridge, 2006; Nixon & Humphreys, 2010). According to the World Health Organization (2024), approximately one in three (30%) of women aged 15-49 years worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner

violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime, with women from disadvantaged backgrounds facing even higher risks (WHO, 2024; Ain et al., 2023; Rocha et al., 2024).

Most of this violence is intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence. Research has revealed this form of violence as the most prevalent internationally (Ain et al., 2023). According to the WHO (2021), IPV refers to actions by an intimate or former partner that result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm, such as physical violence, sexual manipulation, emotional abuse, and controlling conduct. Sexual violence is any form of sexual activity or coercion, regardless of the perpetrator's relationship with the victim or the setting in which it occurs, is considered sexual violence. This encompasses a wide range of actions, including rape, attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching, and other non-contact forms of sexual abuse (WHO, 2021).

National studies suggest that close to 70% of women have experienced violence from an intimate partner (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). Within Africa nearly half (45.6%) of women and girls over 15 are said to have experienced physical or sexual violence (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). Intimate partner violence prevalence estimates vary across regions, with 20% reported in the Western Pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe, and 25% in the WHO Regions of the Americas (WHO, 2024). In the WHO African region shows rates of 33%, the Eastern Mediterranean Region at 31%, and the Southeast Asia region at 33% (WHO, 2024). According to recent data, more than a quarter of women of reproductive age who have had partners worldwide have faced physical, sexual, or both forms of intimate partner violence, with South Asia averaging around 35% (Sardinha et al., 2022). Specifically in India, 32% of ever-married women reported experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husbands at some point in their lives (Sardinha et al., 2022).

As previously stated, violence is not equally distributed. For instance, in developing and underdeveloped nations, women experience various forms of violence at a higher rate compared to women in more developed countries (Akram & Yasmin, 2023). In Ethiopia, the prevalence of domestic violence against women by intimate partners or husbands ranges from 20% to 78% (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015). Alhabib et al. (2010) conducted a demographic study and found that the prevalence of domestic violence varies from 1.9% in Washington, US, to 70% in Hispanic Latinas in Southeast America.

Furthermore, recent SAPS crime statistics show that in the second quarter of 2023/2024, there were 14,401 reported assaults, 10,516 cases of rape, and 1,514 cases of attempted murder

against women in South Africa (Malatjie & Mamokhere, 2024). While both men and women experience gender-based violence, most victims are women (Malatjie & Mamokhere, 2024). Female youth, specifically, experience a disproportionate impact from this violence. Victimization rates are highest among women aged 15 to 24 (Tibbels & Benbouriche, 2024).

2.6 Broad literature on the risk factors of violence against women

Multiple factors have been identified that increase the risk of VAW. Gender inequality and discrimination serve as the primary contributors to the violence experienced by women. These phenomena are deeply rooted in historical and structural power imbalances between women and men, manifesting in diverse ways across different communities globally (Hussain & Bashir, 2018). Women and girls face a disproportionate burden due to power imbalances and societal norms that assign them lower social status (Malatjie & Mamokhere, 2024). Violence against women cannot be attributed to a singular cause. The factors contributing to violence against women are a multifaceted blend of social, economic, and cultural elements that help explain the increasing prevalence of such violence (Hussain & Bashir, 2018). Factors such as poverty and unemployment have also been identified to have an impact on the increase of VAW cases (Enaifoghe et al., 2021; Malatjie & Mamokhere, 2024). These factors may increase women's vulnerability to violence due to the stress induced by financial difficulties and marital crises. These circumstances often lead survivors to become dependent on their abusers, making women susceptible to violence (Enaifoghe et al., 2021). Moreover, substance abuse, specifically through smoking and alcohol usage, has been continuously identified as a significant contributor to violence against women in global studies, as found by this present study (Chandra et al., 2023). Alcoholic men are nearly three times more likely to commit IPV than non-alcoholic men (Ola, 2018).

Additionally, violence against women, which was already a global crisis prior to the pandemic, has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ostadtaghizadeh et al., 2023; Rocha et al., 2024). Since the COVID-19 outbreak, reports from China, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries have indicated a rise in the number of domestic violence cases (WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an exponential increase in GBV, which is exacerbated by restricted movement and social isolation measures, as well as economic and social stress (UN Women, 2021). During the pandemic, there was a surge in reported cases of GBV, with approximately 31 million incidents within the first six months (Sardinha et al., 2022; Bukuluki et al., 2023). Lockdown restrictions during the pandemic increased women's exposure to violent situations while limiting their access to essential services (UN Women

2021, WHO 2021; Soeiro et al., 2023). Consequently, staying at home increases the risk of intimate partner violence for women already in abusive relationships or at risk of such abuse (Roesch et al., 2020). This situation left women with limited options for seeking help, contributing to their isolation and vulnerability (Viero et al., 2021). Quarantines have been shown to have psychological repercussions for individuals, including heightened levels of stress, anxiety, uncertainty, and fear; these emotional states may, in turn, contribute to an increase in incidents of violence, particularly domestic violence (Angelucci, 2008; Card & Dahl, 2011). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant job losses and elevated unemployment rates (Dang & Nguyen, 2021). The financial pressures stemming from income loss and diminished economic activity contribute to heightened household tensions, which in turn increase the risk of violence against women (Aizer, 2010; Anderberg et al., 2016). The situation further revealed and intensified existing structural inequalities, undermined years of advancements in women's engagement in the workforce, increased the number of women experiencing extreme poverty, and heightened the demands of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities (UN Women, 2023). These factors collectively contributed to the increased risk and underlying causes of VAW (UN Women, 2023). Such underlying factors, together with the impacts of load shedding, further exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence.

2.7 A review of global studies on load shedding

In certain regions, load shedding was implemented in 2000–2001 to prevent the system from failing due to the inability of the supply of power to meet demand in states such as California (De Nooij et al., 2007). Investments in power generation capacity in emerging nations have not been able to keep up with the explosive growth in demand (Samboko et al., 2016). Because of this, most developing nations frequently endure load shedding and deal with electricity shortages. In North Africa and the Middle East, residents have adapted to load shedding that endures for up to 9.5 hours, six days per week (Schoeman, 2015). Most African countries face overloaded infrastructure with a considerable capacity shortfall and are blighted by unprecedented load shedding. While future power shortages in Africa are predicted to decrease, the issue would still exist because the continent's economies are expected to grow faster than the power generation capacity (IEA, 2014). The prevalence of load shedding in Africa is particularly detrimental, hindering national development and the enhancement of living standards that all developing nations aspire to attain (Schoeman, 2015). The World Bank established that a minimum of 32 out of 48 African countries are undergoing an energy crisis (Schoeman, 2015). In addition, it is the impoverished regions that suffer the severity of

load shedding, enduring up to 20 hours of load shedding daily (Schoeman, 2015; Kessides, 2013).

More recently, there have been power outages in several Sub-Saharan African (SSA) nations; the estimated regional shortfall is 8,247 MW (SADC, 2015). This has, in most instances, induced load shedding. A 2,100 gigawatt-hour (GWh) power deficit that began in early 2015 in Zambia resulted in load shedding over the whole nation (Samboko et al., 2016). Much research has been done on the consequences of load shedding, although they have mainly concentrated on macro-level issues (Bose et al., 2006; Sangvhi, 1991; Kaseke, 2012). For example, load shedding reduced Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP) by 1.8% between 1975 and 1976, or R9.3 billion (Kessides, 2013). In India, load shedding cost US\$2.7 billion between 1983 and 1984, or 1.5% of GDP, and US\$2.1 billion between 1982 and 1983, or 2.1% of GDP (Sangvhi, 1991). For every kWh lost due to load shedding, Zimbabwe had GDP losses of up to 32% (Kaseke, 2012).

2.8 The impact of load shedding in South Africa: A general overview

In South Africa, in particular, load shedding has had dire effects on individuals' lives. Studies show that load shedding has negatively affected households, businesses, and the country's overall economy (Erero, 2023). Families have had to endure the inconvenience of living without electricity and witnessing damage to their electrical appliances due to load shedding (Erero, 2023). The South African economy has suffered from industrial closures, a drastic decrease in productivity, and increased unemployment, among other issues (Naidoo, 2023). Load shedding also impacts health, adding strain to the healthcare system (Naidoo, 2023). Hospitals must use alternative power sources during load shedding, which can result in high costs (Laher et al., 2019). For instance, one private hospital group reported an average monthly expenditure of ZAR 800,000 to operate its generators (Laher et al., 2019). An important aspect of load shedding's impact in South Africa is its potential influence on crime rates. Although there have been few studies (Lambongang, 2023; Mlambo, 2023; Umar & Kunda-Wamuwi, 2019; Nowakowska & Tubis, 2015) examining the impact of load shedding on crime, there is a general perception among South Africans that crime increases during load shedding (Ram, 2024). In addition, Umar and Kunda-Wamuwi (2019:25) argue that "crime and lawlessness are exacerbated at night during load shedding."

2.9 The critical role of street lighting

Lighting is one of the most important factors influencing the probability of crime. Studies have found that streetlights significantly impact the likelihood of crime, although there are conflicting conclusions. Improved street lighting is essential in preventing environmental crime by reducing both actual crime rates and the perceived risk of criminal activity in urban areas (Kim & Kim, 2024). While some research has recognized the importance of street lighting in reducing crime, others have argued that it has little to no effect or even decreases crime (Clark, 2006). On the other hand, other studies have demonstrated that enhanced street lighting does indeed have a positive effect on lowering crime rates. Research by Farrington and Welsh (2002) on the relationship between crime rates and brighter street lighting indicated that, improved street lighting was followed by a reduction in crime rates.

For instance, Welsh and Farrington (2008) conducted research on the benefits of enhanced street illumination for crime reduction. The researchers analysed eight street investigations in the US and five in the UK, comparing conditions before and after the installation of lights while assessing the influence of lighting on criminal behaviour. Their data revealed that although impromptu lighting systems lowered robberies, they concurrently increased burglaries in some cities. In addition, Farrington and Welsh (2002) determined that street illumination lowers property crimes and assaults against humans in both residential and commercial zones. Solomons (2023) further emphasised that load shedding leads to numerous street fatalities.

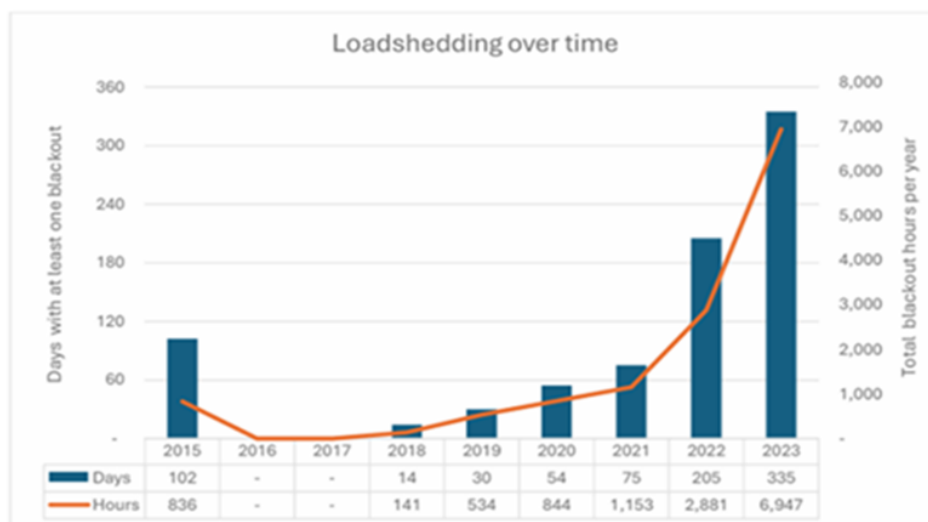
2.10 The impact of load shedding on crime in South Africa

A potential connection between load shedding and criminal activity can be supported by established criminological theories. Cohen and Felson (1979) developed Routine Activity Theory, which suggests that disruptions to daily routines, such as those caused by load shedding, can increase the opportunities for motivated offenders and reduce guardianship, such as gridlocked traffic and a diminished police presence (Ram, 2024). Load shedding makes robbery and crime more convenient as house alarms and other security systems stop functioning (Mlambo, 2023). Research by Lal and Lee (2023) supports this by noting that the 2023 load shedding in South Africa have been linked to a surge in criminal activities, with home security systems failing, resulting in what is referred to as "a crime pandemic" (Lal & Lee, 2023). Consequently, burglars tend to target homes without alarm systems to decrease the chances of being detected (Malatjie et al., 2023). In environments with inadequate security and a lack of outdoor lighting in areas with numerous potential targets, opportunities for

offenders to commit crimes may be created (Wüllenweber & Burrell, 2024; Malatjie et al., 2023). Load shedding is scheduled for specific durations, and criminals are known to take advantage of these periods by carrying out their activities in the dark, resulting in an increase in crime during peak load shedding (Mlambo, 2023; Umar & Kunda-Wamuwi, 2019).

In addition, continuous load shedding has worsened concerns about safety and security (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2024). These safety concerns, especially in public areas and during the night, are likely to be heightened when load shedding happens in the evening and after dark (Marchetti-Mercer et al., 2024). There is an increasing number of reports from both affluent and impoverished regions of the country linking load shedding to a surge in interpersonal crime, particularly incidents of robberies, in urban areas with varying economic statuses (Lamb, 2023; South African Police Service [SAPS], 2020; Winde, 2023). Furthermore, researchers have observed that frequent load shedding has increased certain types of crime (Lambongang, 2023). Using SAPS crime data from 2010-2019 to analyse load shedding periods in 2014, 2015, 2018, and 2019, (Lambongang, 2023:3) found that areas with more frequent load shedding experienced higher rates of assaults, robberies, murders, property damages, and carjackings.

Figure 2: Load shedding over time



Source: Ram (2024)

The data presented in Figure 2 demonstrates that in 2023 there were 335 days with at least one blackout and 6,947 hours of load shedding nationwide, indicating the highest level and intensity of load shedding (Ram, 2024). Between 2022 and 2023, there was a significant increase in

crimes against women. According to the SAPS crime statistics for 2022/2023, between April and June 2022, 855 women died in South Africa, and over 11,000 incidents of assault, including Gender-based Violence (GBV) with female victims, were reported to the police. During the first three months (1 January to 31 March) of 2023, there were 1,512 reported cases of rape, 1,485 instances of attempted murder against women, 969 cases of women killed, and over 15,000 reported incidents of women assaulted (Cruywagen, 2023). While various factors contribute to crime in South Africa, it is crucial to consider the impact of load shedding on crime.

2.11 The emotional responses of women to crime

A rise in youth victimization experiences heightens the fear of crime (Bolli, 2024). Fear of crime is a general unease regarding personal safety and an emotional reaction to the possibility of becoming a victim (Martin-Howard, 2023). Studies on victimization models assert that individuals having a broader range of victimization, where a singular vulnerable identity may amplify their perceptions of victimization, are linked with heightened fear (Bolli, 2024).

The literature on fear of crime indicates a general agreement that women consistently report higher levels of fear (Snedker, 2012). Several studies highlight that women's fear of crime is shaped by their perceived vulnerability (Byun & Ha, 2023) and their limited physical self-defence capabilities (Johansson & Haandrikman, 2023). Johansson and Haandrikman (2023) explain that individuals with fewer resources for self-protection—whether social, physical, or financial—tend to experience heightened fears about crime. The fear of crime has repercussions for individuals, especially women. Research indicates that women's apprehension regarding public spaces constrains their freedom and enjoyment of public life, impedes their access to opportunities, and results in changes in behaviour, such as avoiding specific areas or refraining from venturing out at night (Day et al., 2003; Loukaitou-Sideris, 2005; Deegan, 1987). The present study identifies load shedding as a factor that exacerbates the fear of crime. The findings of this study indicate that young women refrain from going out during nighttime load shedding due to an increased fear of victimization.

For some women, this often leads them to modify their daily routines to mitigate the risk of being a victim. Such routine alterations may involve avoiding dangerous places or individuals, avoiding walking alone at night or relying on public transportation, and increasing time spent at home (Ávila et al., 2016). Sometimes, individuals may even consider relocating from their neighbourhood (Xie & McDowall, 2008). This social withdrawal can diminish overall well-

being and weaken social cohesion and the ability for community social control (Hipp & Wickes, 2017; Hipp & Steenbeek, 2016).

Since a high proportion of women have experienced sexual violence, these incidents of sexual violence notably influence women's feelings of safety (Contreras et al., 2024). Consequently, the fear of becoming a crime victim typically limits women's mobility more than it does for men (Contreras et al., 2024). This fear is often exacerbated by the awareness of being perceived as a potential target. Drawing from the Routine Activity Theory, the concept of being a suitable target aligns closely with perceived risk, contributing to heightened feelings of fear and anxiety. Feeling vulnerable is directly linked to the perception of being a likely target.

2.12 Existing crime patterns in Khayelitsha

Khayelitsha is the most violent urban area in Cape Town (Gie, 2009; Kagee & Frank, 2005; Silber & Geffen, 2009; Nleya & Thompson, 2009). Existing research shows that Khayelitsha is marked by high crime rates (Bidandi, 2007; Ndingaye, 2005; Rodina, 2013). As a result, residents in Khayelitsha report heightened levels of fear regarding violence across various social settings, including many public areas (Barolsky, 2014; Correia et al., 2024). This apprehension is attributed to the area's high crime rates (Dixon, 2024).

Khayelitsha has a history of violent crimes against women, including domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault (Mathéy, 2006). The main policing precinct in Khayelitsha regularly ranks among the most violent in South Africa (Crime Hub, 2021), with high rates murder, assault, robbery, and sexual violence (Van der Spuy & Armstrong, 2014). The 2020 SAPS crime statistics rank Khayelitsha as having the fifth-highest number of reported contact crimes globally, covering incidents of community violence and threats, like murder, attempted murder, sexual offences, interpersonal violence and robbery or assault (Correia, Forshaw, Roden, Lipinska, Rauch, Lambert, Layden, Reutrakul, Crowley, Luke & Dugas, 2024; Van der Spuy & Armstrong, 2014).

The violence in Khayelitsha must be understood within its historical background as an apartheid township founded to 'consolidate' all black urban populations in the Western Cape (Barolsky, 2014). Khayelitsha is a manifestation of apartheid urban planning and is recognized as one of the world's most notorious slums (Vigil, 2021). Khayelitsha was established by violence and bloodshed, and it continues to be characterized by such conditions, frequently making headlines as the murder capital of South Africa (Vigil, 2021).

Several studies have referenced the apartheid regime's lack of focus on fighting and preventing crime in black African communities a factor that contributed to the high levels of crime in South African townships, including Khayelitsha (Palmary, 2001; Shaw, 2002; Demombynes & Özler, 2005; Singh, 2005; Nleya & Thompson, 2009). The socio-economic issues of Khayelitsha (high unemployment and poverty rates) also contribute to the high crime rates in the area. As Mbonambi and Olutola (2024) note, communities experiencing high levels of poverty and unemployment are at greater risk for crime. Approximately 40% of the township's population is unemployed, with youth unemployment (ages 15-23) over 50% (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Despite the democratic transition in 1994, Khayelitsha persists in grappling with high levels of poverty, unemployment and crime (Schotte & Zizzamia, 2024).

2.13 A review of previous crime prevention initiatives in Khayelitsha

Understanding the primary risk factors for violence in Khayelitsha is essential for the development of effective community-level prevention programmes. There have been efforts to tackle the crime issue in Khayelitsha. Previous studies have suggested that involving the community in crime prevention has been advocated as a solution by anti-crime organizations (Manaliyo, 2016). However, it has been noted that the poverty within Khayelitsha obstructs community engagement in crime prevention, stating that most residents are impoverished and require incentives to participate in such activities (Manaliyo, 2016).

There are two ways in which residents of Khayelitsha are actively involved in the prevention and defence against criminal activity. According to Manaliyo (2012), they volunteer in Community Policing Forums (CPF) for patrolling and providing information related to crime to organizations such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), and Khayelitsha Development Forum (KDF) and secondly, residents engage in informal engagement in the prevention of crime through the use of informal social punishments (Manaliyo, 2012). When it comes to crime prevention, however, citizens' engagement is hindered by obstacles such as the ineffectiveness of law enforcement and the absence of financial support (Manaliyo, 2012).

Another crime prevention approach in Khayelitsha is the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading project (VPUU) (Cooke, 2011). Since 2007, VPUU has implemented a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) based urban upgrading approach in Khayelitsha (Matzopoulos et al., 2020). VPUU aims to reduce violent crime through an area-based urban upgrading program centred around Safe Node Areas (SNAs) that combines

modern second-generation CPTED urban design and planning principles to enhance a community's capacity to control its environment alongside interventions targeted at the upstream and proximal causes of offending (Matzopoulos et al., 2020). Despite the efforts made to combat crime in Khayelitsha, the area remains one of the most violent townships in South Africa. According to the Social Justice Coalition (2022), the lack of lighting in Khayelitsha has rendered most sidewalks and paths unsafe at night. The lack of public lighting in many informal settlements, like Khayelitsha, has been linked to higher rates of violent crime (Wang, 2022; Social Justice Coalition, 2022).

2.14 Conclusion

Drawing from existing literature, this chapter explored the crime landscape in South Africa, exploring its underlying causes and the role of load shedding in shaping crime patterns. The chapter highlighted how load shedding has been associated with increased crime, particularly due to the absence of lighting, which creates conditions that facilitate criminal activity. Experiences of the female youth participants in this study further explain how load shedding contributes to feelings of fear and vulnerability. The chapter also emphasised the significance of environmental factors, such as lighting, in influencing crime rates. Additionally, the literature reviewed provided contextual background on the study site, with a focus on violence against women. While not the primary focus of this study, this literature offered a gendered perspective on women's vulnerability to crime globally. The next chapter provides the various methods used to carry out this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the research methods employed throughout the research process. The chapter consists of the research paradigm, positionality and personal reflections, theoretical frameworks, study population and sampling, data collection process and ethical considerations, data collection tool, development of the interview schedule, data collection apparatus, data management and storage, transcription and thematic analysis process and the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

It is crucial for us researchers to understand and articulate our views about the nature of reality, the extent of our understanding of it, and the methods we utilize to acquire that knowledge (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). These elements are integral to research paradigms. A paradigm comprises a core belief system and a theoretical structure that encompasses assumptions regarding 1) ontology, 2) epistemology, 3) methodology, and 4) methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:51). In essence, it guides our worldview and influences our approach to research. This study adopts a qualitative interpretive paradigm.

3.2.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

Interpretivism is a research framework that emphasizes the subjectivity of reality and its construction through social interactions. This approach suggests that social issues should be explored from the participants' perspectives rather than those of the researcher (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The aim of the interpretive methodology is to grasp social phenomena within their contextual backdrop (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This paradigm was suitable for the current study as it aims to comprehend the participants' experiences during load shedding.

The interpretivist framework is founded on these key assumptions:

- **Ontology:** refers to “the nature of our beliefs about reality” (Richards, 2003:33). Reality is not objective but rather constructed through individuals lived experiences. Each participants’ experience of crime during load shedding is shaped by personal, social, and environmental factors.

- **Epistemology:** refers to “the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003:13). In this study, knowledge is acquired through the narratives and perspectives of participants rather than through objective measurement. This study relies on in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the participants’ experiences of crime during load shedding.
- **Methodology:** is “an articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data” (Ellen, 1984:9). It “is concerned with the discussion of how a particular piece of research should be undertaken” (Grix, 2004:32). This study utilized a qualitative research approach. As noted by Stoner (2010) and Creswell (2012), qualitative methods seek to understand human experiences, which aligned with the aim of this research. Employing a qualitative method was well-suited to explore participants' experiences of crime during load shedding. The data were analysed thematically to uncover patterns within the participants' stories.

3.3 Positionality and Personal Reflections

3.3.1 Personal Reflections

While conducting the study, as a female researcher, I was very concerned about my safety in Khayelitsha. Even being in the car to meet with the participants, I did not feel safe as I kept hearing stories from the driver about how cars were stopped and robbed or hijacked. The driver mentioned how lucky I am to have found an Uber to take me to Site C. That rarely happens because they avoid the area because of the crime. The Uber driver then mentioned how the potholes in Site C slow down the cars, especially at night, and this gives the perfect opportunity for criminals to take a chance to rob cars. However, being with a trusted source to help me navigate the study site made me feel at ease. The participants of this study shared how dangerous the neighbourhood was. As a result, whenever I would get out of the car to meet the participants, I felt the need to hide my phone. The whole experience was scary because I have heard so many stories about the horrors of violence at Site C, in particular. Being a ‘new face’ in the township made the whole experience uneasy.

3.3.2 My positionality as a researcher

My own positionality as a researcher directly influenced the study. As a female researcher navigating Site C, Khayelitsha, I was acutely aware of the environmental risks and gendered dimensions of safety. My experiences reinforced the intersection of crime opportunity structures and gendered victimization. For instance, my personal fear of crime while conducting fieldwork—such as the need to hide my phone or the heightened caution when traveling—mirrored the concerns shared by the participants. These experiences not only validated the research findings but also underscored the necessity of integrating environmental criminology, Social Disorganization Theory and intersectional feminist perspectives in analysing crime during load shedding.

3.4 Theoretical Framework: Environmental Criminology, Social Disorganization Theory and Feminist Theories

Although environmental criminology and feminist theories traditionally address different aspects of crime, this study integrated them to provide a more nuanced analysis. Environmental criminology explains the situational factors that create crime risks during load shedding, while intersectional feminist theory reveals how these risks disproportionately impact female youth due to existing social inequalities. By employing this combined framework, the study ensured a multidimensional analysis of crime during load shedding, addressing both opportunity structures and gendered vulnerabilities.

Environmental criminology examines crime patterns and aims to understand them within framework of environmental factors (Wortley & Townsley, 2016). Various theories fall under the singular theoretical framework of environmental criminology (Samuel et al., 2024). The two environmental criminology theories chosen for this study are Routine Activity Theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942) and Social Disorganization Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979). According to Wüllenweber and Burrell (2024:4), Routine Activity Theory (RAT) can be understood using the crime triangle. The crime triangle posits that crime takes place when there is a combination of (1) a motivated offender, (2) a suitable target, and (3) a lack of capable guardianship occurring at the same time and place (see Figure 3). Environmental criminology was a relevant theoretical framework used for the present study because it provided a foundational lens for understanding how load shedding creates conditions that facilitate crime. RAT and the crime triangle are applied to analyse how the absence of capable guardianship,

increased darkness, and being female youth heighten vulnerability to victimization in Site C, Khayelitsha.

Figure 3: Routine Activity Theory Diagram



Source: Olajuyigbe et al. (2015)

To understand how an already vulnerable to crime community like Site C, Khayelitsha, is exacerbated by load shedding by analysing the causes of the pre-existing crime in Site C, Khayelitsha, Social Disorganization Theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942) is used in this study. This theory highlights that there are several factors that impede the development of social cohesion in a neighbourhood, making it more likely for crime and delinquency to occur (Pijper et al., 2021; Spithoven, 2017). These factors include poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, population turnover, economic deprivation, and weak social cohesion (Shen & Andresen, 2021). Social Disorganization Theory helped analyse how the socio-economic challenges in Site C, Khayelitsha serves as motivators of crime for criminals and the opportunity load shedding creates for criminal activity increases victimization.

Intersectional feminist theory is another theoretical framework that was employed in the present study to address the limitations of environmental criminology. By utilizing this approach, this research highlighted the increased vulnerability of female youth during load shedding is not solely due to environmental factors like reduced visibility but is also deeply rooted in systemic issues (i.e. gender norms). Intersectional feminist theory, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, acknowledges how intersecting identities, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and more can create unique and complex experiences of oppression and privilege for individuals within various social groups (Esmaeel & Saeed, 2024:465). The intersectional perspective allowed this research to move beyond a singular analysis of crime,

offering a nuanced understanding of how multiple layers of identity and structural inequality converge to impact the experiences of female youth.

3.5 Study population and sampling

Population encompasses all individuals, objects, or substances that fulfil specific criteria for being part of a particular universe (Burns & Grove, 2005:40; as cited in Klopper, 2008). The population for this research comprises female youth residing in Site C, Khayelitsha, who have experiences of crime during load shedding. The selection of this population is informed by the focus of the study, which seeks to explore the experiences of female youth during load shedding. The initial sample plan for this study was to employ non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability purposive sampling (also referred to as judgmental sampling) involves researchers using their judgment or specific criteria to select a sample that they believe represents the population or to seek diversity (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Purposive sampling seemed appropriate for this research as the aim of the researcher was to specifically target participants with the required characteristics (female, youth and experience of crime during load shedding) for the study. However, the researcher faced challenges in getting participants suitable for the study. The researcher was not familiar with Site C, Khayelitsha so it became difficult to find suitable participants of the study as the researcher had no idea where to look.

Snowball sampling was employed as a secondary strategy when purposive sampling was insufficient. Snowball sampling involves identifying and recruiting participants based on referrals from a reliable source familiar with individuals possessing relevant expertise (Parker et al., 2019). Through snowball sampling, fifteen (15) female youth participants living in Site C, Khayelitsha between ages 18-30 were chosen for this study. The sample size of 15 participants was determined based on practical considerations, such as the researcher's capacity to collect and analyse data and was deemed adequate to obtain data saturation. Although Statistics South Africa defines "youth" as individuals aged 15 to 34, the researcher intentionally selected female participants aged 18 to 30. This decision was informed by both ethical and contextual considerations. Firstly, including participants under the age of 18 would have introduced ethical complexities such as the need for parental or guardian consent, adherence to child protection protocols, and additional layers of ethical clearance. To avoid these complications, the study focused on those who were legally adults (18+). As Morris et al. (2012) note, conducting research with individuals below the legal age on topics such as violence could lead to parental issues, including conflict, over-protection or child abuse, hindering children from participating and having a voice.

The age ceiling of 30 was selected to focus on younger women more likely to experience certain forms of crime victimization, particularly those linked to mobility and nightlife. Women aged 31-34 seemed to be more likely to have different routines, which could significantly affect their exposure to crime during load shedding.

The researcher successfully recruited 8 participants in September 2023. Several months later, in December 2023, the researcher successfully recruited 7 additional participants to reach the desired number for the study. The recruitment process was initially planned for September 2023 but was continued in December 2023. This two-phase recruitment process was due to unforeseen delays and challenges in securing participant commitments. Participants would often arrange and then postpone interviews, necessitating an extension of the recruitment period to achieve the desired sample size.

With the help of a reliable source, the researcher managed to recruit the desired number of participants (15 participants). The reliable source was a respected community member familiar with Site C, Khayelitsha, which facilitated access to the target population. This connection helped establish trust and credibility, enabling effective recruitment. The researcher and the reliable source knew each other from the University of Cape Town (UCT), the reliable source was a former student there. The researcher acknowledged the potential risks of relying on a single local resident for referrals, including sampling bias and limited diversity. However, to mitigate these risks, the study employed clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure a consistent and relevant sample. The inclusion criteria included female youth aged 18-30 who resided in Site C, Khayelitsha, and had experienced crime during load shedding. Conversely, males or females outside this age range, those not residing in Site C, Khayelitsha, or those without experience of crime during load shedding were excluded.

3.5.1 Profile of participants

The profile of the research participants is presented in 4 categories. The profile includes the participants' age, gender, location, and crime experience during load shedding. Table 1 below presents the profile of participants.

Table 1: Profile of participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Location	Crime experience during load shedding
P1	28	Female	Site C	Witnessed house robberies in her neighbourhood during load shedding at night.
P2	19	Female	Site C	Witnessed many house robberies during load shedding at night.
P3	20	Female	Site C	Experienced a house robbery at her house during load shedding.
P4	22	Female	Site C	Witnessed her sister getting robbed during load shedding at night.
P5	25	Female	Site C	Experienced an attempted street robbery during load shedding at night.
P6	23	Female	Site C	Experienced a house robbery during load shedding at night. Also experienced an assaulted robbery during load shedding at night.
P7	23	Female	Site C	Witnessed robberies and murder during load shedding at night.
P8	26	Female	Site C	Experienced a street robbery at night during load shedding.
P9	22	Female	Site C	Experienced a house robbery during load shedding at night.
P10	23	Female	Site C	Experienced a street robbery at night during load shedding at night.
P11	24	Female	Site C	Experienced a street robbery at night during load shedding at night.

P12	22	Female	Site C	Witnessed a house robbery during load shedding at night.
P13	25	Female	Site C	Experienced a house robbery during load shedding at night.
P14	24	Female	Site C	Experienced assaulted robbery during load shedding at night.
P15	24	Female	Site C	Experienced a street robbery during load shedding at night.

3.5.1 The ages of the participants

The researcher included the participants' ages on their profiles because this study required a specific age range.

- The highest age among the participants was 28.
- The median age among participants was 23.
- The youngest age among the participants was 19.

3.5.2 The gender of the participants

The inclusion of the female gender in the participant profile was intentional, as the study specifically aimed to focus on the experiences of this gender.

3.5.3 Location: Site C

The location was included in the participant profile table because the study is based in Site C, Khayelitsha. Including the location provides geographic context.

3.5.4 Participants' crime experiences during load shedding

The participants' experience to crime during load shedding was a crucial aspect of their profile as it forms the core aim of this study, which aims to explore their experiences.

3.6 Data collection process and ethical considerations

The researcher reached out to the reliable source (community member of Site C, Khayelitsha mentioned in section 3.5) 5 months prior the data collection process. The purpose of this 5 months period was to allow the reliable source to reach out to potential participants for the study. Following that, the reliable source provided the researcher with contact information for potential participants, who were then contacted via casual social platforms such as WhatsApp.

When reaching out to participants through WhatsApp, messages were sent individually to prevent exposing any participant's contact details to others. With a reliable source having already briefed the potential participants about the study and vouched for the researcher's credibility, it became simpler for the researcher to contact the participants and schedule meetings as they anticipated receiving a message from the researcher about the study.

Although receiving help from the reliable source to recruit participants might have influence in the participants' decision to take part in the study, the research ensured that participants signed the consent form before participation, which included the study's purpose, benefits and potential risks (refer to appendix B). The researcher ensured to obtain informed consent directly from each participant, emphasizing their autonomy and right to decline participation without consequence. According to Nijhawan et al. (2013), it is important to obtain informed consent for any research that involves human participants. In addition, for a study to be successful, it is important for participants to have trust in the researcher. In this study, trust was facilitated by a reliable source who provided referrals, making it easier for the participants to trust the researcher. As Guillemain et al. (2018) note, trust plays a vital role in research that involves human participants and is seen as essential for the research to be successful.

The reliable source helped the researcher navigate Site C during the time of meeting with the participants. An ethics approval was granted by the university's ethics committee, which reviewed and approved the plan to conduct interviews with the accompaniment of a reliable source. The first participant was contacted through WhatsApp and set an arrangement to meet with the researcher and the reliable source at the Site C Youth Centre, a medical clinic in Site C. The participant suggested the time and the place. Upon arrival at the Site C Youth Centre, the researcher and reliable source had to request permission from one of the workers to enter the clinic, notifying them we were there for research purposes. The researcher and reliable source were granted permission to enter the clinic and had to issue a consent form for the Site C Youth Centre manager to grant permission for the researcher and reliable source to conduct interviews for this research study in the premises of the clinic. The researcher also had to present her student card as proof that she was affiliated with the University of Cape Town (UCT). The Site C Youth Centre granted the approval for the researcher to conduct the interviews in the clinic.

The clinic provided a private setting for the interviews to be conducted, where it was only the researcher and participant in the room and the reliable source had to be outside the room for

the duration of the interview. This was to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was maintained. After the interview with the first participant, the participant recommended four other potential participants, who were also interviewed at the Site C Youth Centre. Five interviews were conducted successfully at the Site C Youth Centre. The researcher and reliable source met with three other participants the following day, each at their own homes. The location was pre-discussed with the participant through WhatsApp and confirmed as suitable for both comfort and safety for the participant. While interviewing participants in their homes can pose safety concerns for the researcher, the researcher took specific precautions to ensure her safety during these visits. These included: the interviews were conducted during daylight hours only, before going to Site C, the researcher informed a trusted friend of my schedule, location and expected time of return for each interview. Also, being accompanied by a reliable source, known in the community and familiar with the local context, minimised safety concerns. The reliable source helped ensure both my safety and the participants' comfort. The reliable source presence also provided a sense of security for the participants especially when meeting with a researcher they do not know. In addition, most of the participants had limited ability to travel due to cost, safety and time constraints. Meeting them in their own environments ensured inclusivity and accessibility. Despite facing challenges in recruiting other participants for the study (mentioned in section 3.5), the desired number of participants for the study was successfully achieved.

Given the sensitive nature of this study, particular attention was paid to the emotional and psychological well-being of participants. Prior to the commencement of each interview, participants were provided with information about available support services, including helplines for survivors of violence (see Appendix E). This was done to ensure that participants had immediate access to professional support should the interview trigger any emotional distress or discomfort. The decision to issue these helplines before the interview aligns with ethical research practices and guidelines for working with vulnerable populations. The UCT Law ethics committee required the researcher to provide helplines to the participants as a preventative measure to mitigate potential harm to the participants.

3.7 Data collection tool: Semi-structured interviews

One of the aims of qualitative research is to seek deeper understandings of the human experience (Bearman, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are one of the most common methods used to achieve this purpose (Bearman, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather data for the study. This method was selected because it offers a dialogue with the

participants, making it easy to explore participants' experiences, which was important for the objective of this study – to explore the experiences of crime of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. As Karatsareas (2022) note, semi-structured interviews encourage participants to share their perspectives and experiences on a particular topic, making this method appropriate for this study. Focus groups, on the other hand, generate data based on the synergy of the group interaction (Green, Draper & Dowler, 2003). According to Rabiee (2004), the members of the focus group should feel comfortable with each other and engage in discussion. Krueger and Casey (2000) point out that for some individuals self-disclosure is natural and comfortable, while for others it requires trust and effort. Given the sensitive nature of the present study, the researcher realised that other methods such as focus groups would not work for this particular study as some people may not be comfortable with disclosing their sensitive experiences with other people present, making individual interviews appropriate for this study. A survey, while useful for reaching a larger sample (Rice, Winter, Doherty & Milner, 2017), would not have provided the rich, contextual insights necessary for an exploratory study grounded in lived experiences.

3.8 Development of the interview schedule

The semi-structured interview schedule was developed in direct alignment with the overarching research aim and central questions guiding this thesis. As Taylor (2005) and Fox (2009) note, an interview schedule is crucial for ensuring that all main topics of the study are covered. Rather than adapting an existing tool, the researcher designed the questions to explore the specific themes that this study sought to explore, including the experiences of female youth during load shedding, how they protect themselves from crime during load shedding and the influence load shedding has on the existing patterns of crime in Site C, Khayelitsha. This approach ensured that the data collected would speak directly to the key questions (mentioned in 1.10) of the study.

The schedule comprised open-ended questions to allow participants the space to express their experiences in their own words, while still providing enough structure to cover the key questions guiding this research. For example, questions such as “Can you share any specific incidents or experiences of crime that you or others in your community have faced during load shedding?” and “from your perspective, do you believe load shedding influences existing patterns of crime in Khayelitsha, Site C?” were used to elicit detailed narratives relevant to the research focus.

The interview schedule was drafted in English and used in that language during interviews, although informal translation into isiXhosa was provided where necessary to ensure clarity and comfort for participants. The schedule was not formally piloted; however, adjustments were made after the first interview to improve the flow and phrasing of certain questions, based on initial reflections and the responses of the participants.

3.9 Data collection apparatus: smartphone

A smartphone was used to record the interviews for this study. This choice was guided by its portability, cost-effectiveness, and suitability for fieldwork. Smartphones are lightweight and easy to carry, making them ideal for conducting interviews in various settings. In addition to being portable, smartphones are a cost-effective data collection tool. As Raento et al. (2009) note, smartphones have the potential to greatly decrease the expenses associated with recording, making them a cost-effective option for researchers working within budget constraints. This was particularly important for this study, which was conducted with limited research budget.

3.10 Data management and storage

All audio recordings of the interviews were securely stored on a password-protected smartphone and were only accessible to the researcher. This was to maintain participant confidentiality. To further maintain participants' confidentiality, participants' names were not included in the audio recordings, however the audio recordings themselves may still have contained identifying information through voice recognition, language use, or contextual clues (e.g., personal experiences). Therefore, in line with the ethical principle of participant confidentiality and anonymity, the recordings were deleted after the transcription process was completed and verified for accuracy. This decision was also consistent with the conditions outlined during the informed consent process, where participants were made aware that their recordings would not be retained beyond transcription.

While deletion of recordings may limit the opportunity to revisit the raw data, the transcripts served as a reliable and sufficient resource for whenever the researcher had to revisit the data. What made the transcripts a reliable resource for the researcher was that the transcripts were written verbatim, capturing participants' words exactly as spoken. Despite the deletion of the recordings, the richness of participants' narratives was preserved, allowing the researcher to revisit the data.

Although the University of Cape Town's Research Data Management Policy also encourages researchers to preserve data with long-term value - stating that "data with acknowledged long-term value should be preserved and remain accessible and usable for future research", in this study, protecting participants from possible re-identification was prioritized over long-term data retention. For instance, during the data collection process, several participants expressed concern about how the data would be used and whether their voices or personal experiences could make them identifiable, even if names were removed. These concerns were taken seriously, and the decision to delete the audio recordings was made in response to participants' requests for confidentiality and anonymity – these ethical principles guided the data disposal process.

3.11 Transcription and thematic analysis process

The audio recordings for this thesis were transcribed. Transcribing involves converting audio recordings into written form (Stuckey, 2014). All 15 audio recordings were manually transcribed verbatim by the researcher into individual Microsoft Word documents. This manual transcription process involved listening to each recording multiple times to ensure that participants' words were captured accurately and in full, including pauses, hesitations, and emphasis where relevant. According to Stuckey (2014), it is essential to accurately transcribe nonverbal cues to ensure the reliability, dependability, and trustworthiness of the study. Verbatim transcription was important for preserving the authenticity of participants' narratives and ensuring a detailed and faithful representation of the data for analysis. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used throughout this study. Participants are referred to using neutral labels such as "Participant 1," "Participant 2," and so forth. These labels do not reflect any identifying characteristics and were assigned in the order of interviews conducted.

Thematic analysis was utilized in this study to analyse and recognize themes and patterns in the participants' responses. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The researcher utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method to analyse the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) offer a six-phase guide that served as a valuable framework for analysing data in the present study (refer to Table 2).

Table 2: Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis

Step 1: Become familiar with the data,	Step 4: Review themes
Step 2: Generate initial codes,	Step 5: Define themes,
Step 3: Search for themes	Step 6: Write-up

Source: Maguire & Delahunt (2017)

- **Step 1: Become familiar with the data.**

After carefully reviewing the transcripts, the researcher went through the process again to analyse the data and jot down key points on a piece of paper.

- **Step 2: Generate initial codes.**

At this stage, the focus was on tackling research questions and examining the data accordingly. The researcher systematically categorized every data segment that was pertinent or highlighted something intriguing about the research query. Not every piece of the text was coded by the researcher. Using open coding involved not having pre-set codes but rather developing and modifying the codes during the coding process. After completing the first step, the researcher had some initial thoughts about codes. For instance, the recurring concern of heightened crime opportunities during nighttime load shedding was highly pertinent to the research question, as it emerged in all interviews. Working meticulously through each transcript, the researcher coded every segment of text that appeared relevant or addressed the research question. This was accomplished manually, by reviewing printed copies of the transcripts with highlighters.

- **Step 3: Search for themes**

A theme represents a pattern that reflects something important or intriguing about the data and/or research question (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). After analysing the codes, it was evident that some of them formed a cohesive theme. For instance, multiple codes were associated with the rise in crime during nighttime load shedding. After compiling these, they identified an initial theme named the 'impact of load shedding on crime patterns.' By the end of this step, the codes had been categorized into overarching themes that appeared to convey something particular about the research question.

- **Step 4: Review themes**

At this stage, the researcher revisited, adjusted, and refined the initial themes identified in step 3. Ensuring the coherence of the themes was a priority for the researcher. Collecting all the pertinent data for each theme was a crucial part of the study.

- **Step 5: Define themes.**

This represents the ultimate fine-tuning of the themes, with the goal of pinpointing the core of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006:92). During this stage, the researcher delved into understanding the theme's message by deciphering the significance of each theme and how it aids in comprehending the data. The themes were identified and assigned a brief title to each one.

- **Step 6: Write-up**

After completing the process, the researcher documented the findings.

Data Verification

Verification involves checking, confirming, ensuring, and being certain (Morse et al., 2002). Verification in qualitative research involves using mechanisms throughout the research process to enhance reliability, validity, and the overall rigor of the study (Morse et al., 2002). The study followed the Guba & Lincoln (1981) criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of the study: credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

By comparing different responses, the researcher established credibility. The participants' responses were consistent with the existing literature, demonstrating the study's accuracy and credibility, in line with previous research conducted by other scholars. Ensuring the accuracy of the data and the participants' perspectives, as well as how the researcher interprets and presents them, is crucial in research (Polit & Beck, 2012; as cited in Diane & Cope, 2014).

Dependability

Consistency of data under similar conditions is crucial (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004; as cited in Diane & Cope, 2014). Through the use of semi-structured interview schedules, the study's data collection process was carefully executed, followed by a comprehensive analysis to maintain consistency.

Conformability

Confirmability is about showing that the data accurately reflect the participants' responses rather than the researcher's personal biases or perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012; Tobin & Begley, 2004; as cited in Diane & Cope, 2014). This study ensured conformability by transcribing participants' responses verbatim to remove biases and subjectivity.

3.12 Limitations of the study

- A key limitation of this study is its heavy reliance on participants' experiences, which, while valuable for understanding their experiences, may introduce subjective bias and limit the generalizability of the findings.
- The lack of crime statistics of Site C during load shedding, limited the study. As said before (section 3.12), this study heavily relied on participants' experiences, however, there is limited to no statistical evidence to support participants' experiences.

3.13 Conclusion

The chapter includes the methods used to carry out this study. A qualitative research approach was employed to explore the experiences of the participants. The data for this study was collected through in-depth individual semi-structured interviews. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants relevant to this study. The data collection and analysis procedures are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research findings are discussed. The results are organised according to the themes, sub-themes, and categories from the data analysis.

The present study explored the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the female youth experiences of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha?
2. How do female youth respond to crime to protect themselves?
3. What influence does load shedding have on existing patterns of crime in Site C, Khayelitsha?
4. What interventions have been implemented to help the victims of crime?

4.2 Thematic framework for results and discussion

This subsection discusses the results according to themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged in the research data analysis.

4.2.1 Participants' general perceptions of crime in Site C

The research data analysis's sub-theme regarding the participants' perception of crime was the *high crime prevalence* in Site C, which is discussed in detail below.

4.2.1.1 High crime prevalence in Site C

All 15 participants in the study reported that Site C is dangerous because of the high prevalence of crime in the area. They pointed out that there are increased incidents of street robberies, and because of the high crime prevalence in Site C, they are worried about their safety.

- **Increased incidents of street robberies.**

A high proportion of the participants (73%) reported that there is an increase in street robberies in Site C:

"...People get their phones stolen, even their bags...it is not very safe, guys" (P1)

"... It is not safe because I always have to be careful with my personal belongings whenever I am outside, whether it is my phone or whatever..." (P8)

Participants 1 (P1) and 8 (P8) raised safety concerns, particularly regarding the potential theft of personal items like phones and bags. They stressed the importance of staying alert and cautious about these belongings in public spaces. These concerns are consistent with previous research on fear of crime, which indicates that worrying about becoming a victim of crime is a significant factor contributing to this fear (Tseloni & Zarafonitou, 2008). Given Khayelitsha's reputation for high crime rates, especially in terms of robberies (Theron & Breetzke, 2024), it is plausible that individuals in this area would have apprehensions about their safety (Wang, 2022). Research findings also suggest that residents in all Khayelitsha precincts, particularly at night, feel unsafe and are vulnerable to crimes such as robbery (Freeman & McDonald, 2015). Wang (2022) also observes that inadequate lighting in Khayelitsha contributes to the high crime rate, as poorly lit sidewalks and paths create unsafe conditions, especially at night. The lack of lighting, worsened by load shedding, can heighten participants' feelings of insecurity and may contribute to street robberies in Site C, Khayelitsha (Murray & Feng, 2016). The concerns raised by the participants can be examined through the lens of the Routine Activity Theory (RAT), which suggests that crime occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship converge (Cohen & Felson, 1979). P1's mention of stolen phones and bags indicates that individuals carrying portable items are perceived as suitable targets. The participants' constant need to be vigilant and their feelings of insecurity reflect the lack of formal or informal guardianship in their environment, further increasing the risk of victimization. The convergence of these factors leads to an unsafe environment, consistent with the RAT's concept of how environmental conditions facilitate criminal activity.

- **Elevated levels of worry and anxiety about personal safety.**

Additionally, participants 4 and 9 reported that safety is a huge concern in Site C:

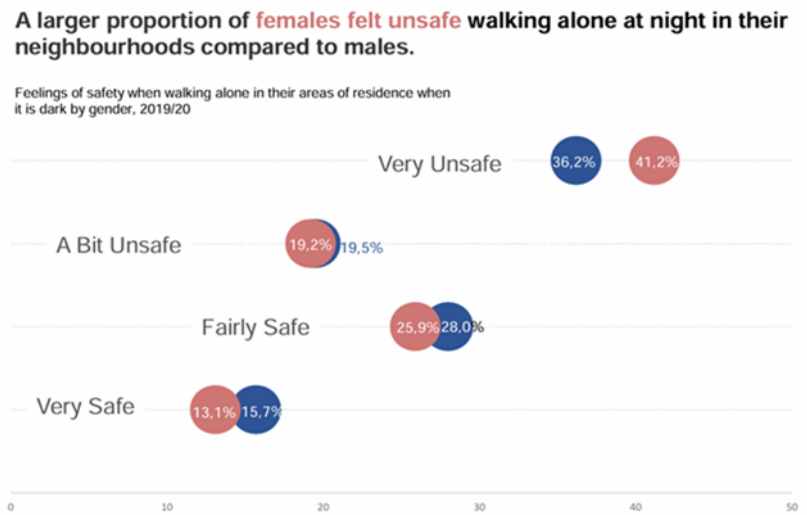
“If you stay in Site C, you must always worry about your safety.” (P4)

“Safety is a concern, especially at night.” (P9)

The participants in the statements above express safety concerns about staying in Site C, an environment perceived to have a high prevalence of crime. According to Erero (2023), where crime rates are extremely high and exacerbated by prolonged load shedding, there is an increased fear of crime among people (Erero, 2023). May and Dunaway (2000) and May (2001) discovered that the youth residing in chaotic neighbourhoods with heightened perceptions of risk tend to experience significantly greater fear of crime (as cited in May et al.,

2015). Prior research also indicates that specific socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, and living environment, influence the fear of becoming a victim of crime (Chockalingam & Srinivasan, 2009).

Figure 4: Feelings of safety at night



Source: Statistics South Africa, Victims of the Crime Survey (2020)

Victims of the Crime Survey (2020) (refer to figure 4) shows that females feel unsafe when walking alone at night, compared to males. Consistent with this, Johansson and Haandrikman (2023) note that, women frequently experience fear of crime, particularly when going alone at night. Existing research indicates women who are more inclined to express feelings of fear regarding crime, have heightened risk perceptions (Ranaweera, 2024). Recent studies reveal that women are particularly vulnerable to fears concerning personal safety, mainly because they face greater exposure to gender-based violence and have a higher likelihood of experiencing crime than men (Correia et al., 2024; Sabina & Prameswari, 2023). Participants 4 and 9 may be aware of their identities as young females living in a high-risk area like Site C, which could heighten their concern for their safety, as they perceive themselves to be targets.

There are various factors that may contribute to the participants' concerns about their safety, including inadequate lighting in Site C. As Struyf (2020) note that, poorly lit surroundings contribute to the fear of crime. Site C, Khayelitsha has a protracted history of inadequate public lighting and informal settlements, with many individuals devoting hours to commute in dark mornings or late evenings, frequently on foot (Briers, 2021). The Neighbourhood Context Model proposed by Bolli (2024) suggests that individuals who view their surroundings as

deteriorating - characterized by disorganized neighbourhoods - tend to exhibit a fear of crime (Rountree, 1998). Furthermore, this model posits that those who have negative perceptions of their environment are more likely to associate it with indicators of crime, such as gangs, public drug use, and abandoned buildings, leading them to feel at risk of victimization (Skogan, 1992; Skogan, 1981). Similarly, individuals who experience a lack of community cohesion (Bellair, 1997; Bursik, 2000) and collective efficacy (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981) are also believed to contribute to their fear, as suggested by this model. Consequently, many residents remain indoors mostly at night but sometimes must go outside in the dark to utilize communal infrastructure, exposing themselves to the danger of darkness (Briers, 2021).

4.3 General underlying causes of crime in Site C

Furthermore, the perceptions of what causes crime in Site C are shared by the participants and discussed below.

4.3.1 Economic and social drivers

Five (5) out of the fifteen (15) participants mentioned that poverty and unemployment contribute to crime in Site C. Given this situation, they pointed out that people commit crimes for economic gain. They also mentioned that substance abuse drives crime in the area.

• Poverty and unemployment as primary motivators for crime.

The participant statements below reveal a strong association between economic challenges, particularly poverty and unemployment, and the prevalence of crime in Site C:

“... economic challenges contribute to crime in our area. High unemployment leads some people to engage in informal economies or even criminal activities out of desperation” (P14)

“Poverty and unemployment are the biggest factors that drive crime in the whole of Khayelitsha, especially at Site C, because most people turn to crime when they cannot make ends meet and they rob other people of their belongings, such as money, phones to sell, etc.” (P4)

“Poverty is the most important factor that makes crime worse here in Site C. People do not have the means to get by, so they wander off the streets looking for people to rob” (P6)

“Other people commit crime because they are struggling financially and they need the money to buy something to eat, it’s hard out here.” (P10)

The participants consistently emphasize how unemployment and poverty drive individuals to engage in criminal activities out of desperation. It is evident from their statements that the inability to fulfil basic needs leads some people to enter informal economies or turn to theft, thereby exacerbating crime rates in the area. The link between poverty, unemployment, and crime has long been acknowledged in criminological theory and research, as these socio-economic factors are closely connected to patterns of criminal behaviour. In particular, poverty and unemployment significantly contribute to crime by creating financial strain and limiting access to lawful sources of income, driving individuals toward illegal activities for survival (Fagbadebo et al., 2024). The socio-economic factors contributing to crime in Khayelitsha have been extensively discussed, including high levels of unemployment, extreme poverty, inequality, rapid growth in informal settlements (with approximately 50% of families now residing in informal dwellings), and inadequate provision of essential services such as water, sanitation, and public amenities (Mbonambi & Olutola, 2024; Lloyd, 2023; Smit et al., 2015; Seekings, 2013).

When load shedding is implemented within this socio-economic context, it further complicates the relationship between poverty, joblessness, and criminal activity. According to Mabunda et al. (2023), load shedding has led to the shutdown of businesses, resulting in job losses and a rise in unemployment. The loss of jobs can have a devastating impact, depriving individuals of their primary source of income and leaving them with limited lawful options to sustain themselves and their families. This sets the stage for increased criminal activity, as outlined in Merton's strain theory (1938), which suggests that when individuals cannot attain societal goals through lawful methods, they may turn to unlawful behaviour to survive (Agnew, 1985). For those affected by unemployment due to load shedding, turning to crime might become a way to obtain essential goods, leading them to resort to theft, burglary, or participation in the informal economy to meet their needs. These underlying factors, combined with the opportunities presented by load shedding, creates a conducive environment for criminal activity, thereby increasing the risk of victimization.

- **Substance abuse drives crime**

Another factor that drives crime in Khayelitsha is substance abuse, according to the participant:

“The thing is, the one thing that makes safety an issue at Site C is that there are a lot of places that sell drugs here at Site C and even Khayelitsha as a whole, mainly tik.” (P8)

“People under the influence of alcohol and drugs can engage in violent behaviour, causing them to commit violent crimes.” (P4)

The reflections of the participants highlight a link between substance abuse and violent crime in Site C, Khayelitsha, a widely discussed phenomenon issue in the literature. Participant 8's remark about the widespread drug sales, particularly of tik (crystal methamphetamine), illustrates the systemic violence associated with these drugs. According to Watt et al. (2014), tik is frequently associated with increased rates of crime and violence, which erode community cohesion. This is supported by Matzopoulos et al. (2020) and Lloyd (2023), who assert that drug abuse, particularly crystal methamphetamine (or tik), is cited as the primary cause of robbery in Khayelitsha. Participant 4's observation regarding alcohol and drug-induced violence resonates with findings from studies connecting alcohol consumption to heightened aggression and impulsivity, especially in marginalized communities (Abbey, 2011).

4.4 Fear and vulnerability

Given the crime situation in Site C, most participants (8 out of 15 participants) expressed a heightened fear of crime at night.

4.4.1 Night-time anxiety

The participants reported experiencing feelings of anxiety and fear of crime, especially at night. They reported having experienced constant fear of crime and feeling vulnerable because they (young women) are targets of crime.

- **Constant fear of crime, especially after dark**

The participants reported constantly fearing crime, especially at night, in Site C. They express this below:

“...we live in constant fear apha (means here) ... especially us women, we fear going out at night because we are the most vulnerable – load shedding or not.” (P9)

“Ever since this load shedding started the crime here does not stop, it just becomes worse, and we constantly live in fear once the lights switch off.” (P15)

In the above statements, the participants express their constant fear due to the prevalence of crime at night, especially during load shedding. Participant 9, in particular, highlights the heightened vulnerability of women when going out at night. Participant 15 emphasizes the worsening of crime, and the persistent fear experienced when the lights switch off. The

literature supports this by stating that fear of crime and perceived crime risk are usually higher at night than during the day (Uttley et al., 2024). For instance, criminals often view night-time as an ideal opportunity to commit robberies as it reduces the possibility of being seen (Uttley et al., 2024). It is plausible that this induces feelings of fear and unsafety. One reason why it feels less safe after dark is that visual function is impaired at low light levels, meaning it becomes more difficult to detect and identify visual features of the environment that might contribute to judgements of prospect and refuge, which are known to influence how safe individuals feel, causing them to fear at night (Uttley et al., 2024). Consistent with this, Winter (2022) notes that perceived vulnerability may also be due to environmental circumstances. The quality of a neighbourhood influences the fear of crime among the youth. Neighbourhood characteristics such as high crime rates, prevalent poverty, and disorderly environments can predict individuals' fear levels (Pantazis, 2000; Brunton-Smith & Sturgis, 2011; Keel et al., 2024; Brunton-Smith et al., 2014). Research shows that perceived disorder in a neighbourhood impacts fear of crime (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; McGarrell et al., 1997; Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987; Ferraro, 1995), indicating that those who view their surroundings as disordered and unsafe are more inclined to fear crime. For instance, when youth witness their peers being victimized, it can lead to fears about their vulnerability to crime (May et al., 2015). This phenomenon is referred to as indirect victimization. Indirect victimization occurs when individuals learn about others' victim experiences through personal connections, often including neighbours, which can heighten their fear of crime (Xie & McDowall, 2008; Russo et al., 2013; Drakulich, 2015; Keel et al., 2022). Witnessing the victimization of others, particularly family members or friends, can shape women's feelings of safety (Ceccato et al., 2023). Moreover, people residing in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are likely to encounter more negative experiences and terrible living conditions than those in other urban areas (Galster, 2014).

Moreover, the participants of this study express that young women are the most vulnerable to crime, as they are the targets of crime. They express these sentiments below:

“Young women, especially, are not safe because they are the targeted ones the most.” (P7)

“It is not safe at all, especially for us young women... we are the ones who are more at risk.” (P6)

Participants 6 and 7 claim that young women are not safe in Site C because they are targets. It seems like their age and gender makes them susceptible to crime. As Carastathis (2014) note,

that multiple identities such as age and gender intersect to compound their vulnerability. Global research suggests that women are usually targeted for several reasons, such as perceived powerlessness, societal and cultural norms that devalue women, and the portrayal of young women in media and society as hypersexualized (Heise et al., 2019). These factors place them in a social position that makes them more susceptible and visible targets for violence, particularly in public spaces. In addition, harmful societal norms related to femininity and masculinity often portray men as perpetrators and women as passive or defenceless, perpetuating the belief that young women are easy targets (Jewkes et al., 2015). In settings where female youth are seen as potential targets, load shedding heightens their exposure to crime by creating conditions that criminals can easily take advantage of.

When asked about the impact load shedding has on the safety in Site C, one of the participants responded:

“Those are the times when criminals operate in the dark, targeting us young women because they know we cannot defend ourselves and that is why there is a lot of crime during load shedding, especially at night.” (P10)

The participant in the above statement emphasizes that their inability to defend themselves makes them more vulnerable. The inability of women to physically defend themselves has been studied in the literature as a factor that increases their vulnerability to crime and makes them easy targets. According to Martin-Howard (2023), women may be more physically vulnerable due to weaker physical strength, which can affect their ability to defend themselves in risky situations. This perception of women puts women at risk to crime, especially at opportunistic times like load shedding.

4.5 Impact of load shedding on crime

The sub-theme that emerged from the research data analysis regarding the impact of load shedding on crime was *crime awareness during power outages*, which is discussed below.

4.5.1 Crime awareness during power outages

When asked about the impact load shedding has on crime, especially at night. The participants responded:

“...there is a lot of crime during load shedding, especially at night. It becomes dangerous.” (P10)

“Site C is generally a dangerous place, but with this load shedding going on at night, it just becomes worse. Criminals love this load shedding because they know they get away with a lot, no one will see them because it is dark.” (P6)

The statements made by participants 6 and 10 describe the rise in crime during load shedding, especially at night. These findings are consistent with Malatjie et al. (2023) work, which suggests that situational factors like lack of outdoor lighting can contribute to an environment conducive to robberies. For instance, previous research has identified the hours of darkness (nighttime) as a predictor of when a street robbery occurs (Tompson & Bowers, 2013). It is evident from P6's statement that darkness encourages criminality and allows for anonymity. These assertions are supported by Malatjie et al. (2023), who state that darkness provides criminals with favourable conditions of anonymity. In addition, the absence of light makes it difficult for guardians (i.e. the police and neighbourhood watch) to monitor their surroundings (Malatjie et al., 2023). Darkness, thus, can be considered a significant impediment to capable guardianship (Malatjie et al., 2023). Furthermore, the statements by the participants highlight the advantageous opportunity for crime created by load shedding and how it influences an already dangerous place.

- **Higher incidence of housebreaking during load shedding periods.**

A total of 53% (8 out of 15) of the participants identified housebreaking to be the most committed crime during load shedding, and this is evident in their responses:

“...during load shedding, criminals enter people’s houses and rob them because they know there’s no one who will see them in the dark...” (P2)

“... criminals broke into my house once during load shedding. We were sleeping, and then we heard a noise. When we went to check, the lights were off, and there was load shedding. The person quickly went out the kitchen door, and we could not see who it was because it was dark. I have also heard incidents of people getting robbed during load shedding because it's too dark outside when it's load shedding, and this makes the criminals happy because they know no one is going to see them.” (P7)

In the statements above, participants 2 and 7 express that there is an increase in home burglaries during load shedding. They highlight that this is due to the darkness caused by load shedding as it creates an environment conducive to crime. The darkness resulting from load shedding provides a shield for criminals to exploit the reduced visibility and gain entry into homes

without being noticed. These findings align with Uttley et al. (2024), who assert that burglars tend to commit burglaries during night-time as it reduces the possibility of being seen by neighbours and passers-by. It makes it easier for them to determine whether the occupants are home. This notion is further supported by Umar and Kunda-Wamuwi (2019), who note that thieves capitalise on the darkness during load shedding to carry out house break-ins. Payne (2022) asserts that one of the most common crimes during load shedding is housebreaking. For the participants in this study, load shedding intensifies their vulnerability to crime, particularly within their homes, which are traditionally considered a safe haven but become susceptible to home invasions due to the lack of lighting due to load shedding. The SAPS crime data (2022/23) further shows that housebreaking is the most commonly reported crime, with about 1.1 million households experiencing such incidents during this period. Further research should analyse crime statistics during load shedding to ascertain whether these perceptions align with reality or are influenced by escalated apprehension during times of susceptibility.

The consequences of load shedding are further described by participant 7, stating that:

“The problem is that we do not see the criminals when it’s load shedding, and now we can’t report because we did not see their faces, and it’s hard for them to be found.” (P7)

Participant 7 further expresses that it becomes hard to report an offence due to the inability to identify perpetrators during load shedding. When unable to see the faces of the perpetrators, it becomes challenging for both victims and witnesses to provide accurate and reliable descriptions. The darkness resulting from load shedding at night can further weaken the ability of guardians, such as the police and neighbourhood watches, to identify potential offenders, as they are unable to distinguish them from other community members in the dark (Malatjie et al., 2023). This can hinder their ability to monitor their surroundings effectively, making crimes easier to commit during load shedding (Malatjie et al., 2023). This limitation in evidence gathering not only affects the police's ability to investigate but also increases the likelihood of unsolved crimes, potentially emboldening criminals to commit further offences during load shedding. Additionally, being unable to report criminals may lead to feelings of insecurity, which can further deter individuals from going outside during load shedding periods.

4.6 Protection strategies against crime during load shedding

During load shedding, the participants discussed their measures to protect themselves from crime. The section below discusses these measures.

4.6.1 Safety measures

The sub-theme that emerged from the analysis of research data regarding the protection strategies used by the participants against crime during load shedding was the preference to stay indoors during load shedding; or walk with someone or in groups, which is discussed below:

- **Preference for staying indoors during load shedding.**

When asked what the participants do to stay safe during load shedding, most participants (7 out of 15) proposed that staying at home during load shedding was one of their strategies:

“...the best way to protect yourself when there’s load shedding is to stay at home.” (P4)

“I stay at home because I do not want to be at risk” (P5)

In the statements above, the participants believe that remaining at home is the most effective way to safeguard themselves during load shedding. P5 also chooses to stay indoors during load shedding to avoid crime risk. Their comments indicate a heightened awareness of the dangers of being outside during load shedding, particularly at night when visibility is low. Choosing to stay at home reflects a behavioural adjustment to these perceived threats, which can restrict individuals' movements and contribute to feelings of anxiety and fear, mirroring the findings of Chalfin et al. (2020), as cited in Lambongang (2023), that a majority of women refrain from going out after dark to minimize the risk of falling victim to crime. Their decision to stay at home also underscores the broader literature on the fear of crime, indicating that this fear constrains everyday behaviour and leads individuals to limit their lives by avoiding specific routes or places (Lee & Ha, 2024).

- **Walk with someone or in groups when outside during load shedding.**

Other participants also state that to be safe from crime during load shedding; it is best to walk in groups or with a companion:

“I usually ask someone to accompany me whenever I must go somewhere during load shedding at night because it becomes so dark and dangerous during those times. I think many prefer to move around with friends or in groups to reduce the risk of being targeted.” (P11)

In the statement above, the participant explains how they typically request company when they need to go out during nighttime load shedding. Having someone with them seems to offer a sense of security, as criminals are more likely to target individuals walking alone. This reliance

on group movement is consistent with the findings of Chowdhury et al. (2024), which highlight that women often experience fear when travelling alone at night due to an increased risk of victimization. This highlights the broader societal issue of gendered vulnerability, wherein women's navigation of public spaces is shaped by both perceived and actual risks, particularly in unsafe environments. The fear of being in public spaces is a significant concern for women across various regions. For instance, according to previous global research, most women fear walking alone at night in their neighbourhoods (Day, 2001). In areas with high crime rates like Site C, which is known for its low-income demographic, it is highly likely for women to feel unsafe, especially during periods of load shedding at night.

4.7 Support programmes for victims

The analysis of research data revealed a sub-theme concerning the availability of support programs for victims in Site C, highlighting a *lack of awareness and availability* of support programmes for victims of crime in Site C, which is explained in detail below:

4.7.1 Lack of awareness and availability

When asked about the presence of support programs for crime victims in Site C, the participants provided the following responses:

“I think there are, but I don't know any of them... but I think there are.” (P13)

“There are no programs that I know of, I would be lying if I said I knew shame, and if there are that I do not know about” (P6)

The participants' responses show a lack of awareness of support programs for victims of crime. Previous research has highlighted various situational and psychological factors influencing victims' decisions to utilize support services (Bricknell et al., 2014). These factors encompass a lack of awareness about the availability and accessibility of services, inconvenient geographical access, and anticipated waiting times (Bricknell et al., 2014; Jaycox et al., 2004). The participants' unfamiliarity with support services for victims might also indicate a "trust deficit", as described by scholars Adelopo and Rufai (2020), where individuals lack trust in external support services and are therefore hesitant to seek help. This reluctance aligns with victims' lack of confidence in law enforcement (Super, 2015), leading them to refrain from reporting incidents due to concerns about insufficient assistance. Furthermore, it is possible that victim support services are not effectively publicized, which could be a potential explanation to the lack of knowledge about such victim support services. Research indicates

that a lack of awareness of available support services is a significant barrier preventing victims from seeking help (Rohn & Tenkorang, 2024). Moreover, having support from Victim Support and other services can give victims a voice and the impression that their experiences are being taken seriously. It can also boost confidence and the perceived efficacy of the criminal justice system (Bradford, 2011; Laxminarayan, 2015). For victims of theft or house robbery, counselling services could be offered by NGOs or trauma centres – this would help victims to process emotional distress following the crime.

In addition to obtaining assistance in coping with the psychological impacts of victimization, engaging with support services has the additional benefit of increasing victim trust in the procedurally fair criminal justice system (Freeman, 2013; Laxminarayan, 2015).

- **Absence of support programs for crime victims in Site C**

Furthermore, some participants expressed that there are no support programs for victims in Site C. They express this in their responses:

“I won’t lie shame, there is no such thing” (P3)

“There is no such thing here, sisi.” (P5)

Existing literature speaks of the available victim support services such as the Khayelitsha Thuthuzela Care Centre – which assists victims of rape and assault, the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Unit - mandated to investigate various crimes involving child victims, inter-familial assaults, attempted murder, and sexual offences, including rape and incest (Freeman & McDonald, 2015). The participants may be unaware of support programmes that are specifically for people who have experienced theft or house robberies. This could be due to institutions' ineffective communication and outreach efforts. Often, programs intended for marginalized communities suffer from inadequate advertising and limited accessibility to information, particularly in areas where digital platforms and formal networks are not readily available for dissemination.

4.8 Suggestions for improvement

The participants proposed ideas to tackle the crime problem in Site C, which is discussed below.

4.8.1 Enhancing safety and accountability

The participants emphasized the need for increased police visibility, community-police collaboration and the prosecution of offenders to ensure safety and accountability in Site C.

- **Increased police visibility, particularly during load shedding.**

When asked about suggestions to improve the state of crime during load shedding. The participants responded:

“...having more police around during power outages would really help our community.” (P13)

“Well, first, having more police around during power outages would be really helpful.” (P15)

From these statements, the participants believe that the mere presence of the police would discourage criminal behaviour. This presumption stems from the belief that visible law enforcement might deter crime, particularly at vulnerable times like night when load shedding occurs. Even though it is questionable whether police are more successful at preventing crime during load shedding, for the participants, just seeing the police there or on patrol throughout the period gives them a psychological sense of security. For instance, international studies claim that individuals may feel more protected when police are present in the community, particularly at night (Sjöberg et al., 2024). The idea that one is being protected from harm or danger by a trustworthy authority, such as the police, is the source of this sense of security (Sjöberg et al., 2024). A feeling of safety like this promotes comfort and well-being and reduces fear and anxiety (Sjöberg et al., 2024). Additionally, when individuals are in the presence of the police, they are more likely to comply with the law (Doyle et al., 2016). This is because the police are the official representation of capable guardians (Doyle et al., 2016). Therefore, the police presence becomes a symbol of the police being in charge, lessening the likelihood of criminal activity (Doyle et al., 2016). According to Bahn (1974), Jackson and Bradford (2009), and Zhao et al. (2002), actions such as their presence could be interpreted as an indication that the police are in charge, which has the potential to minimize the fear of crime and boost the sense of safety.

Furthermore, research indicates that load shedding decreases police effectiveness by interfering with communication systems, bringing police stations to a standstill (Smit, 2023), or directly decreasing visibility during nighttime load shedding (Nkanjeni, 2022; Ram, 2024; Mlambo, 2023; Uttley et al., 2024). Given that the participants believe that police presence could inhibit illegal behaviours, this could explain why there may not be an adequate police presence in Site C. From this, it is plausible that policing during load shedding may be difficult, which could encourage more crime. This is one way load shedding can exacerbate crime patterns in this area.

- **Encouragement of community-police collaboration**

Another suggestion proposed by the participants was the collaboration of the police and the community:

“I would like for the community and the police to work together. If they work together, we can beat this crime issue here at Site C. The community can help the police and tell them the areas where this crime happens the most.” (P6)

“If they (police) are seen around and involved in community programs, it helps build trust with residents.” (P14)

Participants 6 and 14 both propose that fostering a cooperative relationship between law enforcement and the community can decrease crime. They both emphasize the importance of trust and collaboration between the two parties. Participant 6 advocates for a partnership where the community supports law enforcement by sharing local knowledge about areas with high crime rates. The collaboration between the police and the community has the potential to build trust and reduce crime. Residents possess valuable information about crime hotspots in Site C. If the police respond effectively, it could help establish trust between the community and law enforcement, ultimately encouraging more reporting. Research by Kassaye (2022) also supports the idea that the police must work closely with community members and other collaborative partnerships to develop solutions to problems and enhance trust in law enforcement. P14's reflection suggests that police presence is essential for promoting accountability. When police officers are visible and actively involved in community programs, they are more likely to be accountable to residents, which can discourage criminal activities. Despite the potential benefits of trust-building, research by Freeman and McDonald (2015) indicates that Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in Khayelitsha have not successfully established a strong partnership between the SAPS and the community. CPFs serve as structured forums for police officials to engage with community members. Freeman and McDonald (2015) revealed that less than half of the participants were aware of CPFs, and only about 20% were involved in them. Community members who attended CPF meetings expressed frustration that the meetings were unproductive and often influenced by political agendas. To facilitate effective collaboration, it is crucial to enhance community awareness, participation, and the effectiveness of CPFs, ensuring that they function as meaningful platforms for partnership.

- **Ensuring perpetrators are held accountable by law enforcement.**

The participants also suggested that the police should hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, which would make victims feel safe:

“For the police to take action in protecting victims from the perpetrators. They can do this by making sure that the perpetrators are behind bars. This will make the victims feel safe in the community because most victims walk around in fear of bumping into perpetrators in the streets.” (P13)

Participant 13 emphasizes the importance of the police intervening to safeguard victims from offenders. The participant stressed that incarcerating offenders would instil a feeling of security for the victims in the community, as many fear encountering the perpetrators in public spaces. The apprehension of encountering offenders in public spaces is a genuine concern (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). Since numerous victims consistently fear crossing paths with their abusers in public, the police's ability to remove offenders from the community significantly impacts the victims' sense of safety. This apprehension can have profound psychological repercussions, so when offenders are incarcerated, the police not only prevent further harm but also alleviate victims' anxiety and provide them with a sense of assurance. Incarcerating offenders also serves as a deterrent to future crimes and reinforces public trust in the judicial system. Research indicates that detaining perpetrators diminishes the cycle of violence and prevents re-victimization of the victims (Ortega et al., 2024).

Table 3 below presents the categories, themes and sub-themes labelled for analysis and analysed according to the findings using thematic analysis.

Table 3: Analysis of findings using thematic analysis

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
4.1 Participants' general perceptions of crime in Site C	4.1.1 High crime prevalence in Site C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased incidents of street robberies. • Elevated levels of worry and anxiety about personal safety.
4.2 General underlying causes of crime in Site C	4.2.1 Economic and Social Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and unemployment as primary motivators for crime. • Substance abuse as a contributing factor to criminal behaviour.
4.3 Fear and vulnerability	4.3.1 Night-time anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant fear of crime, especially after dark • Young women are targets of crime by criminals
4.4 Impact of load shedding on crime	4.4.1 Crime awareness during power outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher incidence of housebreaking during load shedding periods.
4.5 Protection strategies against crime during load shedding	4.5.1 Safety measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for staying indoors during load shedding. • Walk with someone or in groups when outside during load shedding.

4.6 Support programs for victims	4.6.1 Lack of awareness and availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of support programs for crime victims in Site C.
4.7 Suggestions for improvement	4.7.1 Enhancing safety and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased police visibility, particularly during load shedding. • Encouragement of community-police collaboration. • Ensuring perpetrators are held accountable by law enforcement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. This study found that load shedding is associated with higher levels of robberies, particularly house robbery, during load shedding in Site C. It highlighted environmental factors like inadequate lighting due to load shedding offers an advantageous opportunity for criminal activity, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations such as the female youth. While previous research has focused on the economic and public health implications of load shedding, this study shed light on the impact of load shedding on the female youth living in Site C, Khayelitsha

There have been several attempts made to combat the crime situation in South Africa. Despite these efforts crime remains disturbingly high. Load shedding appears to be contributing to this issue, and the findings of this research are useful in informing policy makers to make strategic interventions against crime during load shedding, especially in Site C, Khayelitsha.

Areas for future research

- **Examining crime data in relation to load shedding schedules**

Future research could examine whether the experiences and perceptions of the participants of this study are consistent with actual crime rates and load shedding periods. This would support the premise that there is a link between the increased sense of vulnerability reported by young women and the incidence of crime during load shedding at night in Site C.

- **The effects of load shedding on male youth victims**

While this study focuses on crimes committed against women, it also acknowledges that men can also be victims of crime. A comprehensive gender-based analysis might be obtained by examining the experiences of male youth victims during load shedding, pointing out any variations or similarities between how load shedding impacts the safety and victimization of male compared to female youth.

- **Research on educating Site C youth on support systems**

Future research could explore the reasons behind the youth of Site C's lack of awareness of available support systems. Additionally, the research could assess effective strategies for making the community aware of the resources available in case someone becomes a victim.

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APPENDIX A

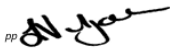
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Faculty of Law: Research Ethics Committee

Private Bag X3 ▪ Rondebosch ▪ 7701 ▪ South Africa
 Room 6.29 ▪ Kramer Building ▪ Middle Campus
 Tel: +27 021 650 3080 Fax: +27 021 650 5660
 E-mail: lamize.viljoen@uct.ac.za Internet: www.law.uct.ac.za

Certificate of Approval for Ethical Clearance

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/SUPERVISOR: IRVIN KINNES STUDENT: MEGAN DIKE [DKXMEG001] FACULTY: LAW DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC LAW	ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBER: L0031NS-2023 ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE: 06-SEPT-2023 APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE: 05-SEPT-2024
PROJECT TITLE: An exploratory study on the experiences of female youth victims of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: [Masters degree research] To explore and understand the experiences of female youth victims of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha.	
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	
This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Modifications To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a formal "Request for a Modification" to the REC Administrative Office. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol. Renewals Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" before the expiry date on your certificate. You are responsible for submitting this by at least 2 months prior to the expiry date of clearance date issued. Project Closures When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please formally notify the REC: Law as well as your supervisor where applicable.	
Certification	
This certifies that the University of Cape Town Law Faculty's Research Ethics Committee has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Cape Town Research Regulations Involving Human Participants. <div style="text-align: center;">  <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> Dr H Stoop REC: LEAD REVIEWER </div>	

Certificate Issued On: 11/09/2023
 REC: Chair – second reviewer

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS



CONSENT FORM

Title of study: An exploratory study on the experiences of female youth victims of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha

Researcher: Megan Dike

Affiliation: University of Cape Town

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled "An exploratory study on the experiences of female youth victims of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha." Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand the nature of the study and what it will entail. Please take your time to read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have.

Purpose of the study:

This study aims to explore the experiences of female youth who have been victims of crime during load shedding in the Site C area of Khayelitsha. The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by this demographic and the potential implications for policy and support systems.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Engage in an interview with the researcher, which will last approximately 60 minutes (1 hour)
- Share your experiences, thoughts, and feelings regarding your encounters with crime during load shedding, which will be audio recorded. You are encouraged to be as open and honest as possible.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and any identifying information will not be included in any reports or publications arising from this study. Data will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and the people supervising this research.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or penalty.

Benefits and Risks:

While there may be no direct benefits to you personally, your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of the challenges faced by young women during load shedding. This knowledge may potentially inform policies and support systems.

Please be aware that this interview may trigger emotional or psychological responses. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you are free to withdraw from the study without any consequences. Additionally, a flyer with helplines is available to assist you with any trauma or distress that may arise during or after the interview.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions, concerns, or wish to discuss any aspect of this study further, please feel free to contact:

Researcher: Megan Dike

Email address: dkxmeg001@myuct.ac.za

Consent:

I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to those questions. I freely consent to participate in this research study.

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR SITE C YOUTH CENTRE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Consent form for Site C Youth Centre

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Megan Dike, and I am pursuing my master's degree in criminology, law & society at the University of Cape Town (UCT), specifically at the Centre of Criminology. I am conducting an exploratory study on the experiences of female youth during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. The main objective of this study is to explore the crime experiences of young women (ages 18-30) during load shedding in Site C. I kindly request permission to conduct my research at the Site C Youth Centre, where I hope to engage with female youth participants to understand their experiences better. Participation will involve voluntary, confidential interviews with the female youth, and all ethical considerations have been reviewed and approved by the University of Cape Town Ethics Committee. I will ensure that the research process respects the centre's environment and operations if permission is granted.

Your signature will confirm that you have been informed about the purpose of this study and grant permission for it to be conducted at the Site C Youth Centre. If you have any questions or comments about the research, please feel free to contact my supervisors, Associate Professor Irvin Kinnes or Dr. Sisanda Mguzulwa, for further information.

Email: Irvin.kinnes@uct.ac.za or mgzsis001@myuct.ac.za

Researcher's email: dkxmeg001@myuct.ac.za

Staff/Manager's Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Department of Public Law

Title: An exploratory study on the experiences of female youth victims of crime during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR RESIDENTS OF SITE C, KHAYELITSHA

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your input and experiences are incredibly valuable to this study. The focus of the current study is on the crime experiences of young women during load shedding in Site C, Khayelitsha. By sharing your experiences, you are contributing to a deeper understanding of the vulnerabilities of this demographic group during load shedding, which may help inform future strategies to improve safety and support for your community. If you have any further questions or thoughts after this interview, please feel free to reach out. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Interview guidelines:

- Confidentiality is prioritized.
- You can withdraw at any time during the interview should you feel uncomfortable.
- You are not obliged to answer if you do not feel comfortable with the questions.
- You are free to leave at any time of the interview.
- Sign the consent form.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Location	Gender	Age	Socio-economic status	Duration of residence in Site C:

Objective: To explore the crime experiences of female youth during load shedding.

EXPERIENCES OF CRIME DURING LOADSHEDDING

- a) Can you share any specific incidents or experiences of crime that you or others in your community have faced during load shedding?
- b) Do you feel that load shedding impacts the overall safety and security in Site C?
- c) Have you been a victim of crime during load-shedding?

LOAD SHEDDING AND PATTERNS OF CRIME

- a) From your perspective, do you believe load shedding influences existing patterns of crime in Khayelitsha, Site C?
- b) Are there any types of crime that seem to be more prevalent during load shedding? (during the day or night-time)

RESPONSES AND COPING MECHANISMS

- a) How do young women in your community typically respond to incidents of crime to protect themselves?
- b) Can you share any personal strategies or practices you or others use to stay safe during times of load shedding and increased crime?

INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

- a) Are you aware of any interventions or programs in your community that aim to support victims of crime? Could you describe them?
- b) In your opinion, how effective have these interventions been in assisting victims of crime? Can you provide any specific examples?

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- a) From your perspective, are there any improvements or additional support mechanisms you believe could be implemented to better assist victims of crime in Khayelitsha, Site C?
- b) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or thoughts on this topic?

I will ensure that your experiences are accurately conveyed. Would it be acceptable if I reach out to you again if I have additional questions? Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for taking part in this study.

APPENDIX E
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HELPLINES

To All Research Participants:

If you as respondent feel that you have been triggered to relive any moment relating to your experiences of crime against you, during or after the interview, please note that we propose that you speak with a trained counsellor at any one of the following organisations:

Trauma Centre:

126 Chapel Street Cape Town 8001

<tel:0214657373>

<https://traumacentre.org.za/>

Rape Crisis:

89 Msobomvu Dr Khayelitsha 7784

<tel:0213619085>

<https://rapecrisis.org.za/>

Simelela Rape Centre, Khayelitsha: 021 361 0543

Network on Violence Against Women: 021 633 5287

Lifeline: 0800 05 55 55

Abuse Helpline: 0800 150 150

Emergency Contraception Hotline: 0800 24 64 32 WC