



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN SCIENCES

**AN ANALYSIS OF WHATSAPP AS A TOOL FOR CRIME PREVENTION IN
KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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DECLARATION

This is to confirm that this
thesis is my own work which
I have never previously submitted to any other university for
any purpose. The references used
and cited have been acknowledged.

Signature of candidate.....

On theday of 2019

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Highway Area community
in KwaZulu-Natal, who work tirelessly to find new ways to fight crime,
as well as to the role-players who go beyond their normal duties to support them.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
CCTV	CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION
CPF	COMMUNITY POLICING FORUM
GIS	GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM
GPS	GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM
HSSREC	HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
IOL	INDEPENDENT ONLINE
IM	INSTANT MESSAGING
KZN	KWAZULU-NATAL
MO	MODUS OPERANDI
NGO	NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
PC	PERSONAL COMPUTER
PSIRA	PRIVATE SECURITY INDUSTRY REGULATORY AUTHORITY
SMS	SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE
SAP	SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE
SAPS	SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICES
UK	UNITED KINGDOM
UN	UNITED NATIONS
USA	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UKZN	UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

ABSTRACT

Violent crime levels are on the rise on South Africa; however, the advent of the Internet, and the subsequent advancement of social media, has drastically changed the way in which community members can get involved in community crime prevention efforts. It is evident that the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes by communities is a new trend in crime prevention; however, there is a limited body of scientific information that illuminates this phenomenon. Therefore, the aim of this research is thus to determine which WhatsApp practices could be regarded as the most effective for use by communities to enhance community-based crime prevention efforts in the area of study. It is argued that this information could inform a set of guidelines for the use of WhatsApp in crime prevention that could be utilised by the various communities in the area of study, and even beyond the demographic borders of the Highway Area. The findings of this study show that WhatsApp is attractive for crime prevention purposes because it has improved the way in which communities can communicate with a broader audience in a much quicker fashion than before. This enhances crime response rates and curbs further instances of crime. The findings of this study also highlighted areas in which WhatsApp use can be carefully regulated to ensure its most effective and lawful use in crime prevention.

This research was conducted in the Highway Area in KwaZulu-Natal. In this area, communities are increasingly using WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes, and role-players (e.g. the SAPS, private security companies, emergency services etc.) operating in this area are becoming more active on community-driven WhatsApp groups in order to assist with resources for crime prevention and responses to emergency situations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Escalating crime rates in the Highway Area of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in recent years have led members of this community to take it upon themselves to engage in their own strategic community policing efforts, particularly by using WhatsApp. The South African Police Service (SAPS) Crime Statistics for the 2015/2016 financial year revealed a significant increase in murder, residential and non-residential burglary, residential and non-residential robbery, drug-related crimes and carjacking cases in these communities compared to the preceding years. Demographically, the Durban Metropolitan areas of Westville and Pinetown (generally referred to as the Lower Highway Area) as well as Kloof, Gillitts, Hillcrest and Outer West Durban (referred to as the Upper Highway Area) make up the Highway Area of KZN (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2016).

Conceptually, community crime prevention refers to strategies by communities to prevent crime from occurring in their own areas (Roelofse, 2011). A branch of this is community policing which is defined in the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines of 1997 as *“the collaborative, partnership-based approach to local level problem-solving”* (Pelser, 1999:13). Although crime prevention has been implemented in communities worldwide for centuries (Minaar, 2005), community policing is fairly new to South Africa. Its most notable arrival was during South Africa’s transition towards democracy in the early 1990s. As Pelsaer (1999) explains, community policing was introduced into post-apartheid South Africa to improve co-operation and communication between the police and their local communities.

An intrinsic and invaluable component of community policing is communication. In this context, it is noteworthy that communication media have developed rapidly for use by all members of society due to the fast-paced development we see in technology today. WhatsApp, which is an instant messaging application, has become an increasingly popular way for community members to stay connected with one another in South Africa. Among the Highway

community, one of the most common usages for WhatsApp is to share information on groups about crime incidents and to increase rapid response to these threats. Operationally, the types of WhatsApp groups used for this purpose range from those that monitor an individual street to those that monitor an entire neighbourhood or town cluster (such as the Highway area near Durban in KZN). WhatsApp allows community members to engage simultaneously on a multitude of levels for crime prevention purposes. However, as this mode of communication is fairly novel, limited scholarly knowledge exists about the benefits of or the threats that this form of communication poses in the crime prevention sphere, and therefore research is required to guide and regulate it within the legal parameters of the South African context.

Because limited empirical research has been conducted on the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes, this research project was deemed vital in order to determine the most effective strategies for using WhatsApp to prevent crime in the Highway Area of KZN. This research was premised on the notion that an analysis of the use of WhatsApp, particularly WhatsApp groups, as a tool for crime prevention in KZN by communities in the Highway Area would provide invaluable information regarding its effectiveness and potential dangers. The aim of this research was thus to determine which WhatsApp practices could be regarded as the most effective for use by communities to enhance community-based crime prevention efforts in the area of study. It is argued that this information could inform a set of guidelines for the use of WhatsApp in crime prevention that could be utilised by the various communities in the area of study, and even beyond the demographic borders of the Highway Area.

This research utilised a descriptive-interpretive paradigm because of its quest to elicit rich, detailed accounts of the use of WhatsApp by community members. A case study research design facilitated the generation of the data by means of in-depth individual (one-on-one) interviews. This research was limited to the Highway Area in KZN due to budget and time constraints and for the purpose of convenience. To achieve the research aim and objectives, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data that were collected during the interviews. The study was embedded within an empirical framework because data were collected from actively participating members of the community.

1.2 Rationale and Research Problem

Crime is on a steady increase globally and various authors from different parts of the world agree that the most worrying aspect of this increase is the violent nature of the crimes that are being committed. There appear to be various reasons for the increase in and diversity of the crimes that are committed across the globe.

In an article that was published in *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom on 25 January 2018, author Alan Travis stated that overall crime rates in England and Wales were down, but that more harmful crimes that occurred less frequently (i.e., gun and knife crimes) were increasing steeply. Travis (2018) explained that, in England and Wales, the number of active police officers was dropping and was 15% lower than it had been 10 years before. The author argued that this phenomenon, in conjunction with the rising rates of violent crimes, was a major concern for both countries. Timothy Williams, who wrote for the *New York Times*, published an article about the rise of violent crimes in the United States of America (USA) on 25 September 2017. In this article, Williams (2017) stated that lower levels of crime were experienced than the levels that had been experienced in preceding decades, but the writer then painted a bleak picture of rapidly increasing levels of violent crime in the second consecutive year. It was argued that, in the USA, there were opposing opinions regarding the reasons for the increase in violent crimes and just how law enforcement in the country should tackle this issue (Williams, 2017).

Currently, the crime situation is not so different in South Africa. On 24 October 2017, *Quartz Africa* published an article written by Lynsey Chutel who argued that the overall crime rate in South Africa was lower compared to previous years' rates. However, she noted that violent crimes such as robbery and murder were on the rise, with murder rates having increased for the fifth consecutive year in the country. This statistic is particularly worrying, as Chutel (2017) suggests that the country “*has struggled [in vain] to shake its reputation as one of the world's crime capitals*”. Chutel (2017) also highlights a study which showed that South African citizens were at a higher risk of being victimised than they had been five years before. In support of this statement, previous Minister of Police, Fikile Mbalula (2017), wrote in the *Daily Maverick* of 24 July 2017 that the murder rate in South Africa was similar to the rate in countries that were experiencing a war. Mbalula (2017) explained that when crime was not the core focus of

the police, the government or the media, then it tended to thrive. According to Chutel (2017), researchers attempted to identify the core reason for the crime issue in the country, with some arguing that it was due to the incapacity of the SAPS, budget cuts, and political interference.

A common trend in the apparent losing battle against crime is the public's differing perceptions about the police. For example, Travis (2018) wrote in an article that was published in *The Guardian* that better police-recording procedures and an increased readiness of victims to report crime could explain the higher recorded crime levels in England and Wales. This comment suggests that the public's confidence in the police forces in England and Wales has become more positive and that police-public co-operation has improved. Conversely, the USA and South Africa are experiencing negative perceptions of the police coupled with poor police-community cooperation. Williams (2017) highlighted the killing of "*unarmed African-Americans*" by the police in the USA, arguing that this has tainted the public's perception of the police and resulted in diminished police-public co-operation and success in the fight against crime. Similarly, in South Africa increased crime rates have resulted in a lack of confidence among the public in the SAPS's ability to solve crimes, and this has resulted in a tendency among victims not to report crime (Chutel, 2017).

It therefore often occurs that communities step up to take control of their own crime problems and that they employ community crime prevention strategies. Community crime prevention is defined as "*strategies which involve communities taking responsibility for crime prevention in their own areas*" (Roelofse, 2011:359), which includes the protection of community members and property as well as partaking in programmes designed to assist the police, such as gathering intelligence and joining local Neighbourhood Watch structures (Ibid). In his article published in the *Daily Maverick*, ex Police Minister Fikile Mbalula (2017) made a plea for South Africans to also take part in or set up a Community Policing Forum (CPF) in their own communities. Traditionally, these forms of community crime prevention required on-the-ground participation by community members in the form of Neighbourhood Watch patrols or attending CPF meetings, but this limited the number of community members that were willing and able to participate in such crime prevention initiatives, resulting in poor crime prevention successes in many neighbourhoods.

The advent of the Internet and the subsequent advancement of social media have drastically changed the way in which community members can get involved in community crime

prevention efforts. The literature suggests that the modern day use of the Internet is primarily for socialization purposes (Hwang & Kim, 2015) and that the social media heralded a radical transformation of electronic communication (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014). It is undeniable that social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have helped to break down social barriers by allowing a high number of people to become involved with one another on different social issues over the internet (Hwang & Kim, 2015). In an article published in *CNBC* on 28 March 2014, author Katie Holliday explained that what traditionally constituted a social media site had changed with the advent of mobile messaging applications such as WhatsApp, which had over 450 million users at the time the article was published (Holliday, 2014).

Hwang and Kim (2015: 478) argue that the use of social media “*facilitates the harnessing of the power of people who have similar ideas by disseminating information quickly and broadly on a network*”. This is a huge breakthrough for community crime prevention as it allows more members of the community to become involved in crime prevention and it accelerates the pace at which community crime prevention efforts can be rolled out. In an article published in *The Press Reader* on 29 October 2017, author Nabeelah Shaikh wrote about the collective use of WhatsApp by community members and SAPS members to fight crime in KwaZulu-Natal communities, and its value as an immediate and inexpensive method of communication was highlighted.

It is evident that the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes by communities is a new trend in crime prevention. However, there is a limited body of scientific information that illuminates this phenomenon. Literature searches conducted for this study revealed a paucity of scholarly information, and it was clear that a lot of what had previously been known about this topic had been based on published journalists’ views in newspaper articles. These articles were thus the products of investigative journalism but reflected journalists’, and not communities’, perceptions on how and why communities used WhatsApp to assist with crime prevention and/or other social issues such as searches for missing persons in their respective areas.

Thus, based on the researcher’s review of the literature and her recognition of the value of social media in modern day society, coupled with a private recommendation made by a local

police official to consider the topic, the researcher was motivated to study the use of WhatsApp by community members for crime prevention purposes. It was deemed appropriate for a study on this topic to engage in empirical research in order endorse or refute the use of WhatsApp in preventing crime among communities within the Highway Area in KwaZulu-Natal. It was also envisaged that empirical data would strengthen the reasons for the use of WhatsApp and that the negative consequences of its use might be addressed.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Aim

The aim of any research is a description of the overall scope of the study and specifies what knowledge the researcher needs to gain throughout the research process (Struwig & Stead, 2013). The aim of this research study was to analyse the use of WhatsApp, particularly WhatsApp groups, as a tool for crime prevention in KZN by communities in the Highway Area and to determine the effectiveness of its use in the prevention of crime. It was envisaged that, should the aim be achieved, effective guidelines could be suggested for the proper use of WhatsApp by communities and that community-based crime prevention efforts in the study area, and eventually across KZN and South Africa, could be enhanced.

1.3.2 Objectives

Research objectives, or “secondary objectives” as Struwig and Stead (2013) suggest, evolve from the aim (or “primary objective”) of the research and help the researcher to accomplish the aim of a study. In order to achieve the aim of this research, three objectives were formulated that would give impetus to the study. These objectives were to use empirical data in order to:

- Evaluate whether WhatsApp is an attractive and desired social media platform for community crime prevention efforts in the study area;
- Assess the effectiveness of the use of WhatsApp as a tool for community crime prevention;
- To identify recommended best-practices for the effective and lawful use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes.

1.4 Rationale for choosing the use of WhatsApp as the Study Topic

Prior to the study, personal experience, anecdotal evidence and private conversations with police officers suggested that WhatsApp was the preferred social medium for crime prevention among community members, regardless of the fact that many other popular social media platforms were used by society such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It was therefore vital to examine the aspects of WhatsApp that make it the preferred social media platform for crime prevention. As the knowledge of why WhatsApp had become the preferred medium for this purpose prior to the study was blurred, it was deemed important to conduct a scholarly investigation into this topic in order to contribute to knowledge about crime prevention strategies that may be used successfully by communities.

1.5 Key Research Questions

Research questions for this study are the questions that the researcher aims to answer by conducting the research, and are thus directly related to the objectives of this research. The research questions this study aimed to answer were the following:

- What makes WhatsApp the most attractive social media platform for community crime prevention efforts in the study area?
- How effective is WhatsApp as a tool for community crime prevention in the Highway Area?
- What recommended best-practices can be identified for the effective and lawful use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will contribute significantly to the field of crime prevention as knowledge on how communities use WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes will be elucidated. Although the study sample was limited and the study results may not be generalised, it is argued that the findings will be applicable to crime-ridden societies across a broad spectrum as the use of WhatsApp has become virtually endemic in all South African societies. Currently there are no laws or policies that specifically address social media usage in this

country, therefore the findings of this research will provide guidelines for lawful WhatsApp use that will assist in maximising the crime prevention efforts that are utilised by community members, while ensuring that no laws are broken in the process. Information based on the findings of this study may be disseminated to Neighbourhood Watch organisations, community-driven crime prevention organisations and private security companies that all work with members of society to prevent crime in their areas through the use of WhatsApp.

Limited empirical research has been conducted on the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes in South Africa and abroad, which makes this research groundbreaking as it will provide the first empirical insight into the use of WhatsApp for community-driven crime prevention in South Africa. Therefore, the findings will establish a solid foundation on which further research into this phenomenon can be developed. Moreover, it will contribute to the success of community-driven crime prevention strategies and will provide invaluable direction to policy makers in both national and local government structures for the development of policies to regulate social media usage in the country.

1.7 Definition of Concepts

The purpose of this section is to provide a conceptual foundation for the research in order for the findings of the study to be appropriately interpreted.

1.7.1 Crime Prevention

The purpose of this research project was to investigate the use of WhatsApp by community members who were trying to prevent crime in their respective areas. The terms *crime prevention* and *crime control* are often used interchangeably; however, Roelofse (2011) stresses that the two terms are concerned with different matters, arguing that crime prevention is concerned with the responsibility people have to prevent crime, whereas crime control is concerned with the actions that people can take to manage crime. The latter better explains the use of WhatsApp by community members to prevent crime in the areas where they reside or work.

In its purest form, Roelofse (2011:351) describes crime prevention as “*society’s responsibility to socialise people in a positive way*”, which “*should happen through a coordinated effort by the government (all its departments), the criminal justice system and civil society*”. Conversely, Rosenbaum (1988:328) describes crime prevention as “*the anticipation, recognition and appraisal of a crime risk and the initiation of some action to remove it*”. In addition, Rosenbaum (1988) highlights that crime prevention is concerned with reducing opportunities for crime and not with changing a potential offender’s motivation to commit a crime. Therefore, Roelofse would rather conceptualise Rosenbaum’s definition as *crime control*.

Roelofse (2011:359) states that crime prevention can be distinguished as two fundamental types, namely “*social crime prevention and crime prevention by the criminal justice system*”. Social crime prevention, which is relevant for the purposes of this research, comprises three components: (1) developmental crime prevention; (2) situational crime prevention; and (3) community crime prevention. Situational crime prevention deals with strategies that can ‘design’ crime out of a particular area, which is aligned with crime control. Consequently, the inclusion of situational crime prevention under the umbrella of social crime prevention creates an inconsistency in what Roelofse defines as crime prevention. This leads Roelofse (2011) to state that *situational crime prevention* is termed incorrectly, as it should rather be labelled as *situational crime control*.

As will become evident, the use of WhatsApp by community members for crime prevention purposes encompasses all three components of what Roelofse describes as social crime prevention; therefore, the term *crime prevention* and not the term *crime control* is used throughout this dissertation. This distinction will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section.

1.7.2 Community Policing

In their article on a Neighbourhood Watch case study, Meyer and van Graan (2011:130) make reference to a definition of community policing which they characterise as being “*one of the most programmatic and clear ones*”. Here, community policing is defined as “*a policy and strategy aimed at achieving more effective and efficient crime control, reducing the fear of crime, improving quality of life and improving police services and police legitimacy through a pro-active reliance on community resources that seeks to change crime causing conditions*”

(Ibid.). As highlighted in section 1.1., community policing is described as a collaboration and a partnership to problem-solving at the local level (Pelser, 1999).

1.7.3 Community Policing Forums (CPFs)

The Community Police Forum structure, also known informally as a CPF, was formally established in terms of section 19(1) of the SAPS Act No. 68 of 1995 and refers to a gathering of community members and police officials for the purpose of discussing safety and security issues within a particular community (Westville Community Policing Forum, 2018). The KwaZulu-Natal Community Safety and Liaison (2011) organisation expands on this definition and explains that in addition to community members and police officials, members of organisations such as non-profit government organisations (NGOs), school governing bodies, private security companies and other governmental representatives also attend CPFs.

1.7.4 Neighbourhood Watch

A Neighbourhood Watch is a non-profit organisation that is driven by community members who represent the needs of the wider community. The primary role of a Neighbourhood Watch is to prevent crime in the community. This is achieved by Neighbourhood Watch members taking crime prevention into their own hands and increasing awareness in the community about what can be done to prevent crime (Meyer & Van Graan, 2011).

1.7.5 Private Security Concerns

Private security refers to the services rendered by private security companies which are business concerns that provide alarm monitoring and response services to clients in exchange for money (Meyer & Van Graan, 2011). Private security services are offered in a private capacity to individuals or organisations and also include guarding, escorting and investigation services (van Graan, 2016).

1.7.6 Social Media

The term ‘social media’ is often confusing, but it is essentially defined as “*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that*

allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Hwang & Kim, 2015:478). Mushwana and Bezuidenhout (2014) explain that social media platforms allow for this interaction in real time via the Internet. The authors also explain that the term *social media* is different to the term *social networking*, although they are often used interchangeably. Social media is to do with the way by which content is transmitted on the Internet and social networking is to do with operational tools social media users can use to share content (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

1.7.7 WhatsApp

WhatsApp is an instant messaging program that was designed as a substitute messaging service to the traditional SMS service. Authors Song and Wang (2011:539) of China define instant messaging as “*a type of information technology to facilitate communication*” and they highlight that instant messaging allows users to see if other users that they interact with via instant messaging are logged onto the platform at any given time. WhatsApp allows for users to send and receive a wide range of content, including text messages, photos and videos. In addition, users can share voice recordings and GPS locations and even make phone calls to other WhatsApp users (WhatsApp Incorporated, 2018).

1.8 Chapter Sequence

Chapter One: This chapter provides a brief discussion on community-driven crime prevention in the Highway Area of KwaZulu-Natal and highlights how communities are adopting social media as a tool for this purpose. It also highlights the lack of empirical research on the topic, which motivated the researcher to conduct the study. Chapter one also highlights the significance of the study and presents the aim of the study as well as the objectives and research questions. The rationale for the research as well as the core concepts of the study are presented.

Chapter Two: This chapter presents a review of various published materials that were found relevant to the study. These sources included study reports from different countries around the world. The main focus of the review was to peruse relevant literature on the use of social media in the South African context. This chapter highlights the lack of empirical research on the use

of WhatsApp for crime prevention and merges elements of community-driven crime prevention and social media usage in order to present a meaningful foundation for the study.

Chapter Three: This chapter explores the theoretical framework that underpinned this study. A discussion on the broken windows theory and the routine activities theory ensues, and it is explained how these theories were employed in order to make meaningful interpretations of the findings.

Chapter Four: This chapter presents the research methodology that was employed in this study. The case study research design and the use of the qualitative research methodology are explained and it is stated why these approaches were used to obtain and analyse the findings of this study.

Chapter Five: This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study. The discourse includes references to literature findings and is underpinned by the theories that were presented in Chapter Three in order to render the findings meaningful and valid.

Chapter Six: This chapter presents the main conclusions of this study, describes how the research objectives were achieved, and provides recommendations for future research into similar topics.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the study by describing its fundamental purpose. The background to the study as well as the aim, objectives and research questions were presented. The following chapter presents a discussion of the literature that was reviewed in order to provide deeper insight into the theme of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this research was to analyse the use of WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention in the study area, which was the Highway Area near Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives were to determine the effectiveness of the use of WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention among the Highway community members. The study also intended to determine which elements of WhatsApp were effective in the crime prevention efforts of the community and what potential threats it could hold for the community. The main purpose of this chapter is to present a logical discussion of literature in the field of crime prevention and social media within both international and the South African contexts. This investigation confirmed that research into the use of WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention in the Highway Area of KZN was justified.

Potgieter, Ras and Naser (2008:35) highlight that the literature review forms a crucial part of any research process because “*it contextualizes the research topic by providing background information on the topic*”. Essentially, by bridging the gap between past and present research, the literature review helps the research learn more about the research topic and validates the need for the research being conducted. This chapter therefore first takes a look at crime prevention as a social issue and then explores the development of community-driven crime prevention as well as community policing in the South African context. The discourse then delves into the use of social media in society and explores how social media is used for crime prevention purposes.

2.2 Crime Prevention

Crime levels in South Africa are notoriously high and our police are known to suffer from a lack of resources that can help them to fight the crime problem. As a result, alternative solutions for crime prevention have been sought over the years. One of the most notable of these resources is the rediscovery of the community (van Graan, 2016). In this section, the different

elements of crime prevention is presented and how community-driven crime prevention has developed internationally and locally is discussed. The focus is on community policing in South Africa and how the Neighbourhood Watch program and the use of private security companies have grown in the country.

2.2.1 Different Approaches to Crime Prevention

The term ‘crime prevention’ includes a wide variety of methods that all encompass different focal points and approaches. Rosenbaum (1988) highlights that, in its most basic form, crime prevention behaviours can be categorised as either personal protection (i.e., protecting oneself from being a victim); household protection (i.e., protecting one’s property from burglary); or neighbourhood protection (i.e., protecting a predefined area). In his paper on community organisation against crime, Vilalta (2013) explains that individuals can carry out private security behaviours, which include any security measures that people take to protect themselves. This can include personal protection (such as owning a gun) or household protection (such as installing a security alarm system).

A group of people implementing a crime prevention initiative together is known as a “collective security” structure (Vilalta, 2013), which includes neighbourhood protection behaviours. Collective security is a solution to crime that is beyond an individual solution and is provided to either an open (official) or closed (unofficial) society. Open (official) collective security as a solution to crime that is provided only by the government but for the benefit of the whole public (e.g. the police service). Closed (unofficial) collective security is a solution to crime that is implemented independently of the government and is provided by a specific community for the benefit of those community members only (such as the Neighbourhood Watch program).

All crime prevention initiatives, whether implemented individually or collectively, are classified as either proactive or reactive and are considered as either primary, secondary or tertiary, depending on at which stage of crime they are trying to intervene. Proactive crime prevention initiatives are used to anticipate crime and are aimed at identifying problematic behaviour that may lead to criminal acts being committed. On the other hand, reactive crime prevention initiatives are implemented after crimes have been committed. Reactive crime prevention strategies involve identifying and solving crimes, detaining criminals, investigating

crimes and putting criminals on trial, and examining offender behaviour for rehabilitation and crime prevention (Roelofse, 2011).

Primary crime prevention initiatives are taken to try to stop the development of criminal tendencies that may develop through deprived economic circumstances such as poverty. Secondary crime prevention initiatives such as the “Scared straight” programs for delinquent teens are taken to try to modify criminal behaviour that has already developed. Tertiary crime prevention initiatives respond to criminal acts that have already occurred and use deterrence to prevent further criminal acts from being committed (e.g., the criminal justice system). As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a difference between crime prevention and crime control. Crime control, like crime prevention, encompasses different approaches based on who or what the actions are trying to protect.

2.2.1.1 Crime Control Measures

Roelofse (2011) describes that crime control by a victim is when a potential victim makes changes to their daily work or social routines in order to reduce the opportunity for victimisation. Crime control by the community involves a community taking control of the environment in which they live and taking part in local crime prevention programmes such as the Neighbourhood Watch program. Linked to this is crime control by environmental design, which involves changing the environment to reduce opportunities for crime. Crime control by environmental design involves mechanical control (e.g., erecting a perimeter fence or wall to keep criminals out) and technological control (e.g., installing a CCTV network for surveillance) (Roelofse, 2011).

As the primary agents of crime prevention, the police force also engages in crime control activities. Crime control by the police is traditionally carried out through strategic on-the-ground operations. However, police around the world are starting to stray from reactive approaches to more proactive strategies that use crime intelligence to control crime. This is known as intelligence-led policing and it involves using information gathered about criminals and their motives in order to prevent further crime from occurring (Roelofse, 2011). As will become evident throughout this dissertation, communities are becoming increasingly involved in such strategies in partnership with the police and other relevant community role-players.

2.2.1.2 *Crime Prevention Measures*

As discussed in section 2.2.1, crime prevention can be distinguished into two fundamental types: social crime prevention and crime prevention by the criminal justice system. This research study looked at a community-driven crime prevention method involving the use of WhatsApp and not at crime prevention strategies implemented by the government. Therefore, the focus of this research was on social crime prevention, which comprises three components namely developmental, situational and community crime prevention.

Roelofse (2011) describes developmental crime prevention as those crime prevention strategies that focus on the circumstances that are contributing to crime in a particular area. Developmental crime prevention strategies are classified as primary crime prevention efforts as they focus on factors such as poverty and marginalization that can motivate someone to commit a crime. Community crime prevention strategies are described as those strategies that involve community members who take responsibility to prevent crime in their community. A core feature of such strategies is informal social control which is reinforced through healthy family behaviour, support from other community members, and secure structures within the community (Roelofse, 2011). This is rooted in the Broken Windows Theory, which is discussed in Chapter Three.

Situational crime prevention strategies are described as involving the adjustment of the environment in a particular area in an attempt to reduce opportunities for crime to occur. Situational crime prevention is grounded in the routine activities theory, which is a theory that was part of the theoretical framework in which this study was embedded. The routine activities theory focuses on the manipulation of the environment to reduce opportunities for crime (Roelofse, 2011). An example of situational crime prevention is crime control by environmental design. The use of situational crime prevention has often been adopted by communities in an attempt to control crime in their area.

Clearly, the above strategies circumvent the police in communities' efforts to curb crime. Minaar (2005) argues that increasing levels of violence and the complexity of crimes committed across the world have led community members to doubt the capacity of the police, and that this has resulted in the need for a different approach to security. One commonly used approach is the use of private security firms, particularly for household and neighbourhood

protection. However, the increased use of and dependence on private security firms by communities around the world have caused many of those communities to transform themselves into barricaded neighbourhoods. As a result, these communities have become isolated and detached from neighbouring communities by the many layers of household and street security that protect them (Minaar, 2005). Nevertheless, the use of private security firms for community-driven crime prevention initiatives is a good example of the partnership approach to crime.

The partnership approach to community-driven crime prevention (i.e., when communities partner with local authorities or community role-players), or what van Graan (2016: 136) calls the “*multi-sector approach*”, is a popular approach used by communities across the world; however, it is often applied to a particular community’s crime problem without reliable evidence to support its appropriateness. Nevertheless, politicians and government officials strongly promote this approach to community-driven crime prevention as it has achieved much success in many Western countries in Europe, Australasia and North America (Goris, 2001). The partnership approach forms a core part of the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes by communities.

2.2.2 The Development of Community-Oriented Crime Prevention

Crime prevention behaviours have been practiced by individuals and communities for thousands of years (Rosenbaum, 1988) and it is important to understand how crime prevention has developed over time in order to gain an appreciation of what crime prevention means today. However, a holistic review of the history of crime prevention is not relevant for the purposes of this study, therefore this discussion will focus exclusively on the development of community involvement in crime prevention over the past several decades, with its development in the United States of America (USA) as a primary example. A discussion on community-driven crime prevention and community policing in South Africa will follow.

2.2.2.1 *Community Crime Prevention in the USA*

In the USA and other Western countries, the criminal justice system has been primarily held responsible for preventing crime. However, the results of this approach appear to be inadequate if not totally ineffective. Despite top-down adjustments that have been made in an effort to

improve criminal justice operations, their effect on the levels of crime has been less than impressive (Rosenbaum, 1988). There are many debates about what crime prevention approaches are the most successful and suitable to curb a particular crime problem, but Rosenbaum (1988) argues that many researchers and policy-makers agree that the criminal justice system is failing in this respect.

Rosenbaum (1988) argues that the legacy of community-based crime prevention efforts can be traced back to The Chicago School of Thought which was developed in the 1920s. During this time, crime researchers focused on the breakdown of social control within a community and its sequential link to increasing crime rates. Such a theory is grounded in the broken windows theory, which was the second part of the theoretical framework that supported this study. Rosenbaum (1988) continues that these researchers proposed that if mechanisms of social control within a community were inadequate and crime levels were increasing, then alternative methods of social control were needed to strengthen the community and bring back a sense of order. An example of this today are communities that form organised neighbourhoods that promote positive social behaviour.

One of the key driving factors of this approach is territoriality, which refers to members of a community protecting and taking ownership of the area in which they live. Territoriality is core to the theory that drives community-driven crime prevention. Through territoriality, key members in a community promote crime prevention behaviours by encouraging other members within the community to watch out for suspicious activities and thus increase the chances to identify and detain criminals operating in the area. This is an example of informal social control, which refers to social norms in society that are imposed by citizens on others to encourage conformity. Another form of social control is formal social control, which refers to governmental laws that legally regulate the behaviour of citizens (Rosenbaum, 1988).

According to Meyer and Van Graan (2011), researchers in the field argue that the most successful crime prevention initiatives are those that discourage a criminal from committing a crime in a particular area, and that such initiatives require active community participation for maximum effectiveness. Many community-driven crime prevention initiatives have emerged as a result of a dwindling trust in the police to effectively reduce crime. Rosenbaum (1988) states that in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States of America, crime prevention was primarily used by the police to boost the public's perception of the police work they were

doing. Soon after, this public relations tactic turned into an educational campaign that was run by the police to create awareness about crime and what citizens could do to improve their personal safety.

It was not until the late 1970s that the community was actually recognised by policy-makers as a valuable role-player in the fight against crime. This was a turning point in crime prevention and two remarkable community-driven crime prevention initiatives emerged in the USA as a result: the Community Anti-Crime Program of 1977 and the Urban Crime Prevention Program of 1980. Both these programs aimed to raise funds that were donated to community organisations rather than to the government in an effort to develop community-driven crime prevention in the country. It was quickly recognised, however, that a community's capacity to prevent crime is limited when they perform independently from the police. Therefore, the early 1980s saw a shift in focus to using formal (police) and informal (community) mechanisms of crime prevention collaboratively in the fight against crime (Rosenbaum, 1988).

2.2.2.2 *Community Crime Prevention in South Africa*

The development of community-driven crime prevention in South Africa was largely a result of the turbulent political transition that South Africa experienced approximately 30 years ago. According to Carrier (1999), research has shown that increasing crime levels could be linked to the political transition within the country. In his paper of community policing in South Africa, Pelser (1999) suggests that, in 1991, there were signs of collusion within the police force in KZN and Gauteng which resulted in accelerating levels of violence in the country. This prompted the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party to launch a peace summit. After months of deliberation and negotiation, the National Peace Accord was adopted which included general provisions for the South African police force to promote the protection of members of society, ensure police accountability to society, and initiate collaboration with the public in the fight against crime.

Pelser (1999) emphasises that the National Peace Accord was successful in highlighting the need for a shift in the approach to policing; however, it lacked structural procedures for implementation and did not incentivise the police force to comply with the provisions. It was in this context that violence and crime continued to grow even in the face of democracy and a new police force. According to Potgieter et al. (2008), researchers have warned that rapid

urbanisation could lead to increasing crime levels as the poverty-stricken migraters could not afford to live in urban environments. As a result, slum areas begin to develop on the outskirts of cities, which “*could serve as the breeding ground for social contact as well as economic crimes and moral decay*” (Potgieter et al., 2008:34). These phenomena materialised in South Africa which was plagued by a crime wave in the first decade of the new democracy post-1994. Carrier (1999:42) describes these rising crime rates as “*a threat to the stability of the new democracy and a deterrent to international investment*”. In response to this uncurbed urbanisation, many crime prevention initiatives were launched but not all of them had been developed with input from the public (Carrier, 1999).

In South Africa today, the SAPS is held primarily and legally responsible for crime prevention according to the Police Act No. 96 of 1995 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No.108 of 1996 (specifically section 205(3)) (South Africa, 1996; Roelofse, 2011). From the perspective of the public, expectations are that the SAPS should respond effectively to this legal mandate because, as Potgieter et al. (2008) affirm, the SAPS is a service paid for by the public. Therefore the police force has the responsibility to continually develop and improve their crime prevention strategies. However, communities are increasingly taking crime prevention into their own hands, which is a phenomenon that has been boosted with the introduction of social media, which will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2.3 Community Policing in South Africa

Carrier (1999) explains that the introduction of community policing in South Africa followed three sequential, and sometimes overlapping, phases, although this was not the primary intention. Phase one is referred to as ‘community police’ which entailed the police force taking on full responsibility for community policing in the country. At the time, there was little knowledge on what community policing really meant and this turned community policing into a public relations tactic, much like in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s. The police force used this ‘tactic’ to gain the public’s favourable perception and their approval of their traditional policing methods and, in turn, to make the public easier to police.

Phase two is referred to as ‘partnership policing’ and with it came the realisation that the police and policing were different and that individuals and organisations outside the police could also make a meaningful input in terms of policing in the country. Phase three is referred to as

‘community control’. This entailed the community taking the primary responsibility for community policing in the country. This shift in responsibility was primarily born out of the community’s perception that the police were unable to meet their security needs. In addition, the public came to realise that the police were but one of the many security providers that they could draw upon in order to better the policing in the country (Carrier, 1999). Although community policing was initially adopted as an experimental approach to rectify the failures of traditional policing methods, it was only formally adopted by the new government with the birth of democracy.

For almost 50 years, South Africa was under the governance of the National Party, which enforced apartheid policies in order to achieve racial segregation. During this time, the minority population, the Afrikaners, ruled the country and the majority of the population, comprising African and other ethnic groups of colour, was severely restricted in terms of rights, relations and movements. One of the most highly prejudiced governmental departments during the apartheid era was the police force, which resembled the military and enforced a strict pecking order. The law and policies at the time strengthened the hands of the police to reinforce the oppression of black and other ethnic groups in the country. As a result of this, an extreme division was created between the police and the citizens of South Africa, and it was this divide that highlighted the need for community policing in the country. It is therefore not surprising that, when democracy was achieved in 1994, the transformation of the police force was the top priority on the new ruling party’s agenda (van Graan, 2016).

As the new ruling party, the ANC believed that the policing methods of the past reinforced oppression and did not help with the crime problem that the country was facing. Therefore, it was decided that community policing would be implemented as a first attempt to rectify the divide between the police and the public (Meyer & Van Graan, 2011). Community policing was officially endorsed as the approved approach to policing in the country by the ANC when it was included in the Interim Constitution Act No. 200 of 1993 (Pelser, 1999; Van Graan, 2016). It was not much later that the Department of Safety and Security published a formal document on community policing in South Africa in April 1997. This document, entitled ‘The Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines’, defined community policing as a *“collaborative, partnership-based approach to local level problem-solving”* (Pelser, 1999:13).

This policy also stipulated procedures to be followed in order to develop such partnerships and achieve local-level problem solving (van Graan, 2016). Two years later, the Department of Safety and Security published the White Paper on Policing which endorsed community policing as the appropriate approach to policing in South Africa (Pelser, 1999; Van Graan, 2016). Pelsner (1999) highlights that the publication of the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines demonstrated a turning point in policing in South Africa, as it shifted the focus from traditional crime prevention approaches to preventing crime through improving the services rendered by the police. The document stipulated step-by-step guidelines on how to achieve community policing in South Africa and highlighted the five central foundations of community policing: (1) service orientation; (2) partnership; (3) problem-solving; (4) empowerment; and (5) accountability (Pelser, 1999).

Pelsner (1999) states that the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines was disseminated in the same year to all police stations and training establishments in the country and was used in workshops for police officer training. Therefore, the transformation of the police force was a major focus of the new ruling party in the development of community policing in the country. Essentially, this meant achieving democratic control over the police force and promoting a culture of accountability. One of the first changes that was made to the police was unification of the eleven police agencies, which had existed under apartheid, into a unified nationwide police service, which fell under a single budget and order of command (Pelser, 1999).

This new police service was transformed from the South African Police (SAP) to the South African Police Service (SAPS), which was formally entrenched in the South African Police Service Act No. 68 of 1995. Two of the most notable, and perhaps most conceptually important, changes that were made to the police were (i) redefining the police as a 'service' and not a 'force'; and (ii) reconceptualising the police as a service that allows communities to become architects of their own crime prevention initiatives (Pelser, 1999). Minnaar (2005) highlights that these two changes were made possible with the Constitutional call to establish Community Police Forums (CPFs) in every police precinct in the country.

The call for the establishment of CPFs was established in the South African Police Services Act No. 68 of 1995 and entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996 (KwaZulu-Natal Community Safety and Liaison, 2011; Van Graan, 2016). Pelsner

(1999) highlights that it was the responsibility of the police to establish a CPF at each police station in the country. The purpose of this was to afford the police and the community the opportunity to develop a sound relationship in place of the hostility and resentment that existed under apartheid (Minnaar, 2005).

Pelser (1999) explains in more detail that CPFs should be established to serve the following functions: (1) promote police accountability to the community; (2) monitor the effectiveness and competence of the police service; (3) advise the police on policing priorities; (4) monitor police service delivery to the community; and (5) request investigations into police affairs. The police became more accessible to members of the community and they were required by law to collaborate with the community in the fight against crime (Meyer & Van Graan, 2011). Through this, CPFs assist in improving the relationship between the police and the community and these structures afford the community the opportunity to take an active role in policing their area. Therefore, as Pelser (1999:19) argues, “*CPFs remain the most visible expression of community policing in South Africa*”.

Carrier (1999) states that the focus of the new police was on maintaining order in society, as opposed to enforcing the law, which is the premise of the broken windows theory. Essentially, police business became more about achieving a sense of order and peace in communities instead of the oppressive policing that was implemented under apartheid. This was justified at the time in that (1) a focus on social order at the baseline has the potential to filter through and prevent more serious crime from being committed; and (2) order maintenance creates a sense of safety and security and reduces levels of fear of crime. Pelser (1999) highlights that through these changes, community policing was assumed as an add-on to normal police functions within the SAPS as the organisation began to align its principles with the principles of community policing.

From the perspective of the community, community policing brought a solution to what Carrier (1999:38) highlights as “*three fundamental problems with their police services: defining their role, devising effective controls over their discretion, and establishing the basis of their legitimacy*”. Community policing allowed for a reconceptualisation of what policing really meant and who was actually in control of it. Essentially, community policing brought to light a new understanding of policing: that the community is not merely a tool that the police can use for crime prevention, but rather that the community is the primary agent of crime prevention

and can use the police as a tool in the fight against crime. Minnaar (2005) explains that through community policing, the responsibility for maintaining social order, and thereby reducing levels of less serious crime, was placed squarely on the shoulders of the community. The police would therefore take on a more advisory role and would deal with more serious forms of crime that a community faced.

Although community policing seemed to be the most appropriate approach towards transforming the police and addressing the crime problem at the time, its implementation was not without serious challenges that threatened its overall impact. Pelser (1999) highlights that the success of community policing in South Africa was heavily influenced by a specific set of challenges that the police and the community in each policing precinct faced. How each precinct addressed and overcame their specific challenges was a major determinate of the success of community policing in that precinct. One of the most notable challenges faced in every precinct was the availability of basic policing resources. For the police, this meant resources that allowed them to carry out their duties. For the community, this meant resources that allowed them to contribute meaningfully in the CPF.

However, if the above was not a problem in a particular precinct, then it was likely that the community struggled to develop a partnership that promoted mutual trust between them and the police that served them. Pelser (1999) goes on to explain that the public's perception of the police impacts heavily on whether confidence and mutual trust can be achieved, and this relationship determines the success of community policing. In addition, a lack of understanding of the functions of the criminal justice system and where the police fit in can also have a negative influence on this. A lack of understanding or a poor perception of police competence can have a debilitating effect on the development of mutual trust in a partnership, and this can severely impact on the success of community policing.

Meyer and van Graan (2011) state that literature on community policing highlights that community policing was implemented as a one-size-fits-all approach with no consideration of specific governance challenges within different communities. However, the authors stress that its successes cannot be ignored – specifically the successes of strong police-public partnerships to target a specific crime problem. Carrier (1999:39) explains that despite some operations or community-specific challenges, community policing has been fundamental in changing the perception of policing and who is involved in it. Carrier (Ibid) likens it to simple marketing:

“customer preferences are sought, and satisfying customer needs and wants, rather than selling a pre-packaged ‘product’ [is the priority]”.

Over time, community policing has become a way of thinking in South Africa with the aim of achieving improved control over crime, lower levels of fear of crime, and better public-police partnerships that will assist in improving the services rendered by the SAPS (KwaZulu-Natal Community Safety and Liaison, 2011).

2.2.4 The Neighbourhood Watch Program

As community involvement in crime prevention has developed and increased over the years, so has the establishment of and community members' involvement in Neighbourhood Watch structures. Meyer and van Graan (2011) describe that a Neighbourhood Watch is a community-driven, not-for-profit association with the primary role of preventing crime in a specific community. A Neighbourhood Watch comprises of members of a specific community that come together to represent the needs of their community in the fight against crime (Ibid). The first Neighbourhood Watch initiative in South Africa was launched in 1985 in Johannesburg (van Graan, 2016). Rosenbaum (1999:347) states that neighbourhood protection behaviours are *“collective attempts to prevent crime and disorder in a geographically defined residential area”* and argues that strategies that attempt to organise a community and provide a unified reaction to a problem (e.g. a Neighbourhood Watch) have become the foundation of community-driven crime prevention efforts around the world.

Research has shown that community organisation in a neighbourhood is a major contributor to effective crime control and that it increases public participation in community policing (van Graan, 2016). According to Rosenbaum (1988), research conducted in the USA over the years has shown that the Neighbourhood Watch program has been widely implemented by communities who use it to perform several functions that all assist in preventing crime. These include street surveillance, security assessments, regular meetings, information-sharing, and environment improvement. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Watch program has been proven to be more than just a tool to prevent opportunities for crime, as it promotes regular social interaction and leads to improved social order (Rosenbaum, 1988).

Based on the findings of his case study of a Neighbourhood Watch in South Africa, van Graan (2016) highlights that many communities across the country have engaged in organised neighbourhood crime prevention strategies and have successfully lowered crime rates in their area as a result. Van Graan (2016) emphasises that a community must engage in such strategies to the point that criminals are completely discouraged from entering that community. Many communities across the country have seen lower levels of house robbery and burglary and vehicle theft as a result of Neighbourhood Watches operating in their areas. South Africa suffers from a lack of police officers and resources, which leaves many communities feeling vulnerable in the midst of increasing crime. However, the Neighbourhood Watch program has proven to be successful in mobilising communities across the country and lowering the rate of crime.

Van Graan (2016) reiterates that public participation in community-driven crime prevention initiatives has a positive impact on crime levels in two ways. On the one hand, it impacts crime directly through increased street patrolling and surveillance, which are strategies that lower the opportunities for crime to occur. On the other hand, it has an indirect effect through regular social interaction and cohesion, which leads to improved social order and control. Sadly, participation levels in such initiatives remain low in South Africa and other Western countries around the world, and where participation levels are higher it is generally in high-risk communities. Van Graan (2016) also notes that although fear of retaliation from criminals is often a deterrent for most residents to participate in their local Neighbourhood Watch, Neighbourhood Watch committees are encouraged to provide safe places for such residents to still contribute directly or indirectly.

As discussed previously, strategies that attempt to organise a community and provide a unified reaction to a problem (such as Neighbourhood Watches) have become the foundation of community-driven crime prevention efforts around the world. Therefore, it is no surprise that research has shown the Neighbourhood Watch program to be very effective in preventing crime, especially when working together with other significant role-players such as the police. Based on the philosophy of community policing, the partnership between the police and the public, in this case through a Neighbourhood Watch, has a powerful impact through visible policing efforts that are effective in deterring crime. In addition, van Graan (2016) emphasises that this partnership also works well through passive participation by the public (i.e., intelligence-led policing when the community reports information to the police).

Some communities that are protected by a Neighbourhood Watch have seen more success with such partnerships with the SAPS than others, and van Graan (2016) advises that there are a number of factors that could contribute to this discrepancy. Logically, participation levels in the Neighbourhood Watch programme can have an impact on its effectiveness. As stated earlier, participation levels in high-risk communities appear to be higher than in communities categorised as low-medium risk. However, van Graan (2016) advises that budget constraints can pose significant challenges for a Neighbourhood Watch to function effectively, even if participation levels are high. In addition, the type of management that a Neighbourhood Watch is under can either hinder the crime prevention efforts that members engage in, or promote a participatory culture through strong partnerships with other role-players.

2.2.5 The Private Security Industry

The private security industry has become a major role-player in modern crime prevention initiatives, especially those that are community-driven. Private security involves the services rendered by a private security company, which is a profit-making organisation that provides security services in exchange for a fee (van Graan, 2016). The security services offered by private security companies fundamentally involve property or people protection and come in the basic forms of guarding, alarm monitoring and response, and investigations (Minnaar, 2005). Therefore, much of what private security companies offer is closely related to what is constituted as crime prevention (Minnaar, 2005; Potgieter et al., 2008). Despite the core functions of private security firms, the services offered by some companies often extend beyond protecting property and people in exchange for money (Potgieter et al., 2008).

Private security services have been offered to individuals and organisations for many decades; however, the earliest forms of basic private security can even be traced back to prehistoric eras, especially in Western countries (Minnaar, 2005; Potgieter et al., 2008). In South Africa, much like the case for community policing, the development of the private security industry has also been primarily driven by the political transition South Africa experienced in the mid-1990s. Minnaar (2005) explains that the crime wave that plagued the country in the early stages of democracy resulted in persistently high levels of fear of crime. As a result, citizens began to use the services of private security companies in order to enhance their personal security. In addition, the introduction of community policing into the SAPS at the time meant that police

attention and resources were focused on crime hotspots and this left very little resources available for visible policing in residential areas where petty crimes such as house breakings and robberies became the order of the day.

As part of their crime prevention responsibility, reaction to alarms going off previously resorted under the auspices of the SAPS. However, this function has been shifted over the years to private security companies, but Minnaar (2005) explains that this change happened by default. As private security companies tended to maintain their own radio-control rooms, the alarm systems of their clients were linked to them as well as to the local police station so that both parties could respond to alarms that were triggered. Over time, the SAPS found that the majority of alarms that they were responding to were false. Therefore, the SAPS requested that the private security companies unlink the local police station from their clients' alarm systems and only notify the SAPS when a positive incident had occurred. This allowed the SAPS to refocus their limited resources on active crime prevention initiatives and this is when the private security industry really began to flourish.

According to van Graan (2016), South Africa's private security industry is known as one of the most rapidly growing in the world, and the number of security officers employed in the country exceeds half a million and significantly outweighs the number of police officials employed in South Africa. Therefore, the role of private security firms in crime prevention in South Africa should be taken very seriously. However, the growth of the industry has been irregular both in the type of security service offered and in the areas where the services are employed. Van Graan (2016) explains that more affluent areas have been better able to afford the services of private security companies than those communities who suffer financially. This has resulted in many 'gated communities' that become divorced from their neighbouring areas (Minnaar, 2005).

Potgieter et al. (2008) explain that many of these gated communities have developed not only because they have the means to afford the additional security, but also because the public in general have felt that the service they received from the police was not adequate and left them feeling vulnerable. Therefore, the services offered by the private security industry are seen as an attractive alternative. The level of sophistication shown in the security services provided by private security companies has become important in the eyes of the public and this indicates the level of service that is expected from the government, who is struggling to provide it.

Minnaar (2005) points out that the growth of the private security industry should be welcomed by the government as it provides the SAPS some relief; however, tensions still arise.

According to Minnaar (2005), the growth of the private security industry in the country was a clear message to the government that there was a dire need to enforce stricter regulations on private security companies so as to draw the line between private security and police authority. The basis of this requirement was that private security companies were offering security services to the public for a profit, but they were not held accountable by an independent authority other than the owner of the company. Today, every operating private security company is required by law to be registered with the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSIRA). Although the police are responsible for the security of the wider society while private security companies service private clients, Minnaar (2005) emphasises that both parties ultimately engage in crime prevention initiatives in their own way. The following sections will discuss the partnership between the SAPS and the private security industry with a focus on role of the social media.

2.3 Social Media

Traditionally, people have interacted socially with other people by meeting in a physical place. Song and Wang (2011) explain that face-to-face communication has developed over time to allow for communication across vast geographic areas. Communication comprised rudimentary forms of contact such as writing and posting letters. However, with the development of technology, communication has developed to become more immediate, such as telephone calls. Currently, communication is characterised by sophisticated computer and Internet usage (Song & Wang, 2011). More particularly, the introduction of social media has drastically altered the nature of social interaction as it allows communication to occur immediately online and independently of time and place (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

2.3.1 The Value of Social Media

In contrast to the traditional uses of the Internet to search for content online, social media allows for users to search for and access other users' self-generated content, and to interact with those users. Wang, Gerber and Brown (2012) highlight that social media allows for instant content

creation, distribution and consumption from anywhere in the world as long as there is access to the Internet. Hwang and Kim (2015:478) describes this as follows:

Social media technologies generate new ways of interacting on Web 2.0, where users are not only able to view and use information provided on the web, which they could do on Web 1.0 as well, but also to take part in the web environment by expressing and sharing their own thoughts and ideas.

Social media sites allow users to create their own social media profiles and be in control of who is allowed access to their profile. This social networking can be done on computers and laptops as well as on users' mobile devices via the Internet or on applications that connect directly to the Internet (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The interactive nature of social media is a powerful tool for individuals to build and maintain relationships, mostly with friends, family and colleagues (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014). However, Hwang and Kim (2015) highlight that social media promotes a participatory culture amongst users, even if users do not know one another, and this can be very useful in encouraging a group of individuals unknown to each other to join a social movement. A social movement is an endeavour to solve a problem that is driven by a large group of people who share the same view on the matter. Through social media, such people can come together in cyberspace to engage on an issue, plan a way forward and even execute a movement. This has become popular in communities seeking to take control of the crime problem in their area. However, the authors warn that this could lead to what they refer to as "keyboard activism", which they warn "*may replace real actions that require more extensive and intensive commitment*" (Hwang & Kim, 2015:480).

Nevertheless, social media usage has and still is growing exponentially around the world and in South Africa and has birthed a revolution in communication (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Despite the many popular uses for the Internet (e.g., news, weather, and information-gathering), Hwang and Kim (2015) highlight that the Internet is now most popularly used by people for socialisation purposes. However, there is increasing awareness of the dangers of social media usage and what users should do to protect themselves and others. In this context, Mushwana and Bezuidenhout (2014:64) warn that there are currently no laws that specifically

govern social media usage, but state that there are a number of laws that are applicable. This legal framework will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.2 Social Media Platforms

Social media researchers Boyd and Ellison (2007) state that since the advent of social media, millions of people around the world have begun using social media platforms on a daily basis as they have become an integral part of our daily lives. The researchers define social media platforms as “*web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.*” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007:211). The first social media platform was developed in 1977 and it was called *SixDegrees.com*. This platform allowed users to create their own profiles, list who their friends were and eventually users were able to explore their friends’ profiles (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). As social media developed and expanded, so too did the capacity of social media platforms. From the early 2000s onwards, more advanced social media platforms such as MySpace, Facebook and YouTube have been developed, which has left many of the earlier platforms, such as *SixDegrees.com*, outdated and irrelevant (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Despite many similarities across social media platforms – such as having other users as ‘connections’ or the ability to send private messages – each platform has different elements that individualise them. Some platforms focus exclusively on the sharing of images or videos, whereas others concentrate on blogging or instant messaging (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Traditionally, social media users turned to one social media platform (e.g., Facebook) that would fulfil all of their social media needs such as sharing images and videos, private messaging and blogging, and connecting with those known to them or to strangers. However, new social media platforms are constantly being developed at a rapid pace, and each focuses on specific elements of networking. This has led to users using a group of independent social media platforms to fulfil all of their social networking needs (Holliday, 2014). Ahmad and Ismail (2016) attribute this to the fragmented and decentralised nature of youth behaviour that exists today. Holliday (2014) explains that the youth of today might use Instagram for images and videos, Twitter for keeping up with current affairs, and WhatsApp for instant messaging.

In today's day and age, the most popular social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014). However, instant messaging applications are starting to steal the light. In her article on the rise of messaging applications, Holliday (2014) states that social networking on social media platforms is increasingly being done on mobile devices; therefore, instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp are being developed and are recognised as "*the next breed of social networks*". This view is supported by Song and Wang (2011) who recognised the high growth rate of instant messaging some years ago. Mushwana and Bezuidenhout (2014) highlight that the number of users of the leading social media platform, Facebook, was just shy of 7 million in 2013; however, this number grew by two and a half million in just one year. At that time, nearly half of all Facebook users were using the social media platform on a daily basis. The proliferation of social media usage and the sheer number of social media sites that exist today means that social networking has permeated almost every level of modern day life.

2.3.2.1 *WhatsApp*

Peslak, Ceccucci and Sendall (2010) highlight that instant messaging is critical to the way in which the youth communicate in today's age. The authors explain that the unique advantages offered by instant messaging, which appeal to the youth, include the immediacy with which this communication occurs. As was mentioned in the section on definitions, WhatsApp is an instant messaging application that was originally designed as a substitute messaging service to the traditional SMS. The name WhatsApp is a word play on the expression "What's up?" which loosely asks a question of a social nature. WhatsApp was launched in 2009 by ex-Yahoo employees Jan Koum and Brian Acton, who had worked for the search engine for two decades (WhatsApp Incorporated, 2018). WhatsApp is most commonly used in Western countries, whereas other instant messaging applications such as WeChat are more popular in the East. Nevertheless, Song and Wang (2011:539) explain that there are the similarities amongst instant messaging (IM) applications:

Although there are differences among various IM systems, the main features are similar, including a "pop-up" mechanism that displays incoming messages, contact or "buddy" lists, a presence feature (a notification that a user is logged into the application), the ability to create a status message (a message indicating the whereabouts or availability of the user), the ability to send

binary files, custom backgrounds and logos, audio and video options, a feature set of emoticons (images used to indicate an emotion or mood), and integration with mobile devices.

Peslak et al. (2010:263) also explain the universal way in which IM applications are used by users:

Each user downloads a client to his/her personal computer, creates an account with an IM provider who acts as a clearing house for communications, and then logs in to this IM provider. By logging in, a user establishes a “presence” in the IM provider system and other users of the system are notified of the user’s presence. This notification is made available to other users who are logged on to the system at that time and who have previously accepted and exchanged messages (becoming “buddies” or some other such category). The software shows who is available, at which point the user selects an individual with whom they would like to exchange a message, and the message is typed in an easy to use interface and sent. Responses are facilitated through the interface as well. In this way, messages can be simply exchanged between available parties.

WhatsApp allows users to send and receive personal messages with other WhatsApp users and gives users the ability to create and interact on chat groups, which can be given a personalised title and notification tone, or can be muted. These groups allow for up to 256 members to belong to and interact on a single group (WhatsApp Incorporated, 2018). In 2014, WhatsApp Incorporated joined Facebook but the founders maintain that the messaging application continues to operate independently of Facebook (WhatsApp Incorporated, 2018). Holliday (2014) states that the acquisition of WhatsApp cost Facebook US\$19 billion at the time, which drew the world’s attention to the increasing use and value of messaging applications like WhatsApp. At the time of writing her article, Holliday (2014) stated that there were just fewer than half a million WhatsApp users, which has now increased to over one billion today (WhatsApp Incorporated, 2018).

Holliday (2014) explains that the popularity of instant messaging applications like WhatsApp has much to do with the fragmented behaviour exhibited by social media users. However, Song and Wang (2010) explain quite plainly that such applications are widely used because they are free and uncomplicated. Peslak et al. (2010) make reference to a study that was conducted among college students which specifically looked at what were the most attractive elements of instant messaging that motivated them to start or continue using it. The findings of the study

showed that the participants liked the ease with which they could communicate cheaply with several people at once whilst still maintaining privacy in their conversations. In addition, the variety of ways in which users can interact (e.g., by means of texts, videos, photos, and audio recordings) was raised by the participants. Despite the positive comments made by the participants, the authors emphasize that instant messaging applications need to be properly managed as communication tools if they are to be entirely effective.

2.4 Using WhatsApp for Crime Prevention Purposes

Internet literature searches on crime prevention yielded a plethora of studies conducted in South Africa on this topic. However, these searches yielded very little information on the use of social media in crime prevention worldwide. Nevertheless, a number of articles focused on the core element of community-driven crime prevention (i.e., collective action, partnerships, and information-sharing) or how social media can be used as a vehicle to drive this. The next section elucidates each element of crime prevention and how social media has fostered it and indirectly paved the way for WhatsApp use for crime prevention. Clearly, some communities in South Africa are already achieving this. The researcher then concludes with a discussion on how the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention is currently regulated.

2.4.1 Merging Elements of Crime Prevention and Social Media Functions

As discussed in the section on crime prevention, collective action is an important factor in successful community-driven crime prevention efforts. In a case study on collective community action in the Ciudad Juarez city of Mexico, researcher Vilalta (2013) focused specifically on what encouraged a group individuals to collaborate with one another in the fight against crime, especially when most of them were unknown to each other. In his review on community crime prevention in the USA, Rosenbaum (1988) highlighted that a number of studies had been conducted in the USA that specifically looked at social cohesion. These studies stressed the point that frequent social interaction with a large group of individuals in a community is critical if social cohesion is to be achieved. The reason for this is that the frequent social interaction of a large community group increases familiarity within the group, which leads to increased solidarity. In addition, the opportunities for information-sharing increase.

Rosenbaum (1988) emphasizes that research has shown that crime levels are lower in areas where community members: (1) have a high sense of attachment to the area; (2) take on more responsibility to look after the area; (3) are willing to interfere in abnormal social behaviour that occurs there; and (4) put pressure on other members in the community to do the same. Rosenbaum (1988) concludes that these studies highlight the value of and need for community-driven crime prevention initiatives that focus on increasing social cohesion through community organisation and regular social interaction. This view is supported by Vilalta (2013), who stresses that social cohesion is only strengthened through collective community action. Song and Wang (2010) highlight that this is possible on social media, especially on instant messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp), because of the ability of groups of people to build a sense of community online that transcends geographical boundaries.

It often occurred in the past that crime spates in their area encouraged communities to take a stand together and fight crime. Today communities are not doing this alone as they are depending more and more on the crime prevention resources available to them (i.e., the SAPS, CPFs, and local private security companies). Community leaders facilitate this collaboration with the use of social media (Ngema, 2015). Hwang and Kim (2015) explain that, as communication methods become more interactive, they allow for people to take collective action in cyberspace. Social media thus makes it easier to get a large number of people with different views and opinions regarding a specific matter to all come together. This is because of the universal and interactive features of social media that promote a participatory culture among its users (Hwang & Kim, 2015). These latter authors argue that social media connects people who share similar ideas, as this form of communication allows those people to share information with a large audience and in a quick fashion. Moreover, social media fosters the preservation of these connections. This is critical for social movements to succeed because participants can become more involved in and learn more about social movements through their regular social media usage. Essentially, the higher people's dependence is on social media in their daily lives, the more likely they are to become aware of social movements operating around them, and the more likely it is that they will intend to or actually participate in these communication facilities (Hwang & Kim, 2015).

In van Graan's (2016) case study on a Neighbourhood Watch in Gauteng, he focused on the partnership approach to community-driven crime prevention and how the Neighbourhood Watch under study drove it. In this study, van Graan (2016) emphasised the idea behind

community policing, urging that the police cannot effectively prevent crime without the involvement of the community because the community has an important role to play in crime prevention. Van Graan (2016) highlights that the call for partnerships in crime prevention has been emphasised by The United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime, which affirms that there is a broad spectrum of causes of crime and that it requires different skills and responsibilities to address them. He continues that the UN calls for partnerships to be developed between the government, community organisations, the private sector and citizens of the country.

Minnaar (2005) argues that a culture of voluntarism to join the police in the fight against crime needs to be developed in South Africa amongst citizens functioning individually or within an organisation. Minnaar (2005) continues that development and preservation of such partnerships is sometimes challenging but that it allows for all of the relevant role-players to contribute in their own way, which provides for a holistic approach to crime prevention. A good example of this approach is an organisation called ‘Securinet’, which was established in Durban in the late 1990s. ‘Securinet’ was a communication system that focused on information-sharing among local private security companies, the SAPS, the Durban Metro Police and other protection services in the city such as the ambulance and fire brigade services. Essentially, information about any suspicious or criminal activity that was spotted by security personnel on the ground would be sent immediately via ‘Securinet’ to the relevant authorities for immediate response. ‘Securinet’ operated via emails and SMSs that were sent via the Internet and cellular network to get the information out as fast as possible (Minnaar, 2005).

It is undeniable that one of the most important factors of crime prevention is the information that the police obtain, and in this context the role of the community in reporting crime cannot be over-emphasized. Meyer and van Graan (2011) highlight that very little information on crime is generated by the police themselves, and that the public generally report a massive 97% of the information that the police need in order to solve crimes. Therefore, their place as a role-player in crime prevention is justified. Van Graan (2016:143) highlights a statement made by the UK Home Office in 2010: *“Effective information sharing is fundamental to provide an evidence base on which partnerships can make decisions”*. American informatics researchers Wang, Gerber and Brown (2012) highlight that attempts to predict crime in the past traditionally relied on incident patterns from the past, geographic information systems (GISs) and demographic profile databases. They argue that such sources are still very important in

crime prediction, but that the focus must be shifted to social media, which provides a constant stream of information on incidents that can be used more effectively.

The participatory nature of social media, as highlighted by Hwang and Kim (2015), proves social media to be a notable facilitator in creating and maintaining effective partnerships and in improving information-sharing among all role-players. As highlighted by van Graan (2016), residential areas suffer the highest concentration of property crime. Therefore, the traditional method of surveillance where the community was the ‘eyes and ears’ of the police is encouraged in order to obtain sufficient and immediate information on criminal activities, and in this manner profiles pertaining to the causes of and trends in criminal tendencies can be developed (van Graan, 2016). Essentially, such information needs to be shared via social media in order for it to become useable by role-players and effective in addressing and crime prevention.

In an attempt to motivate the use of social media for crime prevention purposes, Trottier (2012) explains that the extent to which social media are used by people in their everyday lives has huge potential for the police and police activity. It has also been demonstrated that the police are more exposed than ever through social media to the interactions that take place among people on a local level, and they can use this information to guide their policing activities and they can even use it to arrest suspects for specific crimes. Trottier (2012:142) advises that *“social media amplify policing not because of their technological sophistication, but rather because of their social saturation”*. Therefore, the value of social media for community crime prevention purposes cannot be overstated, as such efforts become more relevant in curbing current crime trends because of the relevance of the information that is being shared. However, Hwang and Kim (2015) highlight that the potential for social media to organise a community in a social movement is limited to those who actually use social media, which implies that those who do not may be exempt from protection. Moreover, another important challenge that limits social media’s potential for community-driven crime prevention is the lack of guidelines or laws to regulate its use.

2.4.2 Noteworthy Case Studies

It is reiterated in criminological literature that police resources in South Africa are under constant pressure. Therefore, innovative and sustainable ways of using the police in crime prevention initiatives must be developed.

Researchers Wang et al. (2012) explain that because social media is so widely used in communities across the world, market researchers have begun using social media to gather data that allow them to predict a wide range of phenomena. For example, posts made on the social media platform Twitter, which are also known as *tweets*, have been used to predict the commercial successes of films, results from elections, and even trends in the stock market. This has been done using 'keyword volume analysis' and 'sentiment analysis' methods which have been shown to be very successful. This prompted the researchers to conduct a study on the use of Twitter posts in order to predict criminal incidents, which had not been studied previously. The researchers primarily focused on data pertaining to roads and traffic and found that their methods of data analysis allowed them to predict criminal incidents such as hit-and-run crimes. Therefore, Wang et al. (2012) concluded that their results paved the way for future research along the same lines, because social media use is widespread across the world.

An American study conducted by LexisNexis in 2014 (Social media use in law enforcement, 2014), which was a follow-up to a study that had been conducted in 2012, highlights the promise that the use of social media shows as an effective and reliable crime prevention tool for the police. This study showed that law enforcement officers were increasingly relying on social media for relationship-building and information-sharing with the public, as well as to assist them with closing investigations and preventing crime. The law enforcement officers that participated in the study stated that they used a social media platform to inform the public immediately when a crime had occurred so that the public could be on the lookout for any suspicious persons or behaviour that fitted the given description. Overall, with 82% of the participants in agreement, the results of this study emphasised the growing acceptance of social media as a valuable tool in the fight against crime (Social media use in law enforcement, 2014).

Based on the findings of their study that was conducted in Malaysia, researchers Ahmad and Ismail (2016) highlight the importance of youth involvement in crime prevention through social media. The researchers explain that in the early 2010s, the Royal Malaysian Police

realized the value that social media held in relationship-building and information sharing with the public, and decided to create their own Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts. The police recognised that by using social media, they could reach more people, interact with them, and disseminate information about crime in a more efficient way. Armed with this knowledge, Ahmad and Ismail (2016) specifically focused on how the youth could become more involved in crime prevention through social media, as they accepted that the use of social media played a big part in the daily lives of young people. They found that Facebook was the most popularly used social media platform, followed by Instagram and then WhatsApp. The study found that the youth believed that the use of social media was an effective information-sharing tool and they urged that social media should be used by the police and the public in their joint fight against crime (Ahmad & Ismail, 2016).

In an article written in *The South African* in 2015, Thobeka Ngema talks about how community members in South Africa are coming together on WhatsApp in an effort to address the crime problem in their areas. Ngema (2015) explains that members within a community create groups on WhatsApp and use these groups as a platform to interact with other members within their community and that they share, among other things, information about crime happening in their area. Based on her findings, she highlights that there are generally two types of groups that are created for such purposes: (1) a 'crime group' to share information about specific crimes that have happened and how to avoid becoming victimised; and (2) a 'chat group' for members within the community to interact with one another on an informal level and to strengthen social cohesion.

The manner in which information is shared on a WhatsApp group highlights the potential for communities to stand together and respond to and take control of crime. An article was published by the Douglasdale CPF in Gauteng in 2014 about how the use of WhatsApp had helped members in their community find a lost boy. The author, Danielle Dooley, stated that a community member had posted information on her 'crime group' on WhatsApp about a boy that had gone missing, along with a full physical description of him. This description was immediately shared on other crime groups in the area. Members of the local Neighbourhood Watch, together with members of the local police station, began a search for the lost boy and found him 20 minutes after the initial WhatsApp post had been sent. Dooley (2014) emphasises in the article that the immediacy with which the issue was responded to and how it allowed for all role-players to get involved in the search really showed the power of WhatsApp.

In 2017, an article written by Nabeelah Shaikh was published in *The Press Reader* about how WhatsApp had assisted the SAPS in Durban and the Durban Metropolitan Police to build partnerships with relevant role-players in the community such as private security companies and local CPFs. Shaikh (2017) states that this relationship improved their response time to crimes and particularly enhanced their ability to recover stolen vehicles. Shaikh (2017) emphasises that WhatsApp is valued in the Durban community because it is an affordable crime prevention tool that allows for immediate response to emergencies. This is echoed in a letter that was sent to Independent Online (IOL) for publication in 2018, in which Velisa Naicker wrote about how the local WhatsApp crime group in her area had helped her community to take control of their crime problem. Naicker (2018) stated that each area in the wider community had its own WhatsApp crime group with designated SAPS members and other relevant role-players loaded onto it. These groups allowed the community to better assist the SAPS in arresting suspects because it improved information-sharing among all parties involved.

2.4.3 Guiding WhatsApp Use for Crime Prevention

As was previously mentioned, there are currently no laws pertaining to the use of social media. Mushwana and Bezuidenhout (2014:64) advise that “*the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Amendment Act, (Act No. 108 of 1996); the Labour Relations Act (Act No. 66 of 1995); and the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (Act No. 25 of 2002)*” indirectly apply to social media usage but state that these laws were not constructed with the use of social media in mind. Chapter two of The Constitution, which contains the Bill of Rights, deals explicitly with the rights we have as South African citizens and that these rights should not be threatened or infringed on in any way, shape or form. Today, this right includes all behaviour and actions on social media. The Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 1 of 2014 was constructed to facilitate and regulate any electronic communications or transactions between people, which by implication now includes communication on social media (South Africa, 2014). There are also several frameworks and policies that have been developed around electronic communication phenomenon; however, none of these directives specifically address social media usage.

Nevertheless, section 69 of the SAPS Act (South Africa, 1995) makes specific reference to the publishing of photographs of persons of interest which is regularly done on social media, especially on WhatsApp:

(2) No person may, without written permission of the National or Provincial Commissioner, publish a photograph or a sketch of a person-

- a) Who is suspected of having committed an offence and who is in custody pending a decision to institute criminal proceedings against him or her;*
- b) Who is in custody pending the commencement of criminal proceedings in which he or she is an accused; or*
- c) Who is or may reasonably be expected to be a witness in criminal proceedings and who is in custody pending the commencement of his or her testimony in such proceedings.*

(3) Any person who publishes a photograph or sketch in contravention of subsection (2), shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 12 months.

This is a pertinent issue with WhatsApp use, and social media use in general, specifically when it comes to crime prevention, as community members need to be cautious when sharing information about crime so as to not contravene this law and jeopardise a police investigation or trial.

It is therefore evident that a gap exists in terms of how social media usage should be guided and regulated. More specifically, for the purposes of this study it was found that guidelines for the use of WhatsApp in community-driven crime prevention were lacking. Peslak et al. (2010) assert that the use of instant messaging can only be effective as a communication tool when it is managed properly. Mushwana and Bezuidenhout (2014) stress that establishing a policy for any social media usage by any organisation is crucial as it will assist in mitigating any risks that are associated with social media usage. They advise that the implementation and enforcement of a social media policy will ultimately determine its effectiveness and its effectiveness will be dependent on the members running the organisation. One of the most important considerations for regulating WhatsApp use for crime prevention is the type of information that will be allowed to be posted and how members on WhatsApp groups are controlled.

In her article for *The South African*, Ngema (2015) highlights that the main purpose of the ‘crime group’ on a social media platform is for members to post information about criminal incidents and suspicious persons or activities that they observe in their area so that crimes in-progress can be immediately responded to and so that community members can be alerted to the presence of suspicious persons. In order for this to be effective, accurate descriptions must be given without breaking the law or by acting in contravention of the provisions in the SAPS Act. Therefore, the freedom to share information about crime does come with a responsibility, and although it is the responsibility of each person to ensure that they do not infringe on other peoples’ rights or contravene the law, they are not solely responsible for such contraventions. Ngema (2015) explains that most WhatsApp groups are governed by strict rules that members need to abide by; however, this is not always the case and it can become difficult for the administrator of the group to manage what members post and to sift through irrelevant information.

In an article for *Times LIVE*, journalist Nivashni Nair (2017) explains that a WhatsApp group administrator is the person who is the creator of the group and the person who has the power to add people onto the group and even remove them from it. Journalist Y. Kumar from India wrote an article published in *Telangana Today* in 2017 about the legal responsibility that the administrators of WhatsApp groups have and how any posts by members on the group that express discrimination or promote animosity must be promptly addressed by the administrator and reported to the police. Failure on an administrator’s part to do so could have legal repercussions. Nair (2017) makes reference to a case in India where a WhatsApp group administrator failed to address an inappropriate post and it led to the administrator being arrested. Nair (2017) highlights some suggestions made by lawyers on how group administrators can prevent and manage such instances: (1) Consider the consequences of the content shared on the group; (2) Vet all potential members before adding them; (3) Regularly remind members of the group of the rules; and (4) Remove members who repeatedly disregard the rule of the group.

2.5 Conclusion

Throughout the literature review, local and sound contexts were provided that illuminated the concept of community-driven crime prevention in South Africa. The discourse highlighted the core elements of community-driven crime prevention that can be effectively facilitated through social media, especially WhatsApp. It was stressed that the large databases on WhatsApp groups and the efficiency with which information can be shared on a WhatsApp group may effectively facilitate the crime prevention efforts of communities who are working in partnership with other relevant role-players in the community to curb crime. It was also stressed that there are no laws that are specifically applicable to social media usage and that communities must therefore take caution when sharing information about crime. This research was evidently justified as the results of the study will provide information for the development of a sound set of guidelines for WhatsApp use in community-driven crime prevention so that the crime prevention efforts of communities can be maximised and so that laws relating to social media usage will not be contravened.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the theoretical framework that underpinned this research. Two theories were employed, namely the broken windows theory, which was originally proposed in 1982 by social scientists James Wilson and George Kelling, and the routine activities theory, which was originally proposed in 1979 by criminologists Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson.

3.2 The Broken Windows Theory

The broken windows theory has been making waves in criminological literature since it was originally proposed in 1982, and it has had much impact on policing strategies that have been implemented to prevent crime around the world (Ren et al., 2017). Proponents of this theory such as Wilson and Kelling (1982) explain that the term ‘broken windows policing’ was born with the implementation of the Safe and Clean Neighborhoods Program in the State of New Jersey in the USA in the mid-1970s. This program replaced police vehicle patrols with foot patrols in order to curb crime. However, it was met with much suspicion by police officers and academic experts at the time. Five years after its implementation, a report on the program was published and the findings showed that crime rates did not decrease but that levels of fear amongst residents had. This posed the question: “*How can a neighborhood be ‘safer’ when the crime rate has not gone down—in fact, may have gone up?*” (Wilson & Kelling, 1982:2).

Wilson and Kelling (1982) highlight two very important matters in terms of the community context: (1) People are afraid of being violently attacked by someone else; and (2) People are also fearful of other disorderly people, which could make their experiences out on the streets unpleasant and may indicate to them that crime is on the rise. Wilson and Kelling (1982:4) argue that “*there is a sequential link between disorder and crime*” and that the illustration of a broken window sums this up perfectly:

If a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. One unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing.

This is the premise of the broken windows theory. On face value it seems as if this theory suggests that if one criminal event is left unattended or unresolved, the message is clear that nobody cares, and this leaves the window wide open for further criminal activity. However, the implications of this theory are much deeper and more disconcerting, as in an article on the website of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (2018), it is underlined that disorder does not directly lead to crime. Rather, disorder leads to increased levels of fear amongst residents who in turn start to withdraw from society, *and it is this withdrawal* that opens up the opportunity for crime to flourish.

Disorder in this instance refers to public behaviours or actions ranging from those that technically do not trouble others (e.g., loitering) to more troublesome actions (e.g., begging and littering) to those actions that are more unlawful (e.g., public drinking and prostitution). The presence of such disorders in a community is argued to signal to others that disorder is tolerated in that community, which can encourage more serious crimes (Harcourt, 1998; Ren et al., 2017). Essentially, it is the weakened informal social control in a community that has allowed for disorder to be left unchecked and that has led to increasing crime levels (Ren et al., 2017; Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, 2018). However, Wilson and Kelling (1982) stress that increasing crime rates are not a sure result of weakened informal social control in a community, but that it is more likely to happen in a community that appears to ‘tolerate’ disorder rather than in a community that actively regulates the social behaviour of its members.

When residents within a community perceive disorder to be present and/or crime to be on the increase, naturally they begin to worry about their personal safety in that community; therefore, residents will either start to use the streets less frequently and withdraw from public spaces, or they may even move out of that community altogether (Ren et al., 2017). Wilson and Kelling (1982) explain that the disrepair of a community has been happening for centuries; however, in the past, communities were able to regulate themselves in order to take control of a disorder or crime problem and regain social control within the community. However, since the mid-1900s, it has become increasingly easier for individuals and families to move around and to migrate from an area if they believe crime to be a problem there (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

Withdrawal from public spaces weakens informal social control mechanisms, but with communities migrating completely, it becomes more difficult for informal social control to be regained.

Ren et al. (2017) note that involvement in crime prevention is severely inhibited by perceptions of disorder, increases in fear of crime and weakened informal social control within a community, because people will be concerned for their personal safety in the execution of crime prevention efforts that require them to be out on the streets. Therefore, it becomes difficult for a community to achieve and sustain active participation in crime prevention activities because involvement in such activities is entirely voluntary. Nevertheless, the authors highlight that perceptions of disorder and concerns for personal safety can actually have a positive effect on crime prevention as they can promote neighbourhood concern amongst residents and encourage them to take control of the area in which they live. This can promote collective efficacy in a community, which is defined as “*the degree of social cohesion and integration present in a neighbourhood*” (Ren et al., 2017:23).

The main goal of most communities is to achieve order, which essentially suggests that the residents who live in a community are invested in it and desire to actively enforce control within the community. Therefore, order-maintenance policing is how this is achieved. Order-maintenance policing refers to policing tactics that focus on addressing disorderly behaviours (e.g., public drinking and begging) in order to improve order within a community (Harcourt, 1998). The proponents of the theory stress that what is socially acceptable is community-specific; therefore, social norms are decided and agreed upon and enforced by the community members themselves. This allows for much order-maintenance to be achieved without the police because the mechanisms of informal social control become so effective (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

Harcourt (1998) explains that the broken windows theory categorises people as either orderly or disorderly and acknowledges that people can be either regulars or strangers within a community. The proponents explain that disorderly people are those disreputable people (e.g., beggars, loiterers and drug addicts) who do disorderly things such as begging, drinking in public, urinating in public and engaging in prostitution. Essentially, the regular disorderly people are the ones who are to be controlled within a community and the disorderly strangers need to be excluded from it. In the context of the theory, the presence of a broken window in a

community indicates that there is a social meaning of disorderliness, which will influence further disorderly behaviour and lead to more broken windows (Harcourt, 1998). Therefore, the social manifestation of orderliness will be intolerant of behaviours such as drinking in public or engaging in prostitution, and this will help to curb such behaviours and ultimately lower the opportunity for more serious crimes to flourish.

Wilson and Kelling (1982) stress that the broken windows theory is applicable in any type of neighbourhood. The proponents make specific reference to an experiment conducted in two cities in the USA: one was conducted in a low-income neighbourhood and the other a high-income neighbourhood. In both neighbourhoods, a vehicle was parked in a street and left unsupervised. In both areas, the vehicle was ultimately destroyed, with the only difference being the time it took for the first 'window' to be broken. In the low-income neighbourhood where property was regularly damaged and things were often stolen, it took only 24 hours for the vehicle to be completely destroyed, whereas in the high-income neighbourhood, where possessions were valued, the vehicle stood untouched for a week before the first window was broken. Thereafter, the vehicle was completely destroyed within a couple of hours. Therefore, no matter how effective or ineffective informal social control is within a community, as soon as the first 'broken window' occurs and people see that nothing is being done, it invites further disorderly behaviour which will then continue to pervade that community (Wilson & Kelling, 1982; Ren et al., 2017).

3.2.1 Implications of the Broken Windows Theory for this Study

The broken windows theory is premised on the notion that weakened informal social control ultimately leads to crime, but that crime can be prevented by enforcing informal social control within a community. As discussed above, when residents within a community perceive disorder to be present and/or crime to be on the increase, they naturally begin to worry about their personal safety in the community and withdraw from public spaces or move out of the area as a result (Ren et al., 2017). Therefore, the current research was premised on the assumption that if WhatsApp is used effectively among members of a community, they do not need to worry about their personal safety when engaging in crime prevention as they can do so on their phones whilst remaining in a safe space. In other words, individuals can use WhatsApp wherever they are as long as they have access to the Internet; therefore, residents no longer need to physically participate in crime prevention on the streets as they can do so through observation and use

their phones to share information from wherever they are. This makes soliciting and sustaining public participation in crime prevention much easier because most people have phones and use WhatsApp nowadays. Therefore, they will be more willing to participate in crime prevention because they can easily do so whilst not compromising their personal safety.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, informal social control is strengthened if there is social cohesion within a community, and this is achieved with regular social interaction amongst community members who use social media applications (Rosenbaum, 1988). In the context of this research, social interaction is increased by using WhatsApp because several hundred residents within a community can interact with one another for a prolonged time on a single WhatsApp group. Through this interaction, which generally occurs daily, community members become more familiar with one another and are able to establish rules or acceptable standards of social behaviour that are allowed in their community and determine what disorderly behaviours will not be allowed. Community members can thus share reports on the WhatsApp group if they have seen any disorderly behaviour in the community so that relevant structures such as Neighbourhood Watch patrollers and police officers can immediately address their concern so as to prevent further instances of criminal behaviour. This practice will ensure that perceptions of disorder are managed and that levels of fear of crime are reduced because the community members can actively partake in order-maintenance and crime prevention without making themselves feel vulnerable.

Proponents of the broken windows theory state that residents in a community often like to engage with police members who operate in their area to share their concerns about threats that are perceived in the community. This interaction gives them the sense that they have done something about a problem in the community (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). This can be done in the ways described above. However, Wilson and Kelling (1982) stress that although this feedback of information from the community to the authorities is valuable, it may create an issue for the police in terms of how they can effectively serve the community without contravening the law. Essentially, discrimination on the grounds of factors such as race, religion and income-status in the determination of who is disorderly or suspicious must be avoided at all costs (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), and this taboo must apply to community members who share such information on WhatsApp groups for crime prevention purposes.

3.3 The Routine Activities Theory

The environment in which a community resides has a big influence on whether crime thrives there or not. Roelofse (2011:354) describes “*precipitation*” as an environment that is conducive to crime and that could encourage a criminal to commit a crime. What is critical here is that the criminal will assess this environment and make a rational decision to go ahead with the commission of the crime or not. This is a core assumption of the routine activities theory, which is described by Tibbetts (2012) as a modern-day type of the Classical School perspective because it presumes the criminal to be a rational decision-maker. Routine activities theory is founded on what potential victims can do to reduce their chances of being victimised, which is to adjust their routine activities. Cohen and Felson (1979: 593) explain that routine activities may be defined as follows:

We define these [routine activities] as any recurrent and prevalent activities which provide for basic population and individual needs, whatever their biological or cultural origins. Thus routine activities would include formalized work, as well as the provision of standard food, shelter, sexual outlet, leisure, social interaction, learning and childrearing. These activities may go well beyond the minimal levels needed to prevent a population's extinction, so long as their prevalence and recurrence makes [sic] them a part of everyday life.

Routine activities occur in one’s home, at work, or in other private or public spaces. For a crime to be carried out successfully, routine activities theory asserts that three minimum requirements must be met, namely: (1) a motivated and capable offender; (2) an object or a person that is suitable and desired by the offender; and (3) a lack of guardianship that could prevent the crime. Essentially, all three these requirements must converge in time and space for the crime to be successfully carried out, and if one of these requirements is absent, then it is unlikely that the crime will occur (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Roelofse, 2011; Tibbetts, 2012; Saponaro, 2013). Locations with a high rate of this convergence are known as ‘hot spots’ (Tibbetts, 2012). The proponents of this theory argue that when individuals engage in routine activities away from home, the presence of guardianship decreases and the chances increase for a motivated offender to converge with the suitable target in time and space (Cohen & Felson, 1979). However, Saponaro (2013) stresses that a crime is not guaranteed to occur with the convergence of the three elements, but that it is only more likely to occur.

Nevertheless, a crime can be prevented by neutralising the potential of each element with the use of a 'control'. Offenders continually work on ways to improve their skills to successfully commit a crime, just as potential victims work to lower their risk of victimisation; however, such efforts by the potential victim may lead the offender to pursue another, more suitable target (Cohen & Felson, 1979). If controls are absent or ineffective for any of the three elements, potential offenders may be encouraged to commit the crime because their chances of success are perceived to be higher (Roelofse, 2011). An important element in the commission of a crime is the factors that motivate a criminal to commit a crime in the first place, whether they decide to actually do it or not. Cohen and Felson (1979) state that they do not discount the importance of what factors motivate an offender to commit a crime; however, such factors are not relevant to the premise of this theory, which is essentially for victims to lower their risk of victimisation.

3.3.1 A Motivated Offender

A motivated offender, as the label explains, is essentially a person that is motivated to commit a crime as proposed by routine activities theory (Tibbetts, 2012; Saponaro, 2013). As was previously discussed, each element has a control that can contribute towards the prevention of the crime. A motivated offender's controller is known as a *handler*, which is a person that the offender has emotional or legal ties to. Essentially, the handler is or should be able to discourage or prevent the offender from committing a crime (Saponaro, 2013). Roelofse (2011) gives an example of the handler as the offender's parents or spouse who could persuade the offender to commit/not to commit a crime with their approval/disapproval of the behaviour.

3.3.2 A Suitable Target

A suitable target encompasses a wide range of circumstances, objects or people. For example, a suitable target may be an empty house or an unlocked vehicle, a female walking to a shop alone, or a place that serves alcohol and has many vulnerable inebriated customers (Tibbetts, 2012). There are four considerations a criminal must focus on in order to determine what makes a target suitable: (1) the value the target holds (i.e., monetary or symbolic); (2) the risk involved for the criminal; (3) how accessible the target is; and (4) how easily the target can be approached (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Saponaro, 2013). Essentially, the routine activities of people can make them suitable targets as their behaviour can increase the likelihood that the

three fundamental elements of routine activities theory converge successfully. Therefore, changes in routine activities can minimise people's allure as targets and may prevent a criminal act or acts of victimisation from occurring (Saponaro, 2013). For example, a female who walks alone to the shop should rather take the bus or a taxi, and people who leave their homes and return exactly at the same time every day should alter their routine.

3.3.3 Lack of Guardianship

The protection of a suitable target is crucial in crime prevention. In this context, Saponaro (2013:20) highlights that protection is “*any spatial-temporally specific supervision of people or property by other people, which may prevent criminal violations from occurring*”. Therefore, if one's presence or actions are able to prevent a crime from occurring, they can be considered a protector (i.e., the potential target's guardian). It is important to note that technology can also act as a guardian and protect a potential target from a crime or victimisation (Saponaro, 2013). According to Tibbetts (2012), a guardian comes in a range of forms such as minders (e.g., teachers and carers), organisations that are paid to protect citizens (e.g., police officers and security guards), the presence of a dog or dogs in the garden, and technological aids such as CCTV cameras and alarm systems. The most common technological aids include a vehicle patrol, a home alarm, or enhanced lighting. Therefore, there is a plethora of types of guardians that can protect a suitable target from a crime or victimisation, but the lack of a guardian will increase the chances for a crime to occur (Tibbetts, 2012).

3.3.4. Implications of the Routine Activities Theory for this Study

Cohen and Felson (1979) highlight that community organisation and the use of technology within a community can create obstacles that motivated offenders need to overcome in order to successfully commit a crime. In addition, the proponents of routine activities theory state that research has shown community-driven crime prevention and crime control by environmental design to lead to higher perceived guardianship and lower perceived target suitability for motivated offenders. Therefore, this theory had many positive implications for this study, which motivated the researcher to use it to guide the interpretation of the findings. Saponaro (2013) emphasises that the routine activities theory framework can be used by individuals or groups to enhance their or others' guardianship in any given situation as well as to minimise the suitability of potential targets. Moreover, routine activities theory provides a

framework against which one can analyse crime trends in a specific geographical area to ensure that the crime levels in that area are reduced.

In the context of this study, community members can rapidly share critical information about crime that is happening in their area on any given WhatsApp group, which can help to prevent further occurrences in three ways. First, community members can share information about motivated offenders by posting physical descriptions of suspects that are currently operating in the area and details about their modus operandi. Secondly, community members can identify who or what are suitable targets within the community by sharing descriptions of the most stolen items or most attacked types of people in the area. Lastly, community members can share tips and tricks regarding what security measures must be taken by members in the community in order to prevent further occurrences of trending crimes. Therefore, community members that are on specific WhatsApp groups can use all of this information to make constructive adjustments or changes to their routine activities that will assist in increasing their guardianship and lowering their suitability to motivated offenders operating in the area.

One of the most notable criticisms of routine activities theory is that the framework does not provide an explanation for the motivation of the offender, and rather relies on other psychological criminological theories to provide the explanation. However, Saponaro (2013:21) stresses that the premise of routine activities theory is not to explain offender motivation, but rather *“to predict situations that could contribute to criminal tendencies becoming criminal actions”*. The research objectives of this study did not include determining offender motivation, but rather aimed to determine how communities in the study area could use WhatsApp to prevent crime in their respective areas. Therefore, routine activities theory was deemed an appropriate theory to be included in the theoretical framework that underpinned this study, as it gives potential victims the power to prevent victimisation by changing their routine activities. This behavioural change can be facilitated with the information they receive on WhatsApp groups.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided information on the theoretical framework that facilitated a scholarly interpretation of the findings of this research study. The broken windows theory was illuminated as it serves to explain how informal social control leads to lower levels of fear of crime and improved orderliness in society, and the routine activities theory was elucidated as a theoretical basis from which to explain how potential victims can reduce their risk of victimisation. The discourse clearly illuminated how each of these theories was applicable to this research. However, it was noted that each of the theories lacks practical application in today's digital age. Lewis and Lewis (2011) highlight that two prominent theoretical frameworks in criminology are the social control perspective and the victimisation perspective, which in turn underpin the broken windows theory and routine activities theory respectively.

The proponents of the former theories highlight that both perspectives have been highly influential in criminological theorising; however, as they inherently do not consider the pervasiveness of communication technology and what impact it has on crime, these theories were not deemed suitable for further elucidation. Moreover, Lewis and Lewis (2011) argue that the latter theories pertaining to crime prevention are fundamentally limited in their ability to explain or predict social control and victimisation. The authors call for a review of these and other related theories to include the effect that today's communication technologies have on criminal and victim behaviour, because these technologies have transformed the manner and speed with which people can communicate. From the social control perspective, communication technologies have an impact on the way in which people communicate with one another, which can affect social norms in society. From the victimisation perspective, potential victims have far greater access to information that can affect their choices in ways that current explanations cannot cover (Lewis & Lewis, 2011). Nevertheless, the two theories that were selected for this research were found applicable as they allowed the researcher to gain meaningful interpretations from the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to present the research design and the empirical methods used by the researcher to conduct the study. To unpack these elements, the nature of the study, a profile of the area in which the study was conducted, the sampling techniques that were utilised, a description of how the data were collected and analysed, the ethical considerations that were considered, and the limitations of the study are discussed.

A choice of the most appropriate research methods for gathering and analysing the data that would be generated was essential so that the required information could be attained with the maximum accuracy possible. The researcher used critical case purposive sampling to select the sample and the data were collected by means of individual (one-on-one) in-depth interviews that were guided by an interview schedule that had been prepared based on the information garnered from the literature review, personal observations, and earlier informal discussions with police officials. The data were analysed using a qualitative thematic analysis method and the interpretation of the findings was guided by the broken windows and the routine activities theories.

4.2 Profile of the Highway Area in KwaZulu-Natal

This study was conducted in the Highway Area of KwaZulu-Natal, which comprises of Westville and Pinetown in the Lower Highway Area, as well as Kloof, Gillitts, Hillcrest and Outer West Durban in the Upper Highway Area. The Highway Area falls within the central east coast of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, which is one of eleven municipalities in KZN. With a population of 234 497, the 2011 census statistics show that the Highway Area is home to less than 10% of the entire eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality population, which, according to the 2016 Community Survey, boasts a population of 3.7 million. This makes it the municipality with the highest population in KZN (Statistics South Africa, n.d.).

The 2016 Community Survey also shows that almost 90% of the overall eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality population are Africans, with 7.9% Indians/Asians and only 3.9% whites. In addition, Zulu-speaking people account for the majority of the population at 82.5% in the entire KZN province, with English speakers following at 12.5%. The 2011 census statistics show that 50% of the Highway Area population belong to the white ethnic group and that over a third belong to the black or African ethnic group. Indians/Asians account for less than a tenth of the Highway Area population. The proportion of Zulu speakers to English speakers in the Highway Area is contrary to that in the entire municipality, with 61.2% speaking English and 26% speaking Zulu. The majority of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality comprises urban areas (84.8%), with 14.7% consisting of traditional areas and only 0.5% comprising farming land (Statistics South Africa, n.d.).

One of the factors that motivated the researcher to choose the Highway Area as the study site was that this area is predominantly urban, and it was therefore assumed that the dependence of its residents on technology would be higher than what it would be in traditional or farming areas. In addition, access to the Internet in the Highway Area is better overall, with close to 70% of Highway residents having access to the Internet at home, work and other places or on their phones; whereas almost 60% of people in the wider eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality do not have access to the Internet (Statistics South Africa, n.d.). Because WhatsApp use is dependent on access to the Internet, this was a strong motivating factor for choosing the Highway Area to conduct this study. In addition, the researcher had been actively involved in community-driven crime prevention initiatives in the Highway Area immediately prior to the study and was active on several crime and emergency WhatsApp groups. Therefore, the researcher had first-hand experience of the extent to which this community relied on WhatsApp to assist with their crime prevention initiatives, and she had the luxury of selecting a suitable and willing sample to participate in the study.

4.3 Nature of the Study

This study was entirely qualitative and followed the case study design. Neuman (2011:42) explains that the case study design “*examines many features of a few cases. These cases can be individuals, groups, organisations, movements, events or geographic units*”. The focus of case study research is to examine a single or small group of cases in order to analyse the details

within each case and the context in which they all occur (Neuman, 2011). The researcher relied solely on individual, in-depth interviews to obtain the desired information from the sample. This research used only primary sources of data (i.e., the accounts given by the participants in the interviews) to generate data to complete this research. However, secondary data that had been obtained from a meticulous perusal of related literature were used to validate the findings.

The qualitative research method that was utilised allowed the researcher to understand the research findings through the perspectives of the community members who were sampled and interviewed. In order to explore the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes, qualitative thematic analysis was used to analyse the data that had been collected by means of interviews so that themes arising from the data could be identified. The broken windows theory and routine activities theory were drawn upon to guide the interpretation of the findings.

4.4 Sampling

Collecting data from an entire population is impractical and impossible in some cases, especially in qualitative research that focuses on in-depth accounts of any given topic. Therefore, sampling allows the researcher to select a small percentage of the population from which data need to be collected. However, the sampling process needs to follow specific guidelines so that the chosen sample is representative of the population under study, and so that the findings of the study can be generalised to that population (Struwig & Stead, 2013), if not to the entire population.

The sample selected for this research was a group of 12 key community role players in the aforementioned communities in the Highway Area of KZN. A selection criterion was that all had to be involved in the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes. The eventual sample included four members from four major Neighbourhood Watch groups (i.e., one prominent or long-standing Neighbourhood Watch in each of the Highway sub-areas); four personnel from the three top private security companies operating in the Highway Area (i.e., Blue Security, Enforce, and Fidelity ADT); and four personnel from four community-driven crime prevention organisations that use WhatsApp for crime prevention in KZN. This research was limited to the Highway Area in KZN due to budget and time constraints and for convenience purposes, but it must be noted that Neighbourhood Watch groups, the private security companies and the

community-driven crime prevention organisations were active in other areas of KZN as well. Therefore, although the findings of this study may not be generalised to the entire South African population, this broad spectrum of influence may increase the transferability of the findings of this research to other areas facing similar crime problems.

The subjects were selected using purposive sampling. This allowed for specific subjects to be sampled because they were the most useful for the purposes of the study (Steyn, 2013). Kumar (2011) explains that for purposive sampling, the selected subjects should have the information the researcher is looking for. Purposive sampling is particularly useful for researching a topic that little is known about (Kumar, 2011) and therefore, because the literature review revealed that limited literature was available on WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention in South Africa and even globally, it was deemed important to select participants with knowledge of the topic under study. Therefore, for pragmatic reasons, the purposive sampling method was the method of choice and also because, as Struwig and Stead (2013) highlight, it would not be expensive.

For the purposes of the current study, the researcher was looking for participants that could share in-depth accounts of how WhatsApp was used for sharing crime information and what effect this had on crime prevention. The researcher chose subjects that were members of various WhatsApp groups based on their roles in the Neighbourhood Watch, security companies or community organisations that they were part of. Eventually Neighbourhood Watch chairpersons, heads of patrollers, security personnel working with community projects or organisations, and pioneers of community organisations were included in the sample.

Extensive verbal accounts about the use of WhatsApp for community crime prevention purposes were collected from the subjects through in-depth interviews. This facilitated the in-depth inquiry into how WhatsApp was used and what effect this had on community crime prevention efforts. The researcher had been actively involved in community-driven crime prevention in the Highway Area and was active on several crime and emergency WhatsApp groups. Therefore, the researcher had firsthand experience of the extent to which this community relied on WhatsApp to assist with their crime prevention initiatives, and she was thus able to compile a list of possible organisations for participation in the study. Each prospective participant was accessed telephonically by the researcher and was explained the purpose of the study. The researcher followed this with an email to each prospective participant detailing the specifics of the study and what their participation would include, and asking them

to participate in this research. Once the researcher obtained written consent from each participant to participate in the research, a date and time were determined for the interview. Because the sample consisted of Neighbourhood Watch chairpersons, heads of patrollers, security personnel working with community projects or organisations, and pioneers of community organisations, the written consent from each participant formed a gatekeeper's letter on behalf of their organisation.

The sample size of 12 subjects was relatively small, but appropriate for a descriptive-interpretive study. As will be explained in more depth in the following section, in-depth individual interviews were conducted with each of the 12 subjects, which is appropriate for a qualitative study. Steyn (2013) specifies that for such a data collection method, six to eight subjects are sufficient. In this study, 12 subjects were selected so that information could be collected on a slightly broader scale. It was also deemed possible that some selected subjects might choose to withdraw from the study for whatever reason, and thus sufficient data could still be collected. Steyn (2013) suggests that the aim of this type of research is to look for subjective, detailed accounts of one or two subjects rather than superficial accounts of one hundred subjects.

4.5 Data Collection

The researcher conducted interviews, which is the most commonly used data collection technique in qualitative research (Steyn, 2013). Thus extensive verbal accounts about the use of WhatsApp for community crime prevention purposes were elicited. Because this was a qualitative study, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews. An Interview Guide (Appendix A) was drafted around the research objectives for this study in order to generate data that would help the researcher answer the research questions and achieve the aim of the study. The first objective of this research was to evaluate whether WhatsApp is an attractive and desired social media platform for community crime prevention efforts in the study area. The first topic of the Interview Guide was thus to determine why WhatsApp was chosen as a tool for crime prevention and what made it a more appropriate platform for communities than other social media platforms. The researcher drew on the principle of informal social control from the broken windows theory to facilitate meaningful discussions with the participants about why WhatsApp is a useful tool in community-driven crime prevention.

The second objective of this research was to assess the effectiveness of the use of WhatsApp as a tool for community crime prevention. The researcher chose the second and third topics of the Interview Guide in order to discuss how WhatsApp is being used by communities in response to crime and how effective it is in preventing crime. In order to facilitate meaningful discussions with the participants around these two topics, the researcher drew on the premise of the routine activities theory that one can prevent crime by adjusting their routine activities. The third objective of this research was to identify recommended best-practices for the effective and lawful use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes. The researcher chose the fourth topic of the Interview Guide to highlight what impact the use of WhatsApp can have for individuals and organisations, and what guidelines should be followed to ensure maximum effectiveness in preventing crime and avoiding illegal practices. The researcher drew upon the principle of order-maintenance policing of the broken windows theory and the premise of the routine activities theory to guide the discussions around this topic.

Each interview was conducted in English as English is the predominantly spoken language in the Highway Area. However, assistance was given by the researcher to subjects who were second language English speakers if there were any terms or phrases that they had difficulty understanding. Each subject was interviewed individually in a convenient and quiet place chosen by each subject. Venues were selected where the subjects felt most comfortable and where the interview would not be disturbed. Each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes; however, most lasted between 30-45 minutes. The conversations were voice-recorded with each of the subjects' pre-approval and were subsequently transcribed to elicit meaningful and rich data for the data analysis process. Each subject received and voluntarily signed an Informed Consent letter (Appendix B and C) before their interview commenced.

4.6 Data Analysis

“The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to obtain a ‘rich’ understanding of the material that goes beyond common-sense interpretations” (Steyn, 2013:36). The method of data analysis that was used in this research study is known as qualitative thematic analysis, which is also known as content analysis or coding. Qualitative thematic analysis involves the organisation of the raw data to identify themes as they emerge from the data. These themes can

arise from the research questions, concepts procured from the literature review, or terms and phrases used by the participating community members. According to Neuman (2011), it is important that the researcher identifies trends in the raw data and uses background knowledge of the topic to be able to identify and impose themes emerging from the raw data, which is advice that was rigorously followed during the data analysis phase of the current study.

The use of codes, which are labels that give meaning to the data, is vital in thematic qualitative analysis as such codes help the researcher to group the data into the identified themes. These codes can be associated with words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and so forth, and must be interpreted within the context of the topic and in relation to other codes used in the data analysis process (Struwig & Stead, 2013). Neuman (2011) highlights that new themes will often arise in the data analysis process and so codes may need to change to adapt to this. Qualitative thematic analysis involves a series of steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data; (2) inducing themes in the data; (3) coding the data; (4) analysing each theme; and (5) interpreting and checking each theme in preparation for the discussion of the findings (Steyn, 2013). Below, the researcher outlines how these steps were followed in the analysis process of the data:

- First, the researcher read all the raw transcribed data over and over again to become familiar with what had been said during the interviews.
- The researcher then induced themes in the data based on the Interview Guide and on topics that arose throughout the data collection process. Some of the themes that were identified included WhatsApp groups, reporting information, private security companies' role, and so forth.
- Next, the researcher coded the data to distinguish among the different sections, which were in the form of certain ideas or phrases that constituted a particular theme. This coding frame was established by marking, for example, WhatsApp groups as 'WG' or reporting information as 'RI'.
- The researcher then subdivided each theme. For example, the theme 'WhatsApp groups' was sub-divided into 'types of groups' ('WGT') or 'emergency groups' ('WGE').
- The researcher then perused each theme in more detail to ensure that the coding scheme was appropriate. If it was failing to include any important differences or distinctions

within the themes and subdivisions, the researcher then altered or broadened the coding scheme to include them.

- Finally, the researcher developed a written description of the different accounts of the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention using the identified themes in preparation for the discussion of the findings of the study.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

“Conducting research is an ethical enterprise and research ethics provide researchers with a code of guidelines on how to conduct research in an ethically acceptable way” (Struwig & Stead, 2013:68). In this section, the ethical considerations that were strictly adhered to whilst conducting the study are listed and briefly discussed.

4.7.1 What Ethical Considerations Entail

In referring to the Collins Dictionary definition of the term *ethical*, Kumar (2011: 242) writes: *“Ethical means in accordance with principles of conduct that are considered correct, especially by those of a given profession or group”*. Being ethical is particularly important in research as Struwig and Stead (2013:68) describe research as an *“ethical enterprise”* with a *“code of guidelines”* for ethical practice. This code of guidelines outlines appropriate and inappropriate research conduct that has been developed by consensus across professions. Essentially, the purpose of the code is to draw the line between ethical and unethical research practice (Neuman, 2011).

Struwig and Stead (2013) highlight seven unethical conducts that this code aims to prevent: (1) participating in scientific misconduct; (2) plagiarising the work of other researchers; (3) not maintaining the privacy of the participants; (4) coercing participation in the research; (5) carrying out the research incorrectly; (6) deceiving the participants; or (7) reporting the findings in an untrue manner. Incorporating ethics into research is the morally and socially responsible thing to do, and it lowers the chance for charges of insensitivity or abuse of research participants against the researcher. According to Neuman (2011:145), *“being ethical requires that we balance the value of advancing knowledge against the value of noninterference in the lives of people”*.

4.7.2 The Procedures That Were Followed

As a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) conducting this research for a Master of Social Sciences qualification, the researcher first applied to the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at UKZN to obtain ethical approval to conduct this research. Once approval had been granted, the researcher began to sample community members for the data collection process. As discussed, the researcher had previously been involved in community-driven crime prevention in the Highway Area and was active on several crime and emergency WhatsApp groups before and at the time of the study. Therefore, the researcher had direct access to the sample. However, the researcher was required to request and obtain gatekeepers' letters from each of the Neighbourhood Watches, private security companies and community organisations from which the 12 participants for this research were sampled. The researcher obtained a gatekeepers letter from each private security company, Neighbourhood Watch and community organization, following which a date and time were determined for each interview.

At the interview, each participant was given an Informed Consent form (Appendix B and C), which explained to them the nature of the study and their participation in it, and it reiterated that their consent to participate in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. In addition, permission to audio record the interview for transcription purposes was elicited. The audio recordings and the transcription of each interview are stored in a secure online database that only the researcher and the Supervisor has access to. The audio recordings will be erased and each transcription will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research.

4.7.3 Informed Consent

Prior to the data collection process, it is important that researchers consider the value of the research they are conducting and are able to persuade others of this value too. If the researcher cannot do this, then the research is invalid and collecting data would be a waste of time (Kumar, 2011). Informed consent refers to the written agreement a person makes to participate in a study once they understand what the research is about. The informed consent form essentially explains the aspects of the study and asks participants for their voluntary permission to participate in the study (Neuman, 2011).

The first most important aspect of informed consent to participate in a study is that it should be voluntary (Kumar, 2011; Neuman, 2011; Struwig & Stead, 2013). Neuman (2011) explains the ‘principle of voluntary consent’ as an ethical principle protecting people from participating in research without giving their clear and intentional consent to participate. However, this is not enough. Participants also need to be made aware of the following before giving consent: (1) what type of information is being collected; (2) why this information is being collected; (3) what purpose is this research serving; (4) how the participant is expected to participate in the study; and (4) how participation in this study might affect them (Kumar, 2011). In addition, participants must be made aware that they can decline to participate (without intimidation) and that there will be no negative consequences should they decline to participate in the study (Struwig & Stead, 2011).

Before each interview, the researcher gave each subject an Informed Consent form that explained to them what the research would be about and why it was being conducted. They were also informed of what procedures would be involved, that confidentiality would be maintained, who the researcher was, who they could contact for more information, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could consent or not consent to participate and to the interview being audio-recorded.

4.7.4 Maintaining Anonymity and Confidentiality

It is unethical to share information about a research participant for purposes other than the research without the participant’s permission (Kumar, 2011). Therefore, it is important to protect the privacy of research participants, and this is done by maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Anonymity means keeping participants’ identities unknown which is achieved by keeping each participant nameless. However, the names of participants are often required when sampling them and collecting the data. Maintaining confidentiality is thus achieved by keeping secret any identifying information, and not giving out information in such a way that one’s identity can be linked to a specific response (Neuman, 2011). Struwig and Stead (2013) advise that all confidential information about research participants should be locked away in a secure place so that unauthorised persons cannot access it without permission from the participant.

To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects who participated in this study, the researcher kept their identities anonymous throughout the data collection and data analysis processes, as well as in the final dissertation. To achieve this, the researcher gave each subject a code name before their interview commenced to hide their identity. However, the code name still allowed the researcher to categorise each subject according to their role in the community (i.e., Neighbourhood Watch subject 1 is coded as 'NW1', security company subject 2 as 'SC2', or community organisation subject 3 as 'CO3').

All confidential information pertaining to each respondent (i.e., living circumstances, personal relationships, medical conditions or dependencies, psychological conditions, criminal history etc.) remained unknown to the researcher throughout the sampling, data collection and data analysis processes, as well as in the final dissertation. This was important as this information was irrelevant to the purposes of the study. The respondents were only asked questions relating to their use of and involvement in WhatsApp groups for crime prevention purposes specific to their relevant community body.

4.7.5 Disclosing the Outcome of the Study

The researcher will submit a copy of the final research report (once it has been evaluated and accepted by the university) to each of the subjects. Each subject can read through the dissertation for their consideration and they may use or disseminate the findings of the research to assist with the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes in their respective Neighbourhood Watch groups, private security company or community organisation. In addition, the researcher intends to publish pertinent parts of this research so that the knowledge can be readily available to educate all WhatsApp users, whether in a private or professional capacity, on how to use WhatsApp in the most effective way so as to assist in crime prevention, to prevent law violation, and to preserve criminal investigations.

4.8 Limitations of the Study

Some limitations that impacted the study posed a challenge. However, these limitations were identified at the start of conducting this study and were closely monitored to ensure that they did not compromise the validity and reliability of the study.

The first limitation of this study was the use of a relatively small sample to investigate a phenomenon that possibly occurs across most parts of South Africa. This small sample did have an impact on the body of information that the researcher was able to obtain, as well as on the transferability of the findings to other areas in KZN and South Africa that experience similar crime problems. However, a small sample is suitable for a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive study and the researcher conducted in-depth, individual interviews in order to obtain saturated information in terms of the study area and sample. In addition, Neighbourhood Watch groups, private security companies and community-driven crime prevention organisations are widely active in other areas in KZN where WhatsApp is used as a matter of course among communities, and this reality increases the transferability of the findings of this study to other areas in KZN and even South Africa.

The second limitation was that that researcher had intended to sample at least 15 participants for the study, but only 12 participants were able to participate. This lower number of participants may have affected the data that the researcher was able to collect. However, the small sample was suitable for a qualitative, descriptive-interpretive study. In addition, the 12 participants were equally represented among the three categories (i.e., Neighbourhood Watch, private security companies and community organisations). Four participants thus represented each category and the findings of the research were thus not swayed to represent the perspective of one category above the other.

The third limitation was that this study was not funded. This limited the researcher to using the cheapest possible methodology that could yield the best anticipated results. One limitation was that the researcher could not conduct interviews with relevant community role players in other parts of South Africa, or even among rural communities where crime is reportedly rife. Consequently, the transferability of the findings to other areas in KZN that use WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes is questionable. However, Neighbourhood Watch groups, private security companies and community-driven crime prevention organisations alike are active in other areas in KZN and South Africa, and are reportedly also becoming increasingly reliant on using WhatsApp to share information about crime in their relevant communities to prevent crime. Therefore, the findings of this research will be relevant to and useful for such community bodies within and outside of KZN to improve their use of WhatsApp and make it more effective in their efforts to prevent crime.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented an analytical examination of the research methodology that was employed in the study and justification for using a qualitative research approach was provided. The value and limitations of the study were also discussed. The following chapter presents an analysis of the data and a discussion on the findings that emerged from the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data are presented in conjunction with discussions and analyses of the main findings. The data pertained to an investigation on the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes in communities in the Highway Area of KwaZulu-Natal. The data were collected by means of individual, in-depth interviews with Neighbourhood Watch, community organisation and private security company representatives. Each participant's identity is kept anonymous by the allocation of a code name, but the participants are categorised according to their role in the community (i.e., Neighbourhood Watch, private security company or community organisation representative). The four subjects from Neighbourhood Watch groups were given the code names NW1, NW2, NW3 and NW4. The four private security company personnel were given the code names SC1, SC2, SC3 and SC4, and the four community organisation representatives were given the code names CO1, CO2, CO3 and CO4. The data were analysed using a qualitative thematic analysis process.

In order to interpret the findings meaningfully, the discussions in this section are amplified by references to the literature as presented in Chapter Two and underpinned by the theories that were presented in Chapter Three.

5.2 The Features of WhatsApp that Make it an Attractive Tool for Crime Prevention

The first focus of the interview schedule was to determine why WhatsApp was chosen as a tool for crime prevention and what made it a more appropriate platform for this purposes than other social media platforms in the eyes of the participants. The subjects highlighted six important aspects: (1) the functional advantages of WhatsApp; (2) reasons why they thought WhatsApp is better than other social media platforms; (3) how WhatsApp has improved previous approaches to crime prevention; (4) the limitations that WhatsApp does have; (5) the sense of

community that is present on the WhatsApp groups; and (6) the opportunities its use has created for everyone to play their part in crime prevention. These key themes are discussed below.

5.2.1 The Functional Advantages of WhatsApp

There are certain built-in features of WhatsApp that contribute to its attractiveness as a crime prevention tool. The participants all spoke about various built-in features which they regarded as quite useful, such as the ability to take and share photos, videos and voice messages using the application, and the ability to share a user's static and live location with other users. These findings correlate with those of a study that was conducted by Peslak et al. (2010), who found that participants liked the variety of ways in which users could interact on social media (e.g., text, video, photo, and audio facilities). The participants in the present study also appreciated the fact that WhatsApp is cheap to use because users just need to have access to the Internet and that it does not require much data at all to run the application and make full use of all its features. Some participants also explained that WhatsApp can be used either on a mobile device (e.g., a cell phone or tablet) or on a PC (e.g., a computer or laptop).

When discussing how these features were useful for crime prevention, NW3 described how the voice messages, which are also referred to as voice notes, are useful for crime purposes:

You also use the voice notes, especially if you are chasing suspects. For example, you don't have time to type a message. So you just hold the voice note button and you talk and give a full description of the scenario in play for everyone to listen to.

Regarding the live location, participant NW2 described its value in emergency situations:

Also if you are driving and you think you are being followed, on WhatsApp you can go to "my live location" so we can try catch up with you.

Overall, the participants noted that there are many features of WhatsApp that contribute to its attractiveness as a crime prevention tool, and participant CO4 made particular mention of the fact that the social media platform is constantly under review by its designers:

As much as WhatsApp is just a social media tool, it is actually improving for crime prevention and responding purposes, and I don't think that is what it was intended for. The developers just saw that they could add that functionality.

However, it was found that perhaps the most attractive aspect of WhatsApp that made it a suitable tool for crime prevention in the eyes of the respondents is that it allows open access to people and it provides a platform for instant communication. As Trottier (2012:142) explains: “Social media amplify policing not because of their technological sophistication, but rather because of their social saturation”. This view was echoed by participant SC3, who stated:

Technology is second-nature to us. It's just a part of us, like an appendage.

CO4 highlighted the following points:

I think WhatsApp is your most used application for crime prevention because it is a free tool that can be harnessed; you can have quite a lot of groups and communicate quite effectively on it; and because everybody uses it to communicate with family members they have the app on their phones and automatically fall into the category, instead of asking people to download another application.

Overall, the participants highlighted the fact that a large number of people can be reached with one WhatsApp message, specifically through the group feature, and they agreed that this makes it very attractive for crime prevention. Participant CO2 explained why:

I think it's the fact that you are reaching thousands of people simply at the push of a button, and you've got the alerts now. So you find daily how it contributes to the recovery of stolen vehicles, hijacked vehicles, or even kidnapped or missing persons. It is simply that you are getting a message out to everybody very quickly.

Therefore, the participants made it evident that WhatsApp has many useful and functional features that make it very attractive as a tool for crime prevention.

5.2.2 Why WhatsApp is Better than Other Platforms

Many popular social media platforms are used today, but WhatsApp seems to be the preferred platform for crime prevention. The most notable comparison that was made in the interviews was between Facebook and WhatsApp. The participants offered reasons why WhatsApp is more popular for crime prevention than other platforms.

Participant SC2 described how the internal security of WhatsApp makes it more attractive than Facebook:

The good thing about WhatsApp is it's not like Facebook; that is, there are unwanted chats, and a lot of issues with Facebook. If you post something, everybody can see it. It is not a select group. With WhatsApp it is restricted to a certain neighbourhood that can view it.

For NW1, it was the security and the internal structure of WhatsApp that are more effective than those of Facebook:

The other social media platforms, such as Facebook, are not good communication platforms but are good for sharing because of their structure. But there is...commercial impact on those platforms, whereas WhatsApp does not have a commercial impact...Other platforms have advertising and logarithms, and the ability for hacking and invading your privacy. So WhatsApp is a more pure platform for direct communication.

Nevertheless, participant SC4 acknowledged that Facebook contributes to WhatsApp's popularity:

The reason for WhatsApp being chosen is probably because telegram is a better platform specifically for this due to the manageability you can achieve, especially on the group side of things. But with Facebook that brought WhatsApp, which also played a big role so that's why it's so big. So in the Western cultures, it's WhatsApp. In the Eastern cultures, it's more WeChat.

5.2.3 How WhatsApp has Improved Communication

In the literature review, the researcher highlighted some rudimentary crime communication tools that had been used in the past, such as *Securitnet*, which operated via emails and SMSs that were sent via the Internet and cellular networks to get the information out as fast as possible (Minnaar, 2005). In the interviews, some of the participants discussed how WhatsApp has improved the effectiveness of traditional communication methods such as phone calls, SMSs, emails and radio broadcasts. The participants agreed that WhatsApp has improved access to communication.

CO4 mentioned how WhatsApp has facilitated access to relevant information which was not possible before:

Instead of making one phone call for help to one person and then to another and another, it now allows you to broadcast to many people at once, who will all be able to help. Some people read newspapers or use news apps etc., but that's not normally relevant to their area. Whereas this method tells them, for example, your neighbour has been burgled and it is immediate.

This echoes the findings of Peslak et al. (2010), who also found that their participants liked the ease with which they could communicate cheaply with several people at once through social media.

NW1 discussed how WhatsApp is an improvement on the logistical challenges present in email communication:

WhatsApp also allows you to have a separation of groups based on the content that will be shared on each group. So you keep topic-specific things to specific groups, which would need to be out into the header of the email and then making sure that you have all the correct email addresses. With WhatsApp you don't need to do this. You set up the group once...

SC1 referred to how WhatsApp provides a more affordable platform for communication for Neighbourhood Watch groups:

In the olden days, communities used radios to disseminate information to the core audience, who are the role-players. But radio networks are expensive. WhatsApp groups can do the same but they are more cost-effective.

SC1 also highlighted the impact that WhatsApp had on initial Neighbourhood Watch groups:

Trying to get a network off the ground for a Neighbourhood Watch prior to WhatsApp was through letter drops and meetings. But a lot of the modern Neighbourhood Watches don't necessarily have to do that anymore because information is so readily available. So WhatsApp has shrunk the borders in a community because you can get information very quickly and to the right people.

This correlates with Hwang and Kim's (2015) statement that communication methods have become more interactive and that they allow people to take collective action through communication in cyberspace. Neighbourhood organisations no longer need to meet in a physical space with community members because they can convey messages to specific groups of people on WhatsApp by pressing a button.

5.2.4 Some Limitations to Using WhatsApp

Despite the functionality of WhatsApp and the desirable way in which it has made communication more effective, there are still some challenges that need to be overcome to make the crime prevention efforts by communities more successful. Regarding access to people, Hwang and Kim (2015) highlight that social media platforms have the potential to organise a community in a social movement; however, they caution that this facility is limited to those who actually use social media. This view was confirmed by the participants, as was explained by SC1:

I think it reaches a larger audience but that audience will be dictated by who has a smart phone and a lot of the elderly do not have smart phones and rather rely on the information that they get from walking to the shop, etc.

Another limitation, which is primarily an operational challenge, is that there is no panic feature on WhatsApp. CO1 explained how this is a big challenge in emergency situations:

Let's talk about hijackings and house robberies called home invasions. I find WhatsApp is not as effective as you actually don't have time to type a message. That's when we look at the panic button. A panic button identifies who you are, where you are and what your contact details are and that gives you a location.

NW4 described how WhatsApp can also be operationally difficult for Neighbourhood Watch patrollers during a patrol:

The old two-way radios worked best there. You just clicked a button, whereas WhatsApp you have to find the app, open the right group and then send a voice message.

But perhaps the most challenging aspect of using WhatsApp for crime prevention that was raised during the interviews is that it is designed and primarily used as a social media tool, which, as CO4 explained, can be challenging for crime prevention purposes:

But because of it being a social media tool or a public broadcasting tool, the problem is that people still see it as a social tool, not just for crime prevention.

All the participants stressed that it is of critical importance that the groups are very carefully controlled so as to avoid any dangerous outcomes of using a social media tool for crime prevention purposes. This point is explained in more depth in a following section.

5.2.5 A Sense of Community that is Generated by Groups

The broken windows theory is premised on the fact that weakened informal social control ultimately leads to crime, and that crime can be prevented by enforcing informal social control within a community (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). As was discussed in Chapter Two, informal social control is strengthened if there is social cohesion within a community, and this is achieved with regular social interaction amongst community members (Rosenbaum, 1988). In this context, this study suggests that WhatsApp groups have the ability to create close

community relations because people are now talking to one another, even though it occurs in cyberspace.

According to NW1, the sense of community unity on the groups impacted his real-life interactions in a positive manner:

But what WhatsApp has done is that it has brought communities closer because they are now talking to each other, whether it is driven by crime or social needs. I did not know my neighbours when I first moved into my community and now I can't go to the shop without bumping into someone [I know]. And it's because of WhatsApp, it's created a community.

Most of the participants raised a similar point. This relates to the fact that, as Hwang and Kim (2015) explain, social media promotes a participatory culture amongst users even if they do not know one another, and this can be very useful in encouraging a group of individuals unknown to one another to join a social movement, whether it be for social needs or crime prevention. NW2 also described how community members are becoming more supportive of one another and are looking out for one another on the groups, which highlights the essence of territoriality (Rosenbaum, 1988) which was referred to in Chapter Two:

Just typing a small message, no matter how busy he is, can help your next door neighbour, and it has happened where someone would report and say "Listen, my neighbour is not here and there is somebody at his gate and they look suspicious". The neighbours are looking after each other.

It was thus revealed that social interaction is increased by using WhatsApp because several hundred residents within a community can interact with one another for a prolonged period of time on a single WhatsApp group. Through this interaction, which generally occurs on a daily basis, community members become more familiar with one another and are able to establish acceptable standards of social behaviour that are allowed in their community. They also clearly define the disorderly behaviours that will not be allowed. Essentially, communities can enforce and maintain order via WhatsApp groups. As NW2 put it:

It is because we have created that sense of community that it [WhatsApp] works.

5.2.6 Everyone has a Role to Play on the Group

As was noted in Chapter Two, participation levels in community-driven crime prevention initiatives – such as the Neighbourhood Watch program – are reportedly disappointingly low. Van Graan (2016) argues that one of the most commonly offered reasons for this reluctance to become involved is that people fear retaliation by criminals, which is often a deterrent for many to participate in their local Neighbourhood Watch group. According to NW2:

People want to be involved; this is their community and they want to be a part of keeping the community safe. But they don't want to necessarily run around in the streets chasing a suspect or anything like that.

According to the broken windows theory, involvement in crime prevention is severely inhibited by perceptions of disorder, increases in fear of crime, and weakened informal social control within a community. This is because people are increasingly concerned about their personal safety if they should become involved in the execution of crime prevention efforts that require them to be out on the streets (Ren et al., 2017). However, the current research showed that WhatsApp is creating more attractive options for residents to become involved and still make a meaningful contribution to crime prevention. This is because community members now do not need to worry about their personal safety because they can participate 'anonymously' in cyberspace.

According to NW4, this type of participation must not be underestimated:

Let me give you an example here: Some people are armchair warriors and they look out their window. They are as essential as the guy with a gun walking in the bush. Everybody has their place.

Thus it is acknowledged that the 'armchair warriors', who sit at home and report everything suspicious that they see onto the group, are as important in the fight to curb crime as the patrollers and emergency service operators. Thus social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp groups, have created a valuable platform for people to become involved in crime prevention by playing a part in their own way and on their own terms. This means that they

disallow perceptions of disorder to lead to increased crime rates, as is hypothesised by the broken windows theory.

5.3 The Effectiveness of WhatsApp as a Crime Prevention Tool

Another focus of the interviews was to determine how WhatsApp was being used by communities and how effective it was in preventing crime. The three most common themes that emerged were: (1) the value of the groups; (2) being able to react appropriately; and (3) creating an awareness of crime. In addition to these themes, the participants discussed how WhatsApp had helped Neighbourhood Watch groups, community organisations and private security companies to work better and to be able to assist the SAPS more effectively. These key themes are discussed below.

5.3.1 WhatsApp Groups

According to the findings of this study, WhatsApp groups have contributed the most to the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention driven by Neighbourhood Watch groups. The participants highlighted that different types of groups are created in order to respond to and prevent crime. These groups are carefully managed to ensure that each person serves their purpose. From a Neighbourhood Watch perspective, the findings show that the way in which specific areas can be targeted on the groups makes it very effective. Residents in one area are put into one group, which means that specific information can be communicated to the specific area that needs to be alerted. The groups range from those targeting a specific street or cluster of streets to entire neighbourhoods, regions and provinces. The two most commonly found groups, as indicated in the article written by Ngema (2015), are crime groups and chat groups. This was confirmed by the findings of this study.

SC1 gave a clear description of each type of group and their purpose:

Neighbourhood Watch [groups] generally have a chat group for the general community to chat, a patroller group for the patrollers only to share information, and then an emergency group with only active responders within the community and emergency services for the purpose of responding to crime.

SC1 explained that groups were also combined for operational and crime prevention purposes:

There are some WhatsApp groups that have key members from different neighbouring communities. There is one here in the Highway Area and it has proven to be very successful and has a much further reach in the wider community because it coordinates the neighbouring areas on a single group.

These comments suggest that groups are not only sectorised geographically, but also according to the purpose of the group. The participants described how important it is to direct certain information to certain groups of people, and to withhold it from others. CO2 highlighted why this is important:

On WhatsApp now we have the two different types of groups. We have the community groups and the operational groups...And the reason for that, we would find that when we were putting out alerts, for example an armed robbery in progress, it was going onto the community groups and members of the community were acting like cowboys and were confronting criminals...From the operational groups, we can then decide what is safe to put out on the community groups.

Therefore, the groups are topic-specific (i.e., informal chatting, crime, patrol administration, and crime response) primarily because there is certain information that should not be shared with certain categories of people within the community. This distinction is important to help prevent ordinary members of the community from putting their lives in danger by responding to situations they are not trained for.

5.3.2 Reacting Appropriately to Crime Emergencies

The participants suggested that the use of the WhatsApp groups helps their communities to appropriately direct their crime prevention efforts in relation to the situation or prevalent crime trends. Two participants highlighted that the types of information posted on groups help to guide the responses and to make them more successful.

According to CO4, the most important resource available on the groups for this purposes is the patrollers:

Yes, they walk in the parks and trail routes, so they generally know all the specifics of the area. For example, this house is this colour and has this type of fence, or it leads off this road... So along with all of that, it does help with communication and to see where the guys are and generally just improve awareness of what is happening.

Another consideration is the type of information that is posted on groups. SC1 explained the importance of posting relevant information:

And this is what WhatsApp does. If the information being posted is relevant, it reduces time of apprehension and it guides the relevant role-players where they need to go.

Some of the participants also acknowledged that crime does not happen in isolation and that the information shared on the combined area groups can also be valuable in guiding responses and operations:

So now we could see what was happening and what sectors were being hit and where the perpetrators would go. So the responders from other areas were ready should the perpetrator get to their area... We could now alert the other sectors to where we had confirmation of where the guy was headed to.

In Chapter Two, reference was made of Roelofse's (2011) statement that that police operations around the world are starting to shift from reactive approaches to more proactive strategies that use crime intelligence to control crime. According to Peacock (2013), the routine activities theory provides a framework against which one can analyse crime trends in a specific geographical area and, by so doing, reduce the crime levels in that area. Two notable accounts relating to this view are presented below. Both refer to 'hotspots', which was described in Chapter Three as locations with a high convergence of all three elements for crime as proposed by the routine activities theory – i.e., a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the lack of guardianship (Tibbetts, 2012).

NW3 described how their Neighbourhood Watch uses this information to guide their operations:

All of the crime and suspicious activity that are reported by our members on this group, I put onto my database. I then take this information and map it out using Google Maps and pinpoint each 'incident' on a map so that each Neighbourhood Watch under the CPF can see their respective crime [threat] and identify hotspots and adapt their activities accordingly.

SC2 explained how their company is also doing this:

On a monthly basis we sit and sift through it [data] and have now implemented something new, which is what we call 'hotspots'. So we look at the times of the break-ins, what are the incidents and what areas are targeted. We then try to be extra vigilant during those times by putting out extra patrols during those times. And patrols are just a deterrent but a patrol could save somebody's life as well.

The findings of this research clearly show that communities and role-players are starting to become more proactive and have started to generate their own crime intelligence with the information posted on social media, but particularly on WhatsApp groups. This information is transformed into intelligence which is used to guide community crime prevention efforts.

5.3.3 Generating an Awareness of Crime on WhatsApp Groups

Information shared on WhatsApp groups does not only help active responders such as Neighbourhood Watch groups and emergency services, but it is also invaluable as an information base for residents. The general consensus amongst the participants was that WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention holds a lot of value for the community because of the awareness of crime that is created on the groups. This is because one simple message shared on a WhatsApp group can inform the community about what crime trends are present in the area and how they can prevent victimisation, which in essence is an educational process.

NW3 offered a good description of how WhatsApp has helped community members become more aware and take control to prevent their own potential for victimisation:

It has helped communities to have a good idea of what is happening in the area, develop more secure behaviours and educate everyone on how to secure themselves and their

property...So it is not only the Neighbourhood Watch members who are using WhatsApp for crime prevention, it is the ordinary person living in the area too. It is also good just to remind people to be vigilant and to report anything that may appear suspicious to them.

It is evident that this manner of crime prevention is rooted in the routine activities theory, because this theory postulates that potential victims can reduce their chances of being victimised by adjusting their routine activities (Tibbetts, 2012). Therefore, the findings show that through the use of WhatsApp, role-players can share information with the community on groups on what security measures they can take in order to avoid becoming a victim to trending crimes. The community members that are on such WhatsApp groups can use this information to make constructive adjustments or changes to their routine activities, which will assist in increasing their guardianship and lowering their suitability as targets to motivated offenders that are operating in their respective areas.

The participants also described how the WhatsApp groups are helping to encourage communities to be more observant in their neighbourhoods of suspicious activities or wanted suspects. For example, NW2 described how sharing descriptions of wanted suspects with the community led to successful operations by a Neighbourhood Watch group:

There was a spate of house robberies where they were hitting dead-ends. We put [a message] out to our residents of the vehicle we suspected. Obviously no registration number, but if you see a vehicle matching this description acting suspiciously, please let us know. They broke into a house, and the neighbours saw the vehicle. They knew it was the vehicle we were looking for. It was [in] a dead-end [street] and he took the registration number. So the SAPS knew they were going to hit another dead-end [street]. So the SAPS flooded the area, got them...well, one suspect, the vehicle and the stolen goods.

Thus the use of the WhatsApp groups creates an awareness of crime and this knowledge can assist in preventing crime in two ways:

- The community can be educated on current crime trends and how to adapt their routine activities accordingly so as to prevent their own potential for victimisation.

- The community can be provided with descriptions of wanted suspects so as to increase the number of residents being on the lookout for them, which increases the chances of catching those criminals. This in turn which will prevent further crimes from being committed by criminals with nefarious intentions.

5.3.4 The Use of WhatsApp by Neighbourhood Watch Groups

The literature review strongly suggested that Neighbourhood Watch groups comprise a major part of community-driven crime prevention, which was a fact that motivated the researcher to interview members from key Neighbourhood Watch groups in the Highway Area. In Chapter Two, the information on the Neighbourhood Watch program focused predominantly on the impact that Neighbourhood Watch organisations can have on informal social control, which is a point that was supported by the findings presented in the previous section. However, the participants in the current study also discussed the value that WhatsApp has in terms of the smooth running of a Neighbourhood Watch initiatives, particularly with regards to administration and operations. The participants discussed the three major ways in which the use of WhatsApp has helped them to fight and prevent crime in their respective areas: (1) administration of patrols; (2) responding to crime; and (3) educating the public.

NW1 described how the use of the groups has helped their Neighbourhood Watch to simplify the administration of their patrols:

We also have a patrollers group, which is treated like an 'occurrence book', where patrollers log on and log off each time they go on and finish a patrol. We also do all of the patrol admin on it, such as confirming patrol shifts.

WhatsApp therefore provides Neighbourhood Watch groups with a simplified and singular platform to carry out their administration functions more effectively, as was explained by CO4:

Yes, by sending a message saying "I am on patrol" and "I am off patrol", just so whoever is in charge of that Neighbourhood Watch patrol group can have a record of what is going on, who is patrolling, if everything is alright because something might happen and nobody knows. So it just provides organisation and structure.

The participants also described how WhatsApp is useful in the operational functioning of a Neighbourhood Watch. According to CO4, the live location feature on WhatsApp is particularly useful:

And the great part with some of the new functionalities of WhatsApp is the ability to share your live location, which neighbourhood watches can use to know where their patrollers are at any time and they know that they have all the access points in the area covered for visual operations.

One of the most effective ways that a Neighbourhood Watch group can impact crime prevention through the use of WhatsApp is to educate their members and the wider community on how they can become more observant, as well as how to report information about suspicious activities. CO4 explained that their organisation is active on a lot of Neighbourhood Watch emergency groups, and avidly described the successes some of them have had:

And there are some areas where it has become so quiet because they have put so many structures in place, especially WhatsApp, and it has worked in getting information out there and training the residents on how to report and what to look out for. So it drove the criminal element out of the area because every time they came into the area, there was someone stopping them and challenging them, and making them aware that people are paying attention.

According to the routine activities theory, the motivated offender is a rational decision-maker (Tibbetts, 2012) and will assess an environment and make a rational decision based on this assessment whether to go ahead with the commission of a crime or not (Roelofse, 2011). Therefore, through the use of WhatsApp, Neighbourhood Watch groups can prevent crime by educating the community on how to be observant and report suspicious activities. This will increase the general level of guardianship within a community, which will contribute to making potential offenders less motivated to commit a crime in that area.

5.3.5 The Use of WhatsApp Groups by Community Organisations

There are several community organisations that function in the Highway Area and around the country that help to coordinate responses to a range of emergency situations such as medical

emergencies, crime incidences and the location of missing persons. These organisations have their own procedures and systems in place to perform their functions, but they have also become actively involved in community-run WhatsApp groups. This is why the researcher was motivated to interview representatives from community organisations in this study. The findings show that the use of WhatsApp groups has helped community organisations to extend their reach in the communities they are working with and to improve the way in which they can coordinate appropriate responses to emergency situations.

CO2 noted that being on the WhatsApp group “*has certainly helped us to get more numbers*”. But for CO1, the biggest impact related to their national network. He explained this as follows:

For us it's business and community. Our business stands nationally and is dealing with communities' right throughout the country, so we need to have them all connected. What we have found effective is that we actually have key people from different groups right throughout the country.

In terms of coordinating responses to emergency situations, the participants representing the community organisations stated that any emergency service is expected to respond to a situation quickly, and that WhatsApp has helped tremendously to improve response times. The information of key people from the organisations are loaded onto the emergency groups and they work with the local role-players (i.e., patrollers, private security companies and SAPS members) to coordinate appropriate responses to emergencies that occur in the area.

CO3 affirmed that being on WhatsApp groups has helped their organisation to improve their response times to emergencies:

If it's an emergency and you have trained the people within that network how to respond, you can get assistance for any situation to your location within a matter of ninety seconds. In the industry that I am in, you are expected to respond pretty quickly.

Participants CO4 and CO1 described how being loaded onto the emergency groups helped their respective organisations to coordinate and contain crime and emergency scenes more effectively. CO4 explained the value of being on the emergency group as it facilitated knowing all the details of the situation at hand:

I do in a sense of keeping up to date with information about role-players arriving on scene, updates with descriptions of suspects, etc. So we automatically see the description of suspects as well as who has arrived on scene and what the actual details at the scene are.

CO1 described the same, as well as how WhatsApp is used by their organisation in conjunction with their own control room and response procedures:

Absolutely. We constantly make sure that we follow up on every aspect on the group until the incident has been attended to. Not just that they have arrived there, but that it's been attended to. We have ER24 [an emergency service]. Their ETA is four minutes. Our control room will then notify someone to go and wait at the gate to let the ambulance in when it arrives, and WhatsApp has made that possible. Although it came through a different system, WhatsApp has made that sort of communication possible.

Therefore, by being loaded onto emergency WhatsApp groups and using WhatsApp internally, community organisations are able to coordinate more rapid and appropriate responses to emergency situations and to maintain control until the victims and/or the crime scene can be attended to by the relevant authorities. This elicits the most appropriate type of response to an emergency situation which can facilitate the apprehension of criminals and prevent further crimes from being committed by the same criminals.

5.3.6 The Use of WhatsApp Groups by Private Security Companies

It was mentioned in Chapter Two that the private security industry has been very successful in South Africa, primarily because the level of service the companies are able to offer private citizens is highly sought after. Unfortunately, the main reason for this growth is that the SAPS is under-resourced and that this organisation thus fails in its constitutional mandate to protect the community adequately. Thus the role of private security companies has changed over the years as they have become more involved in pro-active crime prevention in communities, which is not their primary function as private service providers (Potgieter et al., 2008). In the Highway Area of KZN, private security companies have become more active in community-driven crime prevention, and their operations have increasingly involved the use of WhatsApp.

This fact motivated the researcher to interview personnel from active private security companies in the Highway Area.

The following account by SC1 sums up how private security companies have become involved in the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes:

A person from a private security company would have someone linked onto various WhatsApp groups and would be able to monitor the information that is being posted by community members, filter the relevant information and then disseminate it to the relevant role-players. This person could coordinate a security vehicle to respond to the incident or conduct more patrols where suspicious activity has been reported.

This demonstrates how the private security industry has evolved to meet the needs of community members who require the assistance of security role-players that have the resources to assist them. According to SC2, the demand for private security companies to be active on community groups has grown at a rapid rate over the few years that they have become involved:

The WhatsApp social media has gone to another level. When we started... we had like ten to fifteen Neighbourhood Watch [groups], and now we've got over 170. So people are taking to it because whether you are a client of our company or not, we still respond. So it's a great tool.

Some of the participants highlighted the fact that WhatsApp has changed the nature of how private security companies respond to crime, because now they are not only monitoring, but also responding to messages that are posted on WhatsApp groups. The implications for the private security industry and the communities they serve are huge. Some companies have even grown their private client base just by being active on selected community groups. Nevertheless, there are still many challenges, as SC2 explained:

Negatives are that the communities do not understand that at certain times a vehicle can be at an emergency call-out and the vehicle will only respond to their request after it has attended to the first call-out.

The participants from the private security companies described how difficult it had been in some situations to deal with the backlash from the community when they had not been able to respond to a request quickly enough. Therefore, SC5 urged communities to still use the right channels:

Rather push your panic button because private security companies have invested millions in systems to ensure automated responses to alarm and panic activations, so don't rely on WhatsApp.

However, regardless of the challenges they face, the value of having access to WhatsApp is appreciated by both security companies and the communities who are being assisted by them. This point was made by SC2:

We have had different people come from different communities come to the control room just to see us. When we introduced them to the [WhatsApp] operators, they said, "We like this, this is working for us. Whenever we need something checked, the [WhatsApp] operator is on the ball." And that is what we really want to hear and want to see.

5.3.7 How the Use of WhatsApp has Benefitted the SAPS

Members of the SAPS were not interviewed for this study because it focused on how communities are driving crime prevention with the use of WhatsApp. Nevertheless, the implications of using WhatsApp for crime prevention and how it can assist the SAPS cannot be ignored, as the participants made notable comments regarding the value of WhatsApp for police operations. Overall, it was believed that the SAPS benefits greatly from the fact that communities are using WhatsApp groups to prevent crime, and it was mentioned that some communities even have SAPS members who are active on their groups. These SAPS members are alerted by the community on WhatsApp groups and they in turn alert others to attend to minor crimes that are reported on WhatsApp groups. CO3 explained this relationship as follows:

We don't want to always phone the SAPS, as they are already under-resourced, over-worked and in many cases probably under-appreciated and under-paid. Now the Neighbourhood Watch steps in and takes care of trivial incidences.

In the context of the broken windows theory, what is happening here is that the community is taking order-maintenance policing into their own hands so that the SAPS can focus their resources and efforts on more serious crimes. Therefore, with the use of WhatsApp, communities are able to enforce informal social control and also take control of order-maintenance policing by responding to disorderly behaviour and minor crimes that are reported on WhatsApp groups.

The SAPS also benefits from the use of WhatsApp by being able to monitor events through the groups that they join. They then use relevant information that is posted on these groups and respond when they are needed. NW3 explained how WhatsApp is helpful to the SAPS:

Yes, on our current main group, we do have current and ex-SAPS members from different units. The nice thing about this is that when something is going on, they can make themselves mobile to the scene and follow their own SAPS protocols to report the incident correctly and get the SAPS there.

Therefore, from a crime prevention point of view, WhatsApp groups have positive implications for SAPS intelligence units as they are increasingly becoming exposed to information that is reported on WhatsApp groups. According to Trottier (2012), the police are more exposed than ever through social media to the interactions that take place among people at local level, and they can use this information to guide their policing activities. In this manner they are sometimes even assisted in arresting suspects for specific crimes. CO4 explained how useful this information is to members of the SAPS:

There is the SAPS War Room, which links cases and suspects to cases from different areas. So the War Room will identify patterns and see, for example, the same suspect with the same MO and description etc. and link it to several incidents, instead of just one. And that's where the information on the WhatsApp groups normally comes in if it's correct.

However, despite the positive implications of WhatsApp information for the SAPS and other role-players, the majority of the participants stressed that the way that communities are turning to WhatsApp for assistance and crime prevention can be problematic, because the correct reporting channels are not being followed. NW1 explained:

We have private security companies on our patroller and emergency groups as well as some SAPS members on our emergency group who respond or help with getting resources. And this cuts out a lot of time, but it is not good to cut out calling 10111. Even if you use WhatsApp to send out an emergency [request], you must also call 10111. Because whatever association is linked to the WhatsApp group, they are not a law enforcement agency. So WhatsApp must not replace 10111.

5.3.8 Is WhatsApp an Effective Crime Prevention Tool?

Overall, the participants felt very strongly about the positive effect that the use of WhatsApp has for community-driven crime prevention as well as for responding to emergencies. However, they also stressed the dangers that community members and role-players can face if the platform is not used correctly. In their article on instant messaging, Peslak et al. (2010) emphasise that instant messaging applications need to be properly managed as communication tools if they are to be entirely effective. This was echoed throughout the interviews, as indicated by some of the accounts presented below.

CO4 stated:

I think the impact has been huge when people started using it for information-sharing because it got the word out quicker.

SC4 agreed, stating the following:

So yes, it does work because it's about getting the right information to the right people, quickly. And from that point of view, it's effective.

CO2 argued as follows:

So it is very, very effective. And rated out of ten, its effectiveness is about a seven or an eight out of ten. But it can be very, very dangerous as well.

CO1 concurred, but offered a warning:

It has many wonderful features but if it is not managed it's no good. To me it is not an emergency alert system, but it is a very good tool to communicate information.

CO3 was adamant that WhatsApp should be used appropriately, but that official reporting channels should be used predominantly:

WhatsApp cannot replace 10111.

Therefore, it is evident that WhatsApp has made a huge impact on crime prevention in a very positive way, but the warning is clear that users should heed the dangers that are associated with the inappropriate use of this social media platform. Some participants stressed that it can even cost people their lives. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that guidelines for the appropriate and lawful use of social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp, should be devised and disseminated to all communities. This point is further explored in the next section.

5.4 Regulating the Use of WhatsApp for Crime Prevention Purposes

The final focus of the interviews was on how WhatsApp should be used to ensure that crime prevention efforts are maximised and that no laws are violated. The participants highlighted five important aspects pertaining to this theme during the interviews: (1) controlling the type of people loaded onto the groups; (2) rules must be in place to control these groups; (3) guidelines on how to correctly report information on the groups should be devised; and (4) the correct way to respond to information reported on the groups should be prioritised. These key themes are discussed below.

5.4.1 Controlling Who the Group Members Are

As was mentioned in previous sections, different types of people are loaded onto WhatsApp groups depending of the purpose of the group. For example, general community members are loaded onto chat groups, security patrollers are loaded onto patroller groups, and so forth. However, the findings of the research show that the groups cannot be effectively controlled simply by categorising the types of people that should be loaded onto the different types of groups. It remains important to look at each individual group member to ensure that the integrity of the group is not compromised. NW1 said:

So you control a group firstly by who is loaded onto it and secondly by a strict discipline protocol for members.

What this means is that the screening of the nature of the people that are loaded onto any group is vitally important. For example, NW1 explained that selecting group members helps to ensure the security of the group:

And the safety aspect of it is that if the admin verifies a person before adding them, you know that the group is secure.

According to Nair (2017), this is one of the recommendations made by lawyers on how group administrators should manage a group in order to prevent things from going wrong. He explains that a WhatsApp group administrator is a person who is the creator of the group and/or a person who has the power to add people onto the group, and even remove them from it. The participants referred to these group administrators as ‘admins’. The majority of the participants emphasised that the ‘admins’ have a great responsibility when it comes to adding new people onto a group, because they often do not know these people personally.

CO1 explained why it is so important that the administrators verify potential group members:

To get back to the dangers of WhatsApp, what you have to remember is that community groups are volunteers. They should only be privy to certain information and their responsibilities are not the same as [those of] the police. They are not policemen,

although some of them think they are... You have to be very careful of who that information is going to.

Therefore, it is very important for the ‘admins’ to fully vet all potential group members before adding them onto the groups they administer. The participants stressed the point that this even applies to less formal, social chat groups. The participants explained that once the admin has checked a potential group member and feels comfortable adding that person on the group, it is also important that they keep a record of who they are, which becomes very important for record-keeping and response purposes.

NW2 explained that when adding a new person, the following details are saved by the ‘admin’ with the person’s number:

Yes, name, address or complex location if they are part of [a residential] complex.

5.4.2 Regulating WhatsApp Groups

Social media usage, including instant messaging, has become a very big part of how people communicate in modern society, and thus how these platforms should be regulated has received a lot of attention. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, there are currently no laws that specifically govern social media usage, although there are a number of laws that are applicable to this facility, such as provisions in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996) and the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 25 of 2002 (Mushwana & Bezuidenhout, 2014). SC4 confirmed that certain laws guide the use WhatsApp, but suggested that the specifics are blurred:

Yes, there are some laws that do indirectly govern social media use but nothing specifically at the moment.

Any communication on WhatsApp must thus be carefully controlled to ensure that none of the applicable laws are violated in any way. Ngema (2015) explains that most WhatsApp groups are governed by strict rules that members need to abide by. SC1 explained how this is done:

Some Neighbourhood Watch groups have created a WhatsApp policy that is also on the Facebook page, and members loaded onto the WhatsApp group must sign the policy before being added.

According to Mushwana and Bezuidenhout (2014), establishing a policy for social media usage by any organisation is crucial as it will assist in mitigating any risks that are associated with their usage. The participants explained that this applies to Neighbourhood Watch groups that run WhatsApp groups for crime prevention purposes as well. SC1 stated:

You find that if a good policy is in place or a good admin is managing the group, then the group self-regulates quite easily. You find that people posting inappropriate stuff on the groups are shut down quickly because of the fear of prosecution. So people are aware of the legalities involved now.

According to Kumar (2017), the legal responsibility to manage WhatsApp groups rests on the shoulders of the administrators of the groups and any posts by members on the group that express discrimination or promote animosity must be promptly addressed by the administrator and/or reported to the police. Failure on administrators' part to do so could have legal repercussions for them. The participants in the current research corroborated this statement. For example, SC1 stated:

Yes, they ['admins'] are overall responsible. They need to have done something about that information to make sure that they don't get into trouble for it.

The participants stated that the group 'admins' can help to regulate the nature of the information that is posted on groups by members by making sure that they are fully aware of the rules of their respective groups. Members are obliged to act in accordance with the rules and should know what the repercussions are for non-compliance. According to Nair (2017), other recommendations offered by lawyers on how to control WhatsApp groups include regularly reminding the group members of the group rules and removing any members who repeatedly disregard the rules of the group. The accounts given below reflect some of the WhatsApp group rules that were in place in the Highway Area at the time of the study:

NW1 stated:

Yes, and another thing is that posts about religion, politics or jokes are not allowed on any of the groups, or even irrelevant general comments such as “God bless you” or “Yay, it’s Friday,” etc.

NW3 stated:

We tell them that we do not want things like car accidents, something happening in an area outside the CPF etc. to be posted on the group... Secondly, we tell the members not to upload several photographs of a crime scene on the group because it is not relevant to the purposes of the group.

NW4 said:

What we also do with our WhatsApp group and what everybody else does as well – and I can vouch for that – is that there is absolutely no slandering on the group.

However, the participants did acknowledge that some group members persistently broke the rules of the group and they suggested that, if it becomes a recurring problem, the group ‘admins’ need to carefully manage the situation. Some of the participants stated that a new feature on WhatsApp which allows users to retract a post is very helpful in circumstances when inappropriate posts were submitted by group members. As stated on the website, users have approximately an hour to remove a post; however, at the time of conducting the interviews, this timeframe was much shorter. NW3 explained:

Yes, if we see a post that is not appropriate we immediately tell them to remove the post. But only the author of the post can remove it and they have 7 minutes from the time of posting it to remove it completely. So if they don’t remove it within that time, then it will stay there, which is not good and the admin can’t do anything about this.

Some participants noted that it is possible that the group ‘admins’ do not see the inappropriate post within the allocated period to remove it, which is a problem. However, they advised that in that case, the ‘admin’ still needs to acknowledge the inappropriate post and condemn it on

the group. However, the consequences for sharing some posts are far greater for some than for others, especially when photos of alleged criminals are posted.

NW3 explained that the law governs this practice and that serious implications may arise if this occurs:

There is also a legal problem with pictures of suspects. The SAPS Act No. 68 states that you may not publish a photograph of a suspect who has committed a crime if he/she is in custody. So in other words, he hasn't been found guilty yet, he is a suspect but he is in custody... So the key word here is 'in custody'. And the reason is obvious: if this suspect is going to stand in a line-up, his lawyer can say to the person that he was only picked out because they saw his face on the WhatsApp group.

The law that this participant made reference to is section 69 of the SAPS Act No. 68 of 1995 (South Africa, 1995). Contravening this law can have serious legal implications, as NW4 explained:

You can have secured him his freedom by naming him or putting his face out there before he is charged.

The above points highlight how the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention is a double-edged sword, because group members can think that they are helping to catch and convict criminals by sharing their photos, but they can actually jeopardise a case and allow a criminal to walk free. When photos of suspects are shared on a group, the 'admin' once again must take responsibility. NW4 explained:

We can actually jeopardise a case by taking photos, so it's best not too. And being the administrator of a group, and someone has put a picture up and you have not reacted to that within twenty four hours, you can be prosecuted as well.

Therefore, the 'admin' needs to find a way to effectively control the group members in accordance with the rules of the group. CO3 used an analogy to explain how this is done on some groups:

The other thing [they] have done on the groups is that [they] have a scoring system, or a grading system. Similar to the soccer one. So the first time you step out of line, [the admin] will go one-on-one with you and say, "Listen, you have stepped out of line." Second time you step out of line, you get a yellow card. That's the first warning. The next time you step out of line you get a red card and you get taken off the group for a week. We explain about the rules etc. that were contravened etc., like a disciplinary message that gives them the option to correct their behaviour.

It is evident that controlling WhatsApp group members could be a very time-consuming and onerous task for group 'admins'; however, the consequences that can be faced for contravening the law justify why it is important that they maintain compliance with the group's rules.

5.4.3 Reporting Information on WhatsApp Groups

According to Meyer and van Graan (2011), very little information on crime is generated by the police themselves, and members of the public generally report a massive 97% of the information that the police need in order to solve crimes. Therefore, it is clear that the community has a very big role to play in the fight against crime. Currently, people are turning more and more to social media platforms such as WhatsApp to share information so that something can be done about criminal activities in their areas. In the Highway Area of KZN, the sharing and reporting of crime information is highly prevalent. However, the nature of the information that group members post onto WhatsApp groups must be carefully controlled. The nature of the posts and the information that is reported on the groups are also very important because these elements may either guide effective and timeous responses to emergency situations, or they may impede crime prevention initiatives.

CO2 explained that ordinary community members that are active on WhatsApp groups have a very specific role to play:

Members of the community must remember that they are the 'eyes and ears' of law enforcement. So if they use it on that level, without trying to become physically involved, and use it to feed back any reports of a suspicious person or vehicle on the WhatsApp group [it is good]. It's then up to the group 'admins' and law enforcement on those

groups to take that information and do something about it. So once they have reported it, their role is complete. It just needs to be followed up by the right people.

It is evident that the traditional method of surveillance (i.e., regarding the community as being the ‘eyes and ears’ of the police) (van Graan, 2016), is still required in this technological age. The only difference between traditional and current practices is the manner in which the information is reported. Traditionally, informants were interviewed or people phoned the police, but nowadays messages are posted on social media platforms such as WhatsApp. It is therefore important that group members are educated on how to report the information correctly and appropriately, so that they can efficiently and adequately contribute to the processes of crime prevention and criminal apprehension. CO4 explained how problematic it can be when group members do not know how to do this:

Yes, but the problem comes as soon you overlap the community’s side with the role-players’ side. There is always miscommunication because the role-players want certain information, whereas the community provides information that they think is correct, which is not normally the case. Or the community hasn’t yet dealt with a range of different incidents so they don’t know how to get the relevant information for that specific incident and to pass it on to the role-players, which is information they [the latter] might require.

In order to report information correctly on WhatsApp groups, NW1 explained that the validity of the information is important:

So we have a ‘behind the scenes’ group in which any information that needs to be put out to the community is first verified by two people from the Neighbourhood Watch. So that we know that when we share something on behalf on the Neighbourhood Watch, that it has been checked and verified. There is nothing false about it and it is relevant.

In addition, the details that are reported on the group are very important, especially if the message is being posted so that a response can be coordinated. NW2 explained that residents need to be specific when describing someone or something as suspicious:

Our residents, when they see a suspicious person, they will post it on the zone. Sometimes we have to ask why that person is suspicious. Or a suspicious vehicle, then why is it a suspicious vehicle? Is he parking somewhere he is not supposed to park, or is he driving somewhere he is not supposed to drive?

According to the broken windows theory, people are categorised as either orderly or disorderly and can either be regulars or strangers within a community (Harcourt, 1998). Through the use of WhatsApp, community members can report on the group if they have seen any disorderly behaviour in the community so that the relevant role-players can address a situation in order to prevent further instances of criminal behaviour. However, Wilson and Kelling (1982) stress that this feedback of information from the community to the authorities can create negative issues. For example, people may be unfairly discriminated against based on their features or looks. It is for situations like this that group rules are very important. However, community members can be educated to apply the elements of the routine activities theory to report suspicious behaviour, and in this manner they will help to prevent further crime. Community members can therefore post information about motivated offenders by describing suspects' physical descriptions and providing details about their modus operandi. They could also reveal who or what suitable targets within the community are by sharing descriptions of the stolen items that are generally stolen or which type of people are predominantly targeted in the area.

CO4 recommended that a report template be implemented on WhatsApp groups:

In order to use the groups and platforms correctly, I would say you need a standard format or template to use for certain things. So the templates will help you not to forget certain vital things you need to report the incident correctly. For example, for a vehicle theft, does the vehicle have a tracking company, how much fuel was in the vehicle when it was stolen to gauge how far it can travel, etc? So having the template for reporting each type of incident will help and will be much more appreciated by the role-players so that they have all of the information immediately. The time and date of the incident is especially important.

Correct reporting by community members is possible on WhatsApp groups and it can have very positive implications in terms of responding to crimes and crime prevention efforts. However, it can happen that over-zealous community members become paranoid and rely too

much on reporting information, to the point that it can be detrimental to crime prevention efforts. Hwang and Kim (2015:480) describe this practice as “keyboard activism”. CO1 expanded on this threat:

I have seen where they have put on a group “I have just seen an accident, will someone please report it”. The time it takes them to type that message out, they could have actually reported that message themselves. That is this whole shifting of responsibility thing. It’s unfortunate as it just keeps being shifted and by the time anyone attends to it, it is way past help time.

This raises another important consideration in making sure that the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes is effective, which is that the information that is shared on the WhatsApp groups must be relevant. In other words, the information must be appropriate for the type of group that it is posted on and it must be applicable to the situation at hand. This particularly includes timing. NW1 explained why sharing group-specific information is important:

So you have to be very careful with what information is put out there and you have to keep information on the group relevant to what the group is for, otherwise it loses its effectiveness.

Most of the participants highlighted the prevalence of forwarded messages on the WhatsApp groups. In other words, there is a lot of copying and pasting of messages from one group to another. According to CO1, this can be a big challenge for role-players when trying to coordinate a response to an emergency:

Yes, and a lot of false information or fraudulent information, that looks like something that is in progress but actually happened two hours ago because of the way it has been forwarded. You type a message, “My mother’s car has just been stolen”, and when you get hold of the person and say, “Your mother’s car has just been stolen?” and they say, “No, I forwarded that from another group”. Then you have to try get to the source of the message, and when it took place.

The participants explained that it can waste a lot of time when role-players are trying to figure out the exact details of the situation to get an appropriate response to the scene in the quickest

possible time. However, the new feature on WhatsApp that allows you to see if a message has been forwarded has been particularly helpful in such instances so as to not waste time. CO1 explained this as follows:

This is quite a nice new feature, especially when you get people that are forwarding all these messages... You also know someone has forwarded something on so you don't even bother looking at it.

Nevertheless, the frequency with which irrelevant information is shared on WhatsApp groups is still a challenge for all role-players, and if the 'admin' does not manage this, it can affect the responses that need to be coordinated. CO1 explained what can happen when the SAPS is involved:

They also want to react to accurate information. They want to make arrests, they don't want to chase ghosts... If you send them on a wild goose chase all the time, they will either take themselves off the WhatsApp group or just stop responding to that WhatsApp group. That's what happens with the police.

The participants stressed that the relevance of the information is very important to keep the role-players active and interested on the groups so that they can get help when they need it. Therefore, it is evident that the manner in which information is reported can have serious implications, positive or negative, for responding to crime and implementing crime prevention initiatives. Thus clear guidelines need to be given to group members to ensure that they 'tick all the boxes' and that they understand the importance of following the correct reporting channels and always call 10111 first.

5.4.4 Responding to Information Reported on WhatsApp Groups

The final consideration in maximising crime prevention efforts through the use of WhatsApp is to ensure that responses to crime are coordinated and carried out properly. This increases the chances of catching criminals and preventing further instances of crime. The best manner in which this can be done is to keep accurate records of the group members, as described in the previous section. CO4 explained how this practice is useful for response purposes:

You don't have additional information unless you create a database yourself with the contacts, so that you can have all of that additional information. This is possible and a lot of Neighbourhood Watches do that. They save the name and number of the person, and their home address. But you still get the groups where the people have not filled in a list or form for them to have all of those details. So when those people require help, they can't help.

The next factor is to have people on the group who can respond to messages when people require assistance. SC1 explained how critical this is:

WhatsApp was more used in response to petty crime and other issues, such as a suspicious person walking around, or to advertise lost pets. However, WhatsApp is now also used by major role-players who develop dedicated emergency groups to escalate information...to essential services a lot quicker.

This comment highlights the importance of the partnership approach to crime prevention, which was discussed in Chapter Two. As highlighted by van Graan (2016), the United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime affirms that there is a broad spectrum of causes of crime and it requires different skills and responsibilities to address them. Therefore, there needs to be a variety of role-players on WhatsApp groups, particularly on emergency groups, so that a wide variety of emergencies can be appropriately and timeously responded to. This point was confirmed by CO2, who stated:

You need to have the relevant role-players on the group who can give assistance and respond to information that is posted.

CO4 explained how useful this is:

Also, when it comes to actual crimes in-progress, WhatsApp could be quite important as well. Normally, the SAPS or Metro [Police] should have a crew member when responding to a crime; therefore, communicating with them on WhatsApp helps because they will be getting the suspect or vehicle descriptions and could possibly see this [post] on their way to the scene. So it advances the opportunity for catching

criminals fleeing from the scene because of the information they are receiving, no matter where they are, and [they can] respond accordingly.

It is not only important to have role-players on WhatsApp groups for response purposes, but it is also important that community members are educated on how they can respond to a particular situation, even if they are merely instructed on how to respond on the WhatsApp group.

NW2 described the protocol they followed to assist patrollers and role-players in catching suspects, and why saving group members' details is important:

As soon as we get the first incident reported on the zone, everybody's lights go on and it goes, "He is in my yard now"; "He is now in my yard"; "Okay, my dog has got him". Even though we are lagging slightly behind, we always know where the suspects are. He is in this block, so we cordon off that block...And because you have the addresses saved, they don't even have to say where they are. And we have caught guys like that.

Although there are ways to report information correctly and to coordinate appropriate responses to emergencies, there are still some challenges. One major challenge in terms of responding is that WhatsApp does not have a panic feature. Most of the participants raised this issue and said that it could make responding to an emergency very difficult, especially because the person in distress does not always have time to give enough details in a moment of panic.

Some of the participants suggested that the use of the location and live location is a useful alternative in such situations. CO3 explained:

It takes three seconds to teach someone how to send a GPS location and that is very important, because if you don't know where you are, how must I as a policeman, as a responder know where you are? So GPS location is absolutely vital.

However, no matter what training group members have received, or what procedures are in place, responding to emergencies, especially crimes in-progress, can be very dangerous, especially for those who are not trained to apprehend culprits. CO4 described how this is a risk with the use of social media tools such as WhatsApp:

So the implication that social media has is that they create these opportunities, no matter the type of group that you are on. If you are on a group and you respond to something, you automatically put yourself at risk.

Therefore, it is very important that the type of information that is posted onto a WhatsApp group is posted onto the right type of group with the right type of people that are trained to respond and have the necessary resources to assist. It is also important that clear and practised response procedures are in place to maximise resources and save as much time as possible. This is critical because, as some of the participants emphasised, the situations that need to be responded to are often life threatening.

5.5 Conclusion

The themes that emerged from the data were presented and evaluated in this chapter. In general, the respondents' comments that referred to how WhatsApp could be used as a crime prevention tool by communities and what impact it has were evaluated. The researcher focused on the aspects of WhatsApp that make it an attractive crime prevention tool, the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a crime prevention tool, and important considerations regarding the effective and lawful use of WhatsApp. All the information that was discussed in this chapter equipped the researcher with knowledge to suggest guidelines on how WhatsApp must be used by communities to ensure that crime prevention efforts are maximised, that no laws are contravened, and that no criminal cases are jeopardised. These suggestions will be further illuminated in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the final evaluation of the data that were obtained by means of an empirical investigation. Primary data were obtained through individual, in-depth interviews with 12 participants from Neighbourhood Watch groups, community organisations and private security companies in the Highway Area near Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. The primary aim of this chapter is to make meaning of the benefits and threats associated with the use of WhatsApp as a tool for crime prevention in the study area, and to suggest a set of guidelines to ensure that the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention is maximised; that the use of WhatsApp for this purpose does not amount to the violation of any laws; and that it does not impact negatively on police investigations. As an appropriate conclusion to this research report, certain conclusions are drawn and recommendations for further research are offered.

6.2 General Conclusions

The general conclusions that are discussed in this chapter pertain to the following objectives of this study:

- Evaluate whether WhatsApp is an attractive and desired social media platform for community crime prevention efforts in the study area;
- Assess the effectiveness of the use of WhatsApp as a tool for community crime prevention;
- To identify recommended best-practices for the effective and lawful use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes.

In order to meet the research objectives, the researcher employed a qualitative research methodology. The researcher interviewed 12 participants from the Highway Area in KwaZulu-Natal in order to gain in-depth knowledge of how WhatsApp is used as a crime prevention tool

and what recommendations can be made to maximise the effectiveness of the use of this social media platform.

The participant sample, who all operated in the Highway Area under study, comprised:

- four representatives from Neighbourhood Watch groups,
- four representatives from community organisations, and
- four personnel from private security companies.

The main findings pertaining to the objectives are discussed in the next sub-sections.

6.2.1 Why WhatsApp is an Attractive and Desirable Social Media Platform for Community Crime Prevention Efforts

The researcher acknowledges that there are many popular social media platforms that are used by society, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. However, many newspaper articles were perused that highlighted the use of WhatsApp across South Africa as a primary tool for crime prevention. This fact, as well as personal experience, motivated the researcher to determine why WhatsApp is the preferred social media platform for community-driven crime prevention.

The findings revealed that WhatsApp possesses many built-in features that make it an attractive tool for crime prevention, such as the ability to take and share photos, voice messages and a location application. In addition, WhatsApp provides an instant communication platform to a broad audience. The biggest comparison was made between WhatsApp and Facebook, with WhatsApp being described as a more user-friendly, manageable and secure platform for crime prevention than Facebook. WhatsApp is also preferred because it has improved neighbourhood organisations' access to people, and it provides more affordable and manageable communication facilities than other tools such as email and radio.

However, a limitation of WhatsApp is that access to people is restricted to those who have smartphones; there is no built-in panic feature; and its primary use as a social interaction tool can spoil its effectiveness in terms of crime prevention. Nevertheless, the sense of community unity and support that is created on WhatsApp groups is important because people are now

talking to one another and are taking responsibility to look after one another and the neighbourhood, which improves informal social control. In addition, WhatsApp provides accessible opportunities for people to contribute meaningfully to crime prevention, unlike physical patrols and security responses.

The data that were obtained clearly addressed the first objective because the findings revealed that WhatsApp is attractive for crime prevention purposes because it has improved the way in which communities can communicate with a broader audience in a much quicker fashion than before. In addition, the features of WhatsApp are functional and adaptable for crime prevention purposes.

6.2.2 Assessment of the Effectiveness of WhatsApp as a Tool for Community Crime Prevention

The researcher was motivated to determine why and how WhatsApp was adopted as a crime prevention tool in the Highway Area of KZN, and to establish how effective it is in preventing crime, as perceived by community participants.

Overall, the findings of this research suggest that WhatsApp is effective as a tool for crime prevention primarily because of the WhatsApp group feature that allows multiple users on one group. Different types of WhatsApp groups are created by administrators (or ‘admins’) such as informal chat groups and groups that respond to crime or threats in their areas. This means that topic-specific information can be disseminated quickly and easily to interest groups who need such information and who can act on it appropriately. It was also revealed that communities successfully prevented or responded to crime in the past by using the information that was shared on the groups to guide crime prevention efforts.

There was strong agreement among the participants that information that is stored in WhatsApp groups can be used to generate intelligence that, in turn, will guide operations against criminals effectively, both within and across communities. Moreover, awareness of crime or crime threats can be generated on the groups and this awareness alerts residents to possible crime threats so that criminal activities are successfully prevented or curbed. WhatsApp groups can serve to educate the community regarding crime trends and how to prevent situations in which they may be victimised. In addition, community members are alerted to what they should watch

out for, and this assisted security officials in the past to apprehend criminals and it resulted in the prevention of further incidents of crime.

WhatsApp has also been effectively adopted as a tool by Neighbourhood Watch groups, community organisations and private security companies to facilitate contact with residents and to support the role that they play in various communities. Neighbourhood Watch groups have started using WhatsApp to organise and administer street patrols, coordinate and execute visual operations, and educate their members about crime in their areas of operation. Community organisations have been successful in reaching more community members with WhatsApp and, by being active on the WhatsApp groups, they have been assisted in coordinating more rapid and appropriate responses to emergencies. Private security companies also recognise the value of WhatsApp, and they have appointed operators to monitor the information posted onto WhatsApp groups, which enhances the manner in which they can assist communities to fight crime. The SAPS also benefits from the use of WhatsApp by community members as: (1) it allows them to focus their resources on serious crimes because community members and other role-players respond to petty crimes; and (2) they can use the information posted on WhatsApp groups to respond more rapidly to emergencies and to generate crime intelligence.

Overall, the findings suggest that WhatsApp is an effective tool for crime prevention because information can be shared quickly among numerous people, which enhances crime response rates and curbs further instances of crime. In addition, the information that is posted on WhatsApp groups guides crime prevention efforts to suit the crime trends that are prevalent in a particular area, which makes crime prevention operations more effective and successful. However, users are cautioned to use WhatsApp for crime prevention carefully and to manage the facility within the confines of the law. It is also vital that formal avenues for reporting crime must still be used.

6.2.3 Identifying Recommended Best-Practices for the Effective and Lawful Use of WhatsApp for Crime Prevention Purposes

The researcher acknowledges that there are currently no laws that specifically govern social media usage. This gap in the legal framework for the use of media was a driver to determine what negative consequences the inappropriate use of WhatsApp may have. As a consequence

of the investigation into the benefits and threats associated with the use of WhatsApp as a crime prevention tool, some guidelines are proposed to render the use of WhatsApp more effective and to ensure that crime prevention efforts in the community context are maximised, that no laws are violated, and that the use of WhatsApp does not impact negatively on police investigations.

Despite the glowing comments regarding the use of WhatsApp as a crime prevention tool, many respondents expressed words of caution that should be heeded. The findings of this research highlight four main areas of consideration with the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention: (1) characteristics of the people who are loaded onto a WhatsApp group; (2) the implementation and enforcement of a WhatsApp group policy; (3) guidelines for reporting information on a WhatsApp group; and (4) response procedures on a WhatsApp group.

6.2.3.1 WhatsApp Group Members

The findings show that it is critical to fully vet each potential group member before adding him/her onto a group because confidential information is shared on the groups and, if members are not checked beforehand, this information can get into the hands of criminals. In addition, it is important to save the details of each group member so that the group administrator can keep a record of the group members. It is also useful for response purposes when group members report information on the groups to know who is reporting it and where they are from.

6.2.3.2 A WhatsApp Group Policy

It is critical to have a WhatsApp group policy for its effective use, and to ensure that no laws are contravened by group members. The policy must be made clear to all group members before they join the group, and each group member must sign this policy to acknowledge that they agree with it and will act in accordance with it on the group. The policy must be re-shared on the group on a regular basis to remind the group members of what the rules are. Overall, the group administrator is responsible for enforcing the policy and controlling the group members, and this person is ultimately accountable if inappropriate or unlawful posts are not removed or addressed. Any persons who contravene the group policy must be addressed and warned, and must be removed from the group for repeat violations.

Such a policy should include the following:

- No posts about religion or politics may be shared on any group;
- No slandering of persons or role-players is allowed on any group;
- No jokes, emotional comments or irrelevant comments are allowed on the emergency group; and
- No photos of detained suspects are allowed to be shared on any group.

6.2.3.3 Valid Information

It is critical that group members verify any information they want to report on the group so that role-players do not waste resources responding to false information. This includes information that is forwarded from one group to another. In addition, group members must be clear in their description of suspicious activities so that role-players do not waste resources responding to a completely normal situation. The group members must also report all the known details of a situation on the group so that role-players do not waste time searching for the relevant details. Group members must always call 10111 before reporting information on the group to ensure that the correct reporting channels are followed, and so that the SAPS can respond appropriately.

6.2.3.4 Response Procedures for a WhatsApp Group

The manner in which role-players respond to information that is reported on a WhatsApp group has successfully led to criminals being apprehended, and such successful responses have helped to prevent the occurrence of further crimes in some areas. However, if there are no security role-players loaded on the emergency group, then the information that is reported on the group will not be actioned. It is therefore important to have security/crime response role-players on the emergency group so that they can monitor the information that is reported on the group and respond when appropriate. It is important that group members follow a response protocol on the WhatsApp group so that they can assist responding role-players with additional useful information that will help to guide the manner of their response. This includes calling the SAPS reporting channel 10111 before reporting information on the group.

6.3 Recommendations

A gap that was exposed by the current study that may have serious consequences for the effective use of WhatsApp now and in the future is omissions in the legal framework which addresses the use of social media in South Africa. Policy makers and social media operators should thus collaborate with legal experts to regulate social media platforms and their use to ensure that these platforms are managed and utilised within the law.

The study also exposed a significant gap between WhatsApp users, WhatsApp administrators and the security structures – the SAPS, CPFs and private security companies – that respond to information posted on WhatsApp groups. As the ‘eyes and the ears’ of security structures, trust is a vital component that will encourage citizens to be aware of and respond appropriately to potential and actual criminal activities in their respective areas. This trust will only be encouraged and enhanced if there is open communication among members of these groups, and thus public relations officers should be employed by these security structures to liaise with, inform and encourage WhatsApp group members on a regular basis.

The proliferation of the use of WhatsApp among communities in the Highway Area was based on an assumption that was not verified by actual updated research data. It is therefore recommended that future studies explore the actual extent of the use of this social media platform in specific crime-ridden areas. Moreover, its value as a crime prevention tool should also be evaluated in rural areas as well, as residents in these areas are notoriously impacted by criminal activities.

WhatsApp is essentially a social tool that connects societies and people from all spheres and all walks of life. It is thus recommended that the exploration of the applicability of WhatsApp be extended in future studies to include other emergency services such as medical emergencies, missing persons – particularly children – and other disasters, such as vehicle accidents and natural disasters.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter concluded the researcher's evaluation of the findings which were based on data that had been collected by means of individual, in-depth interviews. The research aim was to determine the effectiveness of the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes in the Highway Area near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter presented some guidelines for regulating the use of WhatsApp for crime prevention purposes. The researcher believes that these guidelines will significantly assist in guiding the use of WhatsApp by role-players and community members to ensure that crime prevention efforts are maximised, that no laws are violated, and that no police investigations are jeopardised. In addition, the researcher believes that the findings of this study will have massive implications for the development of appropriate policies that are directly related to social media, as such clear policies did not exist prior to the commencement of the study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

An Analysis of WhatsApp as a Tool for Crime Prevention in KwaZulu-Natal.

1. Subject Demographics:

Category	Neighbourhood Watch		Security Company		Community Organisation	
Subject	1	2	3	4	5	

2. Why WhatsApp

2.1. Social Media

2.2. WhatsApp

3. Community Crime Levels and Trends

3.1. Crime

3.2. Crime Prevention

4. WhatsApp as a Crime Prevention Tool

5. Does it Work?

5.1. Impact

5.2. Best Practices

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form (English Version)

Dear (Name of research participant)

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

TITLE OF STUDY

An Analysis of WhatsApp as a Tool for Crime Prevention in KwaZulu-Natal

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The premise of this research is to analyse the use of WhatsApp, particularly the groups, as a tool for crime prevention in KZN by communities in the upper Highway Area, as well as to determine its effectiveness in the prevention of crime in the community. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to determine effective guidelines for the proper use of WhatsApp by communities to enhance successes of community-based crime prevention efforts in KZN.

STUDY PROCEDURES

This research will be conducted through in-depth, individual interviews, which will be guided by a list of pre-determined topics that will guide each interview. The topics will focus on the aspects of WhatsApp that make it the chosen social media platform of choice in your community; the crime problems in your community; the aspects of WhatsApp that make it an effective tool for crime prevention purposes; and common issues that arise with the use of WhatsApp by communities for crime prevention purposes.

Your involvement in the study will entail one individual interview that will be in-depth. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and it will only be done once. The researcher will ensure that you fully understand every aspect of the research and your participation in it, as well as that you feel comfortable with the researcher and translator throughout the data

collection process, so that any possible discomfort is minimised. Once the research is completed, you will receive a final copy of the dissertation to read through for your consideration. In addition, you may use the findings of the research to assist with the most effective use of WhatsApp in your community body for crime prevention purposes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality, including the following:

- The assignment of a code name once you have been sampled and this code name will be used to refer to you in the data collection, data analysis and in the final copy of the dissertation.
- When the researcher is done with the research, the voice recordings and each transcription of each interview will be kept on a secure online database that only the researcher will have access to after the data collection and data analysis processes. The recordings will be erased and each transcription will be destroyed after five years of the research being completed. In an event of the researcher deciding to discontinue the research, all information and data collected from you will be returned to you.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Jodie du Plessis

Criminology and Forensic Studies

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College)

073 209 9313

jodiedup@gmail.com

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research

participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Primary Investigator, please contact the researcher's supervisor Dr. Mkhize at (031) 260 1773 / email mkhizes1@ukzn.ac.za; or the University Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), Ms Phumelele Ximba at 0312603587, ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / hssrechumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you have signed the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data (i.e., the transcription of your interview) will be returned to you or destroyed.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research project.

I hereby agree/do not agree to be audio-recorded

Agree

Disagree

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form (isiZulu Version)

Othandekayo (igama lomhlangenyeli ocwaningo)

Ucelwa ukuthi uhlanganyele ocwaningweni locwaningo. Ngaphambi kokuba unqume ukuhlanyela kulolu cwaningo, kubalulekile ukuthi uqonde ukuthi kungani ucwaningo lwenziwe nokuthi luzobandakanya. Sicela ufunde ulwazi olulandelayo ngokucophelela. Sicela ubuze umcwaningi uma kukhona okungacaci noma uma udinga ulwazi oluthe xaxa.

ISIHLOKO SESIFUNDO

Ukuhlaziya kwe-WhatsApp njengethuluzi lokuvimbela ubugebengu eKwaZulu – Natali.

INHLOSO YOCWANINGO

Isisekelo salolu cwaningo ukuhlaziya ukusetshenziswa kwe – WhatsApp, ikakhulukazi amaqembu njengethuluzi lokuvimbela ubugebengu eKZN ngemiphakathi ephakeme emgaqweni omkhulu, kanye nokunquma ukusebenza kwayo ekuvimbeleni ubugebengu emphakathini. Ngaphezu kwalokho, inhloso yalolucwaningo ukukhomba izinqondiso eziphumelelayo zokusebenzisa kahle i-WhatsApp ngemiphakathi ukuthuthukisa impumelelo yemigomo yokuvimbela ubugebengu emphakathini eKZN.

IZINQUBO ZOKUFUNDA

Lolucwaningo luzoqhutshwa ngokujulile, izingxoxo zomuntu ngamunye, ezizoqondiswa uhlu lwezihloko ezandulelwe ngaphambili ezizoqondiswa ingxoxo. Izihloko zizogxila ezintweni ze-WhatsApp ezenza kube yi-platform ekhethiwe yokuxhumana yomphakathi emphakathini wakho, inkinga yobugebengu emphakathini, izici ze-WhatsApp ezenza kube ithuluzi eliphumelelayo lokuvimbela ubugebengu nezinkinga ezivame ukuvela ukusetshenziswa kwe-WhatsApp ngemiphakathi ngenhloso yokuvimbela ubugebengu.

Ukubandakanyeka kwakho ekutadisheni kuzoba ngudliwano olulodwa lomuntu oluzobe lujulile. Le nxoxo izothatha cishe imizuzu engama – 60 futhi iyokwenziwa kanye kuphela.

Umcwaningi uzoqiniseka ukuthi uqonda ngokugcwele zonke izici zocwaningo nokuhlanganyela kwakho kuwo, kanye nokuthi uzizwa ukhulekile nomcwaningi kanye nomhumushi kulo lonke uhlelo lokuqoqa idatha, ukuze kungakhathaliseki ukuthi kujani ukukhathazeka ukunciphisa. Uma ucwaningo seluphelile, uzothola ikhopyo yokugcina yombhalo ukuze ufunde ngokucubungula kwakho. Ngaphezu kwalokho, ungasebenzisa ugwaninga kocwaningo ukuze usize ngosebenzisa kahle i-WhatsApp emzimbeni wakho womphakathi ngezinhloso zokuvimbela ubugebengu.

UKUYIMFIHLO

Yonke imizamo izokwenziwa ngumcwaningi ukugcina imfihlo yakho ukwenza lokhu okulandelayo:

- Ukunikezwa kwegama lekhodi uma ususampuliwe futhi leli gama lekhodi lizosetshenziswa ukubhekisela kuwe ekuqoqweni kwedatha, ukuhlukaniswa kwedatha.
- Lapho umcwaningi esebenza nokucwaninga, ukurekhoda kwezi nokubhalwa kwansuku zonke kwengxoxo ngayinye kuzogcinwa kwistoreji esiphephile se-intanethi okuwukuthi umcwaningi kuphela ozokwenza emva kokuqoqwa kwedatha nokuhlanganiswa kwedatha. Ukuqoqwa kuzonqunwa futhi umbhalo ngamunye uzobhuyiswa ngemuva kweminyaka emihlanu yocwaningo oluqediwe. Emicimbini womcwaningo onquma ukuyeka ucwaningo, lonke ulwazi nedatha eliqoqwe kuwe lizobuyiselwa kuwe.

UMPHENYI OMKHULU

Jodie du Plessis

Ucwaningo lwe – Criminology kanye ne – forensic

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073 209 9313

jodieup@gmail.com

ULWAZI LOKUXHUMANA

Uma unemibuzo nganoma yisikhathi mayelana nalolu cwaningo noma uhlangabezana nemiphumela emibi njengemiphumela wokuhlanganyela kulolu cwaningo, ungaxhumana nomcwaningi onolwazi lwakhe lokuxhumana olunikezwe ekhasini lokuqala. Uma unemibuzo

emayelana namalungelo akho njengomhlanganyeli ocwaningo noma kuphakama izinkinga ongazizwa ungakhuluma noMphenyi oyinhloko, sicela uxhumane nomqondisi womcwaningo uDokotela. Mkhize ku (031) 260 [1773](tel:0312601773) / mkhize5@ukzn.ac.za noma I – University Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), Ms Phumelele Ximba ku 031 260 3587, ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / hssrechhumanities@ukzn.ac.za

UKUZIBANDAKANYA OKUZITHADELA

Ukuhlanganyela kwakho kulolu cwaningo kungukuzithandela. Kungukuthi ukuthi unqume ukuthi ngabe ungahlanganywla yini kololu cwaningo noma cha, uzocelwa ukuthi usayine ifomo lokuvuma, usukhulekile ukuhoxisa nganoma yisiphi isikhathi futhi unganaki isizathu. Ukususa kulolu cwaningo ngeke kusebenze ubuhlobo obunakho, uma bukhona, nomcwaningi. Uma uhoxisa isifundo ngaphambi kokuqoqwa kwedatha kuaedile, idatha yakho (isibonelo ukubhaliswa kwengxoxo yakho) izobuyiselwa kuwe noma ibhujiswe.

ISIMEMEZELO SEMVUME

Ngako-ke ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyaqonda okuqukthwe kwale phepha kanye nemvelo yocwaningo lokucwaninga, futhi ngiyavuma ukuthi ngihlanganyele kulomsebenzi (kuleprojekthi) yocwaningo.

Ngiyavuma/angivumelani ukuba abekwe umsindo oqoshiwe:

Ngiyavuma

Angvumelani

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngiyinkuleko yokuhoxisa kulo msabenzi nganoma yisiphi isikhathi, uma ngifisa.

Isingesha yomhlanganyeli _____ usuku _____

Isignesha yomcwaningi _____ usuku _____