Chapter 5

Gender and shop theft

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the focus is on the empirical findings of the survey pertaining to gender and shop theft. These findings will be discussed in terms of the main elements of the questionnaire. These elements are as follows: gender, age, grades and personal views regarding various crimes. The respondents= perceptions when small items like, food and clothing are stolen are also examined. Various other views like the taking of goods, that shops make a lot of money with, the opportunity to steal, and the serious consequences of shop theft, and its effects on all the members of the community, are also discussed. The perception that stores seldom prosecute is queried, as well as friends who dare each other to shoplift. Additional questions included in the questionnaire are whether shoplifting generates excitement.

Another question that was raised in the questionnaire was an appropriate sentence. What would be an appropriate sentence for a first offender who is 21 years old, and who has stolen a television from a shop? If a prison sentence were recommended, what would be an appropriate period to spend in prison? The relevant penalty for another first-time offender, who has stolen a television set from a house, as well as the recommended period for a prison sentence, if a prison sentence was deemed appropriate, was also queried. The respondents were also asked if they have taken anything from a shop in the last 3 years. If their answer was yes, how many times, and what were stolen. Lastly, their primary motivation for taking the mentioned items was also queried. The relationship between gender and shop theft will now be discussed.

5.2   Gender and shop theft

The respondents of the research consisted of 208 male and 291 female learners. One hundred and sixty (160) were in grade 10, one hundred and forty four (144) in grade 11 and one hundred and ninety six (196) were in grade 12.

5.2.1   Grade

Table 1: Gender versus Grade

Gender	Grade			Total
	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	
Male	65 (13.0%)	48(9.6%)	95(19.0%)	208(41.7%)
Female	94 (18.8%)	96 (19.2%)	101 (20.2%)	291 (58.3%)
Total	159 (31.9%)	144 (28.9%)	196 (39.3%)	499 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 7,886; DF 3; Prob 0.019

A significant statistical difference exists between males and females pertaining to grade. More females are found in all the grades than males, 101 in grade 12, 96 in grade 11 and 94 in grade 10, whereas more males were in grade 12, followed by 65 in grade 10 and 48 were in grade 11.

The research also uncovered meaningful figures that relate to the respondents= views regarding the definition of serious crimes. Four hundred and seventy nine (479) (95.8%) respondents agreed that violent crimes, such as murder, rape, hijacking and assault that result in severe injury, are serious crimes.

5.2.2   Serious crime

Table 2: Gender versus Serious crime

Gender	Serious crime		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	195 (39.2%)	12 (2.4%)	207 (41.6%)
Female	284(57.1%)	6 (1.2%)	290 (58.4 %)
Total	479 (96.4%)	18 (3.6%)	497 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 4,810; DF 1; Prob. 0,028

Significant statistical differences are registered between the male and female respondents regarding behaviour that is universally viewed as serious crimes, such as violent criminal acts which include murder, rape, hijacking and assault that result in severe injury. Nearly sixty percent (59.3%) of the female respondents regard such behaviour as serious crimes, whilst only 40.7 percent of the boys agree. This finding can possibly be related to the different ways in which boys and girls are socialised in South Africa. This result may also be linked to some elements of the differential association theory and anomie innovation, although this needs further investigation.

There are also differences between male and female respondents= views regarding the removal of food from a store under certain conditions. One out of five (19.9%) of the respondents agree that it is all right to do it, whilst nearly eighty percent (79%) 405, disagree. The differences between the male and female respondents are presented in table 3.

5.2.3   Taking food

Table 3: Gender versus Taking food

Gender	All right to take food				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Male	25 (5.1%)	28 (5.7%)	91 (18.5%)	61 (12.4%)	205 (41.6%)
Female	12 (2.4%)	34 (6.9%)	138 (28.0%)	104 (21.1%)	288 (58.4%)
Total	37 (7.5%)	62 (12.6%)	229 (46.5%)	165 (33.5%)	493 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 12,378; DF 3; Prob. 0.006

Significant statistical differences between males and females were discovered with regard to table 3 (It is allright to take food from stores). When strongly agree and agree were grouped together more males (53) than females (46) said it is allright to take food whereas when disagree and strongly disagree were grouped together more females (242) than males (152) disagreed with the statement because they are females. The figures reflect that the culture of entitlement, of getting something for nothing, are more likely to be displayed by boys, as opposed to the girls who display more conforming behaviour. This finding may be related to the fact that both boys and girls are raised in a society characterised by patriarchy. The boys, more so than the girls, identify with the role of fending for one≈s family, thus they do not view the act of stealing in order to provide food for one≈s family as unlawful, therefore, acts such as shop theft are justifiable to them.

5.2.4   Taking clothing

Table 4: Gender versus Taking clothing

Gender	All right to take clothing				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Male	12 (2.4%)	13 (2.6%)	66 (13.4%)	114 (23.1%)	205 (41.6%)
Female	7 (1.4%)	8 (1.6%)	116 (23.5%)	157 (31.8%)	288 (58.4%)
Total	19 (3.9%)	21 (4.3%)	182 (36.9%)	271 (55.0%)	493 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 9,357; DF 3; Prob 0.025

Table 4 findings indicate that significant statistical differences exist between female and male respondents with regard to taking clothing from stores, if individuals or their families cannot afford to pay for such items. When disagree and strongly disagree were grouped together indicated that more females (273) than males (180) disagreed with the above statement. Because they are girls, they will differ significantly from boys. This finding may also be understood in terms of females who are socially more conforming, and thus more law-abiding, than males, who are socialised to find ways and means to fend for themselves. As a result they are more inclined to oppose the conventional norms and values of society.

5.2.5   Stores make profit

Table 5: Gender versus Stores make profit

Gender	Shops make profit				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Male	15 (3.1%)	15 (3.1%)	81 (16.6%)	90 (18.4%)	201 (41.1%)
Female	5 (1.0%)	18 (3.7%)	120 (24.5%)	145 (29.7%)	288 (58.9%)
Total	20 (4.1%)	33 (6.7%)	201 (41.1%)	235 (48.1%)	489 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 10,568; DF 3; Prob 0.014

There are significant statistical differences between males and females concerning the statement It is all right to take goods from shops, because they make a lot of profit and they can afford to lose some money.

Table 5 findings indicate that more females (265) than males (171) are in disagreement with the above mentioned statement. The findings also indicate that more males (30) than females (23) agree with the statement that it is allright to steal from stores because stores make a lot of profit. The above figures in table 5 project males= view on stores as institutions, insured against losses, capable of incurring costs when encountered. Stores are viewed as impersonal entities and not regarded as direct victims. In addition to that, males further their political ideology of anti-capitalism, since capitalism exploits economically powerless people.

5.2.6   Opportunity presented itself

Table 6: Gender versus If the opportunity presented itself

Gender	Opportunity for shop theft				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Male	31 (6.4%)	26 (5.3%)	54 (11.1%)	91 (18.6%)	202 (41.4%)
Female	10 (2.0%)	42 (8.6%)	92 (18.9%)	142 (29.1%)	286 (58.6%)
Total	41 (8.4%)	68 (13.9%)	146 (29.9%)	233 (47.7%)	488 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 21,760; DF 3; Prob 0.000

Highly significant statistical differences occur between female and male respondents regarding their perceptions about the removal of merchandise from shops, if the opportunity presents itself, and if they will not be caught.

Table 6 findings indicate that a highly significant number of females (234) more than males (145) do not agree with the above cited statement when disagree and strongly disagree were grouped together, because they are girls they tend to differ significantly with boys as far as certain view point are concerned.

5.2.7   Friends dare you to do so

Table 7: Gender versus If your friends dare you to do so

Gender	Friends dare you				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Male	8 (1.7%)	12 (2.5%)	51 (10.6%)	128 (26.6%)	199 (41.3%)
Female	5 (1.0%)	6 (1.2%)	69 (14.3%)	203 (42.1%)	283 (58.7%)
Total	13 (2.7%)	18 (3.7%)	120 (24.9%)	331 (68.7%)	482 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 7,990; DF 3; Prob 0.046

Significant statistical differences between male and female respondents were registered with regard to the taking of merchandise from stores if one≤s friends dare one to do so.   When disagree and strongly disagree were grouped together, the following findings discovered: more females (272) than males (179) disagreed with the above cited statement because they are girls, they show more conformity than boys. Teenagers are always in the company of friends, and demonstrate group membership by taking merchandise that has a prestige value within the group but as far as girls were concerned the influence of the group on an individual show no effect as far as negative peer group pressure is concerned. The influence of the group on an individual is called reference group influence (Cant 1991:150) and may also be linked to the elements of the differential association theory.

5.2.8   Theft from house

Table 8: Gender versus Theft from house

Gender	Theft of TV from house					Total
	Fine	Prison sentence	Community service	Suspended sentence	Any other sentence	
Male	15 (3.2%)	146 (31.1%)	20 (4.3%)	10 (2.1%)	10 (2.1%)	201 (42.9%)
Female	17 (3.6%)	202 (43.1%)	27 (5.8%)	20 (4.3%)	2 (.4%)	268 (57.1%)
Total	32 (6.8%)	348 (74.2%)	47(10.0%)	30 (6.4%)	12 (2.6%)	469 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 9,467; DF 4; Prob 0.050

Significant statistical differences were registered between males and females with regard to the appropriate type of sentence for a twenty-one year old, who has stolen a television from a house. Table 8 findings show that more females (202) than males (146) are convinced that a prison sentence is appropriate. By choosing prison sentence reinforces the broader society=s view that shop theft is a serious problem and the imposition of such a penalty might alter the negative views held on the identified problem.

5.2.9   Recommended prison sentences for house theft

Table 9: Gender versus Recommended prison sentences for house theft

Gender	Q26 Recommended sentences for stealing TV													Total
	2-6 months	6 months to a year	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	9.00 6-10 years	10.00 11-15 years	11.00 16-20 years	12.00 21-25 years	13.00 more than 25 years	15.00 life sentence	
Male	11 (3.2%)	18 (5.2%)	10 (2.9%)	24 (7.0%)	9 (2.6%)	9 (2.6%)	18 (5.2%)	14 (4.1%)	5 (1.4%)	6 (1.7%)	4 (1.2%)		12 (3.5%)	145 (42.0%)
Female	22 (6.4%)	17 (4.9%)	43 (12.5%)	15 (4.3%)	24 (7.0%)	6 (1.7%)	20 (5.8%)	14 (4.1%)	6 (1.7%)	2 (.6%)	5 (1.4%)	11 (3.2%)	8 (2.3%)	200 (58.0%)

Total	33 (9.6%)	35 (10.1%)	53 (15.4%)	9 (11.3%)	33 (9.6%)	15 (4.3%)	38 (11.0%)	28 (8.1%)	11 (3.2%)	8 (2.3%)	9 (2.6%)	11 (3.2%)	20 (5.8%)	345 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 40,438; DF 13; Prob 0.000

Highly significant statistical differences between males and females were discovered with regard to the recommended prison sentence for a first offender of 21 years old, who has stolen a television set from a house.

The following findings were registered (table 9) when 1 month and 2-6 months were grouped together, more females (29) than males (16) recommended the sentence ranging between from 1 month to 6 months. When 6 months and 1 year were grouped together, more females (60) than males (28) were convinced that a penalty between 6 months to one year was appropriate, because they are females they view certain aspects different from their male counterparts.

Table 9 findings indicate that more females (39) than males (33) opted for a sentence between 2 to 3 years when grouped together. When 4 and 5 years sentences were grouped together (27) males and (26) females agreed with a sentence between 4 and 5 years, it is also discovered that when 6-10 and 11-15 years were grouped together both boys (19) and girls (20) recommended the same prison penalty, it is not known as to what these findings might be attributed to, a further research in this regard is needed.

Table 9 findings discovered that when 16-20 and 21-25 years were grouped together (10) males recommended a penalty between 16 and 25 years with only (7) females also agreeing with their male counterparts and lastly, when more than 25 years and life imprisonment were grouped together, more females (19) than males (12) recommended maximum

penalties ranging from 25

years to life sentence

because they are

females.

5.2.10 Ever taken anything in the last three years

Table 10: Gender versus Ever taken anything in the last three years

Gender	Ever taken anything in the last 3 years?		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	74 (15.1 %)	130 (26.5%)	204 (41.5 %)
Female	40 (8.1%)	247 (50.3%)	287 (58.5%)
Total	114(23.2%)	377(76.8%)	491 (100.0%)

Chi-Square 33,374; DF 1; Prob 0.000

Highly significant statistical differences between males and females were discovered with regard
to the question > Have you ever taken anything from a shop without paying for it during the last three
years?=

Table 10 findings indicate that more males (74) than females (40) said yes to the question posed, because they are boys will differ significantly from girls. The findings also revealed that more females (247) than males (130) said they did not take anything from the stores in the last three years because they are girls.

5.2.11 Number of times items stolen

Table 11: Gender versus Number of times items stolen

Gender	Number of times taken something			Total
	Once	Twice	Thrice or more	
Male	27(24.3%)	15(13.5%)	30(27.0%)	72(64.9%)
Female	18(16.2%)	14(12.6%)	7(6.3%)	39(35.1%)
Total	45 (40.5%)	29(26.1%)	37(33.3%)	111(100.0%)

Chi-Square 6,934; DF 2; Prob 0.031

Table 11 findings indicate that significant statistical differences exist between males and females pertaining to the number of times items were taken from stores. Table 11 discovered that more males (30) stole thrice or more, followed by 27 (once) and 15 have stolen twice whereas 18 females said to have taken from stores only once, followed by 14 (twice) and 7 mentioning to have stolen thrice or more. Boys stole more than girls because they are boys, they steal as individuals as well as in a group context as a result of friends dare them to do so or because of the opportunity

that has presented itself or inadequate security guards in stores.

5.3   *Conclusion*

This chapter concentrated on the correlation between gender and shop theft and revealed
empirically significant statistical dissimilarities. It is apparent that males perceive shop theft related
aspects as insignificant when their views are compared to those of females. This supports the
universal view that men commit more crimes than women do. To the question Have they taken
anything from stores in the last three years? more males have stolen from stores thrice or more
than females.

It can be concluded, based on the projected findings, that more males are inclined to commit shop
theft than females. This is supported by the fact that more males strongly agree that opportunity
plays a significant role in their stealing behaviour, whereas females disagree with their male
counterparts.

Significant statistical differences between males and females will exist, simply because they
subscribe to different schools of thought, biologically and otherwise. Males tend to view shop theft
as a less serious crime, whereas females regard it as a serious social, economic as well as legal

problem.

The next two variables: age and grade will be explored in chapter 6.