

# A Miscellaneous Hindrances to an Effective Response to Cable Theft in Durban Railway Stations, South Africa

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on notable miscellaneous hindrances to an effective response to cable theft in Durban railway stations of South Africa. From a qualitative standpoint; data was collected from Eight (8) purposively selected individuals to solicit their respective perceptions and experiences on this subject. This involved the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) 'Security Personnels – Cable Theft Investigators and Cable Theft Railway Patrollers, all involved in combating cable theft in Durban railway stations. Inductive Thematic Analysis was used for data analysis. This study found that scrap metal dealers are the major key contributors to cable theft in the Durban railway stations; and also the value of copper cable on the market promotes the exponential rise of cable theft. It was also established that, there was no proper protection of the rail infrastructure, and cable thieves get lighter sentences. It was further established that cable theft is perpetuated by the shortage of indispensable resources and workforce or police visibility in the stations. For the recommendations: More attention must be paid to scrap metal dealers by offering strict rules on the issuing of trading licenses. Moreover, severe stiff sentences should be handed to potential offenders and better working relations should be established, with more resources geared to the PRASA security department.

**Keywords:** Cable Theft, Durban railway stations, Effective response(s), Miscellaneous hindrances, South Africa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cable theft in railway stations has appeared as a significant and contentious problem throughout South Africa, particularly in Durban. Many industries, including the railways, telecommunications, the power industry, and utility companies have been subjected to persistent cable theft. The current (2020) Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs [CoGTA] - Andries Carl Nel provides that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) does not deal effectively with cable theft and theft of public infrastructure and that there are presently weaknesses in our CJS since matters often get treated as petty crimes (News24, 2014).

Considerable figures of cable theft in South Africa shows that this scourge moves in a rate of knots, and could sooner become a cataclysmic scourge. The South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SACCI) emphasised that the barometer level of this crime increased to R13.6 Million in April 2015, from R12.6 million in March 2015 (Polity, 2015). Moreover, the April 2015 figure was 7.08% higher than the March 2015 figure, as approximately 0.11% lower than the year 2014 was recorded (Polity, 2015). Internationally,

the copper cable theft is linked with the sudden rise in demand for this semi-precious metal in the United States of America (USA). Scott Berinato of Detroit Edison (DTE) electric company mentions that in 2003 when the "Grasberg copper and gold mine" collapsed in Indonesia; where copper was sold for 65 cents a pound on the London Metals Exchange (LME). As a result, the economy forced the copper price to rise to record highs of \$3 per pound (R36.00) from 2003 to 2006, with China reported the biggest buyer (Arendse, 2010).

The consulted literature studies by the researchers highlights that not only do organisations suffer astronomical financial losses but also the country suffers detrimentally due to this scourge. Subsequently; Ellman (2012) points out that cable theft at railway stations disrupt passengers, and it also escalates costs to the rail industry. Moreover, cable theft in railway stations has caused the cancellation of many national rail services and cost network rail millions of rands to repair the damage, and it became clear that an on-going demand for this metal means the appeal of cable theft to opportunist criminals is likely to continue. The latest report (2020) on cable theft in Durban (Isipingo specifically) reveals that police got a tip-off from the public and proceeded to the area on time where they found Three (3) males stealing the cables and loading them into a truck. Among other things, police found on the scene were copper cables valued at R400 000.00,

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a chainsaw and other tools (see Independent Online, 2020). In another instance, police officers also got tip-off information regarding men who were transporting copper cables in their vehicles; the police found copper cables that were off-loaded into a container. Notably, it was estimated that the seized copper cables worth R500, 000 (Rising Sun, 2020).

Consequently; in 2018, the residents in the surrounding squatter camps of Durban inner city and concerned commuters were reported furious, as trains from Transnet Freight Rail (TFR) were allegedly causing delays on the railway lines. The stated problems were related to cable theft and theft of signals in railway lines (Polity, 2018). Notably, Metrorail in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) lose millions of rands through infrastructure vandalism (Involving train windows hit by stones and trains burnt) by disgruntled passengers owing to train delays caused by stolen cables in railway lines. When cables are stolen from railway lines, the Metrorail has to replace such cables, which also caused disruptions on railway services, resulting in fewer train tickets being sold (Daily News, 2014).

The cable theft on railway stations in Durban, KZN is not a new phenomenon. News24 (2002) states that "thieves stole two meters of vital signal cable on a busy railway line at KwaDukuza on the KZN North Coast, rendering the 'automated system' on the track used daily by more than 4 000 commuters." This system was brought to a standstill and this is occurring nationally and is touted to be the cause of major distractions, leading to South Africa losing millions of rands annually due to this crime. Furthermore, KZN Metrorail, Spoornet, Telkom, Eskom and Tongaat Hulett combined losses of this practice, estimated at around R5.7 million through the theft of copper wires, cables and power lines, which resulted in the major power failures and the disruption of transport and communication services (News24, 2002).

The public members should be aware that copper cable theft holds a specific danger to the entire South African industry infrastructure; this causes a '*Domino* [The effect of the *Domino* theory] *effect*' (The situation in which something, usually something bad happens, causing other similar events to happen) that vibrates on all levels. For example, if the operational transport systems, such as buses, trains or ships, were to be stopped, all the supporting and dependent services would follow. Thus, the importance of conducting this study rests on bringing collation to the available

structures to effectively combat this crime, by looking at the existing miscellaneous hindrances to an effective response to cable theft in Durban railway stations of South Africa. The researchers believed that the strategies to be revealed by this study can be utilised on Durban railway stations specifically to eradicate this crime and in South Africa in general. This can also provide a closer look to the nature and contributing factors to cable theft in the study location. An understanding of these specific factors to inhibit available mitigation strategies of effectively combating this crime and also gauge perceptions of seminal responders to this crime.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method was adopted in this study to explore and identify the actual perceptions of the conspicuous 'Cable Theft Investigators and Cable Theft Railway Patrollers' from PRASA Protection Services, all involved in combating cable theft in the Durban railway stations. An exploratory research design was adopted to explore and discover crucial information on this subject. Two techniques, namely: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGDS) were used to collect data, using both purposive and snowball sampling methods. This was based on a reason adopted by Nobanda (2018) affirming that "qualitative researchers try to get an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the factors that control or influence behaviour." This study explored and discovered the actual perceptions of cable theft investigators and cable theft railway patrollers involved in mitigating the crime perpetuated at Durban railway stations. The collected data was analysed using Inductive Thematic Analysis.'

### 2.1. Study Population and Sample Size

A total number of eight (8) participants were recruited from PRASA protection services in Durban, South Africa. The choice of the purposive sampling technique was justified based on the participants' knowledge and experience in investigating cable theft in railway stations. The study sample included cable theft investigators and cable theft railway patrollers from PRASA Protection Services involved in combating cable theft in the Durban railway stations. It was confirmed that these selected participants provided rich data that the study purposely investigated. Table 1 provides a tabular presentation of the participants sampled and the justification for their selection.

## 2.2. Method of Primary Data Collection

The data were collected using KIs and FGDs. These methods were utilised to gain in-depth data that would assist in producing a comprehensive report as it would be considered as the first-hand information shared by the selected PRASA individuals, about their experiences and perceptions. An 'Interview Schedule Guide' was used to guide the interview process, however, throughout the process and where necessary participants were probed for more in-depth information about the topic. The questions were open-ended, making it possible for the interviewer to include new insights during the interview procedure depending on the information shared by the interviewed participant to add the information that was required for the study. The interviews were voice recorded with the participants' permission. For participants who were categorised as KIs, interviews were conducted in their offices as privacy was assured. FGDs interviews were conducted during the working time at the railway stations. A copy of the said guide and the contact details of the researchers were given to every interviewee for possible inquiries during the process of the study and future inquiries. The length of each interview was 20-30 minutes.

The purpose of the study, the confidentiality clause were explained to the interviewees during the interview process, by ensuring that all gathered information was regarded as personal and confidential. The researchers did not disclose participants particulars. This was accomplished by allocating 'Codes' to each participant and also sought permission to record their voices as they were responding to the questions imposed. Each conducted interview was provided with a time-frame, following a specific format. Relevant instructions were stated on the 'Informed Consent Form' designed for the study. The participants were given ample time to read with an understanding of what was stated on the stated form to be signed by both parties involved. Furthermore, the elicited interviews were conducted in

the preferred language of correspondence. The validity of this study was achieved by determining whether the obtained findings were accurate from the standpoint of the researchers and the interviewed participants. The researchers checked-out whether the meaning and interpretation of the responses were sound based on accurate reflections of what they said and what they intended to find-out. The data and information obtained from the consulted literature studies and interviews was used to establish patterns and trends to ensure validity of the obtained data and information. The researchers also used numerous sources of information such as literature and interviews.

Furthermore, the reliability remain relevant to this study; as the researchers can show the readers procedures that led to a particular set of conclusions in this study. The collected data was rigorously and consistently interpreted to ensure that the collected raw data and the meanings attached by the participants were dependable and consistent in nature.

The reviewed literature studies provided an overview of existing publications on this subject, confirmed by the list of references, across Southern Africa and some parts of the globe, was conducted by the researchers. The views of different authors that relate to the problem that was researched were discussed to place the current research project within a conceptual context. Information sources comprised of additional reputable academic journal articles, books and information available on the internet, relating to this study topic. The criteria of inclusion were that participants should be either male or female who has been dealing with cable theft incidents for quite some time in Durban.

## 2.3. Method of Data Analysis

The Inductive Thematic Analysis was adopted to analyse the collected data. This method was chosen because the researchers were able to analyse, classify

**Table 1: Participants Sampled for the Study**

Designation	Number of participants	Justification for recruitment
Cable Theft Investigators	2	They are limited in number. Due to their rich knowledge of investigating cable theft and their involvement in attending cases of those who had been arrested. was also foreseen that they would provide rich data for the study and provide their views especially on the light sentences given to the cable theft perpetrators
Cable Theft Railway Patrollers	6	The reason is that they are the ones who patrol the railway lines in different railway stations of Durban area, they were having rich information regarding how this crime can be mitigated, and they have been working in this field for many years.

Source: Researchers illustration.

and present the data according to themes that emerged (Pearse, 2019). Therefore, the collected data was analysed to reach structured, reliable, and valid conclusions. In this manner, the narratives of the interviewed participants concerning their experiences and perceptions of investigating cable theft in Durban railway stations, and the challenges experienced in the process of mitigating this crime were adequately discovered or explored. The findings of this study were verified using the methods to ensure trustworthiness, including 'credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability' (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014). Ethical approval was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethics in Research Committee as well as from PRASA Protection Services, where participants were recruited and human participants were interviewed for this study, all the necessary approvals were obtained from the mentioned institutions.

As stated *Supra*, this study used the Indictive Thematic Analysis to analyse the identified themes emerged during the conducted KIs and FGDs. Also, it was inspired by the steps formulated by Braun and Clarke (2006), which are typically employed when researchers are generating, identifying and grouping study themes. This involved reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals. The collected data was analysed so that structured, reliable and valid conclusions are reached (Maluleke, 2016; Maluleke, 2020; Maluleke, Tshabalala, Barkhuizen, 2020; Maluleke, Mokwena & Motsepa, 2016; Maluleke & Mofokeng, 2016 and Maluleke & Mokwena, 2017). These steps are as discussed and applied to this study as follows:

#### ***Familiarising Yourself with the Data***

In the process, eight (8) participants were selected; two (2) served as the KIs and six (6) served as the FGD members. FGDs and KIs meetings were held, and the researchers transcribed responses. The data was collected from all the selected participants. Thereafter, during the process, the initial ideas were noted down. Repeated ideas and shared information that emerged from the participants were examined. Similar and contradictory ideas and patterns were marked and analysed according to their relevance to the objectives of this study. This process assisted the researchers in gaining an initial understanding of the views of the participants concerning the research subject.

#### ***Generating Initial Codes and Searching for Themes***

During the coding phase, the whole data set was given equal attention so that full consideration could be given to repeated patterns with the data collected. These themes explained larger sections of the data collected by combining different codes that may have been very similar or may have been considered to have same aspects within the collected data. All initial codes relevant to the research question were incorporated into a theme.

#### ***Reviewing Themes***

In this phase, the researchers developed thematic maps to aid the generation of themes, helping the researchers to visualise and consider the links and relationships between themes that emerged. At this point, the themes that did not have enough data to support them or were too diverse were discarded. This refinement of the themes took place on two levels, primarily with the coded data ensuring they formed a coherent pattern, and, secondly, once a coherent pattern has formed the themes were considered about the data set as a whole. This stage lasted until a clear idea of the various themes and how they fitted together emerged.

#### ***Defining and Naming Themes***

The phase of defining and naming the themes is the second last phase. Each theme needs to be clearly defined and accompanied by a detailed analysis. It was highly important to develop short but punchy names that conveyed an immediate indication of the essence of the theme. Themes are viewed as essential in determining the understandings of all the participants.

#### ***Producing the Report***

The final stage (the report production) involved choosing examples of transcripts to illustrate elements of the themes, considering and comparing the findings relating to the existing literature and drawing conclusions (Implications for the future). Again, it was at this stage that the researchers mainly made linkages and interpreted the data. This section provided a platform for demonstrating the practical as well as the theoretical implications of the results.

### **3. IDENTIFICATION OF STUDY THEMES AND CHALLENGES**

The findings of this study relates to the identified study themes and challenges to clearly show that cable theft in railway stations of Durban still exists and this

has contributed negatively to the rail industry particularly PRASA in Durban. Among other things, scrap metal dealers who buy stolen cables from non-authorized associates, the value of the copper in the market, shortage of manpower, lack of proper protection, lack of reporting structures within the department, and light sentences given to the perpetrators of this crime drastically contribute to cable theft in railway stations (The list is inexhaustible).

**3.1. Scrap Metal Dealers who Buy Stolen Cables from Non-Authorised Associates**

These criminals do not steal without knowing who the buyer of the cables will be. They are connected with scrap metal dealers. Also, they prioritise the availability of unregistered and sometimes registered scrap metal dealers to sell the cables as soon they got away with them from the railway stations.

One of the selected participants provided the following response:

*“....The other one is a scrap metal dealer who do not adhere to scrap metal dealers’ rules and regulations because they get attempted by the copper cables sold to them by these cable criminals and that is also maximising the issue of cable theft”*  
**[KII - Cable Theft Investigator No. 1].**

The International Union of Railways [IUR] (2013) states that the scrap metal industry forms a ‘pyramid’ with metal or cables being moved from dealership to dealership until it reaches a small number of operators who are equipped to process and refine the material. Once stolen cables enter the chain, it becomes challenging, if not impossible, to identify them. Moreover, it is a common belief that the vast majority of stolen cables are sold to the scrap metal recycling

industry rather than being directly exported. However, the recycling industry is now much more regulated than the ordinary scrap metal industry, which leads one to believe thieves most often use that exportation.

**3.2. Value of the Copper in the Market**

The higher value of the copper in the market means more the cables will be stolen.

One of the selected participants provided the following response:

The **KIIs** - Cable Theft Investigators No.1 and No. 2 and the **FGD**- Cable Theft Railway Patrollers have in short agreed on saying that:

*The scrap metal buyers involve mediator or the exact scrap metal dealers. Nevertheless, these metal dealers purchase stolen cable consciously or unconsciously. Additionally, insiders accustomed to the processing of copper or metal products are likely to join perpetrators in stealing copper cables, and such actions exacerbate challenges affiliated with cable theft.*

The global supply-demand imbalance is recognised as the main contributor to the menace of cable theft due to the significant increase in the price of many metal and copper cables (Sidebottom, 2012). In a similar vein, the study conducted on the connection between copper price and copper cable theft on the British Railway Network [BRN] reveals that the wide availability of cables supports the price increase, which consequently generates more incredible opportunities for crime; offenders sell stolen cables at a financially rewarding price with low risk of detection (Refer to Figure 1).

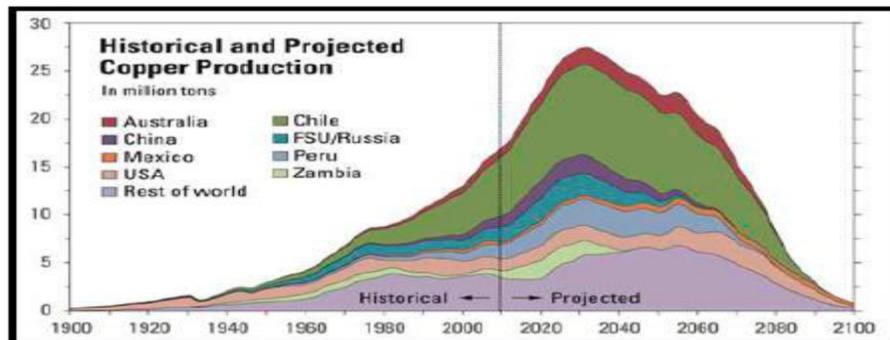


Figure 1: Historical and projected copper production.

Source: Louw (2019).

This study went on to explain the issue of scrap metal dealers through the use of projecting monthly copper theft cases and copper prices as this is believed to be one of the major contributing factors to cable theft crime affecting the rail industry in South Africa, particularly in Durban.

From Figure 1, the demonstrations of copper production in millions per ton related to mine production capacity and recycling are recorded. These figures present the increase from 1980 to 2030 production requirement. It should further be noted that the anticipated peak of production is estimated to take place in 2030. The anticipated demand can go further up to the next five years (2035). The increase in the production is resulting from the availability of the copper sold in the market as the copper thieves know the value of the copper.

Figure 2 showed the peak that took place in the demand and supply of copper in the market. In this figure, it is shown that the demand outweighed the supply starting from the year 2016 to 2020, and the consequential effect it has on the copper price should be noted as it will promote illegal trade of this metal or perpetuate recycling. On the other hand, scrap metal buyers and the copper market play a significant role in the cable theft problem. They are responsible for converting stolen cables into cash (or in some cases drugs), thus providing a financially rewarding incentive to steal.

### 3.3. Light Sentences Given to Cable Theft Perpetrators

Mostly, offenders get lighter sentences that contribute to more reoffending; they get sentenced for a few months and released to the same places regarded as crime zones. One may argue that the law does not understand the impact this crime has on the

rail industry once these cables are stolen and on the economy of the country.

In conclusion, the **FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller (Patroller No. 3)** produced the following comment regarding the contributory factors to this scourge:

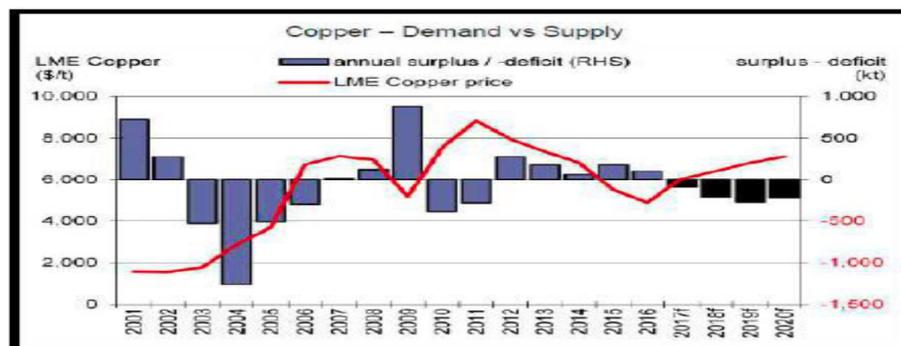
*“The participant pointed out that these contributing factors are a problem because once there is a disruption of railway lines or just one meter of a cable could cause the standstill of a total operational area, blocking whole sectors for long periods. However, this is also an additional expense for the attached companies, as overtime needs to be paid to technicians and the company will also lose the customers as they are the priority for the company, I, therefore, suggest that cable theft offenders should be severely punished and kept for longer in prison” [FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 3].*

### 3.4. Lack of Proper Protection and Reporting Structures in the Department

The railway stations across the KZN regions are fenced in concrete slabs since the building of the rail tracks and some stations are not fenced at all and that leads to easy access to the stations. In some areas, the concrete slabs are broken and not taken care of, which means the railway stations are exposed to the perpetrators of cable theft.

One of the Cable Theft Investigators No. 2 had this to say:

*“The fencing is so poorly structured that it enables cables to be stolen very easily.*



**Figure 2:** Copper-Demand vs Supply.

Source: Louw (2019).

*The fencing is designed in such a way that cable thieves have easy access to come and steal the cables” [KII - Cable Theft Investigator No. 2].*

It is confirmed by this study that the local police are not easily accessible to receive, or deal with cable theft cases; thus, cable theft cases end up not reported to the police. The security department of PRASA protection services does not have enough resources to take cable theft cases forward. Even the patrollers have to forward criminals to the police and that, too, is not easy due to lack of communication between the management and the patrollers as the latter cannot take decisions on behalf of the management.

This Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 5 had this to say:

*“The SAPS response to cable theft is also a serious challenge for us as they are not committed to help us reduce this crime. There is poor communication between us and SAPS and in most cases, they do not get involved in combating cable theft. Frequently, they get to the crime scene four to five hours after it has been reported” [FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 5].*

### 3.5. Shortage of Manpower and Resources

One of the findings is that few investigators are employed with full knowledge of the science of security. This calls for more advanced training of security personnel, and also, PRASA protection services need to employ more investigators and patrollers so that they can be able to cover the vast area at any given point in time. Vehicles used do not help in mitigating the scourge in question and servicing and/or taking care of the railway tracks can also assist as the patrollers find it hard to patrol using a vehicle and that forces them to travel by foot.

One of the selected participants provided the following response:

*“I have been serving this department for more than ten years as a cable theft investigator, and through the years I have served, I can tell you that the challenge we have in combating cable theft is not having enough ‘manpower’ in mitigating this crime happening in railway stations” [KII - Cable Theft Investigator No. 1].*

The **FGD** - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 4 shared the following concerning the severe existing challenge faced by PRASA protection services in combating in Durban railway stations which automatically contributes to the rise of this crime:

*“The resources available meet a few of our needs. We have a challenge of service lines that are not well structured to accommodate the company vehicles we drive. Criminals would run so fast, and in that case, it is not easy to shoot the criminal because shooting itself will cause us to have a criminal case of a shooting. Therefore, in that case, patrolling by foot and having to chase the criminals is the only way [FGD- Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 4].*

The other Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 6 alluded that:

*“...more resources need to be introduced within the department; mentorship programs by PRASA management should also be introduced at all costs. They should change the format they are currently using by introducing benefits, recruiting suitable candidates to lessen the pressure (workload) and pay them better” [FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 6].*

Another Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 3 had this to say:

*“Communication by telephone with the management or with other railway patrollers in the other area is a significant problem because there is only one cell phone line we use as patrollers and sometimes we have to use our own money to buy airtime” [FGD- Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 3].*

The following participants shared their perceptions:

*“...Security personnel of PRASA protection services is understaffed, and its members feel as if their workloads are too heavy and their time is spread too thinly. The truth is that few are educated within the department, and then their skills are questioned. The department is not*

*recruiting experienced and educated investigators on the service to improve the quality of their investigation continuously”* [KII - Cable Theft Investigators No. 2].

### 3.6. Substance Abuse

The selected participants believe that cable theft in the Durban railway stations is caused by the factor below:

They shared consensus that the use of recreational drugs such as *Whooga* and *Nyaope* remains a contributory factor to cable theft in this area. They emphasised that when these thieves use drugs, they usually get the courage to steal even a two-meter cable because they will sell it and get the money to buy their drugs (i.e. To feed their daily habit). According to participants, criminals are just stealing to get money to buy their drugs (i.e. Drug dependence). They further stated that unemployment is another contributing factor because in most cases, the criminals are below 30-years, and some of them are dropouts from school, so they are young adults.

The World Health Organisation [WHO] (2020) stresses that substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome - A cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug.

Other reasons were given by these participants, about ‘why copper cables are stolen in the Durban railway stations’ are demarcated as follows (i.e. not in order of importance).

### 3.7. Taxi Industry

The taxi industry (drivers) plays a massive role in making sure that the rate of cable theft in railway stations remains high as they plan and execute their operations. This contributing factor was cited as one of the surprise findings to the researchers as they became acquainted with this factor, they wanted to probe further on the execution of related operations.

One of the participants had this to say:

*“Taxi industry also contribute to cable theft as it is the competition occurring between trains and taxis, so they also hire people to come and block the railways and also*

*steal cables”* [FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 3]

### 3.8. Over Reliance on Conventional Methods of Combating Cable Theft in Railway Stations

Old strategies are still utilised even today and this makes these offenders to get away with this crime, as they seem to be step ahead in their respective operations. These offenders also know which probable investigative approaches are used by PRASA. This makes the cables in railway stations to become more attractive and vulnerable them.

FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller (Patroller No.4 and 5) produced the following comment regarding the contributory factors to this scourge:

*‘Most of the cable theft investigators and railway patrollers are African individuals who have been working at PRASA for more than ten years and are not well disposed to learning new practices in fighting against cable theft’* [FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 4].

*“The challenge we face is that of the committed manpower because the company at other stations has employed private security companies, but still the cables get stolen in the presence of this private security personnel because they do not do their job very well* [FGD - Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 5].

From the conducted direct observations by the researchers, it was clear that due to a variety of challenges that contribute to cable theft in railway stations of Durban, such as shortage of manpower, a lack of updated knowledge, low self-confidence and inadequate training, impede the performance of the security personnel in effectively reacting to incidents of cable theft in the Durban railway stations.

## 4. DISCUSSIONS OF STUDY FINDINGS

It is evident from the findings of this study that there is a severe threat to the rail industry of South Africa [Durban included], as cables once stolen bring the rail industry sector at a halt. As a result, the copper cable theft in railway stations amounts to economic disturbance which automatically disrupts energy, transport, telecommunications service delivery and affects the living standards of the commuters.

The findings of this research study are essential as they aid to explore the crime of cable theft in Durban railway stations collectively, looking at the phenomena holistically and at the qualities this crime possesses. Similarly, findings reveal that the Scrap Metal industry is the key contributor to cable theft in railway stations as it is believed that Scrap Metal dealers usually purchase the copper cables without asking the identity of the seller. In contrast, the existing regulations provide that scrap dealers should ask for the biographical profile when stolen cables are presented to them. In brief, scrap metal dealers do not adhere to scrap metal dealers' rules and regulations as they get attempted by the copper cables sold to them. This finding lends credence to the works of Coetzee (2013) who stated that scrap metal dealers do not adhere to legislative requirements and do not ask for clients' identification documents when purchasing stolen goods that are concerned to be in commissioning of an offence. For remedy; Section 6 of the Second-Hand Goods Act (No. 23 of 1955) states that scrap metal dealers should keep the records on daily activities happening in their premises, as the detectives and prosecutors made this due to the suspicions that scrap dealers perpetuated this crime by purchasing highly suspicious goods. This Act in Section 6 (1) of the recordkeeping states that anyone involved in the second-hand goods industry is required to keep a register that would reflect all the transactions that took place in their dealerships and it is mandatory.

The range of transactions included all acquisitions and all disposals of goods. Whereas, Section 6 (1) (a) specifically made it clear that the scrap industry should ask for the name and address of the person the goods were obtained from or disposed to, and it must also be recorded in the register. Section 6 (1) (b) required the dealer to record the date and time of said acquisition and disposal of items. The dealer in effect had to keep a stock register of every item purchased and disposed of that it could be classified as second-hand goods. The implication is that all registered and unregistered scrap metal dealers must be visited by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) unknowingly and produce the trading license and their premises be searched on an almost daily basis. This would make things difficult for them to purchase stolen goods, particularly copper cables. The fact that stolen copper had to go through the hands of scrap metal dealers and the recycling vendors, the argued notion is that scrap metal market is in no manner policed sufficiently, and there are so many loopholes, making the potential criminals to beuntouchable.

Findings also indicated that the value of the copper in the market is the contributing factor to cable theft in railway stations. When the price of metals in the market increases, more cables are being stolen and channeled with relative ease through the metal industry, this position is consistent with the positions of Vosloo and Mhaule (2016) stating that copper theft amounted to 173 tons in September 2014 and 160 tons in August 2014. Also, South African exports of waste copper products to countries including India and China amounted to \$40 million (R738 358 000.00) in August 2014. The studyfindings further indicate that Cable Theft Railway Patroller No. 5 indicated that the police are not easily accessible to receive, or deal with, cable theft cases as they encounter the problem of having limited police vehicles and lose the dockets of the suspects. This participant continued to indicate that there is poor communication between PRASA personnel and SAPS, as a result in most cases, SAPS do not get involved in combating cable theft in railway stations of Durban as most of the time they do not arrive on the crime scene on time. Frequently, they get to the crime scene four to five hours after it has been reported to them.

To this end, findings revealed that the arrested offenders often get light sentences, they only spend a few months in prison, and the next they are out. This is a result of NPA not understanding the damage caused by the cables stolen in railway stations as this would affect freight services, passenger services and also safety and security. The Network Rail (2017) highlights that PRASA encounters many barriers that drag the company into fulfilling their responsibilities as the cable theft in railway stations would reason to freight delays to power stations and on passengers. Judging from the fact that Cable thieves knew they would get lenient sentences, the Combined Private Investigations (CPI) came into play with the then President Jacob Zuma to amend the Criminal Matters Amendment Act (No. 105 of 1997) in classifying the theft of ferrous and non-ferrous metal as infrastructure crime on 01 June 2016. This Act amends the Criminal law Amendment Act (No. 105 of 1997), to regulate the imposition of minimum discretionary sentences for essential infrastructure-related offences and create a new offence relating to essential infrastructure; and Criminal Procedure Act (No. 51 of 1997), as to regulate bail in respect of essential infrastructure-related offences (CPI, 2019).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these findings highlight that these contributing factors mentioned above are the reason

cable theft in railway stations still exists and why it is still increasing in nature. If more attention can be paid to these factors, cable theft can decrease in railway stations, and the channeling of these cables need to be switched off as it is believed they are the umbrella phase. This study has contributed to the knowledge of emphasising the protection of the rail industry infrastructure by clearly highlighting and discussion miscellaneous hindrances to an effective response to cable theft in Durban railway stations of South Africa. This study discusses cable theft in Durban railway stations, looking at probable contributing factors and recommendations that can be made in trying to put a stop to this menace. The scrap metal dealers have been noted as the primary contributor to cable theft in railway stations as they usually buy metals from criminals; therefore, their role in curbing this crime needs to be amended such as outlining strict rules of trading licences. The authors propose that cable theft perpetrators need to be given harsh sentences, and the government must establish a cable theft specialised unit. It has become clear that the rail industry (Mainly PRASA protection services) has focused more on deploying railway patrollers, hiring security companies to add the personnel, and patrolling through vehicles.

Negatively; such a strategy is inimical to a successful combating approach, especially for a sophisticated crime like cable theft in railway stations. Moreover, such a reactive approach to a crime of this magnitude will not only fail but will further cause damage to the rail infrastructure. The relevance of this topic to the public and rail industry is that copper cable theft holds a specific danger for the entire South African industry infrastructure in that it causes a domino effect that vibrates on all levels (Pretorius 2012). For example, if the transports system, such as buses, trains, or ships, were to stop being operational, all the supporting and dependent services would follow. In this respect, the authors argue that there is no clear policy on how the SAPS should work with PRASA protection services in combating cable theft in railway stations in Durban. Therefore, this article came into recommending that this area must be looked into by policymakers and develop a clear policy around the issue of cable theft in railway stations. Further research is needed to develop policies around SAPS roles and responsibilities in combating cable theft in railway stations. This research contributes to the body of knowledge required to do this and will provide the evidence for PRASA protection services and SAPS together with lawmakers to effectively provide

appropriate interventions that can help mitigate cable theft.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

From the findings generated, it becomes clear that the cable theft occurring in Durban railway stations is a big problem for PRASA as this crime would put everything at a standstill; even if a meter of a cable is stolen, the entire rail systems, commuters and immediate communities get affected and hold the country's economy at ransom.

More attention needs to be on the Scrap Metal dealers/ or role players if they can be monitored by SAPS daily. This study further recommends that the scrap metal industry needs to be state-owned and nationalise all the second-hand goods that are not directly owned by people registered on the trading licences of those businesses, and the bucket shops or fly by nights should be immediately closed from selling and buying copper cables. This is the fact that Scrap Metal dealers are regarded as the real culprits responsible for the entire situation in that scrap metal dealers control the market for stolen cables and the recycling process. In this research study, the scrap metal dealers are regarded as the key to the successful mitigation of cable theft and the core institution that kept cable theft alive—consideration of harsh sentences for potential offenders should be strictly made. If harsh sentences can be given to deserving perpetrators, this provides an example to those who are also doing a similar job. Putting this recommendation into consideration can effectively reduce the cable theft happening in railway stations—an establishment for Cable Theft Specialised Unit. The implementation of a so-called “Special Unit” as was done in the USA, which contributes to combating cable theft in the rail industry. It is of great importance that South African law considers implementing this Unit. The victims of cable theft, together with government agencies, should establish this Unit to protect their resources.

The following future research studies are deemed importance: the researchers submit that urgent research needs to be conducted regarding the methods and techniques used in place to combat the cable theft phenomenon in railway stations by the involvement of parliamentary dignitaries. This will show how useful and relevant these techniques and methods are in reducing the scourge. The use of modern technologies in combating cable theft phenomenon in

railway stations, such as the implementation of a biometrics capacity and a standard software program in ensuring and capturing the information of all scrap metal merchants. The investigation on the adherence of the scrap metal dealers to the rules and regulations governing the second-hand goods market is of paramount importance. This will examine and assess the understanding that scrap metal dealers have on the existing Acts.

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