

CRIME INCIDENTS AND PREVENTION PRACTICES AMONG SELECTED MALLS IN NUEVA ECIJA

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Abstract: *The objective of this study was to explore crime and crime prevention measures of business establishment in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija Philippines, Data were collected by means of respondents' demographic profile, crime questionnaires as assessed by crime by crime against public moral, crimes against person, crime against property, and crime prevention questionnaire as evaluated by punitive prevention, environmental prevention, and mechanical prevention from mall owners (n=5) and their tenants (n=105). Employing a descriptive correlative design. Significant differences were found between owner and tenants responses in terms of crime ($t=6.64$, $p>0.5$) and crime prevention ($t=4.29$, $p=0.05$) significant negative relationship between crime and crime prevention ($r = -0.56$, $p> 0.05$) were also explored. Interview with professionals experienced law enforcers and retired high-ranking officials from the Philippine National Police (PNP) Region 3 and Philippine Army (7th Infantry Division) were conducted to support and validate findings. Crime prevention strategies that can serve to make commercial shopping malls safer and more secure were proposed*

Keywords: *Crime, Shopping Mall, Crime Prevention Rational Choice Theory*

Introduction

Shopping Mall. The term "shopping mall" is used to describe a cluster of shops or stores designed and developed as one architectural unit. Shopping malls may be small, large, covered, uncovered, one or many storied, with exposed or undercover parking. The establishment of shopping malls dates back 100 years ago in the Americas. After the First World War, people began to move in ever increasing numbers to the suburbs. With this urban population movement, small shopping centres were integrated into the plans for cities. As modernisation and economic progress with cities growing bigger, huge regional shopping centres housing office complexes and cinemas, as well as department stores, specialty chains and individual

boutiques sprang up. Shopping centres are privately owned properties and that their safety and security remain to its proprietors. To survive economically, capitalists and their tenants create strategies of attracting customers. Moreover, a shopping centre is not a new concept and by its very existence attracts thousands of visitors each and every day. A number of factors attract customers to shopping centres because of the unlimited variety of goods and merchandise; the same tempts the criminal element of society to make its living outside the law. Shopping centres have become the focal point of crime due to there being more people, vehicles and goods sited at shopping centres.

Crime prevention offers opportunities for a humane and more cost-effective approach to the problems of crime. Crime prevention has become an increasingly important component of many national strategies on public safety and security. The concept of prevention is grounded in notion that crime and victimization are driven by many causal or underlying factors. These are the result of a wide range of factors and circumstances that influence the lives of individuals and families as they grow up, and of local environments, and the situations and opportunities that facilitate victimization and offending. Knowledge about the factors that put populations, communities and individuals at risk enables prevention programs to be targeted to areas and neighbourhoods at high risk, or to groups of individuals who are already involved in offending or at risk. At the national level, this assists governments in prioritizing crime problems, and in targeting programs to the regions, cities, or sectors that seem most vulnerable. Such targeting of programs and funds to tackle the greatest needs has been shown to be an effective and economical way of reducing levels of crime and victimization.

Crime prevention requires adequate resources, including funding for structures and activities, in order to be sustained. There should be clear accountability for funding, implementation and evaluation and for the achievement of planned results. Crime prevention strategies, policies, programs and actions should be based on a broad, multidisciplinary foundation of knowledge about crime problems, their multiple causes and promising and proven practices. Crime prevention strategies should, when appropriate, pay due regards to the different needs of men and women and considers the special needs of vulnerable members of society (Clarke, 2001).

Crime prevention is not to be viewed as an exact science that inevitably produces good results in contrast with disaster preparation. In many countries, resources are limited, and social and economic and sometimes political difficulties are chronic. This makes it difficult to adapt programs which have been successful elsewhere and expect them to be successful in more challenging contexts, or to be sustained. Some societies can be seen as chaotic rather than orderly, with high levels of endemic corruption, and with key institutions such as the police or national ministries that are weak, poorly resourced or resistant to change (Clarke 1995).

This study gives light to the perceptions and perspectives of the tenants, staff and safety officers. The research explored risks and vulnerabilities experienced at shopping centres and will further investigate the current protection systems in place at malls. Thereafter recommendations for the implementation of security risk control measures at shopping centres will be proposed.

Theoretical Framework

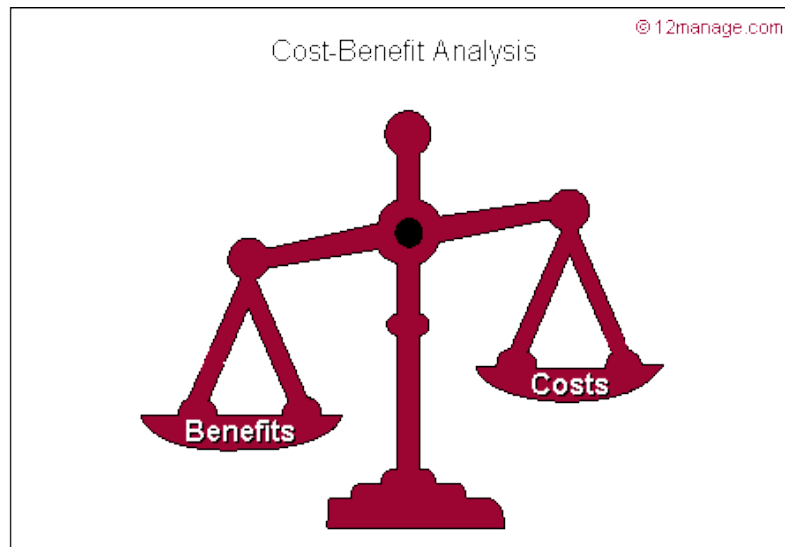


Figure 1. Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory. According to Geason and Wilson as cited in Lutchminarain (2015), traditional criminology tended to see criminals as driven by their conditioning and environment. Rational Choice Theory makes the following assumptions: offenders freely and actively choose to commit crimes; the decision to commit the crime is made in response to the immediate circumstances and the immediate situation in which an offense is considered; and the motivation to offend is not constant or beyond control.

Put basically, rational choice is the process of determining what options are available and then choosing the most preferred one according to some consistent criterion. A criminal carries out a cost-benefit analysis and will not proceed if it looks too risky or tough to accomplish the crime (Levin and Milgrom, 2004).

In rational choice theories, individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their preferences. They act within specific given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting. According to Scott (2000: np), since it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals.

The objective of the study is to explore crime and crime prevention strategies implemented by selected malls in Nueva Ecija. This endeavour informs mall owners and tenants of common crimes committed in their establishment and to practice effective security measures. Furthermore, crime prevention techniques were proposed based on results.

The present study is governed by Rational Choice Theory and principles of Situational Crime Prevention. The aspect of Crime prevention will be measured by most researched categories of crime and delinquency prevention (Short, 1980) identified as punitive prevention, mechanical prevention and environmental prevention. Also, crimes are identified into three subdivisions as stipulated by the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines, as Crimes against Public Morals and

Special Laws, Crimes against Persons and Crimes against Property. The concept of natural calamities as security hazards are also considered such as storm, flood and earthquake.

Literature Review

Shopping malls fall into five major categories: neighbourhood malls, community malls, regional malls, city center malls and multi-use megamalls.

Neighbourhood Malls are often anchored by a supermarket and serve up to 40,000 people. Neighbourhood malls are usually located on local streets.

Community Malls are a group of large inexpensive chain stores and serve up to 150,000 people from several neighborhoods. Community malls are usually located on highway arteries.

Regional Malls are usually composed of two main department stores and a large number of smaller specialty shops. Regional malls are often located at major highway intersections.

City Center Malls are malls that can be built underground or as a part of an urban redevelopment program.

Megamalls have hotels, cinemas, restaurants, bars, offices, sports arenas and even amusement parks with traditional shops within one vast structure (Barr & Pease, 1990).

Malls seem like tightly-controlled and safe spaces for shopping, entertainment and dining and yet, they actually present great problems for those who are in charge of the safety and security of the retailers and customers. Shopping malls have lots of features that make them attractive to criminals. There are plenty of nice things in the stores, and people walking around with money.

There are usually places for groups of teenagers to hangout. There are also parking lots full of cars. Security and safety in malls depend on proper management of the crowd, its movement around the mall, its transportation to and away from the mall, and the way people spend time in the malls.

It would be fairly easy to keep malls safe if there was a way to tell who is coming to the mall to make trouble, and to keep those people out. However, this is quite difficult. So security in malls depends on successful separation between shoppers or potential shoppers, and non-shoppers who are around may be involved in crime, shoplifting, pickpocket, or just hanging around. Certain design qualities of malls can encourage or discourage the non-shoppers, such as lighting, ceiling height, color schemes, presence of public transportation, parking facilities and many others.

Many malls have multiple stories. In order to create a feeling of open space most of these malls have some sort of gallery or mezzanine level. Galleries increase natural surveillance, as people on higher floors can observe what is happening on lower floors. But many mall managers consider galleries to be dangerous because kids and adults tend to throw objects on people on the lower levels, spill water, and yell across the mall and so on. Some designers have dealt with this problem by designing the railings around galleries so that they are uncomfortable or even painful to lean on.

Food courts are difficult to monitor, because this is a spot where customers legitimately spend long periods of time, and also where youth and offenders gather and loiter. Decorative water fountains are usually located at the central points in malls. But this location is desirable not only to legitimate shoppers, but groups of unruly teenagers and loiterers as well.

Sometimes, these areas become crowded and slow down the pedestrian flow. If these areas get rowdy, some shoppers may avoid passing by the area. This could result in less business for nearby stores. Many crowding problems can be prevented by restricting seating close to the fountain.

Most crimes in shopping malls happen in the parking lots, simply because there are many appealing targets and few people around to keep an eye on things. Parking lots that are open air tend to be safer than underground or covered ones. Open air parking lots provide for more natural surveillance, as other people entering and exiting the mall are able to observe the activity in the parking lot, while this is not the case with multi-story closed parking.

On the other hand, covered parking lots tend to have much better access control, because they usually have one entry and exit which can be easily monitored. Lighting is a frequent problem in closed parking lots. Low ceilings and bad lighting provide good hiding spots for criminals, where they are unlikely to be detected while breaking into cars or waiting in lurk for shoppers.

First impressions count. For most customers, the parking lot or parkade is their first encounter with a mall or shopping center. Does it give a friendly, safe, and secure impression, or one that is foreboding, dangerous and dark?

Most local ordinances and building codes for malls require that there must be 1.5 square feet of parking space for every 1 foot of rentable retail space. Considering the size of many modern malls, parking lots obviously require quite large spaces. Yet while a mall can have 10,000 people strolling through it and shopping at one point of time, there is rarely more than 5% of that number strolling the parking lots. Thus, this huge space ends up being empty and unmonitored.

This lack of pedestrian traffic, paired with bad design, can be perfect recipe for crime, especially in the case of underground or level parking. People are all strangers in a large parking lot. Violent criminals can blend in with the rest of the customers and get in close proximity fairly easily. Criminal predators can walk right by and it is allowed because of the public setting (Bressler & Bressler, 2007). Shopping centers come in all sizes from the giant regional malls to the small strip-center with only a few stores. What they have in common is a parking lot. This is where the family is at greatest risk because of the "nature" of a shopping center parking lot. The most common violent crimes committed in the parking lot are stranger-on-stranger purse snatch and strong-arm robbery and occasionally carjacking and abductions (Casteel, Oeek-Asa, Howard & Kraus, 2004).

Crimes committed against business are nothing new. The literature records numerous examples throughout history. By 1995, the SBCI survey found 35% of retailers reporting customer theft with similar percentages for manufacturing and wholesaling industries. In all, 75% of surveyed businesses reported one or more incidents of crime, with 3.5 incidents on average (Burrows and Hopkins, 2005). Small businesses may be particularly vulnerable to crime as small businesses often do not have safeguards in place to prevent and detect criminal activity.

Crimes committed against business can be separated into two categories: those committed by employees against businesses and those committed by others. The more common crimes committed by employees include theft, fraud, and money laundering.

According to Kuratko, Hornsby, Naffziger and Hodgetts (2000), three conditions must be present for employees to commit fraud. The first condition is incentive, often in the form of some type of pressure. Pressure may be due to financial reasons, sometimes associated with extra money needed for an adulterous relationship. In other cases, financial pressure could be due to excessive medical bills, gambling debts, or drug addiction. Opportunity exists when businesses fail to develop safeguards or become too trusting of employees. Rationalization occurs when an employee justifies their action as the company "owing them". In each of these three conditions, company's management can institute safeguard procedures to reduce the possibility of an employee to use these conditions as reason for committing fraud.

The Philippines government has long been criticized for its inefficiency in solving crimes, many of which are categorized as being heinous. Rampant crime has plagued practically all levels of Philippine society, and their incidents have largely been attributed to the weak and useless systems that characterize the government, especially those mechanisms within it that are meant to address the crime problem.

The crime problem has taken its toll on the lifeblood of the nation's socioeconomic situation. Crimes have tremendously affected the country's economic growth. A large segment of the people has lost confidence in the law-enforcing agencies of government. Many fears that tragedy might suddenly strike them in broad daylight. Stories from the newspapers (particularly the tabloids) are sufficient to send tingles down the spine. One thing is certain: Filipino society is crime-ridden, and the government is helpless at effectively checking and containing the already serious and increasingly more serious crime problems in the country.

Common causes of criminality can be traced through sociological and behavioral studies of the human condition. It is a fact of life that crimes occur only in the human sphere, and social relations are therefore a major aspect in approaching the issue of criminality. With this point of departure, one can objectively mention some factors that have been identified by professional practitioners engaged in the study of criminality, among whom are psychologists, sociologists, criminologists and others.

Poverty

In a society like the Philippines, where poverty is a given, no second thought is needed to ascertain that in one way or another, poverty causes criminality. Crimes are committed in areas where the urban poor live, and their incident is quite regular. Poverty may not be strictly identified as direct cause of crimes, but certain circumstances brought forth by and within a situation of poverty cause them. On the other hand, in the book, *The Causes and Cures of Criminality*, Bennett (1998) claim that: "Many - if not most - sociological theories boil down to what might be called economic theories, i.e., crimes as a result of poverty, whether relative or absolute, deprivation, and similar economic causes. Although such theories have always had appeal, they do not accord with the facts." This claim, backed up by figures based on thorough research studies, attempts to rebut the "theory" that poverty is a major cause of criminality. But the research studies were done in the context of an industrialized society where poverty is not prevalent. The fact is, in a society that is not generally poor; poverty cannot really be a major cause of criminality. Hence, the findings stressed by Eysenck and Gudjonsson cannot be applied

across the board, to practically all societies. What is clear is the fact that poverty, in the context of poor countries like the Philippines, is a major cause of criminality. It is illogical, however, to conjecture that poverty is the only cause, considering the fact that other major causes are identifiable, many of which are bred in an environment that is characterized by the sharp features of poverty.

Abuse of Power

Every day newspapers report crimes committed by policemen and military personnel—hold-ups, kidnaps-for-ransom, murders, bank robberies, carjacking, etc. The crimes of these people are even more heinous than those committed by some poor, unknown and desperate criminals. Since the justice system in the country is so discouragingly defective, most of the time, powerful criminals are exonerated of their crimes, even those categorized as heinous. Meanwhile, the unknown, powerless poor suspects in lesser crimes are not given fair trials and thrown immediately in jails (Soriano, 2008).

Widening Gap Between the Poor and the Rich

In view of the powerful people's oppressive and exploitative attitude towards the poor and marginalized sectors of Philippine society, crimes brought about by the capitalism have tremendously affected the country's economic situation. Oppression and exploitation in themselves are basically crimes that further manifest themselves as obvious criminal acts like property grabbing (which is actually robbery), property destruction and murder (Soriano, 2008). The poor are exploited and oppressed more and more, and the gap between the poor and the rich continues to widen.

Reasons Why Law Enforcement Institutions are Ineffective at Solving Crime and Controlling the Rising Tide of Criminality

The number of government law enforcement agencies and institutions is simply mind boggling. In theory, crimes should have long been controlled and solved, given the presence of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and its elite Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG); the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI); the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), and the intelligence arms of the major commands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). In practice, it is disgusting to know that what has been going on is the opposite. Myriads of crimes go unsolved, and the crime situation has never been truly contained. This is basically due to several factors.

Corrupt and Incompetent Law Enforcers

Many law enforcers are corrupt and therefore unqualified. They are part and parcel of the corrupt government system. Since they serve the interest of their corrupt patrons, they acquire from the latter the same character of corruption. At worst, they themselves function as criminals in the performance of their duties as protectors of their evil patrons. This is why the people have lost confidence in law enforcers, particularly the police (Eduardo, 2010).

Lack of Cooperation Between the Public and the Law Enforcers

The situation of corruption has led to a lack of cooperation with law enforcers. The government's Department of Justice keeps calling on people to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, with the promise and assurance of protection. But the people do not bite at the idea because of a lack of trust.

Government's Lack of Interest to Solve Crimes

Because of government's focus on power-base expansion and politicking, it has given the national crime situation a low-priority, and this is a pathetic scenario: solid proof that the government is insincere about its mission to serve and help the people, especially the poor (Eduardo, 2010).

This is the true state of the Philippines as a nation. People are governed by corrupt leaders whose major agenda are their own personal vested interests. Law enforcement agencies and institutions whose major task is to protect and defend the corrupt leaders of the country perpetuate the system of corruption (Eduardo, 2010). Because of these conditions, criminality has proliferated and will continue to proliferate in the next generations. The whole situation has put common Filipinos at great economic disadvantage, and poverty is here to stay "til kingdom come." Hopeless? Who holds the key to the most sensible answer? (Shafer, 2008).

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention refers to the range of strategies that are implemented by individuals, communities, businesses, non-government organizations and all levels of government to target the various social and environmental factors that increase the risk of crime, disorder and victimization (Welsh and Farrington, 2000).

There is clear evidence that well-planned crime prevention strategies not only prevent crime and victimization, but also promote community safety and contribute to the sustainable development of the countries. Effective, responsible crime prevention enhances the quality of life of all citizens. It has long-term benefits in terms of reducing the costs associated with the formal criminal justice system, as well as other social costs that result from crime (Clarke, 1995).

According to Hayes as cited in Lutchminarain (2015) violence within a shopping centre is relatively uncommon, considering the number of customers that pass through a given shopping location, but it does occur, which is one of the main factors for concern. These violent acts range from armed robberies to domestic disputes on the property. Environmental cues can also often shape, positively or negatively, a customer's perception of danger in retail spaces. In a customer's perception, the appearance of safety can be as influential as safety itself. For example, loiterers, beggars, abandoned vehicles, graffiti, broken lights, signs of vandalism, dirty or dark restrooms and merchandise-cluttered aisles are amongst other cues that can influence a customer's perception of safety at shopping centres or retail outlets.

Redstone as cited in Lutchminarain (2015) goes on further and states more succinctly that the terms 'safety' and 'security' cover a large variety of elements relating to a shopping centre, starting from the exterior parking areas and going into the public areas of the shopping centre and the merchandising areas of the retail stores. These three areas can be further expounded into characteristics such as fire protection, pilfering and burglary protection, armed robberies, various methods of electronic surveillance, locking devices, cash control, emergency power, emergency communication and handling of demonstrators and/or employee strikers.

According to Stewart and Davis as cited in Lutchminarain (2015), the primary motive for crimes at shopping centres are the economic advantage that an individual can obtain from it. The financial rewards that are associated with a crime such as this can be an important incentive

to commit these crimes and can be seen as a facilitating factor in the decisions made by the criminals.

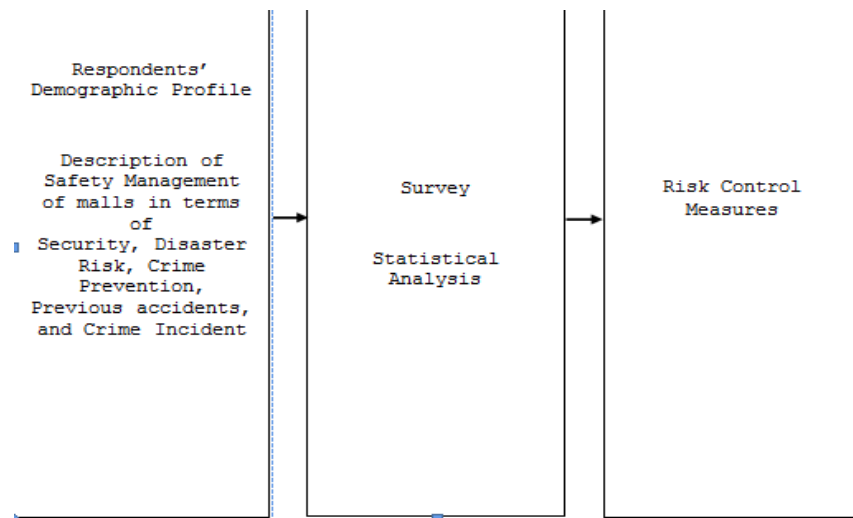
H1: There is no significant difference between the assessment of three sets of respondents on crime incidents occurred, safety measures applied and manner of preventing crimes in selected malls with regards to Risk Control Measures

H2: There is a significant difference between the assessment of three sets of respondents on crime incidents occurred, safety measures applied and manner of preventing crimes in selected malls with regards to Risk Control Measures

Synthesis

To survive economically, capitalists and their tenants create strategies of attracting customers. Moreover, a shopping centre is not a new concept and by its very existence attracts thousands of visitors each and every day. On a holiday a shopping centre can hold thousands of clients making the critical nature of effective safety and security obvious. Aside from the usual accidents and health-related emergencies that arise when peoples are brought together in one place at a time, shopping centres must also contend with the ever-present problem of disaster and crime. Crimes against retail businesses are increasing every year (Hayes, 2007). Shopping centre security as an entity has different meanings to the owner, to the tenant and to the customer/client although they are bound with a common interest: that is not to be victimized by criminals. In reference to security its cost-effectiveness is measured in terms of its contribution to the overall profitability of the shopping centre. To be successful in this area security needs to meet two important objectives, namely: loss prevention which includes crime prevention and public relations. The crime problem has taken its toll on the lifeblood of the nation's socioeconomic situation. Crimes have tremendously affected the country's economic growth. A large segment of the people has lost confidence in the law-enforcing agencies of government. Many fear that tragedy might suddenly strike them in broad daylight. Stories from the newspapers are sufficient to send tingles down the spine. Filipino society is becoming crime-ridden and the government is helpless at effectively checking and containing the already serious and increasingly more serious crime problems in the country. The rise of shopping centers around the world means that these new shopping pilgrimage points are both tremendous tourism opportunities and risk. In both cases, shopping at malls has become big business and it is interesting to note that one of the major reasons for a mall's demise is issues of security. While many people falsely believe that shopping malls are safe heavens far away from urban problems, this is not the reality. Around the world malls have suffered not only from issue of shoplifting and pilferage, but from robberies, gang violence and even acts of terrorism. The consequences of a security crisis at a mall impact not only that city's tax revenues, but also its reputation, its hotel occupancy, its restaurants and of course in the case of death, people's lives. That is why in the study, security is given emphasis so that more profit can be garnered in such businesses

Simulacrum



Method

The researcher utilized descriptive method of research. Descriptive research design describes records, interprets, analyzes and compares events (Castillo, 2002). It aims to describe systematically a situation, condition of area of interest factually and accurately. It includes observation, survey, interviews and standardized test.

According to Zulueta (2010) descriptive research is the most widely used non-experimental type of educational research. It is used in various situations to investigate a large number of different research problems as they occur in the natural setting to determine the status of some variables. Surveys are used to measure opinions, attitudes or achievements. Qualitative studies focus on exploring, describing, and interpreting the personal and social experiences of people (Soriano, 2008), often through the help of interviews.

This technique of collecting data is very flexible since it gives the participants the freedom to express in-depth how they feel without having to adjust their experiences to pre-planned response alternatives in questionnaires (Creswell, 2005). A quantitative approach may be a methodology that is particularly useful for studying crime and crime prevention practices since few published and peer reviewed literature of this kind is available.

The study was conducted in Nueva Ecija. The respondents of the study were proprietors, chief security officers, security guards, tenants and employees of business establishments.

The researcher used two sets of survey questionnaire to gather pertinent data. Items were constructed in corroboration with the dissertation adviser, consultants and business administration experts. Since the instrument is a self-made questionnaire, it was subjected to a test and retest method to establish its reliability.

To gather the needed data and information relevant to the investigation, this study utilized three instruments which include the Respondents' Demographic Profile, Crimes Questionnaire Crime Prevention Measures Questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed to business establishments in the city. The researcher tallied and tabulated the data which were gathered in a span of five months. The following statistical tools were utilized to treat the data: Frequency and Percentage Distribution. It was used to describe the distribution of the profile of the

respondents. Weighted mean. It was used to determine the extent of efficiency of the respondents' security and safety management. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). To utilized and test the hypothesis.

The study gathered several mall owners (n=5) and their tenants (n=105). This study utilized purposive sampling technique to focus on particular characteristics of a population which is needed in the study of interest. This study used the constructed instruments; Crime Questionnaire and Crime Prevention Questionnaire. The data was collected by pen and paper technique. Respondents were also given informed consent to assure willingness to participate in the study.

Significant differences were found between owner and tenants responses in term of crime ($t=6.64$, $p> 0.5$) and crime prevention ($t= 4.29$, $p=0.05$). Significant negative relationship between crime and crime prevention was also explored.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: Most of the selected malls are accessible by means of transportation, complied with national standards, employed hundreds of employees, and at least a thousand of mall-goers being catered every day. Most of the problems encountered are theft and theft by employees. All of them showed relevant readiness to calamities and emergencies. There are evident security measures and crime prevention efforts, but it showed opportunities for improvement. From the conclusions, the following are highly recommended. Encourage personal precautionary (protective/safety) measures also to initiate partnerships and sharing of information. As well as create an educational and awareness programmes. Motivate the reporting of suspicious incidents anonymously and additional training of security guards is necessary. Recommendation for further research is also recommended because of small pool sample.

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