

# The Prevalence of Organized Retail Crime in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract**—This study investigates the level of existence of organized retail crime in supermarkets of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The store managers, security managers and general employees were asked about the types of retail crimes occur in the stores. Three independent variables were related to the report of organized retail theft. The independent variables are: 1) the supermarket profile (volume, location, standard and type of the store), 2) the social physical environment of the store (maintenance, cleanness and overall organizational cooperation), 3) the security techniques and loss prevention electronics techniques used. The theoretical framework of this study based on the social disorganization theory. This study concluded that the organized retail theft, in specific, organized theft is moderately apparent in Riyadh stores. The general result showed that the environment of the stores has an effect on the prevalence of organized retail theft with relation to the gender of thieves, age groups, working shift, type of stolen items as well as the number of thieves in one case. Among other reasons, some factors of the organized theft are: economic pressure of customers based on the location of the store. The dealing of theft also was investigated to have a clear picture of stores dealing with organized retail theft. The result showed that mostly, thieves sent without any action and sometimes given written warning. Very few cases dealt with by police. There are other factors in the study can be looked up in the text. This study suggests solving the problem of organized theft; first, is "the well distributing of the duties and responsibilities between the employees especially for security purposes". Second "Installation of strong security system" and "Making well-designed store layout". Third is "giving training for general employees" and "to give periodically security skills training of employees". There are other suggestions in the study can be looked up in the text.

**Keywords**—Organized Crime, Retail, Theft, Loss prevention, Store environment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE Organized crime is "the unlawful activities of the members of a highly organized, disciplined association engaged in supplying illegal goods and services including, but not limited to, gambling, prostitution, loan sharking, murder, and the smuggling of goods." This is a practical definition used by international law enforcement agencies to develop action programs to counter organized crime [1].

Organized retail crime refers to professional shoplifting, cargo theft, retail crime rings and other organized crime occurring in retail environments. One person acting alone is not considered an organized retail crime. Retail crime related mainly to theft [2].

This study investigates the level of existence of organized retail crime in supermarkets of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The store managers, security managers, and general employees were asked about the types of retail crimes which occur in the stores. Four independent variables were related to the report of organized retail crimes. The independent variables are: the supermarket volume, the social environment around the store, the security techniques and loss prevention electronics techniques used.

The significant of this study emerge from the high development of retail industry in Saudi Arabia. This development needs an immediate care and investigation to the growing organized crime in different part of the world. This investigation would enable the decision makers in Saudi Arabia to act swiftly toward combating of this negative new coming phenomenon.

The organized crime is very serious problem compare to the classical individual crime. The individual crimes normally can be driven by the economic and social factors whereas the organized crime is characterized as the collective criminal act which involves both internal and external involvement of members. The problem of organized crime is a basic environment to educate and recruit many new criminals. This organized group can be work as the school of criminal act.

This study will probe and explore this phenomenon for the purpose to suggest some security and loss prevention techniques to prevent the community from the growing of organized crime. The growth of retail organized crime could move toward the growth of high economic organized crime and other social criminal act.

The main aim of the study is to investigate the effect of social and organizational factors on the prevalence of retail organizational crime; specifically theft by organized group from retail outlets. This aim can be spelled out into number of objectives they are as follow:

- 1- To investigate the effect of the stores volume on the magnitude of retail organized theft.
- 2- To probe the effect of the social environment of the store on the magnitude of retail organized theft.
- 3- To investigate the effect of the security techniques used by stores on the magnitude of retail organized theft.
- 4- To investigate the effect of loss prevention electronics techniques used by stores on the magnitude of retail organized theft.

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a sense, the problem of organized crime is the concept of 'organized crime' itself. The implications of shifting the analytical focus from explanations of 'it' toward building theories of the organization of serious crimes are considered in relation to three ways of framing research: organized crime as an external threat; the organization of serious crimes through routine activities; and their organization through social relations. Beyond taxonomic assessments of various threats, organized crime groups, their regional theatres of operation and involvement in illicit markets, a major fault-line exists within social scientific studies of the organization of serious crimes over the appropriate scope of inquiry. Specifically, whether this should be limited to the particular settings in which discrete serious crime events occur and/or broadened to encompass the social structural antecedents of these events. This boils down to an argument over what constitutes the necessary relations for the commission of serious crimes for economic gain, and how their contingent concentration in certain places and moments amongst particular populations can be adequately explained. This also suggests that the interplay between more remote 'distal' causes, situational opportunities presented by public and private sector controls, and pre-existing networks of relationships have to be understood in combination for an adequate explanatory account of the organization of crimes [3].

The theoretical framework for this study takes the social disorganization theory. In sociology, the social disorganization theory was one of the most important theories developed by the Chicago School, related to ecological theories. The theory directly links crime rates to neighborhood ecological characteristics. For example, youths from disadvantaged neighborhoods participate in a subculture which approves of delinquency and acquire criminality in social and cultural settings. A core principle of social disorganization theory is that place matters—i.e., one's residential location—as much or more than one's individual characteristics (age, gender, race) in shaping the likelihood that a person will become involved in illegal activities. Larry Gaines and Roger Miller state in their book, *Criminal Justice in Action*, that "...crime is largely a product of unfavorable conditions in certain communities."

According to the Social Disorganization Theory there are ecological factors that lead to high rates of crime in these communities, and these factors linked to constantly elevated levels of "high school dropouts, unemployment, deteriorating infrastructures, and single-parent homes". The theory is not intended to apply to all types of crime, but instead to street crime at the neighborhood level. The theory has not been used to explain organized crime, corporate crime, or deviant behavior that takes place outside neighborhood settings. Up to the beginning of seventies, this theory took a back seat to the psychological explanation of crime. A recent overview of social disorganization theory, including suggestions for

refining and extending the theory, is a journal article by Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) [4].

A study proposed that social disorganization variables affect the occurrence of organized crimes in Turkey. In particular, higher rates of unemployment, residential mobility, poverty and family disruption positively influence the occurrence of organized crimes across Turkey's cities. Overall, findings of the study partly supported the main tenets of the social disorganization theory. In order to test all hypotheses in this study, the researcher conducted bivariate correlation, multiple regression (OLS), and path analyses. As a result of multiple regression models and path analyses, a relationship was found between social disorganization and the occurrence of organized crime [5].

The American House of Representatives passed H.R. 5932, the "Organized Retail Theft Investigation and Prosecution Act of 2010, by unanimous consent. This bill will direct the Attorney General to establish an Organized Retail Theft Investigation and Prosecution Unit to combat the growing problem of organized retail theft [6]. "The establishment of an FBI task force on organized retail theft is a major victory for retailers." [7] The FBI has estimated that the losses attributed to organized retail crime could reach as much as \$30 billion a year. These criminals move from store to store and even city to city. Working in teams, some create distractions while others steal everything from infant formula to DVDs. Often, they are stocking up on specified items at the request of the organized crime leader [8].

The South American Theft Groups (SATG) has developed into a transnational criminal network with profound effects on society—from individual victims, to entire industries and local economies. Primarily from Colombia, they continue to frustrate law enforcement with their skills in conducting crimes and eluding adjudication. Of further concern is the escalation of their violent attacks. A historical brief on Colombia and the exploitation of the documented intelligence of the SATG heretofore shed light on the manifestation of this criminal network. Furthermore, nexus between the SATG, paramilitaries, and narcotraffickers are asserted. Finally, exposure of their vulnerabilities is presented (the greatest of which is that most of the members are illegal aliens), and reasonable recommendations are offered for the deterrence of their future successes [9].

Victimization surveys have found that small local businesses experience far higher rates of crime than individuals and households. Previous research also suggests some of the crimes suffered may be organized. Furthermore, local businesses may also be invited to play a part in organized crime, for example through receiving and reselling stolen, counterfeit or contraband goods, though this has been subject to little research to date. A victimization survey was conducted in three high crime neighborhoods in English cities that aimed to establish patterns of organized crime victimization and the extent to which businesses were invited to participate in organized crime. Local police and community representatives were also interviewed to gauge their views on

organized crime and local businesses. The evidence collected suggests that the nature of organized crime in relation to business varies widely between high crime neighborhoods, that invitations to participate in organized crime are very widespread and that the police tend to perceive higher levels of crime organization affecting businesses than those revealed through surveys [10].

Each year, the scourge of organized retail crime (ORC) worsens, and retailers say that ORC now results in more than \$30 billion in yearly losses. The security industry should become more aware of the impact of the spread of ORC across the country. Simply put, retailers consider ORC to be their most significant security problem. ORC is the coordinated theft of mass quantities of retail merchandise that is later sold on the black market. The professional gangs behind the crimes travel from state to state, making them difficult to catch and prosecute. They usually target household items such as over-the-counter drugs, personal electronics, batteries and baby formula. The stolen merchandise is then sold through the Internet, flea markets, pawn shops and other mediums. ORC results in higher prices for consumers and an estimated \$1.6 billion in lost state sales tax revenue each year [11]. One recent important result indicates that many criminals specialize in the re-sale of stolen consumer goods [12]. The profits from these enterprises are used to fund terrorist activities [13].

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigates the level of existence of organized retail crime in supermarkets of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The store managers, security managers and general employees were asked about the types of retail crimes occur in the stores. Three independent variables were related to the report of organized retail crimes. The independent variables are: 1) the supermarket profile (volume, location, standard and type of the store), 2) the social physical environment of the store (maintenance, cleanness and overall organizational cooperation), 3) the security techniques and loss prevention electronics techniques used.

A convenient sample of 270 stores was under investigation about the retail organized crime. The survey questionnaires were administered to different levels of positions in the stores of Riyadh. A convenient sample was determined as it is impossible to go for probability sample.

The questionnaire consists of five parts; one is related to the profile of the person who is answering the questionnaire, the second about stores' environment, the third part is related to the act of retail organized crime in the stores, the fourth is related to the factors and reasons of this kind of theft and the fifth is related to suggestions and recommendations by employees to avoid the retail organized crime.

The questionnaire was given to some experts to evaluate, the evaluations resulted in some amendment to the questions and possible answers. Then the questionnaire was also tested as a pilot study. The pilot study assured the appropriate of the

questionnaires to be administered to the chosen respondents.

The statistical analysis ranged from descriptive statistics to the inferential statistics. These include the mean and standard deviation for the items in organized retail crimes and ANOVA test to compare the different types of store environments as mentioned before. These statistical techniques were done to answer the research question based on the objectives of the study.

### IV. RESULTS

The respondents were asked "How often the cooperation between Employees and their Relatives or Friends (sweethearting) in stealing in the store?" The answers range as: Never, Rarely, Usually, Often and Always, with scores respectively: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The same measurement is also used for the rest of sweethearting questions. In general, the study indicates that sweethearting occur 1.35, with standard deviation of .75. The average is out of 5. This result shows that it is not a highly recognized problem in Saudi Arabia. But this average also shows that, this phenomenon is prevailing in this tradition society. Thus the need is to look into this problem with details to investigate its related factors. The main factors behind this problem can be; the environment and the security measures which are taken by the stores.

#### A. Organized Retail Crime ORC Evaluation

TABLE I  
NUMBER OF THIEVES IN THE THEFT CASE BY STORE VOLUME

STORE VOLUME		C1	C2	C3	C4
B1		Two people	3 – 5 people	6- 10	More than 10 people
1	LOW	1.48	1.44	1.35	1.40
2	MEDIU M	1.43	1.45	1.35	1.36
3	HIGH	1.46	1.41	1.35	1.31
	TOTAL MEAN	1.45	1.44	1.35	1.36
ANOVA	P.	.88	.931	1	.80
	Sig.	×	×	×	×

Notice: C: How often the group of customers entered in the store for stealing items Never: 1, Rarely: 2, usually: 3, Often: 4, Always: 5

In general no big difference between relatives and friends to cooperate in theft but the most of sweethearting in Riyadh happened between husbands and wives. This result is expected as the form of family in Saudi Arabia is strong and the relationship out of marriage is rare and illegal. Also the cashiers are Saudi national by the requirements of the government. Most of expatriate employees in the store are singles no wives or friends as the life styles in subgroup culture, so the possibilities of foreigners to have such sweethearting acts is limited.

TABLE II  
NUMBER OF THIEVES IN THE THEFT CASE BY LOCATION

LOCATION OF THE STORE B2		C1 Two people	C2 3 – 5 people	C3 6- 10	C4 More than 10 people
1	Re	1.67	1.7407	1.4815	1.4630
2	Com	1.33	1.27	1.27	1.27
3	Re/com	1.52	1.516	1.4063	1.47
4	Ind	1.33	1.333	1.3333	1.33
5	Other	1	1	1	1
	Total	1.45	1.439	1.3515	1.3640
ANOVA	P.	.055	.002	.298	.302
	Sig.	×	√	×	×

Notice: How often the group of customers entered in the store for stealing items Never: 1, Rarely: 2, Usually: 3, Often: 4, Always: 5

Re: Residential, Com: Commercial, Re and com: Residential and commercial, Ind: Industrial

Residential areas are getting more organized retail crime than the other areas in all categories. All the results without significance except the group between 3 to 5.

TABLE III  
NUMBER OF THIEVES IN THE THEFT CASE BY STANDARD OF THE STORE

Standard of the store B3		C1 Two people	C2 3 – 5 people	C3 6- 10	C4 More than 10 people
1	Local	1.4649	1.4595	1.3568	1.3730
2	National	1.6522	1.5217	1.6522	1.6522
3	Regional	1.2222	1.3333	1.0000	1.0000
4	International	1.1905	1.1905	1.1429	1.1429
5	Other	2.0000	2.0000	1.0000	1.0000
	Total	1.4519	1.4393	1.3515	1.3640
ANOVA	P.	.234	.466	.061	.105
	Sig.	×	×	×	×

Notice: How often the group of customers entered in the store for stealing items? Never: 1, Rarely: 2, Usually: 3, Often: 4, Always: 5

For all categories there is no significant difference between the standards of the stores. But it can be reported –as indicators- that the national standard stores in Riyadh getting more organized retail theft than other standards.

TABLE IV  
NUMBER OF THIEVES IN THE THEFT CASE BY TYPE OF THE STORE

Type of the store B4		C1 Two people	C2 3 – 5 people	C3 6- 10	C4 More than 10 people
1	Small store	1.7600	1.8200	1.5800	1.5600
2	Supermarket	1.4545	1.4364	1.3273	1.3091
3	Hypermarket	1.4615	1.5385	1.3077	1.0769
4	Commercial center	1.3596	1.3258	1.3483	1.3483
5	Other	1.2188	1.1250	1.0625	1.3125
	Total	1.4519	1.4393	1.3515	1.3640
ANOVA	P.	.012	.000	.022	.213
	Sig.	×	×	×	×

Notice: How often the group of customers entered in the store for stealing items

Never: 1, Rarely: 2, Usually: 3, Often: 4, Always: 5

For all categories there is no significant difference between the types of the stores. But it can be reported –as indicators- that the small stores in Riyadh getting more organized retail theft than other types.

TABLE V  
CORRELATIONS OF STORES' ENVIRONMENT AND THE GROUPS OF THIEVES

CODE	How do you evaluate the store	C1	C2	C3	C4
		Two people	3 – 5 people	6- 10	More than 10 people
B5	The maintenance of store	-.134*	-.172**	-.193**	-.115
B6	The cleanness of store	-.140*	-.178**	-.180**	-.083
B7	The overall security system of the store	-.096	-.178**	-.158*	-.096
B8	The electronic security system in the store	-.138*	-.149*	-.112	-.091
B9	Customer care services in the store	-.103	-.173**	-.125	-.045
B10	Overall organizational cooperation	-.111	-.133*	-.160*	-.084

Poor: 1, Fair: 2, Good: 3, Excellent: 4. Never: 1, Rarely: 2, Usually: 3, Often: 4, Always: 5

Relation with two asterisk (\*) is significant strong correlation, relation with one asterisk (\*) is significant weak correlation and the relation without asterisk is no significant correlation

The general relation between the store environment items and the organized theft seems to be negative relationship. This means that as the environment of the store getting better the organized theft goes down. This is significant in these cases:

- Maintenance and the group of two, 3 – 5 and 6-10 people.
- Cleanness and the group of two, 3 – 5 and 6-10 people.
- Over all security system and the group 3 – 5 and 6-10 people.
- Electronic system and the group of two and 3 – 5 people.
- Customer care services and 3 – 5 people.
- Overall organizational cooperation and 6 – 10 people.

The significance means that these relationships are genuine and it does not occur by the chance alone or any mistakes of data management.

TABLE VI  
KENDALL'S TAU\_B CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF THE GROUPS OF THIEVES AND THE TYPE OF STOLEN ITEMS

V		C1	C2	C3	C4
		Two people	3 – 5 people	6- 10	More than 10 people
C5	health and beauty items	.597**	.603**	.767**	.827**
C6	fruits	.566**	.534**	.608**	.680**
C7	vegetables	.491**	.500**	.617**	.610**
C8	deli food (cheese, olives)	.465**	.489**	.530**	.561**
C9	clothes	.429**	.378**	.512**	.475**
C10	perfumes	.426**	.410**	.497**	.575**
C11	hardware	.317**	.341**	.416**	.509**
C12	house wear	.329**	.354**	.419**	.512**
C13	stationeries	.307**	.317**	.423**	.451**
C14	toys	.345**	.378**	.420**	.431**
C15	sweet items	.402**	.409**	.362**	.414**
C16	groceries	.334**	.382**	.301**	.332**
C17	ice cream	.459**	.461**	.472**	.480**
C18	frozen items	.409**	.422**	.449**	.480**
C19	cash money	.405**	.428**	.456**	.478**
C20	coupons	.415**	.408**	.480**	.459**
C21	costly items	.403**	.339**	.438**	.452**
C22	cheap items	.424**	.408**	.447**	.527**
C23	disposable items	.385**	.376**	.502**	.552**
C24	Occurred by females only	.444**	.411**	.535**	.605**
C25	Occurred by males only	.439**	.432**	.563**	.616**
C26	Occurred by mixed of females and males	.409**	.409**	.560**	.546**
C27	Occurred by children( under 12 years)	.417**	.419**	.478**	.488**
C28	Occurred by teenagers (between 12 and 20)	.469**	.452**	.448**	.445**
C29	Occurred by youth (between 20 and 30)	.422**	.426**	.426**	.461**
C30	Occurred by adults (more than 30)	.430**	.438**	.491**	.476**
C31	Occurred during the first shift (7 am – 4 pm)	.396**	.422**	.418**	.467**
C32	Occurred during the second shift (4 pm – 12)	.463**	.431**	.396**	.448**
C33	Occurred during the third shift (12 am – 7 am)	.492**	.444**	.445**	.446**
C34	Occurred during the night	.518**	.494**	.451**	.500**
C35	Occurred during the daylight	.461**	.444**	.447**	.489**
C36	These shoplifters were sent to the police	.413**	.420**	.458**	.458**
C37	These shoplifters asked for fine to pay	.395**	.386**	.454**	.446**
C38	These shoplifters were asked to sign warning	.384**	.391**	.492**	.516**
C39	These shoplifters were sent free without action	.390**	.378**	.504**	.481**
C40	These shoplifters were handed to their parents or sponsor	.373**	.339**	.500**	.500**

In general - based on the Table VI - the correlations tend to be higher between the number of people participating in the theft case and the stolen items. This indicates that as the group (organized) getting bigger the theft increases. All of the correlations are with significance. There are still some little differences in the stolen items.

#### *B. Factors & Reasons of Organized Retail Theft*

The result shows that the reason of theft is "The thieves think that they could improve their financial situation by theft", this was the first factor which was pointed out by respondents. The next factor is "The theft in group is easier than an individual. The third in order is "thinking of thieves that theft is good job for non-educated people". But the least reason is "The employees encourage customers to steal from the store". More order of factors is in Table VII.

TABLE VII  
FACTORS & REASONS OF ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT

E		Mean	Std. Deviation
E1	poor security system.	2.1255	.83574
E2	employee's economic condition is not good.	2.0962	.77997
E3	increasing unemployment.	2.4017	.91081
E4	The thieves get support from employee which is make it easy.	1.9038	.88590
E5	This type of theft has been habitual activity of customers.	2.0756	1.47645
E6	The employees encourage customers to steal from the store.	1.8410	.91201
E7	The thieves encouraged by the outsiders.	2.0628	.83530
E8	There is no hard action against theft.	2.2762	.95216
E9	There is active plan behind group theft in store.	2.3808	.92207
E10	Unsatisfied salary for employees.	2.3222	.91714
E11	The employees getting extra benefits if they help of customers in theft.	2.1925	.92388
E12	The high price of items.	2.6234	.89374
E13	The theft in group is easier than an individual	2.7531	1.01343
E14	The thieves think that they could improve their financial situation by theft.	2.8117	1.01776
E15	thinking of thieves That theft is good job for non-educated people.	2.7269	1.00052

Codes: Strongly disagree: 1, Disagree: 2, Agree: 3, Strongly agree: 4.

#### V. SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

TABLE VIII  
SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROTECT STORES FROM ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT

F		Mean	Std. Deviation
F1	Creating a positive work environment in the store.	3.6067	.73057
F2	Opening communication between management and employees.	3.6569	.64777
F3	Implementing strong internal control of monitoring.	3.6151	.69990
E4	distributing the duties and responsibilities between the employees.	3.6653	.63914
F5	Appoint or hire the honest and responsible persons for working.	3.6723	.61086
F6	Giving training for employees	3.6611	.66594
F7	Investigate theft incidents occurred in the store.	3.6318	.67238
F8	Appoint some experts to identify the thieves among the customers.	3.6444	.68222
F9	Installation of strong security system	3.6653	.60537
F10	To give periodically security skills training of employees.	3.6555	.63561
F11	Observing people and learning their behavior.	3.6218	.69345
F12	Having patrolling officers on the entrance and exit gate.	3.5900	.73854
F13	Installing very good cameras in the store.	3.6151	.69387
F14	Activating loss prevention system in the stores.	3.6471	.66356
F15	Making well-designed store layout.	3.6653	.67120

Codes: Strongly disagree: 1, Disagree: 2, Agree: 3, Strongly Agree: 4.

The first suggestion to solve the problem of organized theft is "distributing the duties and responsibilities between the employees", "Installation of strong security system" and

"Making well-designed store layout". The second is "giving training for employees". The third is "To give periodically security skills training of employees". The other suggestions go with order as in the Table VIII.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the organized retail crime, in specific, organized theft is moderately apparent in Riyadh stores. The general result showed that the environment of the stores has an effect on the prevalence of organized retail crime with relation to the gender of thieves, age groups, working shift, type of stolen items as well as the number of thieves in one case. This result contributes to the essence of the social disorganization theory.

The result shows – among other reasons – some factors as: economic pressure based in the location of the store "The thieves think that they could improve their financial situation by theft", "The theft in group is easier than an individual, "thinking of thieves That theft is mature good job for non-educated people".

The dealing of theft also was investigated to have a clear picture of stores dealing with organized retail crimes. The result showed that mostly, thieves sent without any action and sometimes given written warning. Very few cases dealt with by police.

This study suggests solving the problem of organized theft; first, is "distributing the duties and responsibilities between the employees", "Installation of strong security system" and "Making well-designed store layout". Second is "giving training for employees". Third is "TO give periodically security skills training of employees". There are other suggestions in study can be looked up in the text. Improving the cashier tracking, manager's involvement, and other workers whose are developing a more sophisticated geometric model to help in theft of items between cashiers and their relatives' customers. In such a way, we expect to enhance disambiguating ability of the model of trick which are using in "Sweethearting" should be traced and shed the light for these techniques for retailers to developed a strong structure to prevent this type of theft.

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