Cybernetic Technology Utility: Scrupulous Heroes v. Unscrupulous Individuals – Ending Corruption in SA

Nafta Mokate Lehobye
Department of Management and Entrepreneurship,
Faculty of Management Sciences, Tshwane University of Technology,
Private Bag X680, Pretoria, 0001, Republic of South Africa. E-mail: LehobyeNM@tut.ac.za.

Abstract
Corruption on South African (SA) roads is so overwhelming that it has reached such proportions where some motorists now see it as the only way to go. On the contrary, things seem to have started turning the other way round. Although it may take a while but it’s now a matter of time. Against this background, it would seem that some of our traffic officers out there although only a few of them, have proven heroism beyond possible doubts. To this end, this paper articulates the case of the courageousness of a traffic officer as would be exemplary on SA roads within the public administration of the local government. The aim here is to demonstrate the beginning of the end to corruption on SA roads and encourage traffic officers to be loyal to their duties and serve the community with discipline. To enhance this idea the paper argues that the CCTV technologies should be installed and be monitored by impartial civilians.

Keywords: Corruptive Activism; Impartial Monitoring; Professionalism; Scrupulous Heroism; Technology Utility

INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the safety of social individuals when exposed in the public during awkward hours when not seen by most or none at all and whether or not corruption in SA will ever come to an end or whether is still on the increase. It looks at technology that can be installed which might curb up corruption after hour between the CBD and places of residence. But most importantly, it focuses on the good work that one or some police officials do providing hope that corruption will soon come to an end. The latter will serve to be a model of the good officials who observe ethical norm of public administration attached to their job as public servants in this paper (Dion, 2010). Although indeed corruption in SA is undeniably on the increase, it is hoped that it will sooner or later come to an end, as the saying that ‘anything that goes around must soon come around’. This corruption is mostly started by government officials who are in state power as the research has shown (Masilo, 2012).

The traffic and police officials for example, due to the nature of their work when working out of their offices like on the public roads on their uniform, seem to take a lead in this respect. It should be appreciated that it may not be all officers who involve themselves in the unwarranted acts perpetrated on the roads in SA. Although research has been widely conducted on the issue of corruption in SA, it is so overwhelming that it has reached such proportions where some motorists now see it as a norm and the only way to go. However, things have started turning around. Based on this thought we indicate that some of our traffic officers have proved heroism beyond possible doubts. This concept of ‘technology utility’ is where the problem begins. The installation of CCTVs where crime is not much likely to happen as opposed to where crime is prevalent where the CCTVs are never installed. This is what this paper refers it to as management cybernetics (Lehobye, 2012). This paper therefore, articulates a case of a courageous traffic officer found in Mzansi as would be exemplary on SA roads. The aim of the paper is essentially to indicate the beginning of the end to corruption on SA roads – with Mzansi priding herself with discipline on the part of good men and women in uniform (Shambare, 2012). Of all these, what then is the main problem to be investigated?

The Problem Investigated

Most people in SA seem not very safe travelling between their places of residence and the Central Business District (CBD) sometimes during the early hours of the evening just after the so-called ‘pick-hours’. The Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)s are installed only in the CBD and definitely not between the residences of the civilians nor are they installed somewhere between the two places. The latter place where the CCTV would have also been installed would have safed many of these civilians from the harassment of and corruption by the Metro Police officers. In the
main, the problem to be investigated is the seemingly denialism to install CCTV on the one hand and the rudeness of other police officials when executing their job after hours in the cover of darkness. However, the paper provides some appreciation to those hard working and honest ones to public administration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses the Information Systems (IS) as its research paradigm. The field of IS examines more than just the technological system, or just the social system, or even the two side by side; in essence, it investigates the phenomena that emerge when the two interact. This mini research study is thus based on the interaction of both the technological and social systems. In the technological system it focuses on the use of CCTV technology as its architecture while on its social system it focuses on the safety of the civilians where CCTV is not used and see what the situation is of these civilians where this technology is not used. This will be shown through the ill-treatment of a woman travelling at night from night classes back home in the evening between the CBD and somewhere before arriving home all alone. This is where the SA case of a scrupulous metro police officer showing heroism amongst his colleagues [villains] in the Johannesburg area of Gauteng Province (GP), SA will indicate the beginning of the end of corruption. The rationale here is to show the importance of the use of CCTV.

This case study is one of those extremely isolated cases ever to be found in SA and was thus regarded, as a model of hope demonstrating the beginning of the end for corruption on SA roads. This paper also indicates misrepresentations made by high-ranking traffic officers in concealing the truth about corruption in SA. This paper however, does not imply that there are no other good officers out there but essentially shows the hope of SA combating corruption within its borders (Fitzsimons, 2009; Zvekic and Camerer, 2002).

Masilo (2012) exposed vehemently in this regard, the part of SA government. Masilo’s (2012) articulation on corruption showed that the government is equally to blame for this as it turns a blind eye to perpetrators (Zvekic and Camerer, 2002). Thus the paper brings hope of putting this monstrous act to shame. To achieve this, the paper adopts a descriptive paradigm. This is as a result of the actual occurrence that actually took place in Johannesburg, GP, SA about a woman driving home from evening lectures alone.

In achieving the above objective, this study hinges on and goes through three theory types upon which it is based namely: Theory as statements that say how something should be done in practice. Theory as statements providing a lens for viewing or explaining the world and Theory as statements of relationships among constructs that can be tested. These theories are in turn briefly described.

Theory as statements that say how something should be done in practice: Davis and Olson (1985) have earlier articulated the way in which Management Information Systems (MIS) should be designed, implemented and managed. This theory provides prescriptions to be followed in practice; with the implicit expectation that the prescribed methods will in some sense be “better” than alternatives (Cashing 1990).

Theory as statements providing a lens for viewing or explaining the world: Orlikowski and Robey (1991) drew on structuration theory and empirical work to construct a theory in which the organizational consequences of IT are viewed as the products of both material and social dimensions. Such theory is seen as a desirable end product - formal testing of such a theory is not envisaged (Walsham 1995).

Theory as statements of relationships among constructs that can be tested: The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis 1986) posits that two particular beliefs on the part of users, perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use, are of primary relevance for computer acceptance behaviours. This theory leads to testable propositions that can be investigated empirically (see Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1989).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This paper describes the situation encountered by a female motorist travelling alone at night from evening classes at the institution where she studies. The case that follows articulates the situation of scrupulous heroism.

The Case

South Africans need to make a choice: either to sacrifice and become part of the solution or drown in fear of the consequences of exposing corruption (Kwazulu Natal Province, 2012). Corruption Watch (2012) released a hard hitting report on corruption in the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department, highlighting the unit’s weaknesses and the extent to which traffic police abuse their power on the roads. The response, of course, is that the
authorities are studying the report, even though their own internal investigations paint a different picture. One may call that denial, but the City of Johannesburg insists this is not the case. Whatever it is, I find this latest report by Corruption Watch (2012), along with data released by Stats SA in 2011, as the real picture.

“This is frightening when you are a woman driving alone at night”

This sentence paints a picture of rampant corruption and bullying, while the metro police’s own internal inquiry puts the number of corruption cases much lower than the 50% reported already. Is it that the so-called JMPD’s figures are correct, as they reflect only cases that have been reported and resolved, as opposed to those that go unreported? It may well be suspected that the latter makes up the majority of cases (Tolisi, 2010). The question is: who should take responsibility for this? If motorists themselves do not stand up and insist that their complaints be looked at, can they blame the authorities for not taking action? If they amplify their voices and use every available avenue to expose crooked cops, then surely; that will leave little room for the authorities to downplay their concerns and reduce their complaints to “unfounded allegations. When asked about the experience of driving at night alone while being a woman, she related as follows:

“I have no idea how one goes about recording the abuse, corruption and bribery without risking your well-being. I am sure I am not the only driver who has been intimidated or harassed by the metro police. It is particularly frightening when you are a woman driving alone at night. But, like so many, after the exchange with the officer who is asking for a bribe, insisting that I ‘must have’ had a drink or, even more commonly, making comments laced with sexual innuendo, I simply drive off and move on, thinking to myself, ‘What a horrible way to live.’”

Challenging the officer would surely land me in jail for no reason other than I dared to question him. Even when I know that an officer who crosses the boundaries should not go unchallenged, the thought of being alone with two or more males in a car driving off to some jail cell is too frightening, so I remain in this paralysis, trapped and helpless. But the most unnerving consequence of my quiet retreat is the sinking feeling that I have let myself down, that I have violated what I claim to stand for and, in not speaking out, am perpetuating this cycle. I once asked an officer if he had a wife, mother or daughters and how he would feel if some man tasked with upholding the law made such blatantly sexual comments or bullied them. His response was, “Hauw, can’t you take a joke?” Yes, of course, it was a joke.”

Perhaps this is more than just enough to explain why we are so elated when we do encounter cops who treat us with respect and professionalism (Benjamin, 2012). There are many of them, and every day they are there, making our lives better. The late night rider here expatiated “I remember how. As a new driver with a brand new car on the road late at night after attending my evening lectures, a traffic officer helped me get home. He saw I was in trouble when the car kept stalling on the highway.

Recently, a taxi driver was fined R1 000 or three months’ jail sentence for attempting to bribe a traffic officer Nomfundo, who stopped him for ignoring a red traffic light. He handed her a R100 note and a soft drink. According to the charge sheet, Nomfundo accepted the bribe and arrested him. We need more of these heroes and heroines.

The report released by Corruption Watch (2012) on bribery involving Johannesburg Metro Police officers might not tell anything new, but it certainly confirms that there is a massive problem with our law-enforcement officers (Agatiello, 2010). David Lewis, executive director of Corruption Watch, said that although motorists ought not to offer bribes when stopped for traffic infringements, the onus was upon the officers to behave in an exemplary manner. Newham and Faull (2011) contextualized this very vehemently.

Some of the statistics offer a shocking insight into how widespread the practice is. According to the report (Corruption Watch, 2012), half of the Johannesburg Metro Police officers have solicited bribes, and one in every four of the city’s motorists has paid a bribe. Clearly there is a problem in Johannesburg and most certainly elsewhere (Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act of 2003 [PCCAA]). And it is reasonable to assume that it is not restricted to the city. The public and the law-enforcement officers need to understand that soliciting and paying bribes is not acceptable. Far too often, motorists resort to paying bribes because they have been threatened with arrest (Shambare, 2012). Shambare and Rugimbana, (2011) correctly elude this idea when they interrogated a question whether or not corruption is innovation (Rabl and Kuhlmann, 2009). In response to this question, Lewis said: “We often hear the excuse that the public is responsible for offering bribes to traffic officers. But we look up to law-enforcement officers to be
accountable and exemplary in their behaviour. It may not even be necessary to over-emphasize the legal stance in terms of the (PCCAA). This position really speaks for itself (Osei-Tutu et al., 2010).

**Technology Utility**

Under normal circumstances there should be some form of monitoring on the part of the law enforcement officers when executing their jobs to ensure that there is not harassment of the community members in the form of corruption. This is another kind of policing on the part of police officials for the sake of public administration. In the absence of self-policing amongst the officials, to ensure that there is ethical patterns that the police follow throughout as long as they are public servants, there should be technology to overlook at everything whatever these officials are doing (Dion, 2010). This technology is referred to as CCTV.

**Fig. 1:** Presentation of the Viewpoint Reported

In the CBD there are CCTVs installed at those busy streets where the perpetrators of crime can be identified at the actual time of the commission of a crime through the CCTV footages. These CCTVs are monitored by the police officials themselves. Now the argument is how can the police monitor themselves? Wouldn’t it be some neutral people out there who should do this one?

**Administrative Management**

This paper looked into the safety of the civilians when exposed in the public during awkward hours when not seen by none at all. It looked at the importance of CCTVs installed in the CBD as a technology that can be installed at the outskirts which might curb up corruption after hour between the CBD and places of residence. It focused on the good work that one or some police officials do providing hope that corruption will soon come to an end. But the big question to be asked is what role is the administrative function of the management of the local government in GP play in these circumstances? Administrative management within this context is that function of management that should see to it that whatever information comes in through management information systems (Davis and Olson, 1985), action should be taken immediately to avoid repeating administrative flaws and unnecessary oversights.

Members of larger communities in Gauteng province are suffering at the hands of the law enforcement officers and the local government is doing nothing about it (Newham and Faull, 2011). So again, the administrative function of the management of the local government in GP is not visible to play the role at all in making sure that perpetrators are brought to book (Fitzsimons, 2009). It is not as if the management does not know what is going on out there. Corruption Watch (2012) has released numerous reports in the media awakening the local government about the state of affairs but still nothing is done about it (Tolsi, 2010; Stats SA, 2011).

If these should be the case, all what it means then is that the members of the community, including the working class, should not work or travel until late to at least avoid harassment when travelling back home using public roads. In the end, who should be in the ultimate control here; the local government or the law enforcement officers? Who is to protect the community from this harassment? What about the question of the installation of CCTVs where they are needed the most? Should there be a situation of a tooth for a tooth and life for a life in which the community takes the law in its own hands? These questions also render more research in this area futuristic.

**FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Given the aforementioned scenario, this paper found the following: that

- First of all, it is frightening when you are a woman [even if you are a man] driving alone at night in the midst of police harassment without any protection by law enforcement agencies.
- The civil society and specifically the motorist community need more heroes amongst these corrupt cop villains to help put corruption to shame as the police officer in the case study.
- The fact however remains that the public would be more reluctant to offer a bribe if they knew that traffic officers upheld the law. This knowledge will bring hope and bring the beginning of the end to corruption on SA roads.
- The metro police management fails to create a way for motorists as their administrative function to report
corruption without fear of prejudice, incrimination and retribution and not just a leap-service as it is right now.

- The CCTVs are installed only in the CBDs and not at the outskirts towards the residential areas where corruption can be monitored.
- The police officials themselves are the ones to monitor the CCTVs instead of impartial people of the community.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Corruption is already far too prevalent in SA. But the problems will continue unless – as (Dion, 2010) correctly states – those who manage the metro police accept that corruption is widespread in the department’s ranks. Unless this is done, SA will have yet another government department that turns a blind eye to what its employees are doing. However, scrupulous heroes amongst the villain metro police officers indicated indeed that putting corruption on shame can be the beginning of the end for corruption on SA roads if and only if these good officers can continue to stand tall against corruption on SA roads. This idea can definitely be enhanced by the installation of the CCTV technology at the outskirts of the CBDs to safeguard the innocent civilians. But pretty certainly, the corrupt officials would then be caught in their acts on the CCTV footages providing that the monitors are the impartial members of the community.

REFERENCES


