

Re-visiting car guarding as a livelihood in the informal sector

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Abstract

A car guard offers to guard vehicles in a public or private parking area for a donation. The aim of this study is to examine informal sector car guarding as a sustainable means of livelihood. The study interviews 30 car guards at six different locations in Durban, South Africa. It examines their demographic characteristics, income, education and skills, risks and challenges faced, and the opinions of car guards regarding their livelihood. Furthermore, it compares the findings from 2019 with 2015 findings from Foster and Chasomeris (2017). Findings show a deterioration in livelihoods and income levels. The average car guard interviewed is 42 years old, has been guarding cars for nine and a half years, works five and a half days per week for an average of nine hours per day. Average nominal incomes per day have increased from ZAR130.1 in 2015 (ZAR160.7 in 2019 prices) to ZAR145 in 2019, with a -9.8% real decrease in income levels.

In 2015, 22 car guards earned above a domestic worker's minimum hourly wage, whereas in 2019, only 16 earned above the domestic workers' minimum wage of R15, and only eight above the national minimum wage of R20 per hour. Accordingly, there was a notable decline in expenditure on accommodation and reduced optimism about their future livelihoods from car guarding. Car guarding remains a high-risk activity that includes verbal abuse, violence and possible health risks. Twenty-one (70%) specifically noted their dependence on the Grace of God to overcome the many challenges.

Keywords

Car guards, employment, informal sector, livelihood, low income, South Africa, Durban

Introduction

The informal sector in South Africa, although small in relation to the formal sector, as well as small in relation to other countries' informal sectors, offers alternative and long-term employment to many (Blaauw 2017). Car guarding remains predominately a South African informal sector employment activity. As mentioned by Blaauw and Bothma (2003), McEwen and Leiman (2008), Steyn, Coetzee and Klopper (2015), Foster and Chasomeris (2017), and

Blaauw (2017), car guards offer to guard motorists' vehicles in either a private or public parking area. What distinguishes car guarding from other means of informal economic activities is that the amount of the donation is at the motorist's discretion. Bernstein (2003) noted that car guards fulfil more of a public service role rather than a private service role such as waiters. Therefore, the option of tipping is unique and suggests a desire to reward good service, yet there is no personal obligation. Car guarding is therefore most unique as it presents an unusual combination of the good nature of the public and market reality, both which are at odds with expected outcomes.

Unemployment in South Africa remains stubbornly high and therefore remains a challenge for the current ANC government. The results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) relating to the second quarter of 2019, released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), show that the official unemployment rate increased by 1,4 percentage points to 29.0% compared to the first quarter of 2019. The number of unemployed persons increased by 455 000 to 6.7 million in Q2: 2019 compared to Q1: 2019, resulting in an increase of 476 000 in the labour force (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

As the South African economy remains unable to accommodate the vast number of migrants entering our borders, as well as the many South Africans faced with fewer viable employment opportunities, car guarding remains a possible means to earn a living (Daniel, Naidoo, Pillay, Southall 2010, Foster & Chasomeris 2017, Blaauw 2017). From interviews with car guards and studies by Foster and Chasomeris (2017), and Blaauw (2017), there is an aspect of independence that may make car guarding seem a more viable means of earning a living, as you work for yourself, and have been helpful and cheerful usually ensures better tips from motorists. Therefore, car guarding provides a critical opportunity for those seeking work to earn an income in the informal sector.

Although authors such as Steyn et al. (2015), Blaauw (2017), Foster and Chasomeris (2017) and Steyn (2018) found that car guards represent the more marginalised components of South African society, dogged with low levels of earning, car guarding is often no more than survivalism. The more formalised car guards, and especially those at hospitals and areas where repeat motorists frequently park, do manage to earn a relatively stable income. What hampers this ability to survive on tips though is the continuous demand by agents that charge car guards daily bay fees and provide car guards with very few if any benefits at all, not even

a lunch hour, paid leave or paid sick leave. Where car guards seem to flourish the most is at the few facilities managed by the organisations, who either regulate the car guards themselves, or have prohibited agents from forcing car guards to pay these fees. This was noted by Blaauw and Bothma (2003), McEwan and Leiman (2008), as well as Foster and Chasomeris (2017)

Most motorists will agree that although car guards may be a nuisance, they do fulfil a valuable or at least a beneficial service. Some see car guards as no more than another form of begging, and even contributing to theft of motor vehicles or out of vehicles. It has been well documented that some more informal car guards may well be involved in crime, and therefore the drive by the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSIRA) to better regulate and ultimately formalise car guarding. Regulated and formalised car guards are therefore understood to be far more responsible, as they are often vetted by the South African Police Service (SAPS) (McEwan & Leiman 2008).

Car guarding is still considered in terms of preventative measures a very effective means of combating crime, even more effective than patrol cars or the use of closed-circuit television (Steyn *et al.*, 2015). McEwen and Leiman (2008) noted that although car guards are unable in most situations to actively fight crime, as they usually carry no weapons and have no means to apprehend a criminal, their very presence can deter criminal activity. Like it or not, car guarding has become an integral part of the South African landscape and a society norm, and is here to stay, especially with the current levels of crime and car hijackings. This is most obvious considering that car guards are now found throughout South Africa at most if not all parking bays where more than two or three cars are parked for any period of time.

The study therefore re-examines car guarding as a potential means of informal sector livelihood, in terms of their social and economic viability in Durban. The study followed the same format as the study by Foster and Chasomeris (2017) in 2015. Of the 30 car guards interviewed, ten were re-interviewed, as they had been interviewed originally in 2015. The demographic characteristics, income, education and skills, risks and challenges faced, and the opinions of car guards regarding their livelihood were once more examined and compared to the findings of the 2015 study.

Literature review

Car guarding and the informal sector

Defining informal employment and distinguishing it from formal employment is an ongoing debate, and this concept was explored in the work on Ghana and Kenya four decades ago by Keith Hart (Hart, 1973). The simplest is to define what informal employment is not, in relation to formal employment.

Informal workers are denied workplace protection as well as workplace health and safety standards, employment rights such as minimum wages, annual leave, paid holiday and sick leave as well as training. They have no job security and little opportunity of future employability as they have no employer references nor any evidence of prior employment; they have no access to credit and they have little rights to a government pension (Chen, 2006; 2012).

According to Blaauw (2017), the South African informal sector has over the last three decades attracted much attention, such as the work by Rogerson and Beavon (1980), Loots (1991), Muller (2003), Kingdon and Knight (2001), Devey, Skinner and Valodia (2003), Martins (2004), Ligthelm (2004), Saunders (2005), Heintz and Posel (2008), Blaauw (2010) and Viljoen (2014). The informal economy is likely here to remain for the foreseeable future as the formal economy cannot provide enough employment. Car guards, waste pickers and day labourers are all lower-tier informal sector workers who have not always received much attention in literature (Blaauw, 2017). In addition, large numbers of immigrants looking for work opportunities enter South Africa, and due to low barriers of entry allow refugees to enter the informal sector, which ultimately results in competition with South Africans for limited work opportunities.

According to Arde (2014), it is believed that an unemployed individual was asked by a motorist at the Durban beachfront to guard his car in exchange for a small donation. However, the first academic paper on the car guard industry may have been an honours research essay written in Afrikaans by Kitching (1999), which explored car guarding in the Bloemfontein industry. Later studies were done on the informal economy with a more specialised focus, specifically on car guards in Durban. According to McEwen and Leiman

(2008), these studies are not available in the public domain. The third author of this paper was, however, able to obtain a copy of the Kitching study.

Potgieter, Michell, Munnik and Ras (2003) followed with a study that predominantly focused on the role of car guards in the prevention of crime specifically as it relates to motor vehicle theft in Empangeni in KwaZulu-Natal. Blaauw and Bothma (2003) also conducted a study among 149 car guards in Bloemfontein, focusing on car guarding as a possible solution to rising unemployment in South Africa. The authors found that car guarding at best is a survival strategy when incomes are compared to other occupations such as waiters and domestic workers.

McEwen and Leiman (2008) found that car guards displayed signs consistent with a quasi-public good, which led to a better determination of why people tip car guards. The possible reason motorists may tip car guards is linked to internalised feelings towards car guards (Saunders & Petzer, 2009; Saunders & Lynn 2010; Steyn 2018). Furthermore, Saunders and Petzer (2009) found in their study that 69% of the drivers of motor vehicles in their sample do pay car guards. This amount had a maximum of R20 per payment in their sample.

A challenge to many car guards is the daily fees that need to be paid to guard a certain pre-allocated area. Steyn, Coetzee and Klopper (2015) found in their study that several car guards struggle to survive financially as bay fee tariffs had to be paid to these car guarding agencies or the owners of shopping centres daily. In addition, these amounts had to be paid irrespective of the car guards' daily income. This startling find was also noted in many studies including the studies by McEwan and Leiman (2008), Blaauw (2017) and Foster and Chasomeris (2017).

The Foster and Chasomeris (2017) study further focused on the possibility of surviving from the earnings made from car guarding as well as the daily challenges car guarding represents. Of interest is that, in the 1990s, the number of car guards has increased, thereby indicating a level of success to their survival strategies. Car guarding has during this time also evolved from very informal activities to now often being well organised, mostly regulated by car guarding agents. These organisations have no contract with, nor do they employ the car guards, often providing the needed jackets and security equipment on a hired basis and demand that car guards pay them a daily fee.

This reinforced that car guarding can be sustainable if high earnings can be achieved daily. In addition, their study confirmed that car guarding includes health risks and the constant possibility of verbal abuse. Physical abuse is also a distinct possibility, especially at public areas where alcohol may be consumed (Foster & Chasomeris 2017).

With the increased concern of rogue and unregulated car guards who may well be involved in crime, PSIRA's new legislation to better formalise car guards has also had a financial implication for car guards (Steyn, Coetzee & Klopper 2015, Foster & Chasomeris 2017). Studies conclude that despite the positive sentiment towards and progress made in terms of policy and legislation, regulating the car guard industry remained problematic. Lack of implementation policies, as well as the regulation and monitoring of the various policy initiatives presented vast challenges (Steyn, Coetzee & Klopper 2015).

Some entrepreneurial car guards do offer added services though. In Durban, car guards at the new pier have been nick named "the guardian angels", as they, in addition to just guarding vehicles, also SMS surfers daily regarding surfing conditions and keep the surfer's keys while the motorists are out surfing (Arde 2014; Hentschel 2015; Foster & Chasomeris 2017). Car guards also forge good relations with business owners and assist by keeping storefronts as well as the parking lots clear of vagrants (Christie, 2009). Nicolson (2015) found that car guards in Johannesburg may wash cars to supplement their income. This was found to happen on the beachfront in Durban and Cape Town (Foster & Chasomeris 2017). One intrepid parking attendant, as reported by the Lowvelder in Mbombela, noticed two cars parked at a shopping mall with identical number plates, which led to the arrest of the occupants who had stolen the vehicle a month before and falsified the numbers (Dias 2019).

Car guarding: Drive towards regulation and formalisation

In Durban alone, there are thousands of car guards and usually there is a clear distinction between the more smartly dressed, regulated car guards, and more informal car guards who are unregulated. Unregulated car guards who do not pay daily fees often include rather unsavoury beggars and street people, who usually patrol public domains. Formalised or legal car guards pay daily bay fees to the agencies who are expected to ensure their car guards receive training and problematic car guards are dealt with and replaced if needed (McEwen &

Leiman 2008). Informal car guards may also be involved in motor vehicle theft or break-ins and may be aggressive or defensive towards motorists and the public. In addition, they may also be involved in public indecency and threaten the public. According to Lindeque (2017), of Goodthingsguy.com, some refer to these informal car guards as illegal and the more formalised car guards as legal. The legal car guards are legal in terms of complying with PSIRA regulations and have a minimum security Grade E. In addition, they should all have name tags and branded shirts or bibs and have been finger printed and vetted to ensure no criminal record. The security companies are now also liable to a fine if they allow car guards to work who are not registered with PSIRA.

Of late, there has been a significant move towards trying to better formalise and regulate car guarding activities. In Cape Town, car guards are contracted to assist in the collection of parking fees in the city centre (McEwan & Leiman, 2008). In addition, car guards in Kalk Bay are in the process of been formalised by local business owners, with the intention of reducing potential crime associated with unregulated car guards (Kotze 2017). Simon's Town Community Policing Forum (CPF) has launched a project to better train and then offer employment to car attendants in collaboration with law enforcement agencies (McCain, 2017).

Furthermore, Steyn et al. (2015) noted that the Basic Conditions of Employment Act was amended in 2009 to include car guards under the Sectoral Determination for Private Security. Accordingly, car guards fall within the category "employees not elsewhere specified", and in Johannesburg and Pretoria minimum wages of ZAR2519 per month have been set, yet this amount is not often guaranteed and paid to the car guards. As of 2019, these minimum rates have not been implemented.

Car guarding: Crime and perceptions of risks and challenges

Police and municipal authorities often inhibit and regulate informal activities based on the assumption that these activities are unsolicited and on occasion car guards may display aggression towards the motorists and the public (McEwan & Leiman, 2008). For example, the Kempton Express reported on a car guard who threatened a woman and damaged her car for not giving him the expected R5 tip (Cele 2017). In late September 2018, as reported in

News24, a car guard stabbed a motorist for refusing to move his car or pay a tip in Johannesburg. The 26-year-old car guard stabbed the motorist on a Saturday afternoon in early September in broad daylight (Raborife, 2018). As reported by Compareguru.co.za, women often feel unsafe when followed by illegal car guards, usually late at night after the official car guards go off duty. Unfortunately, in South Africa, there is not much that can be done even though the Public Places and Prevention of Noise Nuisance bylaws state that nobody is allowed to continue to beg or follow a person after being told to stop (Cohen, 2017). Yet, progress has been made, as Sowetan Live published that the South African Police Services (SAP) arrested illegal car guards at the FNB stadium on 3 March 2018, and are committed to continue to check on car guards at large sports and social events. Organisers of sports and other events are now establishing in their events' safety and security planning (ESSP) meetings that illegal car guards cause traffic congestion, as they allow people to park incorrectly, and charge people to park, even though parking is free at most events (Strydom, 2019). The Kouga municipal area has also put out an appeal to motorists to not tip so-called illegally operating car guards in Jefferies Bay in the Cape. The aim is to provide all registered car guards with bright yellow bibs and reduce the number of illegal car guards (Verwoerd, 2017). This is also aimed at combatting the problem of illegal car guards who beg, sell items and harass clients on the side of the road. Many post offices are now putting up signs that motorists must only tip car guards who wear a bib and have valid name tag with their picture, also in an attempt to try reduce and combat the crime from unregistered illegal car guards as reported in the (February 2018) Highway Mail.

The opinions of some authors range from believing car guards are part street-corner entrepreneurs and part meter attendants (Spinks 2012). Other authors such as Aberdein (2014) believe car guards offer no real value and are simply a nuisance. Yet many car guards are victims of crime by motorists and are abused by the public. Times Live (October 2018) reported how a car guard, Vusi Mgiqwa of Springs near Johannesburg was severely punched in his face and on his head by an irate motorist due to a parking space altercation, and later died in ICU at Pholosong Hospital due to his injuries (Shange, 2018).

Research methodology

Interviews were conducted with 30 car guards located at two shopping centres, two hospitals and two public beachfronts in Durban, between June and August 2019, as per the previous study done in 2015. The same shopping centres and beach front sites were re-visited. Regrettably, one of the two hospital sites no longer have car guards. Therefore, an alternative hospital close to the original hospital was visited. The newly selected hospital is very similar in terms of size, location, demographics, economic and LSM (living standard measure) of patients and visitors.

The interviews were structured with both open and closed-ended questions and convenience sampling to obtain in-depth information about the livelihood of car guards. The interview schedule was developed based on preliminary discussions with car guards, studying available literature and the 2015 findings. All the car guards were eager to be interviewed and were interviewed individually, face to face, and encouraged to answer the questions in detail, so as to better record the characteristics of their livelihood, concerns and opinions. Each car guard signed an informed consent form agreeing to be interviewed and be audio-recorded. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was acquired from the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Five potential limitations were anticipated, namely misunderstanding due to language barriers; car guards' reluctance to being interviewed; the study being limited to Durban; questions leading car guard's answers and misunderstanding of the questions. The concern was that as the interviews were conducted in English, and for many car guards, English would be a second or even third language, there could be misunderstanding of the questions. However, all car guards had enough understanding of English to answer all the questions. Although not required, copies of the interview scripts were translated into Zulu and French in case any questions were not understood. Efforts were made to explain questions clearly, while all care was taken to ensure that the questions were not leading. As the study was limited to only five different sites and only conducted in Durban, this study is not an accurate representation of KwaZulu-Natal or South Africa, yet provides a general indication of the current situation.

The duration of each interview was approximately 20 minutes. In total, close to ten hours of audio-recorded data was collected, transcribed and then analysed using coding to identify emerging themes. The findings are summarised and discussed in the next section.

Key findings

Car guards: Demographic characteristics, income, and education and skills

This section re-examines the gender, age, race and nationality, hours worked and income, and education levels of 30 Durban car guards. Table 1 compares the profiles of randomly selected car guards interviewed now in 2019 as relates to the 2015 study by Foster and Chasomeris (2017). The same two shopping centres and beachfront sites were revisited for this study. Unfortunately, one of the hospitals no longer has car guards and therefore a similar hospital was visited for this study. Ten car guards interviewed in 2019 were also interviewed in 2015.

Table 1. Profile of car guards interviewed in Durban, 2015 and 2019

		Shopping centres		Hospitals		Beachfronts	
		2015	2019	2015	2019	2015	2019
Number interviewed		10	10	10	10	10	10
Gender	Males	9	9	10	7	8	10
	Female	1	1	0	3	2	0
Average age	Years	38	33.5	42	46.5	47	45
Racial group	white (SA)	1	1	1	5	9	8
	black (SA)	1	2	4	5	1	2
	black (Foreign)	8	7	5	0	0	0
Average years working as a car guard		6	4.74	16.3	7.3	6	8
Average days working per week		5.4	5.4	5.6	5.8	6.4	6.1
Average working hours per day		8.5	8.3	9.9	9.5	10.3	8.4
Average income per day (real income 2019 prices)	ZAR	98.3	120 (120.7)	128.4	165 (157.6)	163.6	150 (200.7)
Average income per hour (real income 2019 prices)	ZAR	11.57	16 (15.7)	15.3	17 (19.0)	15.9	17 (20.3)
Real change in daily income (2015 vs 2019)	%	-0.6		+4.7		-25.3	
Cost of daily bay fees at each location	A: ZAR	25	35	35	31	2	5
	B: ZAR	0	0	0	0	2	5

Source: Data for 2015 are sourced from Foster and Chasomeris, 2017

Note: SA = South African

Table 1 shows that since the random selection of car guards interviewed in 2015, male car guards still outnumber female car guards substantially. The mean age of car guards has

dropped at all but the hospitals. As a different hospital site was used for interviews in 2019, a comparison cannot be made between hospitals.

At both beach sites, there were no foreign car guards interviewed, and according to the car guards interviewed, there were no foreign car guards on the beaches that they were aware of. The same results were noted at both hospitals. In 2015, 13 car guards were from other African countries, namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo (10), Rwanda (1), Benin (1) and Burundi (1). The period working as a car guard ranged from one month to 22 years, with a mean of six years. In 2019, seven car guards were from other African countries, namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4), Rwanda (2) and Benin (1). The period working as a car guard ranged from four months to 27 years, with a mean of 9.5 years.

Table 1 further highlights that the average car guard in 2015 worked six days per week with an average of nine hours per day. The average income for car guards ranged from ZAR4.64 to ZAR30 per hour. Average daily incomes ranged from as little as ZAR50 to as much as ZAR350. Domestic workers in Durban earned ZAR2 065.47 (or ZAR10.59 per hour) for the period from 1 December 2014 ending 30 November 2015 (Department of Labour, 2016). Therefore, as at 2015, eight of the car guards earned below a domestic worker's hourly minimum wage.

In 2019, the situation has changed dramatically, the average car guard now works slightly less days at 5.6 days per week, yet still works an average of nine hours per day, and the average income for car guards now ranges from ZAR5.00 to ZAR40 per hour. Average daily incomes ranged from as little as ZAR50 to as much as ZAR300. A domestic worker in Durban can theoretically now earn ZAR20 per hour. The legislation stipulates a national rate of R20 per hour, or R3 500 per month, depending on the number of hours worked. The R20 an hour rate will be phased in slowly in the domestic work and agricultural sectors, with workers earning R18 and R15 per hour, respectively (Fin24, 2019).

Table 1 further shows that car guards are working shorter hours and earn less per day. In 2015, beach front car guards worked an average of 6.4 days per week, 10.3 hours per day and earned an average hourly income of ZAR15.9. In 2019, beachfront guards now work an average of 6.1 days per week, 8.4 hours per day and earn an average hourly income of ZAR17, which is still less than the statutory minimum daily wage of R20. Hospital guards, in

2015, worked an average of 5.6 days per week, 9.9 hours per day and earned an average hourly income of ZAR15.3. Hospital guards now, in 2019, work an average of 5.8 days per week, 9.5 hours per day and earn an average hourly income of ZAR17.0. Shopping centre guards in 2015 worked an average of 5.4 days per week, 8.5 hours per day and earned an average hourly income of ZAR11.57. In 2019, shopping centre guards still work an average of 5.4 days per week, yet slightly fewer hours of 8.3 hours per day and earn an average hourly income of ZAR16.

Therefore, at all venues, car guards are earning nominally more per hour than four years ago. However, if one expresses the income statistics in real monetary values, the car guards are worse off in real terms. Furthermore, car guards now work fewer days and hours to earn more, at the beaches they work fewer hours and days, and this may be due to increased crime and danger of working late at night. As one car guard noted “we leave at 6 and people come and sit in cars and they know we leave then so no one to look after cars”. On the beachfront, one car guard was twice attacked by beggars when leaving the beachfront late. “Beggars swear if people do not give money. Beggar stabbed me and steal me, I arrive at Addington Hospital in 2010. In 2013 they poke me (with knife) in chest, when (beggars) want to fight I keep moving”.

Even though the beachfront has a high volume of traffic, from break of dawn surfers to late night restaurant patrons, car guards at these venues are not able to retain the same level of earnings in terms of real value as in 2015. One car guard, an icon with Durban surfers and beach goers, who has been guarding cars for 26 years and was mentioned in the study by Foster and Chasomeris in 2015, as well as being in the media noted that “...people are tired of people asking for money at every street corner, car guarding is taking a bit of a nose dive, we earn less now”

The car guards located on the beachfronts earned an average daily income of ZAR163 in 2015 and now earn only R150, most likely due to car guards competing more and more with beggars, who also put on a bib and intercept motorists demanding a tip. The formalised car guards who must pay bay fees are supposed to be protected from vagrants who also cash in on car guarding. Yet, the agents are unable to regulate the many vagrants, especially at the beachfront and other public venues. One car guard noted that “we are not treated well, beggars and vagabonds take our money, Isidingo security has given up, they take advantage”

Many beggars desperate for money even threaten the car guards. One car guard noted that “we are often threatened by beggars, we chase them away and they threaten me that they wait for us tonight. Told I have a hit on my life for R50”.

As has been well documented by McEwen and Leiman (2008) and Foster and Chasomeris (2017), beggars often don a bib and take the tips of car guards. Additionally, non-regulated car guards are often involved in breaking into and theft of motor vehicles, thus the reason PSIRA is regulating car guards. One car guard reinforced this by stating that “skelm (criminal) car guards come to steal cars, and they run away, if see shout and tell security”. “Wonga smokers spoil name for car guards” Another car guard mentioned that “people tired of everyone wanting money, rogue car guards that break into cars and not look after cars are a big problem”

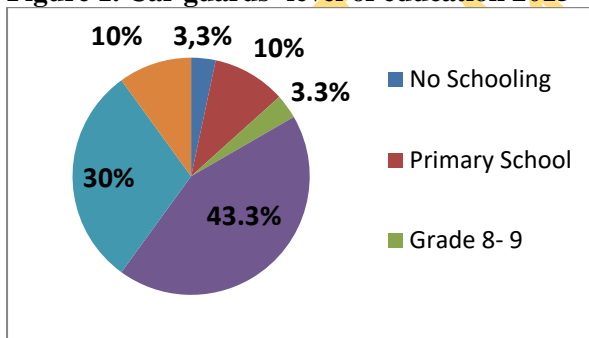
Formalised car guards often build good relations, such as beach front car guards who look after car keys for surfers, send surfers early morning text messages regarding surfing conditions, wash cars and may assist staff by re-parking their cars when parking becomes available. Such car guards earn the trust and respect of motorists and therefore may benefit from these relationships. In addition, several car guards, especially the migrants, save up to buy and resell clothes or electronic goods to earn additional income (Foster & Chasomeris 2017).

Foster and Chasomeris (2017) found that 20 (67%) of the car guards interviewed in 2015 pay daily bay fees compared to 56% in 2019. These bay fees amounted to ZAR35 per day at one of the hospitals and the other hospital’s car guards paid no daily fees, as unregulated by an agent. Shopping Centre A charged ZAR25 per day, while Shopping Centre B did not charge a fee, as the shopping centre management actively prohibited agents from coming on site and charging car guards daily bay fees. At both Beach A and B, where the Community Police Forum (CPF) regulates car guards, daily bay fees have remained constant since 2015, at ZAR2.00 per day. Currently though, only three of the ten car guards interviewed at the beachfront in 2019 still pay the daily fee. Being an open public space, beggars actively intercept motorists and take car guards’ money. This has resulted in car guards earning less, and now refusing to pay the ZAR2.00 daily fees.

In 2019, it was noted that nine car guards paid between ZAR1 000 and ZAR1 999 per month rent unlike 15 in 2015, eight paid between ZAR2 000 and ZAR2 999 per month compared to 13 in 2015, four paid between ZAR3 000 and ZAR3 999 compared to one in 2015 and none paid between ZAR4 000 and ZAR4 999 rent per month, unlike one in 2015. Therefore, nine paid less than ZAR999 a month in 2019 compared to only one car guard in 2015. The increased cost of living and lower income earned by most car guards force many to settle for cheaper accommodation.

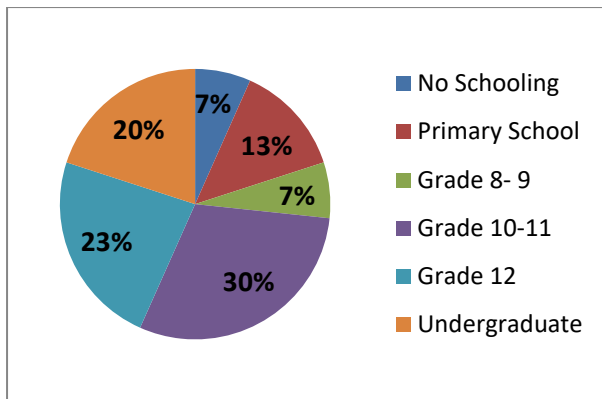
In 2019, 11 people shared rooms, unlike five in 2015, and only two car guards now own their own dwellings unlike eight in 2015. Three car guards reported that they stayed for free with family, and seven now stayed in either a squatter camp or in rooms that are either unfit for human occupancy or have no electricity or sanitation. In 2019, seven car guards stayed in shelters, unlike 17 in 2015. This may well be related to the fact that accommodation is getting more expensive and shelters are not always clean or safe. In addition, people’s clothes are often stolen in shelters. Mngoma (Daily News,10 June 2014) interviewed two car guards in Durban and found car guards felt safer sleeping outside than in a shelter, due to the poor living conditions and rampant theft in the shelters. Three of the car guards interviewed in 2019 had their clothes stolen at the shelter when they left the dorm room to take a shower.

Figure 1. Car guards’ level of education 2015



(adapted from Foster and Chasomeris, 2017)

Figure 2. Car guards’ level of education 2019



When comparing Figure 1 and 2, it is noted that 22 car guards (73%) in 2019 had completed high school (grade 12), unlike 25 (86.6%) in 2015. In 2019, six foreign car guards had started studying in their home country, yet not completed their studies due to political strife, unlike three foreign car guards in 2015. This may well be since many refugees are under the belief that South Africa will assist foreigners with free education and opportunities.

In both 2019 and 2015, no black South African car guards had completed any tertiary studies. Although these findings are similar to those of McEwen and Leiman (2008), it was noted that many foreign nationals enter South Africa with higher qualifications, whereas few local car guards had even completed school. This may well be because South African car guards with any tertiary studies find it easier than foreigners to find better employment.

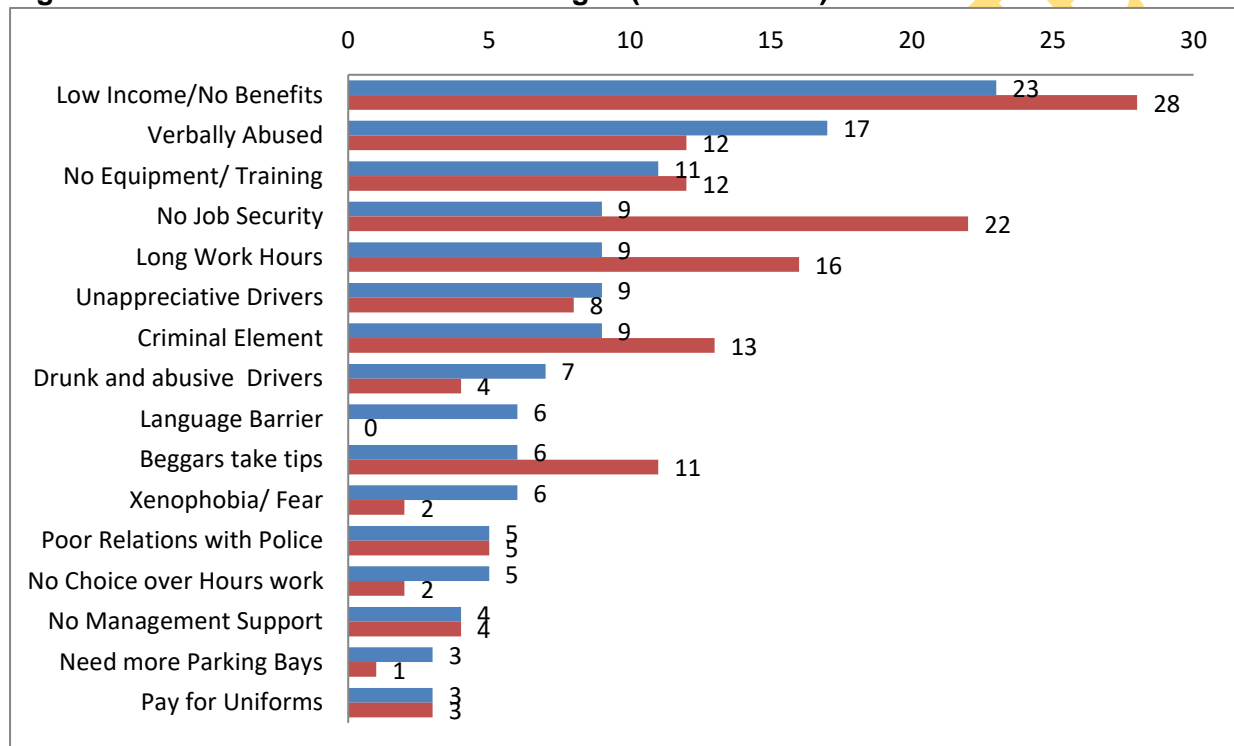
In 2015, 20 (67%) of the car guards were employed previously to becoming a car guard and 10 (33%) had been unemployed. This has changed substantially in 2019, where 26 car guards (86.7%) were employed previously to becoming a car guard and four (13.3%) had been unemployed. All four had been students in the Congo and came to South Africa before being able to complete their studies. A variety of workplace experience and skills were recorded. One of the car guards had previously worked as a security guard. Twelve had done peace jobs, one had been in the military police, one had been a driver, one an artist, four were in management on the mines, one at POSTNET, two managed stores, one worked at the post office, one was involved in running a warehouse and one was a primary school assistant. Of interest is that unlike 2015 where only one car guard had done any PSIRA training, in 2019 a total of nine car guards had PSIRA training of at least an E grade, and all these car guards were regulated by agents. These car guards were predominantly all car guards for many

years and predominately white, with only two Zulu car guards having completed their PSIRA grading.

Risks and challenges faced

Figure 3 examines the risks and challenges that car guards face in performing their duties.

Figure 3. Car Guards: Risks and Challenges (2015 vs 2019)



Source: 2019 data from this study and 2015 data from Foster and Chasomeris (2017)

It was found that 28 car guards compared to 23 in 2015 were now concerned that the money earned was insufficient and there are no additional benefits such as paid leave, pension or medical aid options. As one car guard mentioned, “we use to make up to R500 a day now we struggle to make R100. People have bad attitude towards us now”. Another car guard stated that “the country is going down, not get more like before things are bad”.

In addition, having no equipment or means to protect themselves against armed car hijackers that are becoming more aggressive and increasing stealing cars; the long hours worked; the

lack of job security and beggars that don't bibs and steal car guards' tips are all big concerns of car guards. These points were clearly confirmed by one car guard who mentioned that "not one of us are armed, we absolutely not able to defend ourselves". Criminal activities were a concern for 13 car guards compared to nine of the car guards in 2015, and related to that was fear of intimidation, while poor relations with the police remained unchanged among the car guards interviewed. In 2015, a car guard at a shopping centre was threatened when he tried to stop a car being stolen and had to apply for a protective court order as his life was threatened. Such work risks were discussed in the literature review, including Steyn et al. (2015), who noted that two guards were shot by robbers, with only one surviving. This situation has become far worse as, in 2019, two car guards at one of the hospitals had witnessed cars being stolen. On the beachfront, one car guard related how a car had been hijacked and guns had been produced and he as well as the car owner had a firearm pointed at them. The car guard explained this harrowing situation as follows: "I want to tell you the truth, the owner was there and I was there, he just parks the car, and he jump out car. When I try to go to the owner, they just pull a gun, then the owner come stand here and me too stand here. They reverse car, then we just keep quiet, scared, never do nothing, just stand and look, and car is vei (gone)" On a lighter note, he mentioned that he needs training "to protect so if someone shoot how duck a bullet".

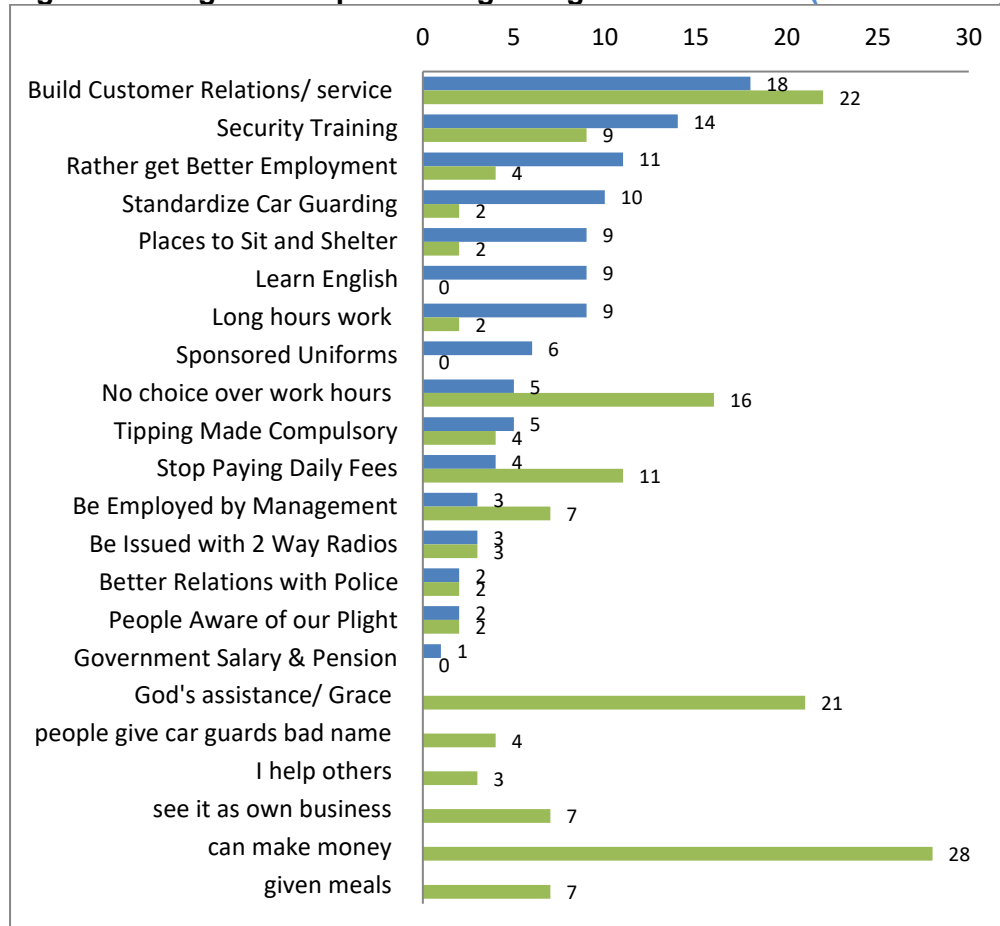
In addition, four car guards complained about motorists verbally abusing them while performing their duties. Seven (23%) noted that they had difficulties with abusive and drunk drivers. Of interest was that language barriers and the fear of xenophobia were less of an issue for the car guards interviewed in 2019, possibly due to fewer foreigners working as car guards. Three foreign car guards mentioned they were planning to return to their home countries due to the hardships they face in South Africa.

Furthermore, no car guards interviewed on the beach were female and on both occasions when fieldwork was done on the beachfront no female car guards were seen; this included 4km stretch from north to south beach. This may be related to the treatment of women as mentioned by Qiniso Mbili, of *The Daily Vox* (18 May 2015), who interviewed Mary Walters on Durban South Beach. Mary noted that woman car guards are often verbally abused by drunk drivers. Furthermore, male car guards are often abusive towards female car guards to take over their allocated positions, and so earn more tips. This was also noted by Kotie Gelden of Servamus (September 2015) referring to car guards.

Opinions of car guards regarding their livelihood

Figure 4 shows a comparison between the opinions of 30 car guards interviewed in 2019 and 2015 regarding their livelihood.

Figure 4. Car guards: Opinions regarding their livelihood (2015 vs 2019)



Source: 2019 data from this study and 2015 data from Foster and Chasomeris (2017)

In 2019, 22 (73.3%) of the car guards realised the need to build relations with customers to receive higher tips, higher than 18 (60%) in 2015. Christie (2009) noted that car guards in Cape Town often build customer relations and therefore forge strong relations with business owners. Aberdeen (2014) and Nicolson (2015) also noted that car guards build customer relations and offered value-added services to customers, such as washing cars. One car guard summed up the need for customer relations by stating “it’s customer based, everyone needs a

parking and a car to get into when they come back, I get cash because I have a smiley face and always wave hello and help.”

Eleven car guards compared to four in 2015 felt one of the biggest challenges was that they are unable to determine their own hours of work, possibly because, in addition to paying bay fees, agents also limit the hours that car guards can work. The inability to select their own hours is also limiting, since new car guards inherited the hours from the previous car guard who worked that designated area. This relates to McEwen and Leiman (2008) who found that car guards work long hours, which are usually unregulated.

Bay fees and the sheer unfairness of paying daily to work was a grave concern to 11 car guards in the 2019 study compared to four (13%) car guards in 2015. One car guard mentioned “paying day fees is cutting our throats”. Another car guard reasoned that “nobody pays to work yet if I do not pay to work, they will just get the next ou (person).” Seven car guards compared to three (10%) in 2015 said they should be employed by the management of the hospital or shopping centre.

New aspects that were revealed was that many car guards see God as an important factor in their lives and that God’s grace assists them to be car guards. One car guard noted that “without God we cannot make it (car guarding)”, another car guard said “God must be there else we won’t make it”.

Nine car guards in 2019 compared to 14 in 2015 felt that security training was needed to improve their work performance. Only four car guards compared to 11 in 2015 felt that they would prefer to leave car guarding and find better work, and all four were new at car guarding. More car guards seem to see car guarding as a sustainable means of survival and need to develop car guarding as a business. Four car guards were concerned that rogue car guards give car guarding a bad name, and three car guards felt that car guarding was not only about customer service, but also involved assisting people. Seven car guards took car guarding to a higher level by noting that they saw this as their own business and took car guarding very seriously.

The truth is that car guarding is a means to earn an income as mentioned by 28 of the car guards interviewed. The fact that the restaurants or motorists often give car guards a meal or left-over food also made car guarding more feasible. One of the car guards who earns a more

sustainable income at one of the hospitals mentioned “Its money every day, this is my business, customers come to me but it is bad that we have to pay bay fees”.

Community Policing Forum

Car guards on the Durban beachfront are regulated by the North Beach Community Policing Forum (CPF), which is a statutory body linked to the North Beach Police. As discussed in the 2015 study by Foster and Chasomeris (2017), the duties of the CPF include assisting street children as well as lost and abandoned children, among other tasks, not only regulating car guards. The CPF includes local business people and interested members of the community, many who offer their time and services for free. Car guards are regulated in terms of the days and hours they may work, as well as the designated areas. Duty rosters are drawn up to allocate a specific zone to each car guard. This process is also followed by the agencies that regulate the formalised car guards.

In 2019, no CPF representative was willing to be interviewed. The beach front car guards argue that beggars often wear a bib to pose as car guards and take money from motorists, and even threatened the car guards. As this situation worsens and all attempts to regulate and remove beggars fail, many car guards now refuse to pay daily bay fees as they feel they are getting no benefit for the money they are paying.

As mentioned by Foster and Chasomeris (2015), requests were made by car guards in 2015 to the CPF to assist with two-way radios, security training, uniforms as well as financial assistance. From discussions with car guards and simply observing the state of car guards on the beachfront, no assistance has been forthcoming as at 2019.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine informal sector car guarding as a sustainable means of livelihood. The study interviewed 30 car guards at six different locations in Durban, South Africa. The average car guard interviewed is 42 years old, has been guarding cars for nine and a half years, works five and a half days per week for an average of nine hours per day. In

2019, a total of nine car guards had completed the compulsory Private Security Industry Regulatory Agency Grade E security training, unlike only one in 2015.

Findings showed a deterioration in livelihoods and real income levels. Average nominal incomes per day have increased from ZAR130.1 in 2015 (ZAR160.7 in 2019 prices) to ZAR145 in 2019, with a -9.8% real decrease in income levels. In 2015, 22 car guards earned above a domestic workers' minimum hourly wage, whereas in 2019, only 15 earned above the domestic workers minimum wage of R15, and only eight above the national minimum wage of R20 per hour. Accordingly, there was a notable decline in expenditure on accommodation with nine only being able to afford ZAR999 or less a month on rent in 2019 compared to one in 2015. In 2019, 28 car guards were concerned that their income was insufficient compared to 23 in 2015.

There is reduced optimism about the future livelihoods from car guarding. Car guarding remains a high-risk activity that includes verbal abuse, violence and possible health risks. Twenty-one (70%) specifically noted their dependence on the Grace of God to overcome the many challenges. The public and all interested stakeholders can assist car guards by adhering to the simple biblical principle of: do to others as you would have them do to you. In this way, a public that better understands the challenges and contributions of car guards, may well appreciate and make better use of their services. Providing appropriate donations would contribute towards car guarding being a more viable means of livelihood in the informal sector. The reduction or elimination of daily bay fees also needs to be addressed.

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