How do you fear? Examining expatriates' perceptions of danger and its consequences

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates the differing perceptions of fear of expatriates operating in terror-exposed Nairobi and the high-crime environment of Johannesburg and its impact on stress and wellbeing. It illustrates how expatriates cope with the challenges associated with these two regions.

Design, methodology, approach: Following an interpretative and inductive research approach, qualitative content analyses were conducted using evidence from in-depth interviews with twelve expatriates in senior management or officer positions within a large global organisation, with respondents based in South Africa and Kenya.

Findings: Data suggest that expatriates in the more terrorism exposed context perceive fear less strongly than expatriates in environments categorised by high degrees of conventional crime. Fear seems to relate to physical wellbeing via restricted freedom of movement, but there is little evidence that fear affects mental wellbeing. The study finds that respondents in terror-exposed Nairobi tend to engage more in avoidance-oriented coping strategies, whereas their counterparts in the high-crime environment of Johannesburg predominantly rely on problem-focused coping.

Originality, value: This study develops a distinction between terror and conventional crime and contributes with practical insights for assignments into dangerous work environments. The geographic lens of the study provides an in-depth look at expatriation challenges in an arguably neglected regional context.

Practical implications: The qualitative design allows practitioners to better understand expatriates' perceptions of fear, its consequences for stress and wellbeing and potential coping strategies expatriates employ. It discusses a set of practical recommendations focussing on the deployment of expatriates assigned to dangerous locations.

Keywords: expatriate management, fear, stress, wellbeing, coping, terrorism, crime

1. Introduction

"You have this constant fear, I at least do, that you are not doing your utmost to manage the balance between this personal safety zone you create against the statistics out there. You always worry that you haven't done enough to make sure that you're not on the wrong side of the bell curve ... We basically came here by choice but we're putting ourselves and our kid at risk. So this feeling like if something ever happened would I ever be able to forgive myself for what I've done? That, I think, affects me."

Despite the potential concerns and fears of expatriates sent to regions that hold reputations as being particularly dangerous to work and live in, multinational corporations (MNCs) often seem heavily reliant on internationally mobile staff assigned there. This is argued to apply for a number of African regions, although the forms of danger and crime expatriates are exposed to may differ. In this paper, this variation is illustrated focussing on the two African countries Kenya and South Africa. Kenya is exposed to a high threat of terrorism due to its proximity to Somalia and the Middle East (Aronson, 2013), while South Africa has lesser issues with terrorism but shows a high rate of conventional crime with some of its cities seen as the most dangerous in the world (Dixon, 2015).

When expatriates take on assignments in such locations they are confronted with changes and challenges other than the new job itself, which is argued to expose the expatriate to additional stressors (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). When working in countries with lower safety standards than expatriates are used to from their previous location(s) their stress level is expected to be higher, which can lead to higher psychological and physical strains eventually impeding work outcomes (Lui et al., 2007). The latter can be associated with undesirable consequences such as expatriates returning prematurely, performing poorly, or leaving the company after the assignment (Hechanova et al., 2003; Shaffer and Harrison, 1998), incurring increased costs for their organisations (Vögel et al., 2008). Maladjustment and expatriate failure can further deter colleagues from undertaking such assignments in the future (Wagner and Westaby, 2009; Wang and Bu, 2004), creating a vicious cycle for recruitment and retention.

This paper argues that to better understand how expatriates' fears associated with dangerous locations affect various work-related outcomes, a better understanding of

possibly differing perceptions of the dangers attributed to a location is required. In this study different forms of danger are represented by the threat of terrorism and conventional crime. While terrorism is a major concern for the safety and security of the wider population, there is a tendency to overestimate the risk of terrorism given its persistent portrayal in the media (Leahy, 2015) and it should be noted that other forms of violence result in more casualties every year (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015). It can be assumed that differing perceptions of fear found in the wider population, might similarly be present within the expatriate community (Anderson, 2017).

There is no evidence yet on how different forms of danger (in this paper terror compared to conventional crime) are perceived differently by expatriates and influence their fears and stress levels and eventually have consequences for their well-being and other work-related outcomes. Hence, the aim of this paper is to gain insight into differing perceptions of fear among expatriates assigned to dangerous locations. The focus lies on the following three research questions:

RQ1: How does the perception of fear differ for locations characterised by different forms of danger (In this study represented by Kenya and South Africa)?

RQ2: How do location specific forms of danger impact expatriates' stress and wellbeing?

RQ3: How do expatriates cope with location specific forms of danger?

Responding to these research questions, this study acknowledges the role of context (Johns, 2006; Minbaeva, 2016) by contextualising the impact on wellbeing of two different forms of threat, terrorism and conventional crime. It provides in-depth insight into the feelings and emotions of expatriates in high-risk environments, a domain that has predominately been studied using quantitative research designs (Bader and Berg, 2013; Harvey, 1993; see the literature review for more detail).

The paper starts with a brief overview of literature focussing on expatriate adjustment, and the impact of terrorism and crime. After canvassing the research design, the insights of the study are discussed in relation to existing literature. The final sections highlights the main contributions and limitations of the study, and suggest future research on this issue.

2. Forms of danger and expatriation

There seems to be consent within the business and management literature and its related domains that behaviour can be better understood within its contexts (Bamberger, 2008; Rousseau and Fried, 2001; Welter, 2011). To understand the underlying factors causing variation in individual behavioural responses, not only the individual heterogeneity but also the heterogeneity of the immediate contexts in which individuals are embedded, need to be under investigation (Minbaeva, 2016). The term "context" is a widespread phenomenon in the field of science (Kittler, 2008, p. 113) and can be defined as "circumstances, conditions, situations, or environments that are external to the respective phenomenon and enable or constrain it" (Welter, 2011, p. 167). Capelli and Sherer (1991) further refer to context as "surroundings that are associated with specific phenomena and help to illustrate it", (p. 56), whereas Johns (2006) defines context as "situational opportunities and constraints that affect [...] functional relationships between variables", (p. 386) and further distinguishes between two dimensions of context. The omnibus context refers to expansive environmental factors, such as society, organisation and culture, and helps to explain the "who", "why", "where", and "when" of the phenomena studied. The discrete context in contrast, refers to environmental characteristics that have a direct effect on behaviour (e.g. task, social, and physical). Hence, the underlying assumption guiding this research is that differences in context affect expatriates perception and resulting behaviour. More specifically, in this paper the focus is on dangers attributed to locations expatriates are assigned to.

Research has acknowledged that variation across different locations impacts on individuals' everyday lives and their subjective wellbeing (Luhmann et al., 2015). An environment allowing to meet basic safety needs is considered a fundamental antecedent of psychological health and wellbeing (Florida, 2008). Just as individuals form their own opinion about others, they do so for locations and their perception and experience of the physical environment is subject to variation (Florida et al., 2011). Hence, it is assumed that also the perception of danger and assessment of risk in relation to the workplace will vary across different locations. In line with previous research in the field of work and occupational psychology (e.g. the job demands-resources model, Demerouti et al., 2001, suggesting that different occupation and different work settings pose different demands) this research is led by the underlying assumption that dangerous locations pose additional demands (e.g. potential risk of victimisation of terrorism or crime), which can lead to work-related and non-work-

related outcomes, such as stress or reduced wellbeing. To better understand the role of dangerous contexts, this study examines how different forms of danger are perceived and how this affects expatriates' stress and perceived wellbeing.

The scholarly literature often suggests that there is no unifying and universally accepted definition of terrorism and sees additional challenges in identifying terrorist activity in its situational perception as "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Laquer, 1987: 7, 302). However, there seems some consensus that objective definitions are essential when discussing terrorism related issues (e.g. Ganor, 2002). While this paper does not attempt to take on the challenge to develop a unifying definitional approach to terrorism, it does provide a clear distinction between terrorism and conventional crime to gain insights into the different perceptions of fear associated with differently dangerous locations.

2.1 *Forms of danger: terrorism and conventional crime*

In order to define *terrorism*, there is some consensus that terrorism is associated with more or less organised groups (or "movements"). For instance, individual acts would only qualify as terrorism if they can be related to such organisations. Some conceptual attempts (e.g. differentiating between guerrilla warfare and terrorism) stress that any attempt to deliberately target civilians could be defined as terrorism (Ganor, 2002). While this view could still be challenged (e.g. if by referring to justifiable goals) it conceptualises terror in line with previous work arguing that terrorism is understood as an act of violence directed at non-combatants (civilians), committed by organised groups or clandestine agents, intended to create fear and harm beyond the direct victims, and usually is politically or religiously motivated (Arnold et al., 2003; Borunda, 2016; Jones and Fong, 1994; Oots, 1990; US Department of State, 2001). Studies on the motivation for terrorism (e.g. Kruglanski et al., 2009) suggest that there can be singular motives (Hassan, 2001; Pape, 2005; Sageman, 2004) but also more complex combinations of motives with an interplay of multiple motivational drivers such as honour, dedication to the leader, social status, group pressure, personal significance (Bloom, 2005), lack of alternative prospects, poverty, moral obligation or the need to belong (Stern, 2003).

An earlier held perception that terrorists are groups with rational actions for political ends seems to have become increasingly obsolete. Today, terrorism tends to emerge as ongoing, systematic attacks often not clearly related with a concise and consistent political agenda or a desire for compromise. Instead of pursuing political goals, some

terrorist organisations seem to mainly strive for strong social solidarity with like-minded individuals (Abrahams, 2008; Bonanate, 1979). It is suggested that terror serves such extremist groups as a communication strategy and that there is a "symbiotic relationship" between terrorist groups and the media (Rohner and Frey, 2007). Hence, the act of violence and particularly its portrayal in public is the desired outcome rather than means of terrorist activity.

In order to conceptually distinguish terrorism from conventional *crime*, the conceptualisation above seems helpful. While terrorism also establishes a criminal activity, this paper refers to conventional crime as non-terrorism forms of criminal activity, mainly conventional crimes that are any personal offenses such as (armed) robbery, raid, rape, or hijacking, and any property offenses such as carjacking, or break-ins. These forms of conventional crime are well reflected in various official statistics such as the homicide rate of the World Bank, which includes deaths resulting from crimes categorised in domestic disputes, interpersonal violence, conflicts over resources, inter-gang conflicts, predatory violence, and killing (The World Bank, 2016). In contrast to terrorism focusing on public impact, conventional crime does tend to show far less interest in the public portrayal of the criminal activity (Anderson, 2017) with its impact usually directed at a far smaller target audience and not the wider public. This conceptual differentiation focusing on motive and outcome rather than methods does also allow the observation that terrorist groups might additionally be engaged in criminal activities without eroding the proposed distinction between terror and crime.

This conceptualisation provides a workable definition in relation to companies and their employees. Terrorism can impact organisations directly through violent acts, or indirectly through unpredictable disturbances of business activities or employees' wellbeing (Czinkota et al., 2010). Incidents in the past have shown that Western companies and their employees are increasingly becoming global targets of terrorist attacks, making terrorism a major concern for employees and their personal safety (Hoffman, 2004). Attacking MNCs not only leads to the destruction of the general social order but is also an efficient way to create chaos, maximise the publicity of the action, and generate capital through kidnapping for ransom (Filiu, 2009; Maddox, 1990). Hence, organisational sense making and their response to disturbing, unexpected events play an important but challenging role; requiring companies to engage in "duty of care" and to corporate preparedness plans to reduce the impact of terrorism and to ease the anxiety of the assignment (Colville et al., 2013; Harvey, 1993;

Harvey et al., 2017). In high crime contexts criminal activity is less visible to the public. For instance, expatriates could be taken hostage and held for ransom (Badiora, 2015) and other forms of offences are likely to occur outside the working context beyond the organisations' control. Despite the phenomenon of organised gang criminality, the majority of crimes are committed by individuals and targeted at individuals (UNODC, 2013), creating less publicity and reach than terrorist attacks.

There is a substantial body of research on challenges in international work contexts and work-related outcomes (Hechanova et al., 2003; Takeuchi, 2010). For instance, undesirable outcomes such as strain, dissatisfaction with the job, lower organisational commitment, poor performance, and even the intention to leave an assignment prominently are associated with (a lack of) adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Haslberger et al., 2013). Additionally, attitudes towards the organisation in the host country, career pathing, and country characteristics can influence the adjustment, or decision to leave, and it can be expected that the turnover is higher in less developed countries (Naumann, 1992). While past expatriate research has focussed on expatriate adjustment and the psychological comfort in a foreign environment with antecedents seemingly well established (e.g. Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003; Takeuchi, 2010), empirical evidence on how violence and fear affect such work-related outcomes remains scarce. The following section overviews previous empirical research associating terrorism and conventional crime with (expatriates') wellbeing.

2.2 *Forms of danger and expatriates' stress and wellbeing*

Research on *terrorism* and its impact on international workplaces appears rather limited. The effect of terrorism on employee behaviour and wellbeing has only more recently become a subject of interest to the global mobility literature and has been examined within international work settings (Bader and Berg, 2013; Howie, 2007). However, research on domestic work and non-work contexts is a less novel issue. It could be argued that the event of 9/11 seems to have drawn increasing attention to the association between the threat of terrorism and employees' attitudes and emotional reactions (Alexander, 2004). After 9/11, perceptions of fear and anxiety increased and individuals saw their personal safety and way of life threatened, leading to negative changes in their lifestyle. This has also showed spill-overs to the workplace and caused changes in organisational activities, such as workplace security and travel policies with many employees expressing their unwillingness to fly or inability to

concentrate in the office building, thus establishing obstacles to daily working routines (Howie, 2007; Mainiero and Gibson, 2003; Ryan et al., 2003).

Within the global mobility context, Bader and Berg (2013, 2014) analysed the impact of terrorism-induced stress on attitudes and the performance of expatriates. They point at intra-family conflicts due to terrorism and detect raised stress levels for the individual, which can result in negative attitudes towards the organisation, the host country and its nationals. This can result in lower levels of employee commitment and reduce the expatriates' performance. The living conditions in terrorism-endangered areas can make expatriates perceive their living conditions as uncomfortable and disturbing. Restrictions due to increased safety measures, and limitations on the freedom of movement might reduce their feeling of safety further and force them to constantly feel a latent danger. Additionally, Bader et al. (2016) found that terrorism can influence expatriates' withdrawal cognitions. They reveal that constraints in the non-work domain had a much greater impact, often fostering expatriates' intentions to leave these countries.

Discussing terrorism and international business Czinkota et al. (2010) suggest that many companies fail to prepare their employees adequately for terrorism endangered locations and neglect sufficient planning or advance preparation. Only few organisations offer anti-terrorist programmes, which then are often criticised for investing predominantly in security equipment but not in training for expatriates and their families (Harvey, 1993). This seems particularly inapprehensible when considering the aforementioned increased risks expatriates face in dangerous locations. Well-manged and proactive responses to crises have shown to improve employees' retention during and after the assignment (Chew, 2004). A better understanding of the challenges and fears perceived by expatriates in dangerous working environments can aid the development of more context-sensitive approaches.

Regarding the role of (the fear of) *crime* on mental and physical wellbeing previous literature suggests that there is an impact, yet existing evidence remains ambiguous and complex, as it is hard to establish robust connections between crime and health related outcomes (Lorenc et al., 2012). However, there are several studies that confirm a negative impact on wellbeing, mental health, physical health, and overall life satisfaction of victims and non-victims (Cornaglia et al., 2014). The psychology literature reports that crime victims often suffer from several significant and persistent psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, and stress. This in turn

has an impact on the victims overall wellbeing and health and makes it hard for them to perform social activities without emotional problems (Powdthavee, 2005). While existing research on becoming victims of crime and its consequences is mainly conducted within domestic contexts, the findings above could also be seen to apply for expatriate victims. Furthermore, victimisation can have a direct influence on individuals' perceptions of welfare, and their beliefs on how the world and society functions, and often they are less likely to believe that effort pays off (Tella et al., 2008). However, fear of crime also affects non-victims and reduces their well-being (Green et al., 2002; Sulemana, 2015). It was found that the perceived likelihood of victimisation and concern about personal safety can have a greater negative influence on life satisfaction than actual victimisation (Møller, 2005).

Individuals who fear crime often feel depressed and unhappy. There is evidence that this psychological discomfort reduces subjective wellbeing and is associated with poor health (Jackson and Stafford, 2009; Michalos and Zumbo, 2000; Ross, 1993). As avoidance is a common response to fear (see also section 2.3), fearful individuals not only restrict their outdoor activities, but are often found to exercise less, have increased car use, see friends less often, and reduce the number of opportunities to participate in social activities (Stafford, 2007). Besides that, the fear of crime can result in mistrust towards others and limit the ability to form social ties, which are supportive towards physical and mental health. Furthermore, social integration enhances individuals' impressions that environments are safe which, in turn, reduces fear and chronic environmental stress (Adams and Serpe, 2000).

The physical environment and the perception of personal safety play a key role for mental wellbeing and the level of happiness. Satisfaction with the neighbourhood, control over the internal environment, quality of housing, and presence of valued escape facilities are found to be important for mental wellbeing and the overall life satisfaction (Fried, 1984; Guite et al., 2006; Powdthavee, 2005). In a high-crime society individuals need to learn to adjust to the threats in their environment by becoming conscious of safety and cautious in all their daily routines and activities (Møller, 2005). This does not only reduce individuals' level of happiness and control over their life, but also is a chronic stressor that reduces psychological comfort and their sense of mastery (Sulemana, 2015). Individuals with a strong sense of mastery are reported to be less depressed and able to cope better with stressful life events (Adams and Serpe, 200). Hence, the threat of crime not only increases the stress level exacting health costs, but also diverts individuals' resources to protection efforts, and creates an

environment which does not promote productive activities (Demombynes and Özler, 2005). The previous discussion suggests that exposure to crime, and even the mere fear of becoming a victim of crime will also affect expatriates, particularly when working in high-crime contexts.

2.3 Forms of danger and coping

In early research, coping was conceptualised as a defence mechanism (Freud, 1933). More recently, coping is understood to refer to all conscious and unconscious actions and thoughts which help affected individuals processing stressful events (Stone et al., 1988). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) refer to coping as a constantly changing cognitive and behavioural effort responding to external and/or internal demands. Coping strategies are meant to provide psychological adaption in crisis situations (Green and Pomeroy, 2007). When exposed to stressful events, such as terror or conventional crime, individuals' mental health and wellbeing are argued to be reliant on the coping strategies they are adopting (Endler and Parker, 1990). The stress and coping literature suggests that three factors can determine the state of balance; the perception of the event, the availability of situational support, and the coping mechanism (Green et al., 2010).

The transactional model of coping suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposes that coping strategies can be divided into emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. They assert that an individual's beliefs and appraisals determine the coping process and the recovery. Emotion-focused coping strategies intend to manage and regulate emotional distress by controlling the emotional consequences of the stressful event such as feelings of fear, anger and sadness (Billings and Moos, 1981). Problem-focused coping strategies, also known as approach coping (Stanton and Franz, 1999), refer to the cognitive efforts aimed at regulating or eliminating the source of stress. Being goal-oriented, problem-focused coping involves activities such as defining the problem and generating, evaluating, and implementing solutions, such as physically confronting the source of stress with the intention to gain control over the person-environment relationship (Pavšič Mrevlje, 2016). Researchers (e.g. Endler and Parker, 1990) have extended the transactional model by adding a third coping strategy, the avoidance-oriented strategy. Avoidance-orientated coping refers to all efforts and actions which draw the attention away from the source of stress, with the intention to distance oneself from or avoid confronting the problem (Stanton and Franz, 1999). Reid (1998) further differentiates between collective coping, including collective

responses such as organised neighbour watches, and individual coping, which refers to actions such as installing an alarm system or carrying a weapon.

Outcomes of applying coping strategies will depend on how well the selected strategy matches the demands (Folkman et al., 1986). In addition to individual characteristics, e.g. personality traits or gender, situational characteristics have shown to play a prominent role in selecting coping mechanisms (Anshel, 2000; Wearing and Hart, 1996). Focussing on context, Roth and Cohan (1986) suggest that a problem-focused approach is more appropriate when the situation is to some extent controllable, the source of stress is known, or action is required because a failure to address the issue may result in undesirable, even dangerous outcomes. In contrast, avoidance-oriented coping seems to be preferable when the situation is not controllable, the source of stress in unclear or unknown, and there is little chance to resolve the problem. Green and Pomeroy (2007) show that victims of violent crimes are more likely to use emotion-focused coping, whereas victims of non-violent crimes rather apply problem-focused and task-orientated coping mechanisms. In a longer-term perspective, problem-focused coping seems to be a rather effective strategy due to the active part the individual takes in the problem-solving process (Folkman, 1997). Consequently, the coping literature suggests that it might be appropriate to shift strategies based on shifts of situational demands (Anshel, 2000) and this subsequently suggests a variation in coping mechanism in responding to different types of danger.

For organisations, understanding not only the role of fear for expatriate stress and wellbeing but also the role of contextualised coping responses appears vital for the success of assignments to dangerous locations. Expatriates' inability to effectively cope with fear perceived in location exposed to threats of terrorism or conventional crime can not only result in severe psychological and physical outcomes such as burnout and cardio-vascular disorder, but also have spill-over effects in the work-domain and lead to poor performance or intentions to leave a profession or job (Anshel, 2000; Pavšič Mrevlje, 2016). In order to provide successful stress management interventions, a better understanding of the factors associated with effective coping is needed (Green and Pomeroy, 2007). While there is a substantial amount of research on victimisation, fear of crime and coping strategies (most recently Rühs et al., 2017) as well as the challenges expatriates face abroad, little is known yet about the those aspects in the context of expatriate management in dangerous locations. The explicit distinction between two different forms of threat is novel, and can further deliver valuable insights in how both, expatriates and organisations, can respond to those differences.

3. Methodology

In order to investigate how situational factors (the risk of terrorism or crime) affect (individual) perceptions and coping strategies, the study applied a cross-level design, as suggested by Rousseau and Fried (2001), taking into account the impact of those contextual variables. To provide insight into perceptions of fear and risk for locations characterised by different forms of danger, several semi-structured interviews with expatriates working in Kenya and South Africa were conducted. Such a research design is seen particular useful to study the impact of context as it is sensitive to a wide range of discrete contextual factors and can be sensitive to a wide range of behaviours (Johns, 2006). The following sections provide information about the research context, the procedures of data collection and participants' selection and data analysis.

3.1 *Research context*

Nairobi and Johannesburg were selected as dangerous locations as these countries face different forms of threat but are not seen as dangerous as high-risk countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq or Nigeria where the situation is so perilous that according to the interview accounts, some organisations have temporarily stopped sending expatriates to these locations on a long-term basis, or at least not allowing their employees to take their families with them. While according to the National Counterterrorism Centre (2016) and the World Bank's Harmonized List of Fragile Situations (2015) neither Kenya nor South Africa are classified as a high-risk country but can be considered to still pose dangerous work environments for expatriates.

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2015) scores the threat of terrorism in Kenya at 6.66, which is high compared to South Africa with 4.23, and the UK with 5.61. The score varies from 1 to 10, with 1 being the countries least affected by terrorism, and 10 indicating the countries most affected. The terror organisation al-Shabaab has perpetrated several attacks in Kenya, such as the 2013 invasion of the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi and the massacre at the Garissa University in 2015 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2015). Experts say that further, more complex attacks are highly likely because of Kenya's role in the Global War on Terror and its military invasion of Somalia. Furthermore, Kenya may be targeted because of its unstable neighbours, Islamic fundamentalism, and insufficient law enforcement (Aronson, 2013; IHS Global Inc, 2014; UK Government, 2016).

South Africa, in contrast, has a high rate of conventional crime and shows the highest incidence of reported rape in the world (Keefer, 2009). The World Bank (2016) measures the homicide rate in South Africa to be 4.5 times higher than in Kenya. South Africa is deemed to have 32 incidents per 100,000 people, compared to Kenya with 7 incidents (and the UK with 1 incident). Furthermore, a comparison between Johannesburg and Nairobi found that the crime index in Johannesburg is higher, and the safety scale lower than in Nairobi. While the safety of walking alone during daytime is moderate in Nairobi, it is low in Johannesburg (Numbeo, 2016). Many South Africans report high levels of personal experience with crime, and only 56% of the population has confidence in the local police forces (Rheault, 2007). The Overseas Security Advisory Council (2015) evaluates the crime rating in South Africa as critical and recommends avoiding walks around township neighbourhoods and the central business district (CBD) at any times.

3.2 *Procedures of data collection and research participants*

The data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with expatriates in senior management or officer positions within an international financial institution, employing over 10,000 people world-wide. Access to participants was generated via a company contact within the company, initiating contacts with potential respondents in both Kenya and South Africa. Following two pilot interviews, twelve expatriates were interviewed (Table 1).

Insert Table 1 around here

In response to the critical safety situations in Kenya and South Africa, interviews were conducted via Skype. Acknowledging that the use of media can hinder the rapport with and disclosure of participants (Bertraud and Bordeau, 2010; Oates, 2013), the use of Skype was considered a reasonable compromise between face-to-face and phone interviews or other VOIP formats without a visual channel. The chosen format allowed interviewees to respond from home, from a private and intimate environment, without invading their personal space and giving opportunity to withdraw at any time (Hanna, 2012; Oates 2013). This format was seen as beneficial for creating an openness among respondents to exchange over a topic that touches on their personal life and

experiences. Furthermore, Skype interviews enabled the access to the purposive sample and, in line with the author institution's ethical guidelines, did not risk the safety of both parties, researcher and researched (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013).

Due to the sensitivity of this research with a possibility to touch on very personal episodes or events in the respondents' lives which could cause emotional stress and discomfort among interviewees, ethical issues were carefully considered and institutional approval was sought prior data collection. An information sheet of the research was sent to the respondents, giving them the opportunity to refuse participation and to refuse to comment or withdraw at any point during the interviews. In addition, the researcher provided all participants with contact details of psychological counsellors in case the interview led to any discomfort. To ensure full confidentiality and anonymity, in-text quotations are not tagged with participant identifiers giving no reference to demographics displayed in Table 1. Only respondents that have never knowingly been involved in a terrorist attack or physical assault were approached. A purposive, maximum variation sampling strategy was used to increase the diversity, and decrease the chance of sampling bias (Palinkas et al., 2015; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

The introductory questions about the participants' current personal and occupational situation aimed to build rapport and record participants' demographics. The interview questions tried to capture an impression of their perceptions of personal circumstances, fear and wellbeing as well as coping strategies applied. Every interview lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. All conversations were recorded with the permission of the respondents, producing recorded material for verbatim transcription. Seven of the respondents came from Western contexts (Europe and America), the other five respondents had an African or Asian background.

3.3 Data analysis

To interpret and explore the meaning underlying the interview content, content analysis was used. This research technique makes replicable and valid inferences from texts and the contexts in which they appear (Krippendorff, 1980). In doing so, it aims to distil the amount of data produced into fewer content-related categories, which are units of text that are presumed to have similar meanings (Weber, 1990). These categories are organised into meaningful clusters, providing thick descriptions of the phenomena studied (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). More specifically, conventional, inductive content analysis was applied, which means that the categories derive from

the data during the analysis. This approach provides rich descriptions of a particular setting or phenomenon, and is particularly appropriate when existing theory or literature is limited (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

While there is no fixed set of predetermined rules, to systematically analyse the data, the three-phase-process suggested by Elo and Kyngäs (2007) was followed. This approach has found strong acceptance in health-care related research contexts and like other tools (e.g. systematic reviews, impact measurement, see Kittler et al. 2011, Kittler 2017) has more recently spilled over to management research. In line with Elo and Kyngäs' (2007) suggested process, the first phase of the analysis was the *preparation* phase which contained the selection of the unit for analysis and the sense making of the data. Considering the research questions, the focus was on all sections of the interviews that contained answers concerning the perceptions of personal circumstances, fear, stress, wellbeing, and coping strategies.

The *organising* phase started with the open coding. Due to the manageable number of interviews the data was manually coded as an alternative to using analytical software. This enabled the researchers to gain a more in-depth understanding of the data. The coding procedure categorised and combined the data for themes and ideas, and marked similar text passages with a code label and an assigned colour. In a second step, the codes were grouped under generic categories, creating the data structure (Table 2). To generate consistency and replicability, a coding manual was established (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2016) which consists of all developed codes and categories, their descriptions, and examples of their occurrence. Every newly emerging code was added to the coding manual, and its appearance was checked across all the other interview responses.

In the final *reporting* phase the data structure created was used to systematically present the findings. In-text quotations are used to illustrate the findings and the links to the raw data. To support trustworthiness, the study considered criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability introduced by academics such as Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and Morrow (2005). *Credibility* was established by using an appropriate research design to study the effects of context, by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, and by using a diverse sample. *Dependability* was ensured by conducting all interviews in a short time frame, under the same conditions, and questioning participants on the same areas. Further, using an inductive approach, a constant comparison of the codes in all interview transcripts

was ensured, adding emerging codes to the coding manual. A rich presentation of the findings and the display of adequate quotations intend to support *transferability*. To foster *confirmability* the evidence from the interviews was tied together in such a way that the reader may understand the adequacy of the insights still leaving room for alternative interpretations. Reoccurring themes in the interviews have suggested data saturation (Krueger and Casey, 2009).

Insert Table 2 around here

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4. Insights from the interviews

The following sections present the insights from the interviews in relation to different perceptions of fear in Kenya and South Africa and illustrate how such perceptions affect expatriates' stress wellbeing and coping. The main research findings are presented following the data structure presented in Table 2.

4.1 Forms of danger and perceptions of fear

The degree of safety varied between the accounts provided for respondents from both locations. Most of the respondents in Nairobi reported to feel rather safe. However, the past terrorist attacks (as mentioned by every respondent in the Kenya sample) have changed the feeling of security for some and most certainly increased the awareness that something can happen. A few respondents elaborated on increased levels of fear after the incidents, which in some cases remained very high for some time after the attack. Some respondents were particularly concerned about becoming exposed to future attacks themselves because of their different ethnic background or religion.

"Yeah…so I didn't feel fear so far but I know that something can happen"

"I think initially I was…but as events happened…my way of life changed and I became more aware that danger was really there and my lifestyle changed"

The terrorists were basically Somali Muslim and I am a Muslim, so I actually felt very insecure on that day and for a couple of days after the event…I was thinking that the security guard or even my neighbours, others, if they come and attack me, what am I going to do?"

Further, respondents in Nairobi felt more unsafe in public spaces, such as shopping malls and restaurants. Also the office building was mentioned as a potentially unsafe place, as offices of international companies could be preferred targets.

"I would say the biggest issue is that of the office…So what happens when there is a terrorist attack on the office?…we are an international organisation with a lot of international staff"

"I think we are more at risk at the, if I would have to rank it, I would say at the office…in shopping malls…or in restaurants, and then at home. At home is probably the place I feel the safest… Because the office itself is a target. International community, many expats, I think in itself it's a target for the type of, not crime, but terrorism"

The insights for *Johannesburg* paint a different picture. In contrast to the perception of a relatively safe environment observed in Nairobi, none of the respondents reported to feel completely safe and at ease in Johannesburg. Safety measures and a constant attentiveness were necessary to enhance their feeling of safety, and to minimise fear to a manageable level. Some respondents reported to feel constantly unsafe, getting scared when walking around particular or unknown areas in the city, even during daytime.

"No I don't feel safe. But I think I can control safety to a point where I still feel it's manageable what we are doing…In my head I'm constantly somewhat unsafe here"

"You have to be mindful of what you are doing at all times and you have to be mindful of the people around you"

"But here I am very uncomfortable, even during the day, to walk around"

In contrast to Nairobi, the way home and activities in front of the house were mentioned as particular danger spots and there were also accounts of respondents feeling unsafe when using public transport or taxis. An interesting observation was that, when addressing their fears, respondents in Johannesburg only referred to conventional crimes and were particularly feared of break-ins or that people could chase and rob them. Further, it was striking how detailed and violent the reference to crime was in these interviews. There was a noticeable pattern among respondents in Johannesburg that it was just a matter time until they become a victim of crime themselves.

"One of the most frequent danger points when you live in South Africa is just when you leave the house or when you come back …. Most people that I know to whom something has happened have been carjacked at the front of their gate while they're waiting"

"Somebody can come into your house...you have to make sure no one is following you home because we've had a few incidents of that. Not me personally but a few of my colleagues have been followed home from the airport and had their things stolen"

"You have to prepare yourself for that circular movement of violence. It's going to be like a spiral and you're going to feel like you are in the middle. At first you hear about it...then you know somebody that you know will tell you about somebody that they know. Then somebody that you know well will be affected. Then it will be next door. Then maybe it's the relative or it's your best friend who is affected. And you feel like it is getting closer and closer and closer"

4.2 *Accounts of terror and conventional crime*

In *Nairobi*, the city's reputation has suffered from the past terrorist attacks that struck the area. Before the 2013 and 2015 terror events (see section 3.1) the city did not seem to have a particularly bad reputation for being exposed to terrorism and other forms of danger but seemed to have had the same crime issues as other big cities (one interviewee reflected on the status before the attacks as Nairobi merely having "a bit of an issue with security but these days every city has got a security issue"). However, the perception over Nairobi's exposure to potential terrorist threats in the future has been perceived to increase as a result of the attacks.

None of the respondents experienced an unpleasant situation at their arrival (as reported in the Johannesburg sample below) but the visible safety measures and barriers did perturb some respondents. However, negative (first) impressions did less relate to fear or terror, but more to undesirable facets of the general environment. Particularly the high traffic density, the expensive public health system, and the lack of leisure activities were described as main disadvantages preventing a better initial perception of the location. One of the Nairobi respondents revealed a feeling that there was not enough (armed) police presence, resulting in a slightly lower feeling of safety. The advantages attributed to the location were climate, low costs of living, beautiful scenery and the availability of leisure time activities outside the city.

"The first time when I went there with my wife for the pre-assignment..., I think she was extremely [pauses] she said I don't want to go there because I don't want to live in a place where I am surrounded by big walls and security companies and electrified wire...The perception of risk is also visible. Much more visible than any other place we lived before"

Coding the interview answers in *Johannesburg* revealed that the city has an extremely bad reputation because of its high crime rates, with people fearing that they could be personally affected and become a victim themselves. This has prompted South Africans living abroad and expatriates living in South Africa to explicitly warn the respondents in this study from moving there. For a few respondents this bad impression was confirmed upon their arrival, and the visibility of physical barriers made them feel insecure and distressed. Corruption and a lack of governance was mentioned as an additional problem, with concerns ranging to doubts about the integrity of local law enforcement and disinterest of the police.

"The perception you get about Johannesburg is that if you just step outside you'll get shot"

"The day I arrived there was a robber, there was someone mugged at gunpoint…So that was a nice welcome…When I first got here I was really shocked…I was like I'm moving into a gilded cage. What is this place?"

"Lack of governance. It's just poor governance. So for example I called the police. The police didn't come…so this kind of lack of basic governance. Basic protection by the state, basic rights…Someone robbed another white lady is like not important and that's basically how it was shown to us. Well you can buy another TV"

While the critical safety situation was certainly the biggest disadvantage of the city, the lack of public transport, the limited options for secure leisure activities and no central residential areas were also named as local characteristics affecting the respondents. Despite the demanding country characteristics, similar to Nairobi above, respondents also reported positive aspects about being in South Africa. For instance, they enjoyed the nice weather, the cheap costs of living, and the relaxing lifestyle.

4.3 Perceptions of fear and expatriates' stress and wellbeing

Despite the accounts of terror and the perceived fear shown above, most respondents in *Nairobi* reported to be generally happy, particularly with the job they were doing. Only one respondent mentioned that the safety situation had a negative impact on their overall life satisfaction in Kenya. A major concern that all respondents with a family flagged up, was the safety of partners and dependents, particularly at times when the respondents were not in the country. For all respondents, family safety was seen as a main priority and they were worried that if something ever happened to themselves they would not be able to look after them.

[Regarding the merit of deciding to relocate from a career perspective] "Absolutely and I think it was the best decision I've made in terms of my career"

"I am basically the pillar of my family right? If something happens to me they will be affected"

Although the physical restrictions did not seem to be as far-reaching as in Johannesburg (see below), the terrorist attacks reportedly restricted the respondents' activities in public spaces. However, the data does not suggest that the restricted activity in public spaces showed an impact on the respondents' wellbeing. Only in one interview the safety situation was reported as being detrimental towards wellbeing, while most respondents found that the latent threat was something they could live with as long as there was no terrorist incident in their direct environment. It was noticeable that, nevertheless, none of the respondents saw a future perspective in the country. A safety incident within the family or a worsening of the health system would make respondents relocate on short notice.

"Previous to the terrorist event, the mall was a convenient place for all us to meet...After the incident, I stopped going to malls...and it changed the way that we were able to socialise"

"The security element … it's something that I can live with to some extent… as long as I have not been exposed to anything, it's not impacted my life differently…The traffic is impacting me much more than the terrorists"

"It [the terrorist attack] just put me constantly on alert, not consciously, a great deal, and I think I only realised that when I got back to New York"

In *Johannesburg* similarly most respondents reported to generally be happy, however their wellbeing was tainted with some reservations about their overall safety. Similar to our data from Nairobi, a major concern for the Johannesburg expatriates was the safety of their family members. Expatriates reported of having a bad conscience for putting partners (and dependents) in such a challenging situation in the first place. Their personal freedom was restricted and this did have a negative impact on the expatriates overall quality of life and especially their physical wellbeing, as certain outdoor activities, such as jogging or cycling or just simply walking around in the neighbourhood, were not available or only feasible when planned ahead, considering multiple safety measures. However, for none of the respondents the situation was so burdensome that they could not live there any longer.

"You have to be constantly mindful. You have to engage in this behaviour to minimise your risks. And that means that sometimes you have to be less spontaneous... You have to be deliberate...So it does diminish your ability to do whatever - just kind of be care-free"

"I feel confined...you live in this constant zone you create around yourself, creating all these security measures"

"But I wonder sometimes, if I were to leave Johannesburg, then I would notice what a toll it actually does take on your daily life...I do think it does impact negatively to some extent"

Similar to the findings in Nairobi, most of the respondents did not see a long-term perspective in the country. While some had personal reasons for moving back, for many respondents the critical safety issues were the main argument to (intend to) leave. Furthermore, all respondents would consider relocating when one of their family members, or friends became a victim of crime, although such a response to crime was seen as illogical as by the time it would already be too late.

"I've always wondered what would happen when we have an incident. And I say when because it will happen. Most people I know who've been there long enough either it's happened to them or it's happened to somebody very close to them...I think if my wife was held up on the driveway... if she gets car-jacked and driven away. Or if anything happened to the kids. Whole new ball game. Completely different league"

"[Respondents daughter] is now at an age where she would personally now be really a victim and she would be old enough to be a victim not just of violence but also rape...I think the likelihood that she would be a target is going up and up. And so, we do have an agreement that our time is coming to a close"

4.4 Perceptions of fear and expatriates' coping strategies

In *Nairobi* most respondents reported to live in guarded residential areas. Additional safety measures at the house were not described in the interviews and appeared less relevant to the respondents living and working in Kenya. Respondents followed certain routines as well, although they were slightly different from the routines reported for Johannesburg below. For instance, respondents limited their time at public places and only went to shopping malls and restaurants during less busy times. Some even avoided going to those places with their family members at all.

"I don't go to any crowded malls, keeping in mind these are targets"

"We just decide where to go, make the decision and then go and come back quickly"

"We would hardly ever, the four of us, go to a shopping mall together"

The risk of terrorism was seen as particularly frightening because it was something that was so unexpected and incontrollable. After the 2013 terrorist attack one respondent started to look for escape routes and reported to always be on alert when in public places. Respondents adapted to their environment and safety measures reportedly became a habit. One respondent even mentioned that after some time their preoccupation with potential danger decreased, with expatriates "getting used" to their dangerous environment.

"This is the one that we don't know about, the one we don't know how to handle. So that's the terrorist aspect because in Kenya there were quite a few events over the last four, five years"

"Always looking over my shoulder, always knowing where I sit...always knowing where the exits were and finding escape routes"

"It's a kind of discipline...for us it's kind of a second nature"

"To some extent, you kind of get used to the security concerns. And after a while you don't even think about it"

In *Johannesburg* all respondents reported to live in gated communities with additional safety measures at and in their house. Respondents followed daily routines in order to be safe, such as constantly looking into the back mirror while driving, leaving valuables in the boot of the car, or developing mental maps of places that are safe and unsafe. They also constantly checked that the security of the house was working and practised with family members what to do if someone broke into the house. Respondents also adjusted to their environment by avoiding certain areas in the city that were considered to be unsafe or avoiding traveling by public transport.

"It's like in a movie. So it's basically, it's called trailing doors. It's a special room. So if something happens you run there and then you lock the room with a special thing and then there is a button, a panic button, and you push it and hopefully the special advance unit will come in five minutes"

"I practice with our daughter what happens...what she needs to do should somebody ever be in the house that's not supposed to be here...she knows where the panic button is. She knows to run to the bathroom. She knows how to lock the door"

"I also avoid going downtown, especially because that's an area that's kind of off-limits to some extent. It's got quite a lot of...quite a high crime rate. And especially after dark"

It was considered essential to ingrain those safety behaviours in order to minimise the risk of victimisation, and respondents mentioned that they were constantly alerted. Again, over time safety consciousness and self-protection were considered routine by most of the respondents. The interviews suggest that the respondents only realise how they adapted to their context-specific life style when they are going abroad.

"And so the idea is to instil behaviours in yourself that reduce risk"

"I didn't think that I would ever deal with that in my life. That routine…You all of the sudden…you learn routines for self-protection. And it becomes sort of normal. But it isn't normal"

"Going back to Europe sometimes to visit, I do realise that you adopt a certain security consciousness that other people don't necessarily have"

"So we're aware of it all the time. We're conscious of it. We are careful"

Table 3 provides an overview of coping strategies. It shows how respondents in Nairobi respond to the increased exposure to terrorism and reports strategies the interviewees in Johannesburg apply to deal with the threat of crime. In order to present the findings the conceptualisation of different coping strategies recommended by Green et al. (2010) was applied, suggesting to distinguish emotion-focused, problem-focused and avoidance-oriented coping strategies. The third column adds a link to additional selected works focusing on coping strategies which could be applied to the context of dangerous locations.

Insert Table 3 around here

Distinguishing problem-focused and avoidance-oriented coping strategies revealed overlaps in the tactics employed by the expatriates. For instance, "life in gated communities" can be considered a way of reducing criminal exposure compared to life in other areas of residence but similarly could be seen as a problem-focused decision when selecting accommodation. The research hence suggests that Green et al.'s (2010) work offers a helpful starting point for highlighting differences in coping when exposed to different dangerous settings but also reveals room for further conceptual development. Yet, this distinction helps identifying patterns in tactics displayed by the interviewees. Data suggests that terror-exposed contexts are more strongly

characterized by avoidance-orientation while crime-related contexts might trigger more problem-focused strategies. The interviewees in both locations illuminated the coping strategies and tactics with specific practices (see table 3). For instance, regarding safeguards, the respondents referred to armed patrols, electric fences and bars, CCTV, panic rooms, biometric security and alarm systems connected to private security companies. Regarding the implementation of safety measures into daily routines they suggested for instance that when travelling with the car to leave the gears in at a red traffic light, constantly check the rear-view mirror for being trailed and park in the driveway with the care facing towards the street.

5. Discussion

Following the aims to provide insights into different perceptions of fear when working in dangerous (foreign) locations and how this might affect expatriates' wellbeing, the study reports insights shared by expatriates assigned to Kenya and South Africa. It focusses on the perceived threat of terrorism (Nairobi) and conventional crime (Johannesburg). The study looks at different types of hardship and how these context specific characteristics were described and experienced by the respondents. It also discusses (differing) accounts of wellbeing and coping strategies in response to perceived threats in dangerous locations.

Regarding the perceived hardship of the location, which was illustrated by feelings of safety, descriptions of crime, safety issues and the respondents' expressions of fear, expatriates seem to be less scared by the threat of another terrorist attack in Nairobi than by the threat of conventional crime in Johannesburg. In line with this finding it was little surprising that not only the reputation of the two locations among respondents but also the overall portrayal of first impressions, positive and negative, differed considerably. Hence, the findings do not convey the claim of Maddox (1990) that terrorism is one of the biggest fears of expatriates at least for this study contrasting Nairobi and Johannesburg. Within the Nairobi sample one of the respondents stated in a rather humoristic manner that traffic is far more concerning than the terrorists. The insights fit with Leahy's (2015) observation that the actual threat of terrorism might be overstated, particularly through excessive media coverage. Additionally, the findings suggest that the living conditions in Johannesburg were perceived more disturbing than in Nairobi, with more safety measures having to be implemented, and a more restricted freedom of movement, which according to

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Bader and Berg (2014) constantly reminds the expatriates of the potential danger and can therefore decrease their feeling of safety.

Assessing the impact of perceived fear on expatriates' stress, wellbeing and coping, this study does not imply that neither the risk of a future terrorist attack nor the latent fear of conventional crime is perceived as a direct cause of distress. Expatriates from both contexts reported that they are generally happy and can cope with concerns and restrictions to their personal life as long as they themselves or their family members do not personally become victims of crime or terrorist activities. Despite the absence of reported unhappiness, the context specific characteristics in both locations made respondents not feel settled in the foreign country. In response to the hardship and context-specific factors of the environment, respondents provided insights into a variety of coping mechanisms which add to the existing literature on coping mechanisms in expatriate contexts.

While the insights suggest that the fear of terror or crime has a negative impact on the physical wellbeing, there was no evidence for an influence on the psychological wellbeing, nor has fear of crime shown to decrease the overall level of happiness as discussed in prior studies (Cornaglia et al., 2004; Powdthavee, 2005; Ross, 1993; Tella et al., 2008). The insights rather echo the results of Michalos and Zumbo (2000), whose findings also could not establish a distinct relationship between crime-related issues and decreased life satisfaction. Neither reduced job satisfaction nor a decline in motivation (Howie, 2007; Ryan et al., 2003) could be detected. However, this might also be a result of the more thematic approach and further research applying concepts from occupational psychology to international work contexts (e.g. Rattrie and Kittler, 2014) might shed additional light on this issue.

According to the expatriates' perceptions, their jobs were key components of their lives abroad, with which all respondents reported to be generally happy with. As this observation did hold within and across the two sub-samples a possible interpretation is that the respondents might get their sense of mastery through their job, which has shown to enable people to cope better with stressful life events (Adams and Serpe, 2000). It might be possible that the work satisfaction observed has spilled over to life satisfaction (Judge and Watanabe, 1993), which helps expatriates to keep a healthy balance between the safety issues and their wellbeing. The study further observed positive aspects of both locations, in particular the contentment with the quality of housing and climate, which might have additionally contributed to a promoted sense

of wellbeing (Fried, 1984; Guite et al., 2006). Furthermore, a major concern in both contexts was the wellbeing of the family which is in line with previous research on expatriates and their family situation (Kittler et al., 2006). Concerns about the wellbeing of family members seemed to raise stronger worries about the safety of the expatriates themselves and was reported to have a negative impact on their wellbeing. The constant worry about the family members' safety was perceived as an extra burden they had to carry, a view also portrayed in existing research (Bader et al., 2015a).

With regard to the coping strategies some common behaviour among all respondents was identified. Similar to Alexander's (2004) suggestion, the terrorist attacks in Nairobi did result in negative changes in the expatriates' lifestyle. Respondents avoided public places, which is a common response to such fear (Stafford, 2007). The implementation of safety measures in daily routines in Johannesburg and the adaptation to the environment likewise is a common coping strategy (Møller, 2005). The coping strategies reported can be as simple as shared groups on social media reporting on any observations on strangers or suspicious activity in close proximity (which also corresponds to Crowne et al.'s 2015 suggestion of the prominent role that social networks play in international assignments). However, the evidence does not confirm that such increased consciousness on safety issues became a chronic stressor for the respondents (Sulemana, 2015) but rather some form of internalised norm.

The variation in coping strategies reported does reflect the different characteristics of terrorism and conventional crime. While locations characterised by an increased risk of terrorism necessitate developing coping strategies for dealing with emergencies or unexpected situations, locations associated with crime rather require an adaptation of everyday life by implementing safety measures in daily routines. The analysis suggests that not only the perception between these two threats varies but also the response in dealing with them. Whereas the crime expatriates are exposed to in Johannesburg seems to be to some extent controllable by applying problem-focused coping strategies, the situation in Nairobi seems to be less controllable, with terrorism being an unexpected, unknown source of danger. This might explain the Kenyan respondents' tendency to engage in avoidance-oriented coping strategies (Roth and Cohan, 1986). Subtle, but in practice far-reaching differences between the location-specific coping strategies, highlight the need for organisations to customise their assignment related HR activities (e.g. the pre-arrival and post-departure trainings,

Puck et al, 2008) and show that a "one size fits all" approach to dangerous location appears overly simplistic.

5.1 Limitations

Despite its potential impact, the research project is subject to some limitations it shares with most expatriate-related research. While the open code analysis allowed other themes to emerge during the analysis, topic areas that were not directly related to the research aim were not reported in this paper. The short-term character of the study impedes a long-term assessment of the consequences of working in dangerous locations (Bader and Schuster, 2015). The sample on expatriates living in gated, upper-class communities might not represent the perception of fear of expatriates from other organisations living under less privileged conditions. Saturation was assumed to be achieved based on reoccurring themes which might result from all respondents working for the same organisation in two clearly defined locations with emerging themes kept repeating towards the final interviews.

5.2 *Theoretical implications*

Comparing two different forms of threat (terrorism and conventional crime), allows going beyond merely analysing possible work-related outcomes and contributes to better understanding the fear perceived by expatriates assigned to dangerous locations. Regarding future contribution to this rather novel but increasingly exiting debate on work in dangerous contexts, the study provides scholars with a workable conceptual distinction of terrorism versus conventional crime that does lend itself as a starting point for follow-up studies. The qualitative design of the study managed to deliver personal insights into a sensitive research topic previously mainly studied using quantitative approaches. The initial propositions provided below could again be tested in a more quantitative fashion. The study contributes to research in the area of the psychological effects of exposure to danger, called for by Bader et al. (2015b) and Lorenc et al. (2012). It contributes to the debate investigating the effects of crime on wellbeing in the African context (Sulemana, 2015) and also ties in with the attempt of Møller (2005) to provide a representation of the theoretical pathways between environment, crime, fear of crime, and wellbeing.

The findings on the role of different forms of danger for foreign assignments suggest differences for terror and conventional crime that could be investigated further. Based on the job demands-resources (JD-R) model as an underlying theoretical perspective

(e.g. Rattrie and Kittler, 2014), it could be argued that a challenging, unsafe work environment poses an additional job demand (which in the model is associated with undesirable work-related outcomes, such as a reduction in wellbeing). The coping strategies identified could help to buffer the additional demands impact similar to additional job resources, provided by the employer in form of context-specific pre-departure training and organisational support during the assignment. Building on basic JD-R logic and the findings of this study, the following propositions can be derived:

(1) Fear of terrorist threats has (a) a positive impact on stress and (b) a negative impact on wellbeing.
(2) Fear of conventional crime has (a) a positive impact on stress and (b) a negative impact on wellbeing.
(3) Expatriates cope differently with their fear of terrorist threats and their fear of conventional crime.
(4) Coping strategies can buffer the negative influence of fear of (a) terrorist threats and (b) conventional crime.

While the research provides in-depth insight into an emerging theme it also opens avenues for future research. Considering the recent terrorist attacks across Europe (e.g. in Paris, Brussels and London) future research could focus on the perception of fear in countries which in the past were not or less associated with terrorist threats and crime. The impact on expatriates from dangerous locations on operating in (less) dangerous contexts or the role of ethnical backgrounds in relation to fear could also be subject to additional research interest. These areas of future research were also pointed out by Bader and Schuster (2015) and Bader et al. (2015a). While all respondents in this study relocated within an organisation, it would be interesting to look beyond corporate expatriation (McNulty et al, 2017) or to distinguish between self-initiated and organisation-assigned expatriates and further insight might stem from their discretion in the decision to relocate to a more dangerous country context. Future research could examine the role of gender (see Salamin and Hanappi, 2014 for a more general overview) as female expatriates may have different experiences or perceive fear differently from their male counterparts (Bader and Berg, 2014). While the study provides some evidence that hardship of the locations, wellbeing and copying strategies are intertwined, future research should investigate more effort to disentangle the complex relationship between context-specific coping mechanisms, fear, stress and wellbeing observed for assignments to dangerous locations.

5.3 *Practical implications*

The study's insight into practitioners' experiences of fear and danger in expatriate settings offers room to speculate on practical implications. The study has shown differing perceptions of fear and a variation in coping strategies associated with different types of danger. In order to manage assignments to dangerous locations successfully, companies might adopt a more systematic performance management process (Engle et al. 2014). Regarding a better understanding of the systems' context companies should be aware of the specific hazards and challenges different target destinations pose. Such an understanding can help to design and operate expatriate management systems which provide expatriates with more realistic accounts of the host county and allow to customise pre-departure trainings (Caligiuri et al. 2001). For instance, in the terror-endangered Nairobi trainings could focus more on how to behave or evacuate oneself in a critical situation such as a terrorist attack in a shopping mall. In Johannesburg the emphasis could be more on training daily routines that can help to minimise the risk of becoming a victim (e.g. driving behaviour, not carrying valuables).

In hubs of conventional crime where it is very likely to become a victim outside the work domain, organisational support could also be offered on private life matters (Bader et al., 2016), such as helping foreign staff to find accommodation with the required safety measures or in getting an overview of the neighbourhood and where to find the nearest and safest places for shopping or (other) leisure activities. A local relocation mentor could support this undertaking by drawing upon their expertise and experience. To counter the restricted freedom of movement and the limited safe outdoor and leisure activities, companies could consider organising social and sports events, or day trips and safaris to surrounding national parks for expatriates and their families. This would not only give them an opportunity to enjoy themselves in a rather care-free environment but also allow them to socialise and exchange with other expatriates embedded in similar situations.

6. Conclusion

This study has investigated how expatriates in two dangerous locations, terror-exposed Nairobi and crime endangered Johannesburg perceive fear differently and how this is reported to impact on stress and wellbeing. Findings also illustrate how expatriates cope with the challenges associated with these two regions thereby providing a pioneering effort in illustrating potential differences stemming from

different forms of danger and their consequences for expatriates. The distinction drawn between terror and conventional crime allowed insights into the highly contextualised character of fear and coping strategies applied to dangerous locations. Findings indicate that the different perceptions of fear and risk relate to different levels of stress and wellbeing and result in a variation of the coping strategies expatriates tend to apply – an observation illustrating practices that are highly relevant to IHRM practitioners that should also find future interest among global mobility scholars interested in the challenges of regional contexts characterised by higher levels of risk.

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