



Situational Crime Prevention: An Anthropological Approach

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Abstract

“Opportunity makes the theft” it is a very well known saying. Situational Crime prevention word is a mix of three word i.e. situational (state, condition, location, site), crime (offence, wrong, sin, fault), prevention (avoidance, hindrance, obstacle, bar). SCP is a new term for western world and more newer to Indian Context. With the help of the application of this term SCP we will find out the multi-dynamic approach for reducing crime. In Anthropology we all know about Human and in Criminology we know all about crime and with this inter-crux we will find out how SCP is relevant, applicable, important and significant in Indian context. Here an attempt has been made to study Situational Crime Prevention with the lens of Anthropological Approach.

Keywords: Situational, Crime, Prevention, Anthropological.

Introduction

Anthropological studies are involved in each and every era as well as arena where Human is centered and focused. The situational crime phenomenon was first noticed by Edwin Sutherland¹ when he says that crime is personal or else situational. The crime occurs within the multi-factorial variable i.e. motivation or desire of prohibited behavior, skill for commitment of crime as well as opportunity. The situational crime theory act upon last one i.e. reducing opportunity processes. The criminals are logical behaving as rational choice that what is the gain and drawbacks of committing crime. Then they act upon five factor i.e. efforts, risk, rewards, provocation, excuses for committing the crime.

Ronald Clarke² has defined core and fundamental theory of situational crime. No one can find out that crime occurrence is how much incepted by personal variable or how much by situational variable but all were agree that this is interplay of both these variables. More studies are needed in this field to find out realities and lies lying beneath this assumption of situational crime prevention.

Review of Research and Development in Situational Crime Prevention: There have been studies on Anthropo-criminological branch of study in the recent past on different aspects of situational crime prevention in many parts of the world. A few studies could be cited here to reflect the focus on this subject. Lewis and Sullivan³ carried out a study on citizen attitudes relevant in crime prevention. Laycock⁴ was of the view that property marking plays a deterrent role to domestic burglary. Similarly, public lighting and women's experience on fear of crime was studied by Painter⁵ and Atkins⁶ et al. Police patrolling in hot spots, Sherman and Weisburd⁷, repeat burglary, Anderson⁸ et al., prevention of burglary, Stockdale and

Gresham⁹, case studies on CCTV in town centers, Brown¹⁰, police handling of crime, Marvell and Moody¹¹ are some of the studies focusing upon various situational dimension in reducing crime. A conceptual interpretation of crime prevention was carried out by Sherman¹² et al. Lab¹³ examined the crime prevention approaches by evaluation methods. A similar study has also been carried out by Jordan and Paul¹⁴. Market reduction approach, Sutton¹⁵ et al., police response time, Di Tella and Schargrotsky¹⁶, Street lighting and crime, Farrington and Welsh¹⁷, crime and midsize cities, Goodman¹⁸, Effects of CCTV, Welsh and Farrington¹⁹, patterns in residential burglary, Martin²⁰, effect of police crackdowns, Scott²¹, evaluation of the target hardening project, Casey et al. and Segessenmann²², intelligence and policing, Cope²³, decision-making by Offenders, Hearnden and Magill²⁴, management of crime scene, Williams²⁵ and market reduction approach by Australian Institute of Criminology²⁶ are some more studies suggesting the situational approach in crime prevention.

Methodology

To approach the objectives of the study, a sample of 400 crimes took place in the chosen town areas viz. Bhopal and Sagar in the state of Madhya Pradesh have been considered. The cases of thefts and burglary and some other property offences have been included in the universe of the study.

To examine the applicability of opportunity theory, the victims of these cases have been interviewed with the help of an interview schedule entailing the essentials of the concept in question.

Results and Discussion

Some major findings emerged in the various sections of the study are being documented in the subsequent paragraphs.

The distribution of crime pattern shows that in both the cities i.e., Bhopal and Sagar, maximum crime was of theft from shop and business places i.e. 40 and 30 percent respectively while theft from residence was lowest [19.5 and 24 percent] respectively. The most of the crime took place in second and fourth week of the month [26 percent] in Bhopal while in Sagar most of the crime occurred in second week [27 percent]. The study shows that the most crime incidence in both the cities occurred during 12 to 6 AM i.e. 35 and 40 percent respectively. Between 6 to 12 AM the crime incidence was lowest in both the cities. Mosts crime scene location was open i.e. 69.5 percent in Bhopal and 63.5 percent in Sagar.

The outdoor scene of crime was located in densely populated area [44.5 percent in Bhopal and 28.5 percent in Sagar]. Only in a few cases, crime occurred in thinly populated [7 percent in Bhopal and 13 percent in Sagar]. The lighting arrangement close to the crime locations of both the ites did not affect the occurrence. Most of the time, victim spent (6 to 10 hours) at home, which is 75.5 percent in Bhopal and 49.5 percent in Sagar. There were only few victims who spent 1 to 5 hours and 16 to 20 hours at home. The absence of capable guardian makes a target vulnerable for crime. In most of the cases, crime occurred in the absence of victim, which is 75.5 percent in Bhopal and 78 percent in Sagar. In rest of the cases, the victim was present during the occurrence of crime. Most of the victims were of age group of 21 to 40 years (Bhopal 70.5 percent and Sagar 62 percent). There were only few cases in which victims were of age group up to 20 years or above 50 years.

The distribution of the sex of victims shows the preponderance of male over females. The data shows that in Bhopal 85 percent victims were male while in Sagar 92.5 percent victims were males. A very few victims were females in both the cities. Most of the victims had service and business as their occupation while a few victims were student and wage earners in both the cities. The study shows that in 66.5 cases in Bhopal and 73.5 cases in Sagar there was a use of implement in the commission of crime while in the rest of cases there was no implement used in the commission of crime. The study shows that the maximum victims were of view that the target was easily accessible [48.5 percent in Bhopal and 57.5 percent in Sagar]. The second main reason behind target lucratively was easy accessibility as well as cost or value of the goods.

The description of crime scene shows that in most of the cases, crime scene was unguarded or easily approachable. The presences of security measures at the crime scene were inadequate in both the cities [73 percent in Bhopal and 82.5 percent in Sagar]. The rest of crime scenes were having moderate or adequate security measures. The visibility of crime scene to others did not show any specific trend. The locking arrangement at crime scene was inadequate in most of the cases [26.5 percent in Bhopal and 47.5 percent in Sagar]. There were very few cases in which adequate locking arrangement at crime scene was found. In most of the cases, quality of lock was of

average and poor [49.5 percent in Bhopal and 77 percent in Sagar]. There were few cases in which quality of lock was good. In Bhopal, the police patrolling was mostly occasional [47 percent] and in Sagar, in majority of instances, there was no police patrolling at all [76 percent]. The regular police patrolling was found to be in 21 percent cases in Bhopal and 1 percent cases in Sagar.

The profile of respondents shows that most of the victims belonged to urban area [96.5 percent in Bhopal and 98.5 percent in Sagar]. Most of the localities covered in this study were residential and commercial [58.5 percent in Bhopal and 58.5 percent in Sagar]. The surveillance/security arrangements were perceived to be unsatisfactory by a large number of subjects [48 percent in Bhopal and 71 percent in Sagar]. Majority of the respondents, [60 percent in Bhopal and 75 percent in Sagar] felt their neighborhood to be unsafe. A sizeable number of victims [62.5 percent in Bhopal and 75 percent in Sagar] found that there was easy availability of opportunity to commit crime in their localities. As many as 56.5 percent subjects in Bhopal and 73 percent in Sagar confirmed the existence of crime problem in their localities.

The study on perceived nature of crime problem in the locality shows that the most respondents [57 percent in Bhopal and 72 percent in Sagar] found instances of petty theft to be utmost recurrent followed by burglary. The factors that may be perceived by the victims to be responsible for crime are quite crucial in the situational explanation of crime. The study conveys that the movement of strangers in the area [31.5 percent in the city of Bhopal] was the prime factor perceived by the respondents making the neighborhood crime prone. The correspondence percentage in case of Sagar city was 21 percent. The respondents in the two cities equally felt the presence of bad character in the locality as crucial. As many as 40.5 percent respondents in Bhopal and 43 percent in Sagar felt that crime can be reduced by increasing the police patrolling whereas 47 percent in Bhopal and 38.5 in Sagar were of opinion that crime can be reduced by greater surveillance. Majority of the respondents felt that crimes of theft/burglary take because of the negligence of the victim.

The respondents in this study also expressed their opinions about the creation of opportunity by the victims. The data shows that negligence was rated to be the main way of causing opportunity [63 and 74 percent respectively]. The perception "Opportunity makes the thief" as advocated by Clark was examined in this study. The study found that the respondents [76 percent in Bhopal and 95 percent in Sagar cities] attributed to this. As many as 20 percent and 18 percent respondents in Bhopal and Sagar avoided traveling alone in public transport because possibility of theft.

The victims avoided visiting certain places because of various factors. In the areas of Bhopal and Sagar [28 and 16 percent respondents respectively opted not to visit certain places in the

cities due to hooliganism] in those areas. Most of the respondents [66.5 percent in Bhopal and 84.5 percent in Sagar] were of the opinion that crime had increased in the last five years in their neighborhood. The study clearly shows that robbery, theft or petty thefts were increasingly regarded to have increased significantly in all the locations of selected cities. Though, the respondent didn't find dacoity or sexual assault to have risen significantly.

Discussion: The present Anthro-criminological study was undertaken to look into the opportunity of crime variables of SCP in Indian context. Situational crime prevention is a relatively modern technique to reduce the incidence of crime by applying a host of managerial and tactical methods to discourage crime incidence. The main thrust in this approach is to effectively exploit the situational instigators for crime. In many parts of the world, situational crime prevention has contributed to reduce incidence of theft, burglary, vandalism, vehicle crime etc.

The main proponents of situational crime prevention have empirically carried out empirical studies showing the efficacy of this approach. Target hardening, access control, deflecting of offender, controlling facilitators, formal and natural surveillance and rule setting have been certain situational crime prevention measures used worldwide in crime reduction. Crime reduction has also been considered immensely cost effective as it immediately alleviates the rising the economic cost of criminal justice system.

There is hardly any empirical study conducted on this subject in India. In view of the mounting arrears and consistently declining conviction rate in Indian courts, rising cost of law enforcement, trial and prison administration in India, the need to have a crime reduction strategy is more than obvious.

A sample of 400 victims of various property crime occurred in the hot and cool spot locations of Bhopal and Sagar cities of Madhya Pradesh has been focused in this study. The data has been collected through primary sources i.e. interview with the affected respondents as well as secondary sources i.e. concerned police station where the crime occurred in the locality. The analysis of data has been done using SPSS 13 version software. This is the sample study and we want to find out the result for a population as a whole. That's why use statistics and say something beyond the population as well as generalize the results.

Resolution: As per findings and experiences gained in the present study lead us to conclude that the quest for 'etiology' in the traditional Anthro-Criminology has been useful in developing our theoretical understanding about crime but it has seldom helped the policy makers and practitioners in suggesting the workable ways and means to effectively reduce crime in the community. The idea of situational crime prevention was primarily the product of this concern. In fact, the functionality

of situational crime prevention has been greatly recognized in almost all kinds of societies in effectively cutting the incident of crime. The traditional approaches of crime prevention have also not been very effective as they undertook to address the fundamentals of human personality or social dynamics and these efforts invariably did not produce any instant result. Whilst, situational crime prevention works immediately and hence in many nations this approach has been adopted with amazing success.

While success stories of situational crime prevention are many and they have been adequately discussed in the present study, we may also look at some limitations of this exercise that needs to be addressed in coming days with the help of new research. The following account critically reviews the existing concept and scope of situational crime prevention and offers some new considerations for fresh research.

Conclusion

This two years study has done under the UGC Major Project fellowship and the reference institution is National Law Institute University, Bhopal. In two years period one year I have done extensive and intensive fieldwork in Bhopal and Sagar area with the concerned locality. Another year analysis and report writing was done. This research paper is a subpart of the UGC Major Project study.

Situational Crime Prevention term is well established. This term SCP is more general and familiar in western world viz. USA and European countries. India is newer for this term in context of SCP studies. I am not stating that this is the first attempt of its kind nor any other studies undertaken in SCP. This paper gives the insight of SCP measures, variables, indicators, theories; notations are prevailing in Indian context.

With summing up I want to suggest that we should be more careful about the SCP variables in context of burglary, theft, vehicle theft etc. The situational crime prevention variables are more relevant in Indian context. This is an era of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary research, the Anthropological studies (Center on man) and Criminological studies (Center on crime) both unite together and find new Anthro-criminological consideration on Situational crime prevention in Indian context.

If the findings and discussions held in this exercise result in directing the attention of criminal justice personnel towards reducing crime by applying SCP and also by generating a debate in Anthro-criminological circles for undertaking research in this area, the study will have served its purpose.

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