

The Contribution and Role Played by Individual Persons in Criminal Victimization

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Abstract. Committing a crime is the outcome of a process where many factors are at work. In most cases, crime is not an action but a reaction, or an overreaction, to external and environmental stimuli. This investigation aims to find out why individuals contribute to their criminal victimisation and sometimes even play some role in accelerating or provoking the offender to commit the wrong. Suppose individuals ensure that adequate steps are taken to deter, delay and provide warnings to assist in summoning assistance to prevent crime or reduce the impact of wrongdoing. In that case, criminal victimisation may drop considerably. Situational crime prevention theory proposes that if society takes some measures to reduce the chances of committing a crime, the potential offenders will not succeed in their endeavour to offend. This article argues that the commission of crimes is primarily a function of opportunities to break the laws, which, admissibly, is influenced by the behaviour of potential victims occasionally. Researchers now just do not see a victim as an innocent point of impact on crime but know the victim, at times, playing quite an active role as a contributor to his victimisation. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This approach lets the scholar get data from various sets of populations simultaneously. In this study, the emphasis is on reducing victimisation through enhancing individual personal security. Towards this end, the researcher sought to examine the role played by particular persons in victimisation. The study examined these relationships using samples of common area residents (n = 210), key informants (n = 45) and 145 members of focused group discussions. The findings of this research are expected to provide data that helps inform policymakers and the individuals who are the primary victims of criminal victimisation of the need for enhanced personal security to assist in crime risk management. The study was conducted in Kajiado County, which sits on the southern side of Nairobi City, the capital of Kenya.

Keywords: personal security; criminal victimisation; environmental stimuli; crime prevention.

INTRODUCTION

State security agencies have traditionally assumed responsibility for maintaining law and order for citizens, understanding security as a public good. Nevertheless, victimologists have constantly argued that potential victims play the most crucial role in persuading a possible criminal to commit a crime [1]. While it is known that individuals are responsible for their self-protection, it is unclear why some individuals insensitively contribute to their victimisation.

Criminologists, drawn to the study of the reduction of crime, consider that criminals are responsible for crimes that they commit, and this is because of probably disregarding the awareness that the victims' weakness, individual helplessness and responsibility for one's misfortunes may promote one's victimisation [2]. Although criminologists consider that because criminology is the study of criminal behaviour, it may help to change the deviant behaviour of the wrongdoer. At the same time, victimologists believe that changing the looks of the physical and social en-

vironment will be more effective by removing the possibilities that make criminals succeed in offending. Personal security has become an increasingly important component of many strategies for public safety and security [3]. Security is a complex issue that affects individuals and society at large. The scope of security is vast, touching on different facets of life contributing to individual and social wellbeing.

Situational crime prevention. To understand why an offender commits a crime, we may have to examine how an offender and non-offenders differ, and that way, we may know to what extent a victim contributes to or facilitates the commission of a crime. Leaving the vehicle unattended while the engine is running in a situation where it is not guarded is an exposure to theft risk [26]. Those people who convey things that can be stolen, such as watches or cell phones, are clear targets, especially in the event of property crimes. The more attractive the targets are in the area, the more crime there will be. Some researchers observe that when faced with chances of committing a crime without a significant hazard, most people would be psychologically prepared to commit a crime. The inspiration to offend, especially for youngsters, is usually dictated by the degree of achievable possibilities [15]. The degree of opportunities increases the incentive to offend. The conduct of a potential offender is principally impacted by immediate situation features and not the behaviour outlook. Lifestyle exposure theory looks at the aftereffect of victim behaviours of the distribution of risk among individuals in time and space [21]

Literature review

Security is a complex issue that affects individuals and society worldwide. Personal security protects individuals and assets by reducing the harm done to people and the loss of assets. Understanding criminal behaviour helps us remove the offenders from where the offences are committed. If we realise how crime occurs, it may assist with knowing how to intercede. Japan, which is recorded as one of the most secure countries in the world, people support almost everything in areas of strength, a liking for personal self-protection measures, such as cultural solid like-mindedness and peacefulness [11]. Japanese consider that avoiding violence is a form of common-sense protection measure that is effective

in preventing criminal victimisation. In South Africa, many people fail to lock their doors and windows, and thieves gain access to their houses and steal their possessions [20]. Clarke assessed individual security in his study and how it may be outstretched to lessen victimisation [26]. In addition, Berg and his colleague emphasised that personal security has become a significant component of many public security and wellbeing methodologies. These are the aftereffects of the possibility of events and conditions that influence the existences of individual people and structures as they mature, neighbourhood environments and, accordingly, the circumstances and opportunities that empower victimisation and offending [4].

The theoretical framework based on situational crime prevention theory was used to define the visualisation in this study. The investigation hypothesises that the critical variables of personal security in the form of target hardening (guarding facilities), surveillance (provision of lighting), and environment management play a role in discouraging potential criminals from offending. Victimisation can be avoided by categorising and eliminating the prospects in which it occurs [16]. Looking at how the victims may have helped simplify the commission of crime, it is imaginable that acceptable ways can be found to exclude these opportunities.

Common victims of robbery. People working in the transportation or retail business industries are much more likely to be victims of theft. It may be necessary to keep changing their routine activities to change the customarily favourable environment for the potential offenders [18]. Non-legitimate businesses such as prostitution and drug peddlers are at more significant risk of victimisation than those who do not do such companies. Such jobs lack clearly understood regulations that make the activities at work smooth running and acceptable. The scholars propose that what made the targets good-looking to the offenders in the first victimisation was also attractive in the victimisation that followed [5]. Where offenders succeeded in committing crimes, this fascinates even the repeat offenders. Repeat offending is frequently committed by those who had done it earlier and accomplished their purpose.

Suitable victims for determined offenders. A university lecturer carrying many books in her arms may be a prospective victim of sexual assault. Her

hands are fully occupied to fight back. A person is more vulnerable if he or she cannot resist being attacked. When targets are close to the potential offenders, they are more suitable for prospective thieves. When a victim is negligent in his behaviour, such a lifestyle makes him or her a facilitator, making him or her a vulnerable target. Suppose a potential victim provokes a likely offender to support the criminal incident [17] openly. A thief attacked by the house owner, whom he awakens while breaking into the house, contributes to his peril. A nice-looking girl who wears a provoking dress and goes to a strip club places herself in a place amongst potential offenders and unambiguously should share the blame for the consequences. To protect ourselves from victimisation, we may need to learn how to expose the chances of potential offenders succeeding and close these opportunities early enough to prevent being targeted [6].

Supermarkets that are open around the clock are always accessible to shoplifters. It is easy to rob taxi drivers and pizza deliveries because the criminal understands their operations, including their customers' time, route and locality. Let us consider an incident where somebody double parks a vehicle in front of a shop, leaves the engine running and goes to buy a cup of tea, and when he comes back, he finds the car driven away by a younger joyrider [7]. What proportion of blame should he share? Or where a woman leaves a purse unguarded at her table in a club and goes dancing. On return, she finds that the bag is stolen. But through the normal process of the police investigation, she gets her credit card, driver's license and identification cards replaced. Still, after a few months, she gets phone calls from loan collectors saying that she has fallen behind in loan payments and is unaware of them. While it is not right to steal, in this case, it could not have happened if the victim had been just a bit careful.

Supermarkets with similar setting-ups may be broken into in a succession of break-ins. Repeat victimisation makes investigators realise why recurrent victimisation is done to the same people repeatedly. It offers valuable indications to crime experts about who is likely to be victimised more than others. To prevent crime, we try to eliminate potential offenders' criminal characteristics and remove the potential victims' crime opportunities [8].

When career criminals gain essential information about the people and places, they beat because they perceive that they will succeed whenever they decide to do so. They know the methods that they applied, which worked and succeeded. A potential criminal also reasons and makes a choice that works in his or her favour. A criminal would like to take advantage of the victim's weakness and occasionally hit the same weak points, assuming that the victim may take time to identify his or her weakness [9]. If the criminal entered a house through the rear window and succeeded in the crime commission, he is likely to repeat the misconduct by frequently entering through the same, same window. If a potential victim has a weakness of leaving her window open, thieves will simply learn such weakness and repetitively enter the house through the same opening and steal or commit any other crime.

Victims make it easier for a potential offender to commit a crime. Victim facilitation is a situation in which victims haphazardly and involuntarily make it easier for an offender to commit a crime [10]. Such a situation increases the risk of losing property by behaving insensitively. Suppose we assume thieves outside the house are just roaming about looking for an unguarded target, and we continue with our sleep without attending to it. That may be termed facilitation, which is more like a chemical reaction catalyst that speeds up the interaction given the right ingredients and conditions. Therefore, behaving that way, we attract the criminally inclined people to our poorly unguarded property, thereby influencing the partial distribution of crime.

Whereas an intruder enters a residential house without breaking in but finds the doors and windows that the homeowner negligently leaves wide open, even the law would consider that to be just trespass by intruders seeking to commit a felony. The intruder was motivated by the easiness of entrance. Otherwise, there is a strong likelihood that if the doors were closed, the intruders would not have considered entering the house [11]. Most of the burglaries (fifty per cent) reported to National Crime Victimization interviewers in the early part of the twenty-first century were just unlawful entries, meaning that burglars used no strength to enter. That means that if the homeowners had been careful and locked up their homes, burglaries would have been reduced by half.

Individuals carelessly and insensitively play a role in their victimisation. Carelessness, insensitivity, and offender-victim overlap are roles that individuals play, thereby facilitating their victimisation [12]. It is unfortunate that, in most cases, the prospective victims contribute to their victimisation insensitively. While the suitable victims contribute to their victimisation unintentionally, it is not clear whether the likely victims have the skills to refrain from facilitating the victimisation. A young lady who has spent most of her time drinking with a man in a club may not be able to evade being raped by the same man if she accompanies the man to his house, even if it was not her intention to have a sexual affair with a man. Although nobody would like to suffer such victimisation, it may be challenging to know how such careless individuals could be helped to evade being victims of crime. Whereas it is known that insensitivity may be the cause of the victim's misfortune, it is not clear how such carelessness can be controlled to make the victim avoid victimisation.

The age of the head of the house turns out to be an important determining factor of whether or not someone would be careless enough to facilitate a burglary [13]. Young people were found to be more negligent than senior citizens. All in all, it is now understood that merely being more concerned and cautious about residential security makes it possible to lower the rate of burglaries and other crimes. Commentators argue that in cases of murder or criminal homicide, other than where an innocent bystander is killed by a stray bullet intended to kill somebody else or where a pure accident is involved, many victims are the major causes of their demise. Hence, some argue that, in cases of rape, it may not be suitable to view the offender at all times as the cause and reason for the offence. And the rape victim is not always the innocent and inactive victim. While it is important to respect women's rights, some people contend that female 'no' to sex does not always mean so. At times, one may even approach a girl and later change his mind because she physically looks underage. Still, she would insist that she is ready for the game and challenge the man to do the act to prove himself wrong, particularly when she expects some monetary gain.

Carelessness in money handling is unrelentingly becoming part of our daily life, sometimes forming part of people's habits that become difficult to change. We may need to develop mass education

programs aimed at changing such behaviour. Careless people create temptation-opportunity situations when they carry money or valuables in a manner which attracts thieves. If potential victims change their behaviour to meet security standards, the crime rate can be reduced substantially [14].

Individuals instigate others to cause their victimisation. In provocation, the victim or the loser is, sometimes, more responsible than the victim for the ensuing fight. The attack would not have taken place if the injured person did not instigate the attack. One would incite a law-abiding person into defending himself, and finally, the aggressor suffers more injuries or even death [22]. Those could be people who know each other and had even quarrelled before over charges of infidelity, the argument over money or drunkenness. The victim could have been drinking, and most of the time, not the offender.

Petty quarrels develop into life-and-death fights through a chain of stages. Personal abuse, sometimes very minor, both offender and victim playing equal roles and sometimes onlookers pressuring them to fight it out [23]. Both the injured and assailant are typical participants in lifestyles that embrace readiness to use force to resolve disagreements. This is an everyday lifestyle for young men in poor urban neighbourhoods who want to prove their manhood and gain their peer's respect. Some victims get killed by playing roles in their death when they apply poor judgement, take unwarranted risks or follow a self-destructive lifestyle. A young man would like to win her girlfriend's heart by demonstrating that he is an experienced diver who jumps into a pool of water and drowns because he lacks diving skills. Some people want to end their emotional suffering and consciously or unconsciously enter risky situations or dangerous events. Victimologists argue that many crimes could not have occurred if a victim had not instigated or incited an otherwise law-abiding person into committing an illegal act [19]. The case of a thug who provokes a police officer to challenge him to shoot him while the thug waves a toy gun should be considered a suicidal act.

Motorists contribute to the theft of their vehicles. Some risk factors in the theft of motor vehicles are the make, model and year of manufacture [24]. Some classes of motor vehicles are in greater demand than others in the market for their spare parts. Car spare parts are more common in

specific localities and are in higher demand in that market. Middle-aged vehicles may not have the latest anti-theft devices; in that case, they are easier to steal. Again, as the cars wear out and depreciate, the owners attach little value to them, and that way, they may need to be maintained in better working conditions. The owners may not observe precautions as to where to park them because they do not attach a lot of value to them [17].

Several car owners, particularly the owners of older cars, do not care about installing an alarm or other anti-theft device. Some commentators pointed out that 10 % of the vehicle owners admitted that they occasionally left their car keys in their vehicles [25]. About thirty per cent of the respondents confessed to leaving their vehicle unattended with the engine running. They think this is good for cooling the vehicle's interior or want to accomplish an urgent errand. According to motor vehicle experts, standard precautions include rolling the windows and removing the ignition keys. Other measures include hardening the target, including car alarms that keep intrud-

ers away, etching the window glass, steering column locks, and pedal and wheel locks [20]. GPS technology that sends signals to the vehicle owner or the police to trace the vehicle red-handed is a relatively effective measure to prevent motor vehicle theft.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which allows the researcher to obtain information from different populations simultaneously. According to Boba, this type of observational study, or descriptive research, involves analysing information about a population at a specific point in time [26]. Usually, these studies measure the incidences of crime outcomes and define the population's criminological features. Berg and his colleague [1] believe that understanding the processes that influence victimisation and offending will provide empirical details to help develop the theories.

Table – Contribution and the role played by individuals in their criminal victimisation

Variables	SA		A		N		SD		DA		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Carelessness	76	20	171	45	71	19	38	10	21	6	377	100
Offender / Victim Overlap	125	33	185	49	36	10	19	5	12	3	377	100
Insensitiveness	74	20	174	46	71	19	37	10	21	6	377	100
Others (specify)												

Notes: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; N – Neutral; SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

73% observed that the individuals contributed to their criminal victimisation due to avoidable carelessness.

65% revealed that facilitation of one's victimisation due to insensitiveness increases the incidents of crime.

71% expressed that many individuals choose risky lifestyles.

60% perceived that residents fail to remove opportunities to commit crimes.

This study hypothesises that personal security, seen as empowering individuals to take charge of their security issues, could reduce victimisation. The activities they put in place are for their bene-

fit and would help to defend themselves from victimisation; the level of involvement and the measures put in place by individual residents regulate the level of reduction of victimisation. Acceptable participation in enhancing personal security by guaranteeing that those factors put in place reduce victimisation. However, several prevailing variables will determine the effect of involvement and the level of victimisation reduction, making it easier to suppress or reverse the expected association. These variables include social policy, individual involvement, resident teamwork, and hands-on ability.

Based on the research findings, security in Kenya has a positive effect, mainly on the security of our homes and the workplace. However, for this to be effective, each resident in the neighbourhood has to be aware of the measures to be put in place to

reduce the incidents of his or her criminal victimisation. Training is essential to educate the residents on the measures to put in place to avoid criminal victimisation. The community residents will have to work as a team to inform the potential offenders that the residents in the locality know their self-protection. The residents must be educated on crime prevention measures to remove the opportunities for the determined offenders to commit crimes.

CONCLUSIONS

Personal security must be improved with ever-increasingly unstable and self-motivated security situations worldwide. Personal security may be the most effective form, considering that individ-

uals will be aware of their own personal security needs to enable them to remove opportunities for potential offenders to commit crimes. This calls for a deeper understanding of the measures to put in place to reduce the incidents of criminal victimisation.

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