

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH COMMUNITY APPROACH: AN EXPERIMENTED MODEL FOR INDIAN SPACES

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Abstract

*The incidence of crime is increasing day by day; crime is dynamic, to control it, crime prevention approach should be vigorous with exclusive processes and knowledge. This will be cost effective and needs to be monitored and evaluated in a regular interval. The increasing crime has invited the attention of several agencies to counteract including educational institutions. While some efforts are made by criminal justice agencies to address the issue of crime and its prevention; however, at grassroots it remains feeble especially to the student's population who are most vulnerable. In India, some of the crimes occupy predominant position, whereas most are not. Media turns around the simple issues to a complex and vice-versa. The reporting of crime in media continues to be selective and subjective is evidentiary. Most of the social researchers in India, talk, research and suggest about crimes where the concentration is given widely to the understanding of crime and its causes, criminal behavior, victims, legal procedures, and prosecution. What remains least attended is the prevention of crime and victimization. Around the world, there are some operational researches conducted by the criminologists, sociologists, victimologists, town planners, geographers, and civil engineers on crime prevention. These researchers have developed some crime prevention models that are widely used or practiced around the world. However, in our department (Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University) we have ventured with a new think tank on crime prevention concept/ strategy called Crime Prevention and Awareness Campaign (basically **Community Crime Prevention programme**). During conduct of this campaign our volunteers share information to the participants on crime and its preventive actions covering wide range of topics which addresses the most happening local crimes, need for multi-community partnerships and the crime prevention strategies. This paper is designed in such way that readers can try this Indian Model of Community Crime Prevention in their locale. The salient features and topics are enumerated in later part of this paper. This exercise could be successful only with the participation of community. This paper shall discuss on crime prevention through conduct of community crime prevention campaigns, our field experiences and itineraries such as issues pertaining to conduct of the campaigns, permissions, information, formalities, hurdles in the field and mandates for conduct of the campaigns.*

Key words: Crime, Crime Awareness, Crime Prevention, Village Campaign, Schools and Colleges Campaign.

Introduction

The increasing complexity fetched by globalization, urbanization and impact of technology has warranted crime prevention stance not only from government agencies but also from community, educational institutions and NGO's. The caveat "*Prevention is better than Cure*" is never restricted to medical sciences. In the competitive globalized world, it shall even be applied to crime and victimisation. The Justice System of India that follows the adversarial system of justice is the two-sided structure under which criminal trial courts operate, putting the prosecution against the defense (Vijay, 2012). This system of justice process concentrates widely on understanding crime, criminal behaviours, legal procedures, prosecution, punishments and corrections (rehabilitation and reformation). In India, law enforcers are busy with their daily routines. This has created a reasonable gap that remains intact in prevention of crime and victimization (Patel, 2013), while prevention remains untamed. There are very few crime prevention training programmes conducted by the government, educational institutions, or NGO's. Hence, we planned to prepare the young citizens to be assertive in matters relating to crime and its prevention which is a vital matter of concern in contemporary society.

Cohen and Felson (renowned criminologist) devised routine activities theory, assuming that the motivation of offenders is always present. The set routine activities theory part from other criminological theories, which seeks to examine why offender are motivated (Nickerson, 2022). According to this theory crime typically occurs when three things happen at the same time and in the same space:

- A motivated offender is present.
- A suitable target is available.
- There is either something or someone present which encourages the crime, or nothing or no-one to discourage it (absence of capable guardian).

A slightly different way to look at this is to say that crime is about people, places and situations. Crime prevention and reduction strategies try to work on all these elements.

Major types of Crime Prevention

Most of the crime prevention model/strategies are developed based on the local needs while some strategies can be used in any environment for example fixing of CCTV which is an integral part of Situational Crime Prevention. However, according to Brantingham & Faust (1976), the crime prevention strategies may broadly be applied in three areas of action which shall be primary, secondary and tertiary preventive measures. Any model of crime prevention aims at mitigating crime through preventive action, enhancing preventive action through capacity building, ensuring crime-free environment, reducing high-risk potential or halting the possibility of future crimes. Approaches to crime prevention have emerged over time with pre-determined solutions, practices, and policies executed by law enforcement, courts,

corrections, family, and community (Umarhathab, n.d.). Some of the dominant type of crime prevention approaches widely practiced by law enforcement can be classified as Punitive, Corrective and Protective. However, the major crime prevention models that are basically protective in nature are as follows.

- Crime Prevention through Social Development
- Situational Crime Prevention
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- Community Crime Prevention and
- Hybrid or "Whole of Government" Model.

India is a unique space with several culture, linguist, caste, creed, religion, customs, culture, geography, norms, and folklore. This space is referred as sub-continent because of its nature, secular, sovereign, and multi-dimensional society. Therefore, any strategy should be designed, tested and implemented only in Indian space for its continuum. As a fact it should be admitted that no crime prevention programmes are designed for Indian spaces as such. This attempt is purely a community crime prevention approach for Indian spaces.

International Status

Crime prevention is a Cinderella of criminological research. Prevention is the first imperative of justice Prevention is the first imperative of justice (UNODC, 2004). Several researches are conducted in crime but crime prevention is limited because prevention remains the choice of the individual (potential victims). Most of the crimes are committed (as postulated by the classicist), when the benefits of committing the crime outweigh the benefits of not committing the crime (MacKenzie, n.d). A similar treatise was observed by Worrall (2010) that every criminal will look for easy targets that pose a low risk of being caught, but have a good benefit in return. Thus, any model of crime prevention should be addressed rationally. White and Perrone (2005) enumerated three major reasons why crime prevention has taken an unprecedented turn during 1980-90's: namely economic, operational, and community initiative. In India, social scientist gives moderate to less preference with specific reference to crime prevention studies and implementation of any crime prevention model is exceptional. While in rest of the world several operational researches are conducted on crime prevention (Ella, 2016). To name few who have directly contributed to crime prevention are Henry Fieldings, Jeffry, David P. Farrington, Brandon C. Welsh, Lawrence W. Sherman, Denise Gottfredson, Bonnemaion, G., Cornish DB, White R., Perrone S., Clarke RV., Homel P., O Malley, Van Dijk J., De Waard J., Doris MacKenzie, Homel R., Hauritz M., Wortley, John Eck, Peter Reuter, Shawn Bushway, Mark A.R., Kleiman David, Cozens P., Saville G., Hillier D., Cherny Adrian, Peter W. Greenwood, Worall, Brantingham, Faust and etc. Among the Indian Criminologist few large-scale studies have been conducted by Bajpai G.S., Srivatsava S.S., Patel and etc.

National Status

Crime prevention is rarely a subject of interest for Indian academics and researchers. Any crime incident is well attended only when it happens in certain geographical location otherwise is taken lightly. For instance, so called Nirbaya case was hitting the NEWS and MEDIA, the very next day a similar incident was reported in central bus stand at Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu though victim was a school student, the incident had no attention as matter of fact that it was an episode in unpopular town of India. Media turns around the simple issues to a complex and vice-versa. The reporting of crime in media persists selective and subjective is evident for these incidences. While no media reported on the preventive aspect of such crime instead criticised either the parties. Patel (2013) has conceptually framed the situation crime prevention for Indian condition which may be tested in later days. This following crime prevention and awareness campaign will bridge the gaps in policy, practices, research, training and model development.

New Think-tank

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli aims to venture into the crime prevention concept/ strategy called **Crime Prevention and Awareness Campaign** (recently renamed as **Public Safety and Health Campaign** on the lines of US practices), which necessarily falls under community crime prevention model. The idea emerged out of discussion with fellow colleagues in the department over three years. This experiment was initially tested with some of the villages, towns, college and schools in three districts namely Kanyakumari, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. Before the campaign, we gear up for the exercise; we train our volunteers to talk in campaign (Different spaces via public- City- Village/ School/ College/ industry) which is designed very crisp and attractive. In the contemporary social conditions visual/ image/pictures can attract the participants/ audience therefore we prepare banners relating to the crime in the locale of the camp sites. During the conduct of this campaign; our volunteers carry information brochure, pamphlet, handouts on crimes, stickers and its preventive actions including emergency numbers (call on services for example 1098, 1090, 1091, 1096, 1261, 108, 112, 101, 100 and etc.) and disseminate the same to every possible corner of the village or campaign site. Most of the campaigns are conducted in identified Crime Prone Zone (Village or Area in a city) and Hot Spots enabling public in around the campaign site to be sensitized and encourage their participation in crime prevention activities. This exercise was well received by the participants (student both college and school as well villagers) as it engages the community for betterment of the society. Our experiences in schools, colleges and villages indicated that there is bare need for such programmes across the schools and colleges.

Topics covered in the Campaign

The designated campaigns are organized with topics relevant to the area of the campaigns. Our volunteers reach the site and enquire on the local conditions well in advance. The topics for discussion are well identified and practiced before the campaigns. The topics for discussion

includes *social and family bond; caste conflict; truancy; vagrancy; child protection; anti-social behavior; self-discipline; domestic violence; corruption; traffic regulations- safe driving; protection of elderly; emergency preparedness, neighborhood safety, fear of crime; ill- effects of alcohol and drug related crime and disorder issues; friends of police; social disorders, safe practices in cyber space/ social media; environmental protection; human rights, importance of reporting behaviours and etc.* The topics are not restricted, as per local needs topics can be altered, added or reduced.

There are several crime prevention approaches that are followed/ practiced/ implemented across the world, but one we have developed is unique and effective because it is community oriented. This is evident from the reception, appreciation, hospitality and participation of members from several sections in these campaigns. Since, it is an collective community exercise it has several formalities and success can be achieved through perfect execution of the planned work.

Aims and Objectives of the Campaign

- To reach the public with information on the forms of crime (traditional and emerging forms) and its prevention strategies
- To ensure and enhance the family, social, and community bonds in their living space
- To imbibe social sense, protection of self, nature and
- To make aware the audience on the importance of reporting the crime and enable community as support system for government that entertains reporting behaviours.

In all forms of campaigns, we prepare our volunteers to display the banners mostly with pictures around the campaign venue. The organizer planning to organize such campaigns may choose one for the first time, later may think about combinations of campaigns. We have classified the campaigns into five major forms.

Forms of Campaign

1. School campaigns (Primary, Middle, Secondary and Higher Secondary school)- Children Safety and Health Campaign

Regularly we arrange for Mime or Skit and short speech / talks on good touch and bad, child rights, child line, importance of reporting to parents on odd behaviours of others, need and importance of respecting elders, self-discipline; ill-effect of castes, importance of outdoor play, ill-effects of mobile usages, how to express alcoholic father on ill-effects of his disease, need and importance of wearing helmet during the driving, detail them on help lines, importance of hygiene, sanitation, protecting environment and so on.

Picture 1: Campaign at Neerodi



Picture 2: Campaign at Valakkal



We also organize small quiz, reading competitions and present the winners with piece of toffee as token of appreciation or things such as pen, pencil or sticker depending on the finance of campaign.

Picture 3: Campaign at Ayan Sigampatti

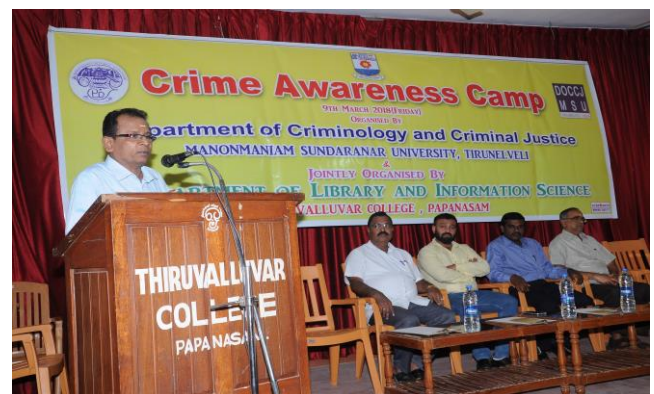


Picture 4: Campaign at Papanasam



2. College campaigns- Youth Safety and health campaigns

Picture 5: Campaign at NSS SP campaign Picture 6: Campaign at Thiruvallur College



Since college students are sensitive, our volunteers are prepared carefully to perform a mime or skit and short speech / talks on ill-effects of drug abuse including do and don'ts, women rights, Gender Sensitization, human rights, safety practices in cyber space, ill-effects of continuous

mobile usages, crime watch, importance of friend of police, ill- effect of castes and ill-orientation, self-discipline; importance of spending time with the family, taking care of elders, importance of being part of **NSS, NCC, YRC, SPORTS**, neighborhood watch, hygiene, sanitation, protecting environment and crime prevention.

We also organize small quiz and present the winners with reinforcements such as tie, pen, stickers and monographs as a token of appreciation again it depends on the finance of campaign.

3. Village Campaigns (Day Campaign for youth and school children, and Evening Campaigns- Specific for the villager)

Picture 7: Campaign at Ayan Singampatti Vallavankottai



Picture 8: Campaign at Vallavankottai



The approaches in village campaigns are different from other campaigns cited above, if a campaign is planned at a village- a village visit is mandate and contact local people in village over major issues (Crime) in villages. After collection of information we need to approach the village president/ BDO for permission and brief him/ her on the objectives of the campaign. In most of the villages the local leaders welcome and support us with few volunteers as per our request. In village, our volunteers select topics of most happening form of crime such as alcoholism and domestic violence (skit or mime), child protection, fear of victimization, ill effects of caste, drunken driving, motor vehicle offences rules and regulations, child rearing and care, need for social bonding, trafficking and abduction, work place harassment, reporting behaviour, elder abuse and its punishment, ill effects of alcoholism, drug abuse, importance of spending time with the family, importance of Friends of Police and etc. and the recommend them on crime prevention strategy.

Picture 9: Campaign at Abishekapatti**Picture 10: Night Campaign at Abishekapatti**

What we do in the campaign? Day Programme: Village campaign

The student volunteers of the department spread over and invite the villagers to visit the campaign (mini exhibition) arranged in the village (day time) also distributed handouts with information on domestic violence, child protection, ill- effects of drugs including tobacco and alcohol use, hard drug abuse and human rights. The information billboards, banner, placard and information boards will be displaced in the center of the village near the community centre/ government hospital/ venue where villagers can be assembled. In some villages, villagers visit the camp site in evening and will enquire with student educator or he/she shall call for a sharing on the above theme.

Listen to Children

An innovative idea of testing the ability of the children to read and understand, ensuring the confidence in them and appreciating them with reinforcement for the attempts (participation) made by the participants.

4. City Campaigns (Venue mostly at Bus Depots/ Railway junctions/ Play grounds- specific topic for example safety week, Vigilance awareness week etc.)

Most of the times, we just take few minutes to perform a short skit or mime on the important crime and move to another place to perform the same or continue with other topics. The topics covered would range from child abuse until elder abuse and drug abuse to trafficking of human. During the performance the student volunteers also distribute handouts with important helpline numbers and sticker from NGO's. Here, it is important to note that police support will help the organizers in peaceful conduct of the campaign. Sometimes it will be more crowded and some audience ventilate with remarks on the police, caste, politicians or criminal justice as whole. Which should be handled with care?

Picture 9: City campaign at Neerodi Township

5. Industrial Campaign (Visit industry through contact or over invitation on specific topic)

Though we haven't conducted any campaign, in times to come we shall identify or on the invitation of an industry we will organize a campaign in the industries. This campaign would restrict to the problem existing within the workers, special care will be given to child rearing, importance of spending time with the family, ill effect or drug use and alcoholism, elder care, child care and safety issues.

Our Experiences

The success of the first crime awareness and prevention campaign gave the organizer (faculties and PhD. research fellows of the department) and the volunteers more confident and made the campaign more operational. Our experience remains motivation to our student volunteers and Ph.D. research fellows and department students.

All the campaigns were held or organized within the University Jurisdiction namely 3 southern districts via, Kanyakumari, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu during the academic year 2015-2019. Our team has successfully organised about 16 campaigns except the industrial camp.

Important Issues in Conduct of the Campaign

Any good thing come in India after great struggle backed by issues. The first and foremost issues in conduct of the campaign are training the volunteers on short and crisp speech/talk for 10-12 Minutes, mime and skit. Second is about the finance, initially we need to invest in creating and printing banner that would definitely cost few thousand rupees, each campaign would cost at least few thousand for transport and food with refreshments to the organizers including reinforcements for the participants.

Necessary Permissions

In all the forms of campaign prior permission is necessarily obtained from the appropriate authority also we inform the local police on the campaign and its site. In case of school campaigns, we need to write to District Education Officer for government and aided schools, Principal in case of private schools. In college campaign we need to meet principal, NSS Programmes officer, NCC officer or YRC programmes officer to obtain permission. In case of village campaigns, we shall talk to village president/ BDO and sometime convince him/her. In case of industrial campaign, the director of company should permit us to organize a campaign at their site.

Basic requirements for conduct of the campaign

- Prepare the speakers for simple and crisp speech/talk for about 10-15 Minutes.
- Arrange Coordinators and volunteers (student and local) for Street Play/ Skit/ Mime, Night Watch and invite audiences to the venue of the campaign.
- Arrange necessary funds- Stationery, Gifts, Toffees, banners, information placard, handouts, pamphlets, stickers, notice, logistics, boarding- if required, and etc.
- Posters with pictorials (Bill boards)
- Seek Support from local Panchayat- President/ Chairman/ BDO in case of village
- Inform local police station on purpose for your visit.
- Seek Prior Permission from Head of Institution(s).
- Concentrate on a Local School especially the government schools
- Prepare your team for a Mini-exhibition or March with Poster/Banners, information placard (with discipline) in village campaigns.
- Find appropriate place for fixing the banners/ placard in villages/ colleges/ Schools.
- Night Watch with support of local villagers and student volunteers.

Mandates

Things to Remember	Must Follow
Remember it is team work	Listen, talk and explain the participants do not lecture or argue
Identify potential local volunteers	Certify and acknowledge the support of locale
Understand local problem and needs	Arrange/ Invite Local Guest, if possible felicitate them
Avoid irritating the locale	Arrange Gift for Children or participants
Do not accuse village or villagers	Invite the villagers to campaign spot
Encourage Youngster to Speak rather aged	Use locale vernacular
Do not criticize any caste or questions	Seek permission from local president/ principal/

raised by the participants	education officer inform police
Be apolitical	If possible Plant trees with support of local volunteer to maintain it

Hurdles in the Field

The public in India really don't understand the purpose of such exercise at very first event. However, in our experience they welcome but hesitate to visit or join the campaign. This can be overlooked with necessary plan and execution.

Conclusion

This exclusive exercise (Public Safety and Health Campaign) is **first of its kind in India**; these campaigns will assist the Governments and help the policy makers to adopt public safety procedures training to youth at school and college level. A dedicated mobile app will be developed, tested for students/ villagers on crime prevention. This will greatly assist the police, educators and policy planners on protecting the vulnerable population from crime. These campaigns are less cost effective but will reach the public at large if exercised with a plan, good team and police support. In long run the impact of this campaign will enhance crime reporting and mitigate crime in campaign sites. The very aim of this campaign is to make aware or touch up on engaging the public in crime prevention unless and otherwise reducing crimes in India will remain a day dream. These campaigns should be actively conducted in different parts of the country. The reader may feel free to contact the author through email for relevant quires. With repeated attempts anyone interested in crime prevention will be able to design community crime prevention campaigns according to the local needs and requirements. This exercise in villages, town, cities and industries is oriented to community crime prevention via educational institution(s) and public participation.

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