

Review Article

SITUATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Situational prevention is a set of methods emphasizing on the reduction and elimination of crime. Although this type of prevention focuses on the circumstances surrounding the criminal and hinders the process of crime transition from idea into action, it encounters some obstacles and challenges which have influenced its efficiency. This study which was conducted using an expository-analytical approach through a library method of data collection, was intended to investigate whether situational prevention faces challenges or not and if yes what would be the way out of these challenges. We realized that this type of prevention encounters some challenges which among them we can mention ideological challenges, conflict between its theoretical foundations and cognitive criminology, challenges concerning some human rights considerations, such as invasion of privacy and civil liberties, economic and social inequality, inequality in the case of enjoying security and etc. Also some territory and scope challenges like displacement of crime within time, place, method and target, inefficiency or ineffectiveness on highly intelligent or irrational criminals, limited effect on crimes resulting from beliefs and mental emotions such as terrorist activities and genocide can be mentioned.

Keywords: *Crime Prevention, Crime, Situational Prevention, Privacy*

INTRODUCTION

Commission of crime is one of the obvious manifestations of creating insecurity in society which fighting against it and more importantly prevention of it, is considered as one of the government's principal tasks. When criminologists remarked upon criminal's rational choice and their profit and loss assessments, many declared the opinion that preventive action which is a set of non-punitive measures seeking to prevent the crime commission through interference in the process of crime actualization would appear as a more efficient approach. By considering criminals as smart figures, crime prevention policies more specifically focus on the removal of commission opportunities and intensification of its risk. Situational prevention which is one of the approaches of preventive action has been also stemmed from this paradigm. Situational prevention is a set of measures placing a high priority on the reduction and elimination of crime commission opportunities.

In spite of being associated with great achievements, situational crime prevention is still faced with some constraints and obstacles. Governments should root their crime prevention policies in providing the entire community and its classes with an equal support. Since by unequal disturbance of prevention services, crimes would be transferred to some segments of society leading to more victimized lower and impoverished classes and a widened gap between the rich and the poor, situational crime prevention shouldn't merely serve a specific segment of society.

The Necessity of Research

Despite the statistical successes, the effectiveness of situational prevention and its mechanism in the reduction of crime commission has been always questioned. These major questions are posed due to the belief of some people that situational prevention can only alter the time and place of commission. Therefore by regarding the government's developing approach toward applying situational prevention and its mechanism, in order for a better assessment to be conducted it would be essential to examine the challenges posed to situational prevention.

The Purpose of Study

The purpose of the present study is to assess the challenges posed to situational prevention, the challenges which have undermined virtually every aspect of situational prevention. Theoretical foundations, the

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scope and the functions of situational prevention have always provoked a barrage of substantial criticism. Sometimes these criticisms appear so strong that can even question the very basis of situational prevention, negate its achievements and introduce its mechanism as being adverse and disadvantageous. Thus, accurate and detailed assessment of these challenges, would promote a comprehensive understanding of foundations, scope and functions of situational prevention.

Research Hypotheses

- 1- Situational prevention approach encounters some challenges regarding human rights.
- 2- There are some solutions to the challenges posed to situational prevention.

Expressing the Problem

Situational prevention is neither based on purification of surroundings nor contains a rehabilitative function. This method only puts the emphasis upon the circumstances surrounding the criminal which brings him/her to the verge of delinquency.

Clark believes that situational prevention is a type of immediate, purposeful and constant intervention in the environment which reduces crime commission opportunities as far as possible and heightens the risk of commission so that it would be tangible and concrete to the criminal (Clark, 1995).

Thus, situational crime prevention seeks for commission opportunity blocking along with heightening the risk of commission and ultimately reducing the proceeds from crime commission (Clark, 1995)

Preventing situational, Conditions that facilitate the transition from thought to action on the perpetrators (Khanalipour, 2012). Among the constraints imposed upon situational prevention resulting in an inefficient approach, we can mention crime displacement and conservative deal with crime that is able to divert attention away from the root cause of crime. On the other hand, situational prevention proves applicable only in the case of opportunity based crimes. That's while many of the crimes such as violent and vicious crimes, follow one's inner feelings and acts (Abranabadi, 2004) Human rights and privacy challenges which function as a red line to individual's position in relation to one another and to the governments, would be invaded through restriction of public places. Since this type of prevention is on the basis of monitoring individual's behaviors and measures and correlates with the quality of individuals' private life, human rights would be violated (Farahani, 2006).

After undergoing various periods of criminal policy, the researchers have concluded that traditional methods of fighting against crime and its prevention approaches are no longer effective. Therefore, situational prevention should be considered as the most practical of all regarding several aspects. However, despite adopting this approach we are still witnessing an uncontrolled increasing delinquency. A question is raised about whether is it possible to adopt this approach in a manner that it achieves its maximum efficiency along with minimum challenges. Some of the underlying reasons behind inefficiency of situational prevention method can be attributed to the posed restraints and challenges. This study is intended to assess these challenges.

Data Analysis

As all other measures taken to fight against delinquency, situational prevention has also met some criticisms. These criticisms have undertaken various aspects of situational prevention. The purpose of criminologists and jurist's criticisms ranges from situational prevention theoretical foundations to its efficiency. Being in conflict with classical principles of criminology, human rights considerations, limited scope, ineffectiveness on highly intelligent criminals and crime displacement are of the major criticism issued to situational prevention.

Ideological Challenges

1- Being In Conflict With Classical Principles of Criminology

In order to adopt the most basic and fundamental delinquency prevention strategies, primary theories of criminology were concerned with the study of the factors and reasons behind crime commission. But the criminal's motivation and reasons for committing crime are not considered within the scope of this approach. Instead of rooting out the crime commission major causes, situational prevention strategies focus on the circumstances surrounding the criminal. The situational prevention programs are also merely some superficial, temporary alleviative strategies which can only set up some barriers to the crime

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commission process. Nevertheless, the immediate impact of its efficiency has encouraged crime commission custodians to hold the rate of crime commission down by the help of applying situational prevention approach so that the extent of crime commission would seem endurable to the community.

Human Rights Considerations

Human rights are a set of entitlements garneted to people only due to the quality of being human and not because of any particular excellence of position. Violation of human rights is equal to violation of the all fundamental liberties and ultimately it means to disregard the inherent dignity of human. Therefore, governments are obliged to comply with these rights with out with their own compromise. Situational crime prevention is sometimes in conflict with human right values which will be discussed in this article.

Invasion of Privacy and Civil Liberties

Privacy and civil liberties are of the inalienable basic individual rights that preservation and respect for them has been stated in both international and civil laws. Privacy can be regarded as a means of control offered to the individuals with respect to their private realm and it aims to support human dignity.

The right to have an ensured privacy is a principle that must be considered as an inviolable right. Privacy is what safeguards Individual's spiritual and intellectual works and their thoughts and feelings and provides them with a personal space free from any interference to have their remarks and deeds inviolable and advocated by law (Warren and Brandeis, 1890).

The immense significance of privacy and civil liberties has been even mentioned in article 12, 17 and 18 of international covenant on civil laws. But it's evident that some particular forms of situational prevention impose restrictions on the fulfillment of these basic rights.

Individual liberties are harshly threatened and violated through restriction of public places and monitoring people's behaviors by means of measures such as installing surveillance video cameras, applying virtual environment devices and applications installed on computers and recording all of the network activities conducted by people even the taps on their keyboard or where has been clicked by their mouse (Farahani, 2006). Situational crime prevention seeks for a rigidly closed, protected and monitored society even in its virtual environment. Therefore, it is sometimes followed by invasion of individual's primary rights such as enjoying solitude, free flow of information and freedom of movement. Under the pretext of protecting security and social order, some governments take measures like telephone tapping, checking emails, installing surveillance video cameras in individual's private realm, physical inspection in air ports and places of pilgrimage that are actually in conflict with individual liberties. Thus, privacy and civil liberties are undoubtedly jeopardized through implementation of situational prevention strategies.

Economic and Social Inequalities

According to article 11 of the international covenant on social, economic and cultural rights, having proper and decent standards of living is indispensable for enjoying these rights. Enjoying minimum standards of living along with human dignity and possessing capability of being equipped to deal with the dangers raised from crime commission is one of the major issues of second generation human rights.

In the case of the existence of even slight displacement of crime, it seems that individuals deprived of adequate financial facilities to secure themselves and their properties are more prone to delinquency (Abrandabadi, 2005). Since situational prevention approach requires applying and installing protective and technical devices which is only possible for the well-off, the entire community is not provided with an equal opportunity of safety by means of this type of prevention. Utilizing these devices by the well-off, along with the crime displacement phenomenon would result in criminal's tendency toward unprotected properties of the poor and defenseless population. Thus it is believed that this type of prevention constitutes a class discrimination regarding providing security. This is due to the fact that equipped with adequate technical protection, the well-off have the chance of remaining secured against victimization. That's while the poor or the lower class's properties are jeopardized by the lack of adequate protection and the consequence would be a widening gap between the rich and the poor.

Inequality In The Case of Enjoying Security

The second article of international covenant on civil and political rights is devoted to the government's prohibition of discriminations regarding the mentioned rights in this covenant. Enjoying security is one of

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the citizens' inalienable rights and government's basic duties. The duty of providing security should be fulfilled with no class discrimination within the society. That's while some of the situational prevention strategies delegate the duty of providing security to the society or in other words to the potential victims. These methods are usually of exorbitant costs and are only available to the well-off. By means of these methods, a security-based discrimination would occur consequently.

Some of the situational prevention methods are so costly that only a minority of the rich may afford those (Young, 1990).

Thus, delegation of security providing task to the society and being costly are the two starting points for experiencing discrimination. Within the context of situational prevention, the well-off would be provided with greater security in comparison to the poor. This inequality is in conflict with the fundamental human right principles.

The Imposition of Security-Oriented Approach on Society

Several situational prevention programs provide the security-oriented governments with pretext for restricting individual's civil liberties and creating a strictly monitored society. Excessive use of situational prevention represents a restricted and military like society. Although the chief purpose of adopting situational prevention strategies is to create a sense of security for people through prevention of crime commission, in such restricted societies there would be less accessibility of free spaces for the citizens and that's how the criminals would be incapable of acquiring commission opportunities. Disadvantages of excessive use of these techniques are no lesser than damages caused by crime commission.

Security-oriented governments overlook justice in favor of security and their policies are rooted in risk management and security provision.

So there lies the possibility of citizen's rights and liberties being the issue of preventive actions which would result in the creation of a society with mass surveillance known as a "big brother". Situational prevention has promoted the "big brother" paradigm and rigidly restricts personal freedoms. Philip Keo, the former director of UNESCO's intelligence community, has spoken of some controversial surprising points regarding privacy. He considers respect for the individual's privacy as one of the most significant human right issues in the third millennium.

Developing Feeling of Fear And Anxiety Among The Society Members

Although the situational prevention strategy of creating obstacles serves as a warning to the potential criminals about the great possibility of being arrested and difficulty of crime commission, it delivers this message to the citizens that they are living within a dangerous environment with a constant high probability of crime commission. The more safeguard the more sense of insecurity. That's because this extra protection implicitly suggests that control and prevention of crime is beyond the government and military forces power.

Taking preliminary measures may result in a change of mood. Since citizens are increasingly becoming aware of security issues, they will tend to avoid attendance in society as far as possible and are drawn into their own safe homes. This is a matter usually accompanied with a sense of isolation and fear of crime (Graham, 1989).

Challenges Regarding the Scope of Situational Prevention

As it was defined, situational prevention observes and inspects the crime occurrence location. Thus, the only preventable crimes are the opportunity-based ones. By opportunity-based crime we mean that they occur only if the proper commission opportunity with the least extent of risk arises (Cornish and Clarke, 1985). Many financial crimes as well as several violent ones belong to the category of opportunity-based crimes. Encountering this type of crimes, situational prevention proposes viable and effective strategies. However in the case of crimes committed by purposeful and determined criminals rather than opportunist ones, the criminals with no intention of gaining apparent benefit being stock in a situation with even no possibility of assessing profit and loss, situational prevention seems no effective. Therefore, most of the violent crimes as well as some of the financial ones or in other words crimes followed by inner tensions and desires (Cornish and Clarke, 1985) expose the efficiency of situational prevention to serious challenges.

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Crime is the outcome of the social and moral teachings rather than a process of rational choice. Although Situational prevention is statistically capable of preventing many of the crimes, it cannot suggest effective strategies regarding violent crimes such as assault and battery, murder, family feuds, crimes against children and racially motivated crimes (Bright, 1992).

It should be noticed that limitation of the situational prevention scope to the opportunity-based and financial crimes and the claim of its being no effective in the case of violent crimes committed by highly motivated criminals, suggests the positivist's thoughts on determinism of crime commission to the mind. That's while determinism view and particularly radical determinism is intensely criticized and its proofs and evidences are inadequate and unreliable (Williams, 1997).

In addition, reformation of determination and will in criminology partly differs from its philosophical concept. These reformations are more flexible in criminology. Another restraint posed to the situational prevention is its ineffectiveness regarding motiveless/unintentional crimes and it's because there is no primary intent of commission to be hindered.

In the case of the crimes caused by negligence, such as a car accident occurred while drunk driving over the speed limits, the criminal has never sought for any unlawful outcome. This scope limitation of situational prevention and the theory of the criminal's rational choice should be considered interconnected and consequently we observe that a wide range of motiveless/unintentional crimes would be beyond the scope of this approach.

Challenges Regarding the Criminal

What was already mentioned shouldn't lead to the conclusion that situational prevention encounters no challenges in the case of financial crimes. Many crimes whether of financial or of other types are committed by people of high intelligence.

Although intelligence of criminals may be discouraged at the very first moment of encounter with obstacles, they immediately devise schemes for facing and removing them. They are capable of circumventing these obstacles and inventing commission methods rendering the situational prevention ineffective (Mirkhalili, 2007).

Since situational prevention is founded on the assumption of criminals giving up while encountering obstacles, it proves ineffective regarding highly intelligent criminals. Irrational criminals suffering from psychological disorders characterized by temerity and disregard for crime commission consequences pay no heed to the obstacles posed by situational prevention methods. Regarding some unintelligent naïve thieves, since they usually do not consider the consequences, situational prevention strategies may fail (Walsh, 1986).

Therefore, situational prevention strategies are equally ineffective toward both highly intelligent and unintelligent criminals.

Various Crime Displacements Disadvantages

Various crime displacements are of the major criticisms addressed to situational prevention. Criminals are usually of high intelligence and motivation that they can shift their target from one to another while encounter with preventive obstacles.

Time and Place of Commission Displacements

Time of commission displacements occur while the criminal's targets are left unprotected. Preventive measures and situational prevention strategies sometimes make the criminals commit the crime in another place.

Situational prevention measures taken in particular places can only reduce commission in those very places but since the criminal's motivations still exist they will be lead to unprotected open to attack places (Kallinger, 1998).

Tactical Displacement or Change in Method

Tactical displacement occurs while the intended method of commission has been blocked by situational prevention strategies. If the criminals are initially unable to adopt the intended method of commission, they would change their technique and devise new schemes for committing that crime. This displacement is more frequent among resolved, intelligent and professional criminals.

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Target Displacement

Using situational prevention techniques, the potential criminal would seek for another commission opportunity for the same or any other target or even using more technical equipment.

Heal and Laycock believed that motivation is the missing link of the rational choice based situational prevention. Having been resolutely decided to commit a crime, the criminal wouldn't be stopped by encountering protected targets but they are likely to aim at another target (Heal and Laycock, 1998).

If through adopting situational prevention approach the determined criminal's targets are protected against attack so that they would fail to achieve them, in order for their targets to be met shifting to an attainable target is what they would do.

Fundamental Crime Displacement

Fundamental crime displacement occurs in the cases that by means of reducing profits or heightening the commission risk, situational prevention can temporarily stop the criminal and consequently the quite determined criminal would decide to commit another crime. This displacement is particularly frequent among resolved, intelligent and professional criminals.

Disadvantages of Being Opportunity Based

Situational prevention is only applicable regarding opportunity based crimes that whether are based on profit and loss or at least profit and loss occupy a crucial role in committing them. So called profit-oriented crimes are the crimes in which being profitable, causing no or low detriment and convenience of the desired profit have been considered the most. That's while situational prevention strategies are not effective regarding violent and vicious crimes such as genocide or premeditated murder committed because of significant biases or reputation and mostly followed by inner feelings and tendencies rather than being opportunity based.

CONCLUSION

In order to prevent crime commission, retribution, indictment and preventive actions are of equal importance. Situational prevention is also one of these prevention types mostly noticed because of its sparkling statistics on reducing delinquency. But it should be noted that for the situational prevention to be an effective form of criminal policy, it is needed that its theoretical drawbacks such as limitation of scope be removed or minimized and its positive points be strengthened. Despite governments and civil communities' already made efforts toward overcoming these drawbacks the mentioned challenges still exist. Although cognitive criminology and its preventive actions have proved ineffective regarding crime inhibition, it shouldn't lead to leaving this method and fundamental theories of social prevention aside. Many of the situational prevention technology based strategies have the two simultaneous functions of crime prevention and promotion of life quality in the current era. Thus, the advocates of situational prevention reject the posed criticisms such as being discriminatory. But since providing the entire society by security is of the human rights and government's inherent duties no discrimination is acceptable. Therefore, first assumption about the existence of challenges in situational prevention methods regarding human rights and scope is proven.

In relation to human rights standards, situational prevention encounters several challenges such as privacy invasion and civil liberties violation. Adopting situational prevention techniques is followed by economic and social inequalities, imposition of security-oriented approach, increasing anxiety and fear among society members, imposition of cost on the citizens and disclaiming the government's responsibilities. In relation to scope, this type of prevention encounters some challenges as well. Of the criticisms addressed to situational prevention about scope limitation we can mention time, place, target, method and tactics displacements, opportunity orientation of this approach, specified measures and restricted range, being non-practicable to all crimes, and merely impermanent effects.

Second assumption about the existence of some solutions to the mentioned challenges is proven as well. The best response to the expressed criticisms would be referring to the primary concept of situational prevention described by Clark at a time when this type of prevention was not well-received yet. He defined situational prevention as an approach applicable to only some particular forms of crime not to the

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all criminal acts. Speaking from this point of view, expressing criticisms such as scope limitation and being applicable only to opportunity based crimes no longer seems plausible. The excessive use of this approach may account for so many issued challenges. Many of the expressed criticisms would be left unjustified only if the situational prevention is evaluated within its own scope and considered as a complementary to other prevention plans not a substitution for them.

Suggestions

A comprehensive, pragmatic and holistic criminal policy is the one which has all the fundamental requirements for fighting against crimes eradicates the causes of creation and increase of delinquency within the society and applies situational prevention techniques for supplementing these preventive actions. The experiences obtained through new policies in the field of urbanization particularly focus on provision of security for the citizens. Generating a proper response to the problems of crime prone areas requires a combination of various measures and strategies. This response should be the outcome of contribution of various skills. Compliance with criteria of urbanization, observance of construction safety principles and installing the required safety equipment can greatly reduce the opportunities of crime commission. The following strategies seem beneficial:

- 1- Municipalities shall be obligated to force building companies to regard criminology methods in their designs. Otherwise their license to build is to be revoked. For instance, they shall be obligated to install anti-theft entrance doors in residential complexes.
- 2- 2. Regarding support of all levels of people in society, especially the poor, governments shall dedicate a portion of collected yearly tax to strengthen the poor's residences against crime.
- 3- 3. With the contribution of a fine street design, passages of urban areas shall have the condition of reducing crime and the opportunity of doing so. In this design, natural design is of utmost importance.

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