

PREVENTION OF CRIME

Written by Shagun Hooda

4th Year BBA LLB Student, The NorthCap University, Gurgaon, India

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ABSTRACT

The prevention of crime and juvenile delinquency, like the prevention of any other undesirable and damaging occurrence, is manifestly superior to their subsequent control. It is possible to prevent crime or delinquency in a variety of ways and settings. When a criminal is incarcerated or given the death penalty, he is prevented from committing other crimes for the duration of his sentence or forever, as appropriate. In reality, the purpose of all forms of punishment is to deter both present and potential criminals from committing crimes. In the current situation, however, criminologists employ the term prevention in a restricted sense, i.e., to forestall criminal behaviour through proactive person and environmental alterations. In other words, prevention in this context includes attempts to strengthen family relationships, encourage better school adjustments, provide education and enjoyment geared to generate helpful and upright citizens, and utilise aids in the disciplines of social work, medicine, and psychiatry. Clearly, these programmes can be executed in civilizations that are at least moderately prosperous. In countries affected with widespread poverty, such as India, it is inevitable that the limitations of preventive programmes encountered elsewhere will present themselves more strongly. It follows from the explanation of the concept of crime prevention that programmes for the prevention of crime and delinquency should be directed not only to those who have already engaged in criminal behaviour sufficient to warrant the attention of law enforcement authorities, but also to those who have either exhibited some tendency to suggest possible delinquency in the future or who may be otherwise normal but due to individual or environmental factors are at risk of engaging in criminal behaviour. Though preventive programmes are not limited to juvenile delinquents, they are obviously more relevant and useful in the context of young people, given that the likelihood of a person becoming a criminal

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after a certain age, when values and attitudes are more or less set, is somewhat lower than in the case of individuals of immature age and comprehension.

IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE DELINQUENCY

Identification of potential offenders in a timely manner is implied in the concept of crime prevention. Some criminologists have attempted to develop strategies for forecasting delinquency in appropriate instances. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck's contribution to the field of early delinquency prediction is the most significant. Using actuarial approaches, the Gluecks determined that the quality of a certain set of conditions allowed future delinquents and non-delinquents to be distinguished. They evaluated the discipline and monitoring of a youngster by his father and mother, the affection of the father and mother for the boy, and the family's cohesiveness.

However, prediction tables produced by the Gluecks and others cannot be relied upon heavily. While the Gluecks' tables have resulted in overprediction, several other tables have the opposite problem of underprediction. While underprediction of future delinquency means that many cases of future delinquency may go unnoticed and, therefore, unattended, overprediction of future delinquency would subject cases where there may be no actual delinquency to preventive measures, a scenario that has been questioned on both practical and moral grounds.

VARIETY OF PROGRAMMES

Prevention programmes may take one of two forms: programmes focusing on the individual or programmes focusing on the environment. The former entails the prevention of delinquency through counselling, psychotherapy, and adequate education, whereas the latter employs tactics aimed at altering the socioeconomic background that is prone to encourage delinquency. The following tactics adopted by crime prevention programmes reflect these two sorts of preventative strategy.

MENTAL HEALTH CLINICS

The purpose of psychiatric aids provided by psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychiatric social workers is to assist future delinquents by gaining a knowledge of their personality issues, and then treating and counselling them at the right moments. Taft and England have enumerated the following functions of mental clinics:

- (i) To engage in the identification of "pre-offenders."
- (ii) To investigate instances chosen for treatment and study.
- (iii) Treating cases or referring them to other organisations for treatment.
- (iv) To arouse the interest of other agencies in the psychiatrically-oriented types of treatment for behavioural disorders in children. (v) To reveal to the community the unmet needs of certain types of children. (vi) To engage in behavioural research in certain communities. (vii) To assist in the training of students who intend to specialise in the treatment of behavioural problems.

Even in highly developed nations such as the United States, psychiatry-based sciences and services are severely handicapped as follows: "These clinics are treating the wrong people; they are using the wrong methods; they are located in the wrong places; and they are improperly staffed and administered."

One might envision the availability and scope of psychiatric care in countries like India.

It is difficult to determine whether or not child guidance clinics are successful, as the concept of "success" is both subjective and relative. As expected, children, policemen, parents, teachers, and foster parents have varying perceptions of "success."

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

In countries where practically every child attend school, educational institutions have a huge impact, and so preventive programmes can be implemented effectively through schools. In this framework, three aims of school education have been proposed:

- a) Developing a new value system in which the school would be a force working against the discrimination and rejection faced by lower-class students.
- b) Making schools a tool for building work attitudes, self-esteem, and job skills in order to increase the employability of school graduates in disadvantaged communities.
- b) Providing delinquency-prone children with school experiences meant to improve their self-perception.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Popular thinking holds that recreational programmes are an effective deterrent against delinquency, since idleness is a breeding ground for numerous vices. It is considered that the energies of youth can be effectively channelled into hobbies such as sports, games, and other beneficial activities that would reduce the likelihood of delinquency among participants.

Despite this, a number of research have not supported the commonly held belief that recreational programmes are effective. In 1957, a subcommittee of the United States Senate reported, "(1) Being a good athlete is not at all a deterrent to delinquency, (2) experience in team-play through recreation can have no significant amount of carryover to general character traits or conduct patterns; (3) even highly organised recreational activities do not absorb enough of the child's energy or time to at least appreciably reduce his opportunities to engage in delinquency; (4) in fact, a play group may itself be Probability increases when there are delinquent or near-delinquent members in the group; (5) many recreational programmes do not reach those children who are presumed to need them the most because of health or delinquency problems; (6) if a child is predisposed to lawbreaking because of his family and neighbourhood influences, his early training, his personality distortions, or his attitudes towards an authority, he will be more likely to break the law.

According to the preceding report, not only do the programmes lack reach and crime prevention effectiveness, but they may also sometimes foster delinquency.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The aforementioned tactics are mostly addressed at individuals in an effort to eliminate the causes of their social maladjustments. In addition, there are programmes incorporating community and group engagement in which environmental problems are addressed. The fundamental strategy of such programmes is to reach the individuals in need of assistance, as opposed to the individuals approaching the employees and agencies. A further relevance of such programmes is that the local community's engagement is prioritised and the role of professional leadership is minimised.

Marshall B. Clinard has explained the fundamental principles underlying these programmes as follows:

(i) Locals will participate in efforts to alter neighbourhood conditions (ii) because they do not accept an unfavourable social and physical environment as natural and unavoidable, and (iii) because self-imposed changes in the immediate environment will have real meaning for locals and, therefore, a more lasting impact.

The Chicago Area Project and programmes for disengaged workers in the United States are among the most prominent programmes based on these ideas.

Since 1934, the Chicago Area Project has been one of the nation's oldest community programmes. Clifford R. Shaw, who believed that the local leadership in high-crime regions was more valuable than professionally educated personnel, launched this initiative. The local leadership has the advantages of being more familiar with the local situations and having better communication with the community. In addition, they have a deeper understanding of local issues and are more capable of locating the necessary financial resources.

Programs for detached employees are distinguished by the fact that, although the workers may be affiliated with social agencies, they do not work behind agency walls. The employees aim to reach the "street-corner gangs" in order to provide support and direction to the members of the gangs. These programmes were initiated after specialists on delinquency determined that recreational programmes were insufficient for dealing with delinquents. The worker's role in these programmes is to behave as an adult buddy in order to shape the participants' ideals and socially acceptable behaviour. Dr. Walter B. Miller explains the mechanism of change in values

in this manner. The process of inducing changes in the value configuration of a group is projected to be more effective if there is strong support for local issues and if the lower-class community has a value system that encourages law-abiding behaviour. Therefore, transforming the values from an emphasis on law-breaking as a basis of prestige to an emphasis on law-abiding requires expanding the availability of law-abiding routes to desired objectives that are already existing in the groups' own cultural context. Thus, the technique seeks to influence individual behaviour by modifying the value configuration of the group that exerts the most immediate influence on exterior behaviour.

According to Dr. Miller, the corner-group method of effecting behavioural change in teenage groups has an outstanding potential for preventing juvenile criminality.

HABITUAL OFFENDERS

Recidivism as a phenomena raises problems which penology finds difficult to resolve. What should be done with habitual offenders whose sanctions do not discourage or reform them? According to Dr. DJ West, habitual offenders may be mentally healthy or mentally aberrant. There are two types of mental deviants: those with psychopathic tendencies who are active aggressive deviants and those who are passive inadequate deviants. While in the case of mentally normal offenders, it may maybe be argued that some appropriate punishment may have a corrective impact, it absolutely cannot be said to be true for habitual offenders who adhere to a criminal career due to their mental aberration. Surely, prisons are not the solution to their issues. The remedy lies in a therapeutic diagnosis and suitable therapy, which is very difficult in the current Indian framework.

In India the problem of recidivism has been sought to be tackled in three ways, i.e. by providing for longer punishments in certain situations, keeping track of the movements of the offender after his release from prison, and taking preventive action in the nature of security for good behaviour from a habitual offender.

COERCIVE MEASURES

1. Reporting by habitual offenders - The District Magistrate may issue an order requiring the offender to report to the police at defined intervals and notify them of his actual or anticipated absence from his normal place of abode.

2. Reporting residence - The registered criminal must inform the police of his residence, including any planned changes.

Movement restrictions - A competent authority may issue a notification restricting the offender's movement within a certain geographical area. A police officer not below the rank of sub-inspector may be authorised by the police superintendent to take the roll-call of offenders at certain intervals.

4. Domiciliary visits - The police officer may visit the offender's residence at any time to verify his location and ask pertinent questions about his movements.

5. Externment. - Externment is yet another approach used to prevent crime by dealing with repeat offenders. The rationale is that an externalised offender may not be able to commit crimes as effectively in a new environment as he could in his own. Various Police Acts permit the possibility of expulsion. The order is issued when the presence of gangs or a large group of people causes concern, when a person is likely to commit a crime, or when a person has been convicted of a crime such as violation of a ban, customs, or anti-immoral traffic law, or law relating to coinage and government stamps.

With some safeguards, the Constitution enables preventative detention, and several laws specifically provide for it. The Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act of 1974, the Prevention of Black-marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act of 1980, and the National Security Act of 1980 are examples of such legislation. Under these enactments a person is liable to detention without trial or the ordinary procedure of law. Although these statutes were not intended for repeat offenders, they can be utilised against them in proper circumstances.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

Under the state statute governing habitual offenders, correctional facilities may be established for offenders selected based on age, health, and other criteria. In general, the maximum age limit is 40 years old. The prisoners of these institutions are given labour or acceptable jobs.

Section 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code addresses the preventative measures to be used against repeat offenders. Under the law, habitual offenders may be compelled to post a bond for good behaviour. The section 110 provides a lengthy list of offences that, by their very nature, can be committed repeatedly. The bail functions as a deterrent to their illicit activity. Abbreviated list: (a) property offences, (b) socioeconomic offences, (c) offences upsetting public tranquilly, and (d) kidnapping and abduction offences.

Situational prevention. - The preventive measures and tactics outlined previously are broad in nature. In other words, they pertain to general crime prevention techniques that may have a lasting effect. On the other hand, there may be particular steps to prevent or minimise crime with the goal of removing or limiting chances for criminal activity. As can be observed, such procedures are more effective against non-violent property crimes, which almost always form the majority of crimes; violent crimes against person and property are significantly less common. The Home Ministry of the Government of India has over the years produced crime figures indicating that the vast majority of crimes in India are minor thefts. In thirty percent of household burglaries in England, no force was used to gain entry, according to a study. All of this demonstrates that a substantial proportion of property crimes can be avoided by implementing security measures.

A report of an Inter-Departmental Group on Crime set-up under the administration of the Home Office in 1983 brought out the "importance of the setting in which crime happens, underlining that crimes result not only from the motivation of the offender but also from the situation in which he finds himself".

Situational prevention, particularly in the context of property crimes in urban locations, may necessitate improved illumination and alarm systems, more caretakers and apartment access phones, and detection-enhancing equipment. In addition, these and other approaches may have the ability to reduce violent crimes. In locations and situations prone to violence, further

measures must be done. Some of the most common hazards of violence are related with late-night travel on buses and trains, as well as drinking of alcoholic beverages in public locations. During all types of elections in India, including those for national and state legislatures, municipal organisations, and even university and college unions, violence is prevalent. In many contexts, a great deal of violence can be averted if the proper steps are taken at the right moment. Similarly, many communal conflicts can be avoided if the political and administrative apparatus anticipates and addresses them appropriately.

