

BOMBAY (INDIA)

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Introduction

Crime has existed within the community from time immemorial. Yet, it has never been possible to know the true index of crime because the crime statistics published by the different governments are considered to be the records of the criminal justice system activities. According to Antilla² "all the crimes committed are not reported to the police, all the reported crimes are not recorded, and all the recorded offences are not processed". It is, therefore, undisputable that there are dark figures of crime. What is the extent of unregistered crimes? It has been difficult to estimate the real figures of crime as this varies from one period to the next, and from area to area and crime to crime.

Initially the criminal was considered the best source of information in the quest to identify the true extent of crime. This approach has not provided the desired results. Therefore, a new method based on the criminal incidents experienced by the community was thought of: this method is now known as a victimisation survey. For this study, a representative sample of the community was approached to give their experience of crime. These surveys are expected to provide information on the victims' experience of criminal offences in relation to his/her reporting of an offence to the police, adequacy of police, community's support to the victims, measures taken to prevent certain offences, etc.

To understand the crime phenomenon from the victim's viewpoint, a German criminologist, Von Hentig, focussed the world's attention on the role of victims in crime. It was, perhaps, the failure of offender-oriented research which attracted the attention of Mr. Von Hentig. He elaborated his ideas on the role of victims in his pioneering book *The Criminal and his Victim*³. It may be pointed out here that turning attention on the victim was not aimed at finding an explanation for the criminal behaviour.

Decades of empirical research have strengthened the victimological concepts and have opened doors for the measurement of crime in the community through victimisation surveys. It has already been pointed out that there is a gulf between the number of crimes committed and the offences reported to the police. Therefore, there is a dire need for victimisation surveys all over the world.

The present study

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² Antilla, I. (1973) "Victimology - a new territory in criminology", paper presented at the 1st International Symposium on Victimology, Jerusalem.

³ Von Hentig, H. (1948) *The criminal and his victim*, Archon Books, Handen, Conn.

The present study is part of the victimisation survey being undertaken in developing countries. It is expected that these studies will provide direction for the new policy thrust for better crime prevention and control. In India, the city of Bombay has been chosen for the study.

The objectives

The multifaceted objective-oriented study focuses on certain pertinent issues for a more accurate understanding of the extent of crime in the country. The main objectives of the study are the following:

- 1) to obtain a more accurate understanding of the extent of crime;
- 2) to understand the nature and extent of victimisation in the country;
- 3) to understand the functioning of the police and other law enforcement agencies connected with it;
- 4) to identify the most affected population among the three groups under study; and
- 5) to look into the shortcomings which enhance the chances of higher rates of victimisation in a particular area.

Methodology

Universe

As part of a more extensive study, India has been included among the developing countries undertaking the survey. Bombay is one of the metropolises of the country; the others are Delhi, Calcutta and Madras.

Population

The metropolis of Bombay is also known as Greater Bombay. It spreads over an area of 632 square kilometres. It has a population density of 13,760 per square kilometre. According to the 1991 census, the population of Bombay is 9,909,547 (approximately 10 million). There has been a 20.2% increase in the population over the 1981 census. There are 5,449,057 males and 4,460,490 females. The breakup of the population in the areas under study is available from the 1981 census. The population of Malabar Hill is 85,380; Matunga 63,294; and Cheeta Camp 308,919.

Gender ratio

The gender ratio according to the 1991 census of Bombay is 1,000 males to 829 females. In the three areas under study, according to the 1981 census, there are 1,000 males to 832 females in the Malabar Hill area; 1,000 males to 772 females in the Matunga area and 1,000 males to 784 females in the Cheeta Camp area.

Distribution according to religion

Bombay is a metropolitan city, the citizens of which belong to different religious groups. The distribution of the population according to religion is, in decreasing order, as follows: Hindus 69.3%; Muslims 14.8%; Buddhists 5.7%; Christians 4.8%; Jains 4.1%; others 0.6%; Sikhs 0.6%; and unstated religions.

Literacy

The literacy rate in the city of Bombay, according to the 1991 census, is 68.2% which is higher than the state average (63.1%) and the national average (52.1%). Genderwise, literacy in the metropolis is higher in the case of males (74.8%) than females (60.5%). In the state of Maharashtra, Bombay occupies first place in literacy. Female literacy is particularly high in Bombay (above 60%). The distribution of literacy rate in the three areas is: 1) Malabar Hill with 77%; 2) Matunga with 85.1%; and 3) Cheeta Camp with 54.3%.

Households

Bombay has 1,662,014 households and 1,612,315 occupied residential houses. It may be mentioned here that in slum areas it is very difficult to pinpoint the number of occupied living quarters; in these areas, most of them are hutments and not houses.

Occupational patterns

Both industrial and agricultural enterprises are to be found in the city of Bombay, which has a total of 2,405,651 workers. The majority of the workers are males (2,093,300) though quite a few are female (312,351).

Sampling

A sample of 1,000 respondents was taken from the city of Bombay keeping in mind the income group and locality. Three areas in Bombay were carefully selected so as to represent a) (affluent locality) high income group; b) (middle class locality) middle income group; 3) (slum locality) low income group. These areas are known as i) Malabar Hill (85,380 population); ii) Matunga (63,294); and iii) Cheeta Camp (308,919). The sample selection was based on the random walk technique. The individual respondent within a household was selected according to date of birth. In this process an adult (above 16 years of age), whose birthday falls next in a particular household was selected as the respondent for the purpose. In the lower socio-economic strata areas, where none of the members of the family had been to school or had records of exact or approximate dates of birth, some difficulty was encountered in determining this data.

Tools

The questionnaire adopted for the pilot survey was based on the survey conducted by the 17 European countries. It was further modified and adapted for

the victimisation survey in developing countries. The questionnaire was translated into Hindi to meet local requirements.

Data collection

Data was collected through personal interviews with the respondents. An *ad hoc* interviewing team was created. The team was composed mainly of individuals with a social science background, preferably with some experience in the collection of data. Nevertheless, the team was given a one-week training in this skill. This was done step by step in order to teach the individuals how to approach the respondents: self introduction, introduction to the survey, the organisations involved in the survey, recording of the responses and termination of the interviews. Prior to going into the field, the interviewers were provided with a demonstration of how to collect data.

The major problem encountered during data collection was the respondents' suspicion of the interviewers. The respondents were assured that the information collected would be used only for research purposes. This problem was found to become more acute when interviewing the middle and higher income groups. The interviewees in these two areas felt that if the security measures used became known to criminals, their houses could have been broken into even when they were present.

The data were collected between 1 April and 10 June 1992. Most of the interviews took place during the morning and in the evening, as a large number of people go out to work early in the morning. In several cases the interviewers had to visit the houses more than once. As a rule, responses were recorded on the spot.

The questionnaire was administered in two languages: English and Hindi. The Hindi questionnaire was usually utilised in the Cheeta Camp area (the largest group in the sample) owing to the low educational level of the local population. In the middle class localities both Hindi and English questionnaires were administered. For the affluent community, instead, only the English questionnaire was used.

Response rate and re-contacting

A target of 1,100 interviews was set for the city of Bombay. Earlier experiences had indicated that there would be refusals; these came to approximately 5%. Most of the refusals came from respondents belonging to the higher and middle income groups. Re-contacting for information was done in 8.5% of the cases. Again, re-contacting was mostly required among the affluent community, followed by the middle income groups. In the case of respondents in the lower income group, refusals were few. Finally, information was collected from 1,044 respondents.

The experience of crime

The experience of crime may vary from place to place, in type of crime and according to the socio-economic status of the person. Taking these factors into consideration, an attempt has been made to analyse the experience with crime incidents of the people in the community. The information provided here focusses mainly on victimisation rates over five years, followed by one year, on the extent of

reported crimes, reasons for not reporting, seriousness of crimes and measures taken to prevent crimes.

Victimisation rates (5 years)

At the outset it should be mentioned that Bombay city has well-knit rail, road, air and sea routes for transportation. Consequently, the need for private means of transport is limited - few people use it. The middle and lower class population use mostly public transport. Data provided in Table 1 shows that only 1.4% (15) of the sample have been victims of a car theft in the last five years, which cannot on any account be considered high. However, thefts from cars have been quite high (4.5%) which may be the result of a lack of proper precautions to prevent this type of offence. Car vandalism, instead, is quite low. Theft of motorcycles (0.6%) and bicycles (0.6%) is also significantly low.

When compared on an ownership basis - except in the case of theft from a car (26.9%) - the percentage does not show a high rate of victimisation. The situation is not much different when we look at the values for offences of burglary, attempted burglary, robbery and personal thefts. Sexual incidents and assaults are quite low. This could be explained in terms of social and cultural situations in the city.

Prevalence of victimisation rates (1 year)

When taking into account victimisation rates over 1 year, it is important to keep in mind that memory is very selective and that in many cases people may not remember incidents which took place at an earlier time. The data presented in Table 2 show that the percentage of victimisation is a little higher for the one year cases in almost all areas. This percentage can be compared with the overall percentage. Besides, the percentage for consumer frauds and corruption show a distinct increase in the total cases for one year. Respondents are mostly affected by theft from the car, theft of motorcycles, theft of personal property, consumer frauds and corruption.

Reported crimes

In recapitulating, it can be stated that all the offences committed are not reported, and that not all the reported offences are recorded. Therefore, there is a gap between the official and actual number of offences recorded. Table 3 provides information on the number of cases reported to the police. It would appear from the data provided that there is no uniformity in the reporting of offences such as: theft from a car, car vandalism, theft of motorcycles, bicycle and burglary. Percentages are low in the case of personal thefts, sexual assaults and theft of car.

Reasons for not reporting

The reasons for not reporting an offence to the police may be several. As the data in Table 4 show, a large number of people did not report offences to the police "because they felt that the offence was not serious enough" - this was the response for all types of offences - followed by the response "inappropriate for the police". A

large number of the victims felt that the "police could do nothing" and "police won't do anything". Furthermore, some respondents either dislike or are afraid of the police. This, in fact, shows that it is mostly people's opinion of the police which has played an important role in not reporting offences.

Seriousness of crime

Describing an offence as very serious, fairly serious and not serious by the individuals who have either experienced crime personally or who have a member of the family who has had such an experience, will depend much on his/her own perception of the offence and its nature. The data presented in Table 5 show that burglary with entry (57.1%), threatened assault (37.0%), and sexual assault (35%) have been considered very serious by more than half and one-third of the victims respectively. Indeed, fairly serious has been the response given by a large number of victims of crime. Only some respondents made mention to the effect of an offence not being serious. It is, therefore, acknowledged by most of the respondent victims that offences are both very serious and fairly serious. This indicates that people are concerned about crime.

Crime prevention measures

Though everyone is preoccupied about the incidents of crime, yet the attention paid to its prevention does not show any significance in terms of deterrence. The data presented in Table 6 show that informal requests to somebody to watch the house when going out were quite high (91.8%). However, installing door locks (29.3%) and window/door grills (27.4%) has been done in a considerable number of cases. Keeping a house caretaker has also been, to some extent, prevalent; this, of course, mainly in the areas with higher economic status. The percentage of respondents that possess firearms was also quite low. Again, house insurance is not very prevalent in the country. The overall impression obtained regarding measures taken to prevent crime was not satisfactory.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be said that the percentage of crime experiences for the one-year period is higher than the average annual percentage of crime experiences for the whole five-year period. Thefts from car show a higher rate than that for other offences. Cases of corruption and consumer frauds are higher in the city. The offences that most affect victims are theft from car, theft of motorcycles and theft of personal property. Reporting of offences to the police show better percentages when related to theft from car, car vandalism, theft of motorcycles and bicycles, and for burglary. Reasons for not reporting have been mainly: that the offence was not serious enough, inappropriate for the police, police could do nothing and police won't do anything. As regards seriousness of the offence, most of the victims are of the opinion that offences are serious and fairly serious. Measures taken to protect against victimisation were largely inadequate in all respects.

TABLES

Table 1: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	1.4
Theft from car	4.5
Car vandalism	1.4
Theft of motorcycle	0.6
Theft of bicycle	0.6
(Owners)	
Theft of car	8.6
Theft from car	26.9
Car vandalism	8.6
Theft of motorcycle	10.0
Theft of bicycle	6.2
Burglary with entry	6.7
Attempted burglary	3.4
Robbery	1.3
Personal theft	11.8
Sexual incidents	1.9
Assault/threat	2.6

* Prevalence - percentage of respondents who have been victims of a specific form of crime once or more.

Table 2: Prevalence victimisation rates (1 year)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	0.7
Theft from car	2.3
Car vandalism	0.7
Theft of motorcycle	1.9
Theft of bicycle	0.6
(Owners)	
Theft of car	4.0
Theft from car	13.7
Car vandalism	4.0
Theft of motorcycle	33.3
Theft of bicycle	14.4
Burglary with entry	1.3
Attempted burglary	1.5
Robbery	0.6
Personal theft	3.9
Sexual incidents	0.6
Assault/threat	1.6
Consumer fraud	38.7

Corruption	6.7
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* Prevalence - percentage of respondents who have been victims of a specific form of crime once or more.

Table 3: Reported crimes

	%
Theft of car	4.6
Theft from car	53.2
Car vandalism	31.9
Theft of motorcycle	33.6
Theft of bicycle	50.0
Burglary with entry	34.3
Attempted burglary	20.0
Robbery	21.4
Personal theft	0.8
Sexual incidents	15.0
Assault/threat	29.6

Table 4: Reasons for not reporting*

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/threat %
Not serious enough	33.3	29.4	14.3	25.0	50.0	30.0	55.5	19.0	26.3	12.5
Solved it myself	33.3		42.9	25.0		25.0	11.1	4.0		
Inappropriate for police	33.3	17.6	28.6	25.0		5.0	22.2	6.0	10.5	18.8
Other authorities				25.0		10.0				
My family solved it			14.3	25.0		12.5		4.0	5.3	6.3
No insurance		5.8		25.0						
Police could do nothing		23.5	14.3	25.0	50.0	35.0		41.0	15.8	37.5
Police won't do anything		23.5		25.0		5.0	33.3	17.0	15.8	6.3
Fear/dislike police		17.6		25.0	100.0	15.0	33.3	9.0	47.4	12.5
Didn't dare				25.0	50.0	45.0	100.0	5.0	5.3	18.8
Other reasons				25.0			100.0			
Don't know				25.0						

* Percentages calculated on victims who said they had not reported the last incident of each type of crime to the police - multiple answers possible.

Table 5: Crime seriousness*

	Theft of car %	Theft from car %	Car vandalism %	Theft of motorcycle %	Theft of bicycle %	Burglary with entry %	Robbery %	Personal theft %	Sexual incidents %	Assault/threat %
Very serious	26.7	27.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	57.1	28.6	27.6	35.0	37.0
Fairly serious	26.7	51.1	53.3	66.7	83.3	25.7	50.0	46.3	30.0	44.4

Not serious		4.3	4.3			7.1	14.3	13.8	35.0	7.4
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* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

Table 6: Crime prevention measures*

	%
Installed burglar alarm	2.4
Installed door locks	29.3
Installed window/door grills	27.4
Maintain watchdogs	2.6
High fence	3.1
House has a caretaker	10.3
None of these	
Others	1.1
Ask somebody to watch home	91.8
Neighbours watch anyway	1.6
Possession of firearms	1.3
House is insured against burglary	4.9

* Percentages based on total sample of respondents - multiple answers possible.

