

KAMPALA (UGANDA)

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The main objective of the survey was to use its findings to promote effective policies of crime prevention and control in full respect of human rights and equitable social development.

This paper basically presents and discusses the findings of some selected aspects of the survey, namely: prevalence-victimisation rates (over 5 years and over 1 year); attitudes towards the police; fear of crime; crime prevention and attitudes towards punishment.

It is hoped that these sub-themes will throw light on the crime situation of Uganda and will be used, together with findings from the other countries participating in this study, to achieve the intended objective of the survey.

Description of sample

The size of the sample was 1,000 respondents of which 484 (48.4%) were male and 516 (51.6%) female. The survey was carried out in urban Kampala (Kampala City and suburbs).

Of the respondents interviewed, 196 (19.6%) resided in a high status area, 310 (31.0%) in a middle status area, and 494 (49.4%) in a lower status area. The respondents interviewed were between 16 and 87 years of age.

Data collection technique

Data were collected using the face-to-face technique and with the administration of a questionnaire. An interviewing team comprising five males and five females conducted the survey under the supervision of the national co-ordinator and a supervisor. The interviewing team received specific training for five days before they started interviewing. The training included the definition of basic concepts, techniques of interviewing, as well as role playing (i.e. interviewers were paired; one in each pair acted as respondent and the other as interviewer). This was done to make sure that interviewers became familiar with the contents of the questionnaire and to determine the time it would take to interview one respondent.

Particular problems encountered

The questionnaire was too long; it scared some respondents, especially some upper class interviewees.

Delicate questions

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Questions on sex, income and the possession of guns were considered to be rather sensitive and could have prompted biased answers. The question on sexual incidents was an embarrassing one, especially when put to elderly women. Most of them were afraid to admit whether or not it was a successful rape or whether they had ever been victims.

Questions on income posed some problems: for example, a housewife did not know anything about her husband's income and details concerning the money going through taxation. Besides, in addition to their usual job, most people had other income-generating activities. This caused confusion as regards the income to declare.

Respondents in the lower class bracket perceived the question on gun-ownership as being a sensitive one, to the extent that they thought the interviewer, an intelligence person, may have been spying for the government or expected them to be thieves.

Classification of households

It was rather difficult to classify a household as middle or upper class; some households were neither of these.

Respondents' lack of co-operation

Some people in the higher status residential area did not co-operate with respondents. They claimed to be busy and had no time to spare to be interviewed.

Some were hard to find at home because they returned late from their work places. Another problem was with the gate-keeper (guard) of the fenced houses, who requested identification, both at the gate and on entering the house. Besides this, people living in these houses keep ferocious dogs that threatened the interviewers.

These difficulties were not only a waste of time, but also inconvenient.

Period of data collection

Data were collected between April and June 1992. The questionnaire was administered in English, although it had also been translated into the local dialect (Luganda) to ease interviewing.

Table 1 shows percentages of respondents who had been victims of one or more forms of crime in the past 5 years.

In absolute values, out of the 1,000 respondents, 178 had been victims of theft from car over the previous five years and 126 had their bicycle stolen. Theft of motorcycle ranked lowest with only 30 victims out of the 1,000 respondents.

On the other hand, of the 395 car owners, 93 (23.5%) were victims of car theft; 178 (45.1%) were victims of theft from car and 35 (8.9%) experienced car vandalism.

Theft of motorcycle occurred to 30 (23.8%) respondents of the 126 owners of motorcycle; while 126 (28.3%) fell victim to theft of bicycle out of the 445 bicycle owners. With regard to other forms of crime, personal theft had the largest number

of victims, i.e. 601 (60.1%) out of the 1,000 respondents; followed by burglary with entry which had 481 (48.1%) victims. Of the 516 females interviewed, 150 (29.1%) were victims of sexual incidents.

The above findings suggest low victimisation rates with respect to theft of vehicles. Victims of personal thefts ranked highest, indicating that most people lose their property through pickpocketing. Burglary with entry was experienced by almost half of the sample. This is more manifest in low and middle class residential areas.

With regard to the owners of vehicles, it appears that out of 395 car owners, 45.1% - almost half of the owners - experienced theft from their cars, and only 35 (8.9%) experienced car vandalism. This suggests that car vandalism is not very common in this area.

Table 2, which refers to one-year victimisation rates, shows low victimisation rates with respect to theft of motorcycle, i.e. 2.2%; theft of car 3.2%; and theft from car 7.5%. With regard to car owners, only 75 (19%) of the 395 owners were victims of theft from car. On the other hand, among other forms of crime, consumer fraud had the highest number of victims over the last year, i.e. 701 (70.1%) out of the 1,000 respondents, while 409 (40.9%) fell victim to corruption.

Victims of personal thefts were 244 out of the 1,000 respondents. This was lower in comparison with the victimisation rate of personal theft over the past five years, i.e. 60.1%. Victims of robbery ranked lowest on the scale, i.e. 80 out of the 1,000 respondents.

As far as reporting is concerned, Table 3 shows that 83 (89.2%) of the 93 victims of theft of car reported the incident to the police, while only 87 (48.9%) of the 178 victims of theft from car reported the incident to the police. Theft of motorcycle was reported by 20 (66.7%) of the 30 victims.

Theft of bicycle was reported by 65 (51.6%) of the 126 victims of this incident.

With regard to other types of crimes, 236 (49.1%) out of 481 victims of burglary with entry reported the incident. The least reported incident was personal theft, where only 52 (8.7%) of the 601 victims reported the incident.

Sexual incidents were only reported by 21 (14%) of the 150 victims.

Reasons for not reporting

Victims who said they had not reported the last incident of each type to the police gave various reasons for not doing so. These reasons are presented in Table 4. The principal reason given by three victims (33.3%) out of the nine for not reporting theft of car was that the incident was not serious enough.

The main reason given by 30 (34.9%) out of the 86 who did not report theft from car was that the police could do nothing. The same reason was given in the case of robbery and personal theft. With regard to car vandalism and theft of motorcycle, the principal reason given for not reporting was that the victims solved the problem themselves. This was also the reason given in the case of sexual incidents.

Theft of bicycle was often reported to other authorities (i.e. the Village Chief or Resistance Council Chairman). This was the response given by 20 (48.8%) of the 41 victims who did not report the incident. Similar responses were mentioned in the case of burglary with entry by 123 (50.6%) of 243 victims, and for assault/threat by 48 (27%) of 178 victims who did not report the incident.

Reporting or not reporting a crime incident may be associated with its seriousness. It is to be expected that the more serious crimes, rather than the less serious ones, are reported to the police.

Table 5 shows crime seriousness. This table indicates that all crimes were taken very seriously by the victims. For example, 90 (96.8%) of 93 victims stated that the theft of their cars was a very serious offence. This was also the most reported offence in Table 3. The most fairly serious crime mentioned in the table is car vandalism. Assault/threat is considered not to be a serious crime by 46 (20.2%) of the 228 victims.

Satisfaction with police performance regarding reported crimes

Findings show that 70 (26.7%) out of 262 respondents were satisfied with police performance regarding reported crimes, while 186 (71%) were dissatisfied.

Reasons for dissatisfaction

Respondents had various reasons for being dissatisfied with police performance regarding reported crimes. The most outstanding reason given was that police did not recover their property (goods). This was mentioned by 73 (39.2%) respondents.

Another important reason leading to dissatisfaction was the failure of the police to find or apprehend the offender which was mentioned by 33 (17.7%) respondents.

Satisfaction with the police in controlling crime in the area

The findings show that 469 out of 1,000 respondents said the police were doing a good job in controlling crime in their area, while 500 said the police were not doing a good job.

The findings also show that the presence of the police in the areas under study was quite regular, as opposed to a high percentage (50%) of the respondents who were not happy with their performance. For example, (29.9%) respondents mentioned that a police officer passes by their street at least once a week, while 29.1% experienced the presence of a police officer at least once a day. 14.6% said they had never seen a police officer passing by their street. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (76.6%) asked for a more frequent presence of the police officer in their streets.

Police performance, especially in low income areas, was found to be poor with many reported crimes going unattended probably due to "less serious" crimes committed, i.e. mostly petty theft or repetition of the same crimes leading offenders to influence police action in meting out punishment. However, the role of police in controlling crime cannot be underestimated. Respondents still had confidence in the police.

Fear of crime

Respondents were asked to give their opinions regarding crimes in their areas. The findings show that most respondents were not sure of their safety while alone in their areas after dark. 46.5% respondents felt fairly safe; 25.3% felt a bit unsafe; 8%

said they felt very unsafe. 19.5% stated that they were very safe walking alone in their areas after dark.

Furthermore, 49.7% avoided particular streets or areas for security reasons. It is interesting to note that most respondents claimed they did not need company while out after dark. For example 60.9% declared that the last time they went out after dark, they were unaccompanied, while 36.7% went out with someone for safety reasons.

Out of 1,000 respondents, 579 believed it was likely they would be victims of housebreaking in the next twelve months. However, 254 were optimistic and felt it was unlikely that someone would break into their homes.

Comment

Opinions were evenly distributed with regard to fear of crime in the areas under study. Such fears were mostly manifested by the low income groups whose security relied mostly on their day-to-day relationships; while the high income classes relied on individual family security. Although most respondents thought it was not too dangerous outside their compounds, the majority were not sure of the safety of their homes. This shows that most respondents regard crimes committed in the homes to be more serious and dangerous than those committed in the streets or trading centres at night.

Crime prevention

The findings indicate that the respondents have employed various crime prevention measures.

Respondents asked somebody to watch their home during their absence in 74.1% of the cases. Fifty-four percent installed door locks and 43.2% installed window/door grills. A minimum percentage (1.8%) possessed firearms as a precaution against crime. Houses were insured against burglary by 9.7% of the respondents. Installing a burglar alarm or owning a gun - apart from security personnel - is very rare in Uganda, especially in low income areas.

Comment

Crime prevention in the areas under study has not been effectively implemented, mainly due to the high cost of installations, such as burglar alarms. But this situation is more acute in low income areas where the nature of the housing pattern is characterised by congested homesteads divided into small rented rooms.

While households in high income areas are detached bungalows with almost all the necessary preventive means, the low income groups mostly depend on the immediate community co-operation in preventing crime. All crimes committed were taken very seriously, probably because of the difficulty encountered in replacing such property due to low income (most victims of five years ago had not replaced the stolen items at the time of the study). It was unlikely for individuals in the study area - and in Uganda, for that matter - to own firearms or insure their houses against burglary.

Attitudes towards punishment

Opinions varied regarding what punishment could be meted to an offender who, for example, was caught stealing a television set. Most respondents' views were to have such an offender imprisoned. Findings show that 802 out of the 1,000 respondents chose to have an offender who stole a TV set imprisoned, while a small proportion of respondents suggested other sentences which highlighted prison as the dominant sentence; let alone being the most secure way of dealing with crime in Uganda today.

Suspended sentence was very unpopular; only 11 respondents suggesting it. However, most respondents who suggested imprisonment did not request the victim to stay longer than 5 years in prison, mainly because most respondents did not believe that crime to be so serious, and yet the victims were fellow members of the community with families to look after. 15% suggested a 2-year imprisonment while 13% proposed 3 years. Only 1.3% of the respondents suggested one month or less.

Uganda being a developing country, the limited resources available can no longer support offenders in prisons. Coupled with this is prison overcrowding and the fear that such offenders learn new criminal techniques which they would use to terrorise society on their release. Support should be given to shorter term prison sentences and the trend is now towards alternative measures to imprisonment.

7.6% of respondents suggested community service; a fine was mentioned by 7.9% and suspended sentence by 1.1%. Although the percentage of respondents that propose these methods of dealing with offenders is very low, the population needs to be sensitized on the advantages of alternative measures to imprisonment.

TABLES

Table 1: Prevalence victimisation rates (5 years)*

	Victimisation rate (%)
Theft of car	9.3
Theft from car	17.8
Car vandalism	3.5
Theft of motorcycle	3.0
Theft of bicycle	12.6
(Owners)	
Theft of car	23.5
Theft from car	45.1
Car vandalism	8.9
Theft of motorcycle	23.8
Theft of bicycle	28.3

Burglary with entry	48.1
Attempted burglary	38.9
Robbery	24.5
Personal theft	60.1
Sexual incidents	29.1
Assault/threat	22.8

* 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	3.2
Theft from car	7.5
Car vandalism	4.6
Theft of motorcycle	2.2
Theft of bicycle	3.8
(Owners)	
Theft of car	8.1
Theft from car	19.0
Car vandalism	11.6
Theft of motorcycle	17.5
Theft of bicycle	8.5
Burglary with entry	13.9
Attempted burglary	13.7
Robbery	8.0
Personal theft	24.4
Sexual incidents	9.5
Assault/threat	7.2
Consumer fraud	70.1
Corruption	40.9

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

Table 3: Reported crimes

	%	No. of victims
Theft of car	89.2	93
Theft from car	48.9	178
Car vandalism	37.1	35
Theft of motorcycle	66.7	30
Theft of bicycle	51.6	126
Burglary with entry	49.1	481
Attempted burglary	35.5	389
Robbery	27.8	245
Personal theft	8.7	601
Sexual incidents	14.0	150
Assault/threat	21.1	228

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	17.4	20.0		7.3	6.6	10.8	24.0	7.4	19.1
Solved it myself	22.2	5.8	25.0	66.7	9.8	5.8	1.8	4.1	28.1	14.6
Inappropriate for police										
Other authorities		5.8	10.0		2.4	4.9	5.4	7.4	9.1	10.7
My family solved it		17.4	10.0		48.8	50.6	26.5	6.6	19.8	27.0
No insurance		9.3	5.0		2.4	3.7	4.2	3.3		10.7
Police could do nothing		1.2				0.4		0.4		
Police won't do anything										
Fear/dislike police	11.1	34.9	15.0		19.5	16.5	32.5	43.5	7.4	9.6
Didn't dare										
Other reasons	11.1	7.0	5.0	33.0	7.3	2.5	10.2	4.6	4.1	6.7
Don't know	11.	1.2			2.4	4.9	2.4	2.3	8.3	1.7
Number of victims who didn't report last incident to police	9	86	20	3	41	243	166	517	121	178

* 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 %
Very serious	96.8	75.3	48.6	70.0	71.4	75.9	65.7	48.3
Fairly serious	2.2	20.8	42.9	6.7	9.5	16.8	21.2	29.5
Not serious	1.1	3.4			1.6	3.7	9.0	16.1
Victims	93	178	35	30	126	481	245	601

* Percentage based on victims of specific crimes.

Table 6: Crime prevention measures*

	%
Installed burglar alarm	5.0
Installed door locks	54.0
Installed window/door grills	43.2
Maintain watchdogs	21.2
High fence	17.3
House has a caretaker	8.9
None of these	
Others	11.7
Asks somebody to watch home	74.1
Neighbours watch anyway	5.2
Possession of firearms	1.8

House is insured against burglary	9.7
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* Percentages based on total sample of respondents - multiple answers possible.