

Crime measurement techniques essay

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The measurement of crime is done with the objective of monitoring and this is mostly done in the same manner as the measurement of “ consumer prices, stock market activity, traffic fatalities, population, unemployment, and HIV infection rates” (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011). However, much more is done in measuring the crime instead of just counting things. An assortment of societal, fiscal, geographic, and medical concerns is measured for keeping a record of communal and monetary conditions, population size, age distribution and hazards to physical well-being of the people. Similarly, crime measurement has the main concern of keeping track of criminal behavior so that probable risks to public security can be monitored in an effective and efficient manner (Maxfield & Babbie, 2011).

Measuring the characteristics of crimes and criminals is important because of three reasons. Firstly, crime measurement helps in finding out the motivations behind the commitment of crime and this is done by testing various theories. Secondly, crime measurement is used for enhancing the knowledge of the distinctiveness of a range of offences. Thirdly, crime measurement facilitates criminal justice agencies to carry out their routine operations easily. However, it is rather complex to have knowledge of the exact numbers of crimes that are committed. There is no clear picture of the recorded crimes due to the various factors that influence them like victims' readiness to give their testimony about the crimes.

- Uniform Crime Reports

In 1929, the International Association of Chiefs of Police envisaged the

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program for the fulfillment of the need of a dependable, uniform crime statistics for USA. The collection, publish, and archive of those statistics was made the responsibility of the FBI in 1930, At present, quite a lot of annual statistical publications are published from the facts and figures that are provided by USA city, county and state law enforcement agencies, more or less 17, 000 in number. Thus, it has been since the 1930s that the FBI has governed the UCRP along with issuing cyclic measurement and evaluation of the nature and kind of misdemeanor/felonies across USA (“ Summary of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program”, 2013).

The major purpose of the Program is the generation of a dependable set of criminal statistics to be used by the law enforcement admin and management. The data contained in Uniform Crime Reports have turned out to be the most important social indicator in the United States of America (Purpura, 1997). This is the reason why Americans follow Uniform Crime Reports to gain knowledge regarding the variations in crime level. These reports are also used by criminologists, social researchers, lawmakers, civic representatives, the media and students for different purposes ranging from research to planning (“ Summary of the Uniform Crime Reporting Program”, 2013).

- National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

With the expanded utilization of UCR data and the increase in law enforcement capabilities to make crime information available, NIBRS was introduced in March 1988 as a lengthened and improved system for crime data collection for meeting the twenty-first century law enforcement needs.

Under NIBRS, the data is collected for single crime occurrence by the law enforcement agencies. This incident-based reporting system receives data from the participant local, state & federal law enforcement agencies that have automatic/computerized records systems. It depends on the agencies to form a records system that can suit its needs. These needs may include the compilation/storage of information that is required for organizational and operational purposes or the report data that is submitted to UCRP by the NIBRS. The objective of NIBRS is to gather information (facts and figures) about every single incidence (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 2013). There are twenty-two offense categories in Group A offenses about which the law enforcement agencies are required to report specific facts. On the other hand, Group B offenses has eleven offenses categories for which the law enforcement agencies are required to report arrest data only.

- National Crime Victimization Surveys (NCVS)

Since 1973, National Crime Victimization Surveys (NCVS) has been gathering facts and figures about the private and domestic victimization. This is done through a constant survey of a nationwide representative sample of housing addresses. This endeavor has 4 major purposes including the development of complete information concerning the sufferers and crime consequences, guesstimate of the number and kinds of unreported crimes, provision of standardized measurement of selected crimes and authorization of assessments over time and areas. The surveys also gather necessary demographic information including sexual category, age, race and earnings for crime evaluation within diverse subpopulations.

In short, the victimization surveys are extensively used for measuring the “

frequency and characteristics of particular types of crime and the demographic profile of victims, both in the United States and other countries” (Mosher, Miethe & Hart, 2011). Thus, it can be said that more information is gathered by the victimization surveys concerning the dark figures of crime.

- Drug Surveillance Systems

Drug information or surveillance systems are developed in order to measure the unlawful drug usage and prediction of new trends. Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) is one of the most contemporary programs for measuring drug use among certain group of individuals (considered as samples) who are under arrest for quite a lot of years. Though the program was ended in 2003, data from ADAM and DUF (Drug Use Forecasting (ADAM’s antecedent) is used by researchers, criminologists and policy makers. Even though ADAM is inactive now, the main objective behind the program was to make a continuing assessment available regarding the frequency of drug use among people arrested for illegal doings (Maxwell & Babbie, 2011).

- Conclusion

In criminal justice research, the importance of crime as a fundamental concept cannot be ignored. This is the reason why there are a number of approaches for the measurement of crime and these approaches demonstrate essential standards of “ conceptualization, operationalization and measurement” (Maxwell & Babbie, 2011). The paper discusses several kinds of crime measurement techniques. However, it is important for the researchers to understand that what kinds of offenses are covered by the crime measurement techniques before using any of them. This is important

because all the measures to crime identification have different units of analysis. As discussed, all the measurements for crime detection and identification are not completely perfect having their own strengths and limitations. Therefore, it is really necessary before choosing a measure to have complete knowledge of it and the areas that it covers. To cut a long story short, it is rather a difficult method to work out the frequency of crime occurrence. It is also a crystal clear fact that all the crime measurement techniques present a rather misleading picture of how much crimes take place within the society as many go undocumented and unreported. Thus, the various methods of crime measurement that are discussed in this paper do not justify some aspects of crime occurrence. However, the point here is not at all to say that it is useless to attempt to measure crime. However, what it does mean is that it is not a good idea to rely upon a single crime measurement technique to find out the whole truth regarding the level of crime and criminal behavior.

There are many reasonable arguments regarding the stagnation of the current approaches to crime measurement. Therefore, it is exceedingly important for the criminologists, in particular, to devise new crime measurement techniques that can turn out to be more efficient and effective in detecting the crime and criminal behavior. Thus, criminological attempts must be directed towards amalgamating crime measurement and methods together. This is a bitter reality that despite the importance of crime measurement in criminology as a significant topic, criminologists overlook it from time to time. This sort of frequent ignorance on the part of criminologists needs to be stopped and new ways and methods of crime

measurement must be devised to protect the community in general and the world in particular.

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