

Is cctv effective in crime prevention?



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Overview

Over the past few years, there has been an explosion of closed-circuit television (CCTV) installation. This has been mostly in centres, with Britain having the most extensive coverage in the world (Philips 1999, Temperton 2018). This widespread installation of CCTVs in the UK has been the result of a proactive initiative by the government. The British Security Industry Association estimated in 2013 that there are 5.9 million closed-circuit camera systems in the UK, including 750,000 in public and sensitive places like schools, hospitals, and care homes. The British Security Industry Association claim that there is one CCTV for every 11–14 people that keep watch over every movement. Homeowners and businesses in the UK are encouraged to install CCTV cameras with the aim of preventing crime and supporting the police to identify criminals (Barrett, 2013).

The government, between 1994–1999, funded CCTVs as a challenge competition, and £38.5 million was spent on 585 schemes nationwide. In turn, between 1999–2003, major investments were made in public-space CCTVs through the home office-funded Crime Reduction Programme (CRP). A total of £170 million was made available to the local authority. As a result, more than 680 CCTVs were installed (national CCTV strategy, 2007). The Lord report said £500 million, that could be used for street lighting or neighbourhood crime prevention, was spent on CCTVs (Travis, 2018).

The CCTV has been identified as an important tool to fight crime. While it has gained increasing importance in crime prevention, issues of security in public places remain a major concern (Wells et al. 2006). Gone are the days when

street patrols were the only means of preventing crime. Therefore, this review will seek to examine the effectiveness of CCTVs in preventing crime.

Research objective

The aim of this literature is to focus on the introduction of the CCTV and its role in the UK. This research will also look at crime and the fear of crime in relation to CCTVs. After that, the research will discuss crime prevention and examine strategies that led to situational crime prevention. Finally, it will discuss the effectiveness of CCTVs in crime prevention and issues of right and privacy when using CCTVs.

Introduction of CCTV

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is a system design to monitor activities in both public and private areas. It is usually known as a monitoring system that uses video cameras as a means of surveillance (Goold, 2004).

In 1942, Walter Brush, a German Engineer, invented the first Close-Circuit Television system (CCTV). The system was invented to monitor the V-2 rocket during World War Two. Marie Van Brittan Brown, in the USA, exploited the technology and designed it to become a security system to record footage (“ Closed-circuit television,” 2018).

In 1960, the CCTV was first introduced in the UK, when the Thai Royal family visited the United Kingdom. The CCTV was used to oversee and to monitor the crowd at Trafalgar Square during the royal visit. During that time, the images from the camera were not chemically processed, and it was possible to only record and playback instantly. However, it is now possible to have

cameras linked to a central control room where images are monitored by a person and a permanent record is kept of everything that was captured (Staff & Staff, 2018).

This technology development was not lost on those who desired to reduce crime, and retailers started to use CCTVs as a means of deterring and capturing shoplifters. After the visit, the UK mounted a permanent surveillance camera to improve the security at a London railway station (“ A History of CCTV Surveillance in Britain – SWNS”, 2018).

The role of CCTV

The significant goal of most CCTV systems has been the prevention of crime and disorder through deterrence. CCTVs alert police at an early stage to stop perilous situations from escalating. Operational assistance to the police in sizing up and resolving a situation can be obtained, and, above all, people’s confidence is renewed, which has led many towns in the centre being revitalized (Goold, 2004).

According to Pawson and Tilly, the CCTV is expected to operate through nine potential mechanisms. Firstly, caught in the act. A CCTV could reduce crime by increasing the possibility that offenders will be caught and punished. It can deter offenders who will not want to be captured. It may also deter offender who fear an increase of anxiety. A CCTV supports the police and security staff and alerts them that suspicious behaviour is occurring. CCTV portrays to people that crime is taken seriously, and that deters offenders (Pawson & Tilley 1994).

Crime and its prevention

Before evaluating the effectiveness of CCTVs in reducing crime, it is necessary to understand the theory of behind its use. Criminology is an interdisciplinary scientific approach to studying criminal behaviour (Siegel 2012). It is a vast body of knowledge that considers crime and antisocial behaviour as a social phenomenon, focusing on the nature, causes, control, and consequences of criminal behaviour within society (Siegel, 2012).

Primary crime prevention is focused on the offence rather than the offender, and it is often associated with situational crime prevention strategies, which focus on the immediate and localized context of the offence (Coleman & Norris 2000). This type of crime prevention is based on rational choice theory, where it is assumed that individuals are likely to commit a crime.

According to the crime model, crime occurs where the activity spaces of offenders intersect with the activity spaces of potential targets (Boba, 2005).

Crime prevention is difficult to control. This can be defined as any initiative or policy aimed at reducing criminal behaviour, violence, and fear of crime by the state or the private body (Victoria, 2002). It is been taken as the implicit purpose of any crime prevention strategy pursued by the state or a private organization. The United Nation Guidelines for the prevention of crime (2002) state that crime prevention includes effective measures and strategies that seek to reduce the risk of crime.

Situational crime prevention is relatively different from most other styles of criminology and crime control. The situational crime prevention approach focuses on the setting in which crime occurs, rather than on those committing the criminal acts. This does not try to eradicate criminal

tendencies by arresting and sectioning offenders, but rather, it tries to find ways to make crime less attractive. Situational crime prevention seeks to identify ways in which opportunities to commit a crime may be reduced (Clarke, 2009). Situational crime prevention concepts prove that CCTV surveillance has become more explicit and it is now a standard to discourage criminal behaviour.

CCTV and fear of crime

The massive investment in CCTV cameras in the UK was related with the fear of crime and public reassurance. Fear of crime is a difficult phenomenon to define (Farral et al., 2000), and it has been measured in several ways. Some researchers include the feeling of safety, which includes things that are not crimes, such as fear of the dark and worries about crime (Hale, 1996). The British crime survey showed that less than one-fifth of respondents worry about being a victim of different crimes. It also showed that 24 percent of respondents felt very unsafe when walking alone in their area after dark (Simmons, J. and Dodd, T. 2003). The fear of crime that may be present without having experienced an actual crime can restrict individuals' daily physical and mental activities and can reduce their quality of life (Kim & Kang, 2018).

In Glasgow, the residents assumed that CCTVs can reduce both crime and the fear of crime. A survey was carried out in Glasgow about the fear of crime level experienced by residents before and after CCTV installation. Most people supported the installation of CCTVs due to the fact that it could make them feel safer. Other people believed that CCTVs are better than police at

crime detection, but police patrolling is more effective than CCTV in making people feel safer (Ditton, 2000). To determine the effects of CCTV upon the fear of crime, results showed that CCTVs were negatively correlated with the fear of crime. However, no significant effect was detected on the perceived risk of crime. Furthermore, the effect of CCTVs differed by gender and the number of CCTV cameras was found to affect men's fear of crime rather than women's fear of crime (Gies, T. 2018).

The effectiveness of CCTV

Alongside the installation of CCTVs in public place, there has been a wealth information on the impact of CCTVs in crime prevention. However, the relationship between CCTVs and crime prevention has been uncertain. Some studies have attested to the effectiveness of CCTV in fighting crime, while others have pointed out that the effect of CCTVs is insignificant (Greenhalgh 2003).

Farrington and Welsh carried out a studied in the UK, and the evidence proves that the CCTV had a vital desirable effect on crime, even though the general reduction in crime was 4 percent. They found that CCTVs were the most effective of reducing crime in car parks, and they had no effect on violent crime (2018).

On the other hand, CCTV assessment was carried out by Gill and Spriggs. Out of the 13 systems evaluated, six showed a moderately significant reduction in crime in the target area, but only two indicated a substantial reduction. Crime increased in the seven areas, but this could not be related to CCTVs (2005). Studies have concluded that there is little evidence to

suggest that CCTVs reduce the fear of crime or crime itself (Gill & Spriggs, 2005). This finding is particularly disturbing as it implies that a CCTV system merely gives the impression of reducing crime while indirectly leading to its increase under a false cover of security.

Even though CCTVs have little impact on reducing crime, police officers strongly depend on the CCTV to investigate and monitor offenders and their offences. It increases their knowledge while, previously, the police had to depend on the public to report any crime (Goold, 2004). The police said that CCTV cameras are used by officers to solve cases more efficiently, and they allow the scale of a situation to be assessed and responded to, according. The police made it clear that a thousand hours of manpower can go into viewing and processing CCTV footage, but they feel that the benefits of CCTV overshadow the resource input (Levesley and Martin, 2005).

Similarly, in Canada, the effect of CCTVs is highly unpredictable. It was suggested that the impact of CCTVs varies over time. CCTV cameras could increase the crime rate because shop owners would only rely on the system and thus lack vigilant staff for their security (Gill & Spriggs, 2005).

The effect of the CCTV was assessed in three different towns: Birmingham, King`s Lynn, and Newcastle Upon Tyne. When CCTVs were first installed, they had a robust deterrent effect on a wide range of crime. However, the effect on crime reduced and began to weaken. People felt that there was a greater effect on property rather than on personal crime. Most people sensed that they are not safe, and that cameras will not have any effect on crime and antisocial behaviour. In Newcastle, crimes reduced after installation and

continued to drop afterwards. Diffusion of benefit occurred in non-CCTV areas. Theft from vehicles increased after installation. The figure for public disorder occurrences remained the same. In Birmingham, robbery decreased before the installation and then increased later. Assaults remained the same, although vehicle theft declined. In King's Lynn, there was an intense reduction in vehicle crimes and assaults after the CCTV was installed. The reduction could be due to the fact that the CCTV makes incidents known to police and is an effective response to gathering evidence for further investigation (Brown, 1995).

Mr Nick Pickles, of the Big Brother Watches (BBW) in Birmingham council in the UK, mentioned that Britain was out of control with CCTVs. Despite million cameras, the crime rate is not significantly lower, and it has little to improve public safety as compared to other nations. He claimed that even the amount of money spent on CCTVs, about £11million, could have been used to put an extra 4000 police officers on the street (2018).

Gill and Loveday had a face-to-face interview with 77 offenders in prison on CCTV as a role to prevent crime. The offenders revealed that they are not worried about CCTVs, but they may take safety measures against cameras by wearing clothing to disguise their identity. The offenders said CCTVs have not altered the ways in which they offend. Some offenders also believed that CCTVs increased the chances of getting caught and those caught as result of CCTV (2003).

A CCTV was used as an initiative to reduce crime at a different station in the London underground, and its measure and effect on crime was separately

discussed. When a CCTV was used in conjunction with another measure, the camera proved highly effective in reducing the crime rate in the London underground. Meanwhile, there was no evidence of displacement. The crime rate started to increase after a period of time, which implies that the camera began to decline in its value. Offenders realized that the camera did not have any influence on being caught. It is very clear that a CCTV is useful under certain circumstances, but is not effective in crowded areas where secretive behaviour occurs (Barry & Laycock, 2018).

Ball (2002) argues that CCTVs and its monitoring are important for public safety. However, having many CCTV cameras in operation does not necessarily mean that it increases safety and reduces crime rates (Ball, 2002). An increase in crime following the installation of CCTVs may be the result of an increase in cameras use. However, if the crime appears to be reduced following installation, it might be the result of people feeling that they do not have to report the crime, since it's been

recorded by a camera. The author noticed that the effects of CCTVs appear to fade but have helped to reduce car theft and vandalism on buses and reduced property crime. Some CCTVs had no effect on crime at all.

Home officer minister Lord Falconer said that CCTV cameras had a significant impact on the level of crime when they properly used and maintained. (“Does CCTV really cut crime? | Daily Mail Online”, 2018). The installation of CCTVs in subway stations revealed that crime rates have reduced by approximately 25% (Priks, 2015; Welsh & Farrington, 2004). A CCTV was the most effective in reducing crime, with an overall crime reduction of 21%

when combined with streetlights. This means that with proper implementation, CCTV surveillance systems may prove to be effective in reducing crime. But the fact remains that the majority of studies showing the role of the CCTVs in fighting crime remain questionable.

The government is in full support of the use of CCTVs in public places when that use is in pursuit of a reliable aim, essential to meet a pressing need, effective, and compliant with any relevant legal obligations (Porter, 2018). Even though there has been a soar in CCTV installations, the government has been blamed for losing control in fighting crime. Recent statistics show that due to a shortage of police force, the crime rate has increased by 14%, and this has been the largest rise since 2002 (Dearden, 2018).

In 2014, the use of CCTVs in public places increased by 86% (CCTV, 2018), and many felt that the development of the CCTV is a breakthrough in crime prevention. However, widespread CCTV use in public places has led to the annihilation of civil liberties and an invasion into individual life, along with making Orwellian big brother culture a reality (Young, 1999).

CCTV and privacy

Despite such overwhelming enthusiasm for CCTVs in reducing crime, critics have pointed out that CCTV cameras in public places invades and threatens civil liberties and privacy, against crime prevention. Cameras undermine the privacy of the citizen, and the right to privacy is gradually disappearing due to the dominating trend of installing CCTVs to monitor citizen. Despite crime prevention, people's sense of dignity must be maintained. Critics of the CCTV argue that privacy is very crucial to the development of the self, and that it

liberates us from having to worry about being watched constantly and judged by others. CCTVs expose us to scrutiny because every time we walk down the street, cameras are watching us (Goold, 2018).

CCTV cameras protect domestic areas from crime and anti-social behaviour. Although it seems to be a good, reasonable use, the police and information commissioner's office received a complaint from a neighbour of the public street using cameras, believing that the cameras were being used to spy on them and their families (" Domestic CCTV: using CCTV systems on your property", 2018).

In 1995, there was the case of Mr Geoffrey Peck, who was caught on CCTV committing suicide. The footage was spread by the public without his consent. The European Court of Human Rights, in 2003, realized that although Mr Peck's privacy was violated, it was not believable for him to have expected public dissemination. Hence, the court considered that to be a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to respect private life, and the UK was asked to pay compensation to Mr Peck. (Deas, 2018). Mr Peck's case highlighted possible gaps in the UK protection of individual privacy, and this influenced the MPs to introduce freestanding privacy in 2003.

Following an extensive review of CCTVs in England and Wales, the National CCTV Strategy was published in 2007 to make recommendations on the intrusive nature of CCTVs and its legal aspects. A multi-agency national CCTV strategy programme was created to support and develop the recommendations. These are: The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO),

Ministry of Justice (MOJ), British Security Industry Association (BSIA), National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), Home Office Scientific Development Branch (HOSDB), Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), British Transport Police (BTP), Security Industry Authority (SIA), Local Government Association (LGA), Department for Transport (DFT), Her Majesties Court Service (HMCS), and Office of Surveillance Commissioner (OSC). In May 2010, the coalition government, then elected, promised to implement the full programme to combat an erosion of civil liberty in relation to the operation of CCTVs. The Protection of Freedoms Bill was passed in February 2011 and appointed a surveillance camera commissioner to monitor a code of practice for the use of CCTVs. The UK watchdog on CCTVs, in agreement with the Data Protection Act, claimed that over 90% of CCTV systems did not comply with the law. In March 2011, the home office launched a consultation on how to regulate them to be more effective and more proportionate (“ CCTV”, 2018).

Conclusion

To conclude, this review has conducted an analysis of different notions directly related to crime and its prevention, and how criminology treats offenders. It also reviewed situational crime prevention and deliberated the effectiveness of CCTVs and its rights and privacy issues. Past research will support the researcher to discover how effective a CCTV system is in preventing crime in Manchester.

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