Participation for Crime Prevention in the Communities of Shiraz, Iran

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Abstract: Participation of the community is important to complement and make more efficient any program of crime control by police authorities or any other law enforcement agency. Local communities must include places to promote community participation. As participation among residents increase, the residents become active defenders of the place against crime. Hence, the objective of this study is to assessing the level of participation for crime prevention in the local communities of Shiraz, Iran. This study also defines and discusses the concept of participation as a strategy for crime prevention and reduction. The findings through survey questionnaire indicated that the participation in the communities for crime prevention generally was low; however, each community of Shiraz has different level of participation for crime prevention. It is expected that the findings of this study could utilize by the leaders, police authorities or any other law enforcement agency for reassessments of crime prevention programs in the communities of Shiraz, Iran.

1. Introduction

One of the biggest problems in our communities is the increasing, high rate of crime. Government and law enforcement offices, trying to control this phenomenon, have focused most of their efforts in combating it through repressive or police force-related methods (Barreto 2002). Many sociologists and criminologists believe that the adequate solution for crime problems must be based on community participation and citizens' involvement with each other and with their communities. The most important element of community crime-prevention appears to be bring about social interaction, whereby residents of the community maintain a degree of familiarity with each other. Such interaction and familiarity should at least, make it possible to detect strangers in the community. Finally, crime-prevention theory suggests that such interactions may lead to a cohesive neighborhood. The basic philosophy of community crime-prevention is that social interaction and citizen familiarity can play an important role in preventing, detecting, and reporting criminal behavior (Mukherjee & Wilson, 1987, p. 2).

Community participation is regarded as an important tool for crime prevention. Western scholars generally agree that active participation in the decision making process will benefit local communities. However, in developing countries, such as participation is difficult to put into practice due to shortcomings in structural, cultural and operational limitations in local communities (Aref & Ma'rof, 2008). Since, all these studies are performed by Western researchers. Thus, the relevance of the findings in the Iranian context may not be fitting. To date, very little research has examined the participation for crime prevention in Iran, In point of case, local communities in Shiraz, have never been studied of such. Thus, there is limited understanding of people participation toward crime prevention. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine community participation in crime prevention in the communities of Shiraz.

2. Literature Review

Crime is an act of wrong doing by voluntary and intentionally. It is very dangerous to the individual and the society. Generally, it involves the violation of social law, moral law and country's law with the objective to cause harm or injury to other. According to Paul Tappan "Crime is an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law committed without defense or justification". Mowrer has defined crime as an anti-social act. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "it is an action which constitutes a serious offence against an individual or the State and is punishable by law (Lisham, 2011). The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2003) defined crime as an "... act or the commission of an act that is forbidden or the omission of a duty that is commanded by a public law and that makes the offender liable to punishment by that law; especially a gross violation of law. In this study, crime prevention has discussed with community participation as a fundamental strategy. Participation is a strategy to promote sustainable, people-centered development, equal opportunities and social justice (Mayo & Craig, 1995).

The main component of participation in this respect is the ability of the individuals to gain more control in determining their lives as they wish, an idea which is shared with the practitioner in community work, and group work (Adams, 1990; Simon, 1990; Parsons, 1991; Wallerstein, 1993, Aref & Asnarilkhadi, 2009).

Barberton, Blake and Kotze (1998:111) state: Community participation seeks to address the unequal distribution of power. Therefore the main goal ... is to transfer power to disadvantaged groups that have been excluded from economic and political influence. From this rationale for fostering community participation it follows that any participation fostering unit... needs to serve as a change -agent that seeks to remove power from politicians and bureaucrats and place it in the hands of the people.

Fox and Meyer (1995, p. 20) define community participation as "the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programmes toward community needs, build public support and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within society". Thus, community participation transcends the mere involvement of citizens as the beneficiaries of development but aims to involve them actively in the decision-making process. For purposes of this research study, participation referred to community contributions to the crime prevention and reduction and involvement in community decision-making on social crime prevention programs.

2.1. Role of participation in crime prevention

Community participation is an essential part of community development and one of the factors in the crime prevention, which allows involvement of people in the different stages of decision-making (Asnarulkhadi & Aref). Fagence (1977, p. 129) remarks that in order to constitute validity, participation must involve positive conscious action. In order for participation to be maximized, the role of the community needs to be clearly defined. Without a clear understanding of when and what is expected from the community, their participation may remain elusive and hence become less meaningful and ineffective. Community participation should not be seen as a process that "rubber stamps" pre-determined agendas or merely ends up in an information providing session to the developers but should advance the interests of the community. By working together and awarding clear responsibilities to the community, their participation will not only foster democracy but will also assist in measuring and reviewing its impact against clearly stipulated targets. Community

participation should ultimately lead to the promotion of community empowerment and solidarity (Mayo & Graig, 1995, p. 4) and this can only take place when the community's role transcends ad hoc participation.

Gonzalez (1998, p. 22) makes a distinction between the two roles that the community can adopt in its participation. First, passive participation through which the beneficiaries and the communities are present during discussions although their presence carries no weight. This type of participation assumes that the community's role is to absorb what has been discussed and thus participation does not demonstrate anything significant that could lead to the growth of the participants. The second type is active participation in which there is involvement of the community in discussions, decision-making and contesting different opinions. This participation signifies a role in which the community and the developer are on equal footing and one where there is mutual recognition and understanding of each other's role.

Community participation can be an important factor for in crime prevention. Without community participation, there are obviously no developments, no security and no program (Aref & Ma'rof 2009). Hence, lack of community participation in the crime prevention progrmas can lead to failure in the social security (Miranda, 2007).

Ashley & Roe, (1998) describe community participation as a spectrum from passive to active involvement to full local participation, where there is active community participation and venture ownership. Meanwhile, some scholar provided a typology of participation. However, they do not directly deal with crime prevention (Leksakundilok, 2006). Therefore, this paper attempts to establish a typology of community participation in crime prevention based on those models. Table 1 shows how eight broad categories or levels of participation were formulated. Each rung of the ladder corresponds with the extent of citizen's power in determining the end product. The eight rungs are categorized into three categorize. The top of the ladder is a symbol of full or genuine participation. The two bottom rungs of the ladder represent non-participation. People are allowed to participate, but it does not give them any opportunity to change programs to their own needs and as a result maintains the status quo in power relations (Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995). The next grouping encompasses three degrees of tokenism, which allow the participants to be heard, to have a voice. At the level of symbolic participation, citizens gain some degree of influence though it is still a form of tokenism as traditional power-holders continue to have the right to decide (Arnstein, 1969, Choguill,

1996, Dewar 1999, Aref & Ma'rof 2009). It is the illusion of a voice without the voice itself.

Table 1. Types of community participation in crime reduction.

Levels	Types	Characteristics
Genuine Participation	Empowerment	Local people may directly prevented crime by themselves. Local people have control without any external force or influence.
Symbolic Participation	Partnership	There are some degrees of influence in crime prevention programs.
	Interaction Consultation	People have greater involvement in this level. The rights of local people are symbolic recognized and accepted in practice.
		People are consulted in several ways, e.g. involved in community's meeting or even public hearings.
Non-Participation	Informing	People are told about crime prevention programs, which have been decided already, in the community.
	Manipulation	Crime is generally prevented by government, without any discussion with the people.

Source: Adapted from: Aref & Ma'rof (2009)

3. Methodology

The study of community participation in crime prevention carried out in 63 communities in Shiraz. The study used survey design in which questionnaire used to collect the data. The respondents were local leader, where each leader was chosen from each community. Community leaders in Shiraz chosen as the sample for this survey because we believe that they could become a proxy for the community and represent the voice of the people (Aref, 2011).

Six questions were developed based on the literature review of the measurement of participation in crime prevention. The respondents were asked to insure these questions, which were constructed to gauge their participation in crime prevention programs. The respondents were asked to select from a 5-point scale in answering the questions. Each question represented an item of the range between the least to the most participation. Participants answered to each question based on five scales that most describes the current situation in their community.

Pre-testing of the research instrument was carried out to examine the appropriateness and reliability of the instrument by taking 25 convenience samples with community leaders who lived in other communities around Shiraz. Twenty-nine questionnaires, a 89.12% response rate, indicated that the results were sufficiently comprehensive and verified the value of the instrument and the statements received.
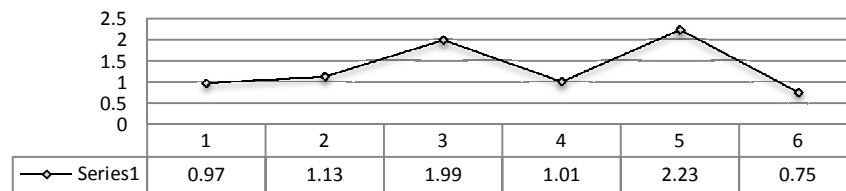
4. Result

The results of the study of community participation are outlined in Table 2. The table reveals that, generally community participation in crime prevention programs in the local communities of Shiraz is low. This table also shows that the involvement local organization in crime prevention also has low ranking of scale.

Table 2. Mean of indicators of community participation in crime prevention.

Indicators	Mean	SD
-Involved a representative range of local people in social crime prevention	0.97	0.85
-Encourage volunteer groups for crime prevention in this community	1.13	0.93
-Provide information for residents about crime prevention ways.	1.99	0.87
-Encouraged local citizen in crime prevention programs	1.01	0.97
-Involvement of local organizations in crime prevention	2.23	1.01
-Involvement of local NGOs in crime prevention	0.75	0.81

Meanwhile, Figure 1 provides a distribution of high and low ratings of the six statements, illustrating a range of community participation for crime prevention.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Series1	0.97	1.13	1.99	1.01	2.23	0.75

Figure 1. Community participation for crime prevention.

In general, the leaders gave a low rating in most statements. Using the mean it was found that the involvement of people for crime reduction is lower than involvement of local organizations (0.97, and 2.23 respectively). Generally, the findings reveal that the level of participation for crime reduction in local areas of Shiraz is low. This means that most people are not involved in the process of crime reduction and prevention. For the residence to be effective in crime prevention, they should come together and interact with local police and other authorities. Local residence should be more involved in community actions and influence decision-making processes that affect their lives, and their communities.

5. Conclusion

Participation is a continuous process by which people develop and use their ability to act in response to shared problems and to achieve expected needs in an effort to bring some changes to social life.

In this study, an attempt was made to measure community participation related to crime prevention. Two main findings have been found and could be concluded. First, the participation of the leaders in the study area is low. Secondly, involvement of local organizations in crime prevention is higher than other domains. It can conclude that the people in Shiraz did not play on important role in crime prevention programs. Although some have participated activity in crime prevention activities, but they actually did not involve in decision-making related to crime reduction and social security.

In order to reduce the crime rate and to minimize the impact of crime on children, family, and communities, more focus should be given to community participation trends that influence poverty. Crime rates appear to be influenced more by persistent poverty rates than any other factors; therefore, extra attention should be placed on reducing poverty via people participation.

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3/27/2013