



Territorial Functioning: A Crime Prevention Mechanism in Reducing Victimization and Fear of Crime in Malaysia

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Abstract

Many researchers have done a number of studies by introducing Territorial Functioning as a crime prevention tool in reducing victimization and fear of crime in a high crime housing area. There are three elements in territorial functioning namely territorial behaviour, territorial markers and territorial attitudes. Most studies that had examined territorial marking emphasized the results in adaptable social interaction primarily by preventing unnecessary social encounters. It is also stated that markers are placed to restrain territorial encroachment. Three elements: territorial attitudes, territorial markers and territorial behaviour are interwoven and responded to support and stimulate one another. If one of the elements is high, other elements should be high as well. The research discusses on territorial functioning in the context of victimization and public housing in Malaysia. This research focused on territorial functioning and its relationship with victimisation, which vary according to the resident's characteristics. In particular, this study, which was quantitative in nature, was conducted in Subang Jaya housing area. The data were collected and administered through face to face interviews with the household in the Subang Jaya housing area. The stratified random sampling obtained from the survey was 73% of the total 300 households with 218 samples of the Subang Jaya housing area. The data were then examined using SPSS through descriptive and inferential analysis. Territorial markers, territorial behaviour and territorial attitudes were also tested using factor analysis. The main purpose of the process is to calculate and combine territorial attitudes and marking behaviour as to create the overall total for territorial functioning as a whole figure. The whole figure obtained known as territorial functioning is correlated with demographic data and victimization. Results show that Territorial behaviour is high and reflected in the territorial displays which are chairs and tables outside the homes. Meaning that the more displays outside homes can deter intruders and strangers. Presence of real barriers and plantings is interpreted as deterrent to intrusion and an indication of a stronger occupant territorial attitude.

Keywords

Territorial Functioning, Victimization, Crime Prevention, Public Housing

Subject Areas: Criminology, Sociology

1. Introduction

The increase in criminal cases and lack of police officers especially those occurring in residential areas is often a source of community concern. According to [1], this may be caused by several factors. First, the home or place of residence is usually the only one owned by an area in which the focus daily activities. Second, home in most areas are fortresses which covered with fences, trees or shrubs that are not maintained. Home closed as this may invite burglary and theft of property. Although the increase in crime rate is influenced by various facts (such as increased economic and social problems, research has shown that planning and design also plays a role in reducing crime in residential areas [2]. According to [3], emphasis is given for material and earthly benefits that result in the occurrence of crime.

According to the review of preventing crime approaches in the built environment and their theoretical basis, the research examines how burglars select their targets, and examines the consequence of physical space and target hardening for crime prevention. This indicates the confines of space and target hardening as preventions, their possible impact on expanding the city's social-spatial divide, and their negative insinuations for the quality of the city environment. Most of the environmental criminologists have associated crime patterns with the environmental and physical design of places where crimes take place. This research will report on findings derived from a research carried out in Subang Jaya, focusing on the link between victimization and territorial functioning.

The victims' behaviour, the characteristics of the households, physical and social environments influence the frequency and affect the victimisation rate [4]. According to [5], an occurrence alters the probability of its subsequent happening, thus producing something akin to a "contagion" effect. This means that there would be an increased probability of repeated victimisation on a person who had been a crime victim.

Most houses that had been targets of victimisation in neighbourhoods were corner lot houses [6]. The reason was that the houses were barricaded by fortresses and surrounded by trees. The fortresses resulted in negative perception by the neighbours and reduction of natural surveillance. Withdrawal of the neighbours from interactions and social activities alleviated the social bonding of neighbourhood ties [6]. Finally, the decrease of "eyes on the street" increases victimisation probabilities. No control over a property and no defense of the neighbours' property by other neighbours occur through time. The linear design of the terrace houses area monotonously does not generate or enhance community ties and thus reduced surveillance for each other. Each neighbour was acquainted only with the immediate neighbours and most of them did not know the names of their corner lot neighbours [6].

Break-ins through the rooftops were also common because surveillance was lacking and hidden from public view. Housing scheme with a curvilinear shaped design housing lots was good for visibility. In Europe, the house design provided the basement with a small window hole for visibility [6]. The ground floor visibility was from the living room windows and the doorway was made out of glass for visibility. The first floor consisted of the kitchen, dining room and the TV room. It was provided with sliding doors and glass doors to the back lane. The bedrooms were on the second floor. More windows were provided where visibility and surveillance improved [7]. The attic was provided with a small window and the whole residential area was visible. The neighbourhood was not a gated area and each of the houses exhibited a neighbourhood watch sticker to avoid territorial encroachments [8].

2. Territorial Functioning and Victimization

Victimisation define by [9] as "to be a victim of harmed or by suffering from some acts, conditions, or circumstances." According to [6], a person who commits crimes or other undesirable activities with a rational mindset, does so on the basis of perceiving the available opportunity to take advantage of a victim (*i.e.*, person or property) and the idea of not being caught or identified as the perpetrator of the act. Known as the "crime triangle": a victim, an offender and an opportunity for a crime to occur. Eliminating one of the crime triangle processes would enable the public safety and crime prevention to be maintained [9].

House-breaking continues to become a major concern in the society. Most of the urban cities in Malaysia

faced with the Housebreaking problems related to the urban pattern. Crime rates recorded by the police were high not included the unreported crime which will be relatively higher. The total crime rate of Malaysia per 100,000 population stands at 820 for the year 2003 [10]. This figure is much less than other developing countries. The crime situation in Malaysia since the year 1980 can be described as a roller coaster ride. Scenes from the 1989 the index crime recorded a gradual upward trend until 1996 after which it rose steeply until the year 1999. Starting from 2000 it began to ease downwards until 2002 and for the year 2003 recorded a slightly increased. The trend may be derived from 1) Rapid development and economic growth, 2) Establishment of new townships, industrial areas and areas of other development, 3) Influx of residents, especially the youth from the rural to the urban areas, 4) Influx of immigrants from neighbouring countries and the last one is 5) Economic slowdown and financial crisis [10].

One of the cities in Malaysia that was high in crime rate in property crime is Selangor in the year 2001 with 1890 break-in cases and 2466 burglary cases. In Malaysia the comparison of House Breaking and Theft by Day in 2003 with 5905 while in 2004 to 5637 a decrease of 4.64% of cases and House Breaking and Theft by Night in 2003 is higher with 15,754 cases and 2004 to 15,754 cases a reduction by 3.66% [10]. There are a lot of crime studies researched that have to do with crime and social aspect and physical environment, but the ones related to the relationship between victimization and territorial functioning have not undergone research yet especially in Subang Jaya. It certainly appears to be almost universally the case that in any particular era showed that urban crime rates are higher than those in the rural areas [10].

One of the factors that contributes to this phenomena would be the site planning of urban housing area, for example, communal park with no frontage, the crowding of trees closing the home area will result in lack of casual surveillance which achieved through the external layout of the dwelling [11]. According to the statistic data throughout Malaysia most of the Housebreaking and theft occur during the night time this would refer to the inadequate lighting level, the material in the housing area are not vandal resistant proof, streets in the housing area with no road bumps or cul de sac would be an easy target for burglars, poor maintenance particularly regarding to specific environment it serves [10].

[12] proposed three different types of territorial existence that differ along dimensions of duration and psychological centrality. A physical feature should define the type of territory strictly. Generally, in urban housing areas, territories are defined with physical barrier such as gates or in most of the villages with planted trees. To the residents, the gates are used to protect unwanted intrusions. However, [8] gave a more detailed characteristic of territorial functioning as compared to that of [12] and they are listed out as follows: 1) Territorial functioning is highly placed specific to particular, small-scale, and delimited areas. Shifts in spatial location result in changes in territorial attitudes or behaviours, or both. Territorial functioning is linked to social structure. 2) One's beautification or decoration effort may reinforce social cohesiveness among residents who live nearby even though one does it for fun or as a hobby. On the other hand, a person who, merely out of convenience, deliberately throws unwanted furniture into the backyard is unknowingly weakening the local territorial dynamic. 3) The bases and consequences of territorial functioning are relevant to small, face-to-face groups. It is not a largely competitive individuocentric set of processes, but is rather a group-based process. 4) The characteristics of human territorial functioning are a product of our evolutionary heritage. However, it does not mean that it is a genetic inheritance, nor does it mean that it should always be linked with aggression. 5) There is a limit to the size of the groups for which territorial functioning is relevant. It cannot operate unless there are some minimal bonds of interaction among the members of the group in question. It applies to individuals or to small groups of people such as among neighbours in a corner street to which they belong to, interact, or have social bonds.

Territorial functioning is a behaviour of an individual or a group claiming control over a particular area [13]. According to [8] it refers to a system of sentiments, cognitions and behaviour that are highly placed specific. The theory stated by [8] there are three elements in territorial functioning namely territorial attitudes, territorial markers and territorial behaviour. These three elements are interwoven and responded to support and stimulate one another which is if one element is high the other element should be high as well. Territorial behaviour may accrue power to an individual or group, or it may promote interaction between individuals in one group [8]. People who live outside settings that are closed to the homes should be adapted to using more energy (in terms of territorial behaviour) and effort to protect their spaces. In contrast, if the adjusting to the pathologies of a place by becoming indifferent to the territory, the result contributes to a disorganisation of a place. At the same time, the relationship between the environment and behaviour is indirect with the social and cultural forces mediating it. This indicates that the cultural and social structure is more important in determining behaviours and

experiences than the immediate environment. Nevertheless, place does play a significant role in our behaviours and experiences which simply reproduce structure and culture [8].

The interest of researchers on territorial functioning and its influence on the social process and crime reduction began around the 1980'. Since then, many ongoing debates have been conducted on whether or not that territorial functioning between ethnicity functions to reduce crime in a high crime area [8]. The debate has flourished concerning the linkages between animal and human social behaviour. Thus the main purpose of this research is to develop and apply the concept of human territorial functioning which highlights how and why the people manage different kinds of settings that they engaged and the penalty of mismanagement of the spaces. Only a few studies that was looked into the culture and territorial functioning that deals with the personal space which was studied by [14] on the comparisons on the Greeks and the Americans examined for their reactions towards territorial contaminations. Both groups were tested with putting a garbage sack by the researcher and found out that both were quick to remove the sack but the Greeks were found to be slower than the Americans. The study suggested that the two samples of different cultures plays a role in the way territorial spaces are claimed and regulated.

According to [8] also territorial functioning is divided into three elements comprise of Territorial Attitudes, Territorial Markers and Territorial Behaviour. [8] suggested that the three elements; territorial attitudes, territorial markers and territorial behaviour are interwoven and responded to support and stimulate one another. If one of the elements is high the other elements should be high as well. This relationship has been observed in a wide variety of settings and territories. For instance, a number of studies had been conducted in libraries where college students placed their bags, jackets, and other personal belongings in various positions on the table, preventing strangers from violating their personal space. Based on one of the previous studies, the female's personal space and marking of a territory differ from that of the males. It was hypothesized that females reserved the seats with belongings in positions to protect the space next to them.

2.1. Territorial Attitudes

Territorial attitudes deal with the people's perception of their delimited area varying between the cultural expands. There are four dimensions that are relevant to territorial attitudes in outdoor residential settings closed to home, as identified by [8]. The four given dimensions are: 1) Issues of control versus problem; This refers to the extent to which people perceive the level of control they have over their territories. Perception of control is reflected in perception of problems in the area such as crime and vandalism, as well as reported levels of concern. 2) Issues of social legibility: This involves the extent to which people can distinguish whether a person belongs to the territory or otherwise. 3) Issues of responsibility and caring: Territorial responsibility may involve care-taking or surveillance behaviours. 4) Issues of association; It is exemplified by a sense of appropriation, caring and feeling physically connected to the site.

2.2. Territorial Behaviour

Territorial behaviour among humans has been broadly conceived as functioning to regulate social interaction and to provide a necessary stability in social organisation (cf. [1] [12] [13] [15] [16]). The process that had been implicated to maintain control of a space would be the demarcation and/or adornment of space, such as placing shrubs or hedges as a fence around a residence or displaying different elements according to culture. Different cultures with different beliefs display different behaviour markings.

2.3. Territorial Markers

According to various studies ([17]-[19]) territorial markers are viewed as inhibiting territorial encroachment by fixing and maintaining property boundaries. In a study of territorial markers of suburban adults, [17] found a direct relationship between the presence of preventive markers (examples; fences, hedges, "no trespassing" signs) and the inhabitants' active defence of their territory (that is speed of response to an intrusion). It was concluded that markers tended to inhibit territorial encroachment where the offenders could perceive the risk of entering a territory, thereby preventing confrontational social encounters ([12] [13]).

3. Methodology

This study adopts the quantitative in nature and case study. The study involved a high crime home environment

in USJ 18, Subang Jaya housing area. The data resource is obtained from planning department, housing departments and police statistics. Primary data from questionnaires that will be prepared in structured interviews. Data from the observation sheet of the respondents. Questions are asked to identify the perception of the respondents on the Victimization and Territorial Functioning in USJ 18 Subang Jaya housing area. The questions ask are based on the “inter-disciplinary” is made by the enumerator assisting the survey. Apart from that the observation sheet is also used to observe the surroundings of the physical area pertaining to the street pattern, amenities and infrastructure. The sample size of this research is 300 respondents. Respondents that are chosen were households in the area of USJ 18, Subang Jaya. The methods for data collection were obtained from surveys. All together the questionnaire was distributed by the enumerators that will be sent out to the site in order to increase the rate of return questionnaires. The Data obtain from field work or Likert scale survey is to be analyzed using the SPSS program. Quantitative data will be using elements of statistical description and inference. Easy one-way frequency table and will be used in bilateral discussions. Spearman-Rho and Pearson also used to find the relationships between the variables. Correlation analysis and factor analysis has been widely applied in the past on territorial functioning to verify the multidimensionality of territorial attitudes and territorial behaviour. The Spearman’s rho for ordinal variables and the Mann-Whitney for nominal variables test were widely used to find the association between the two variables. Before the value of the standard items identified as ordinal. There are two formulas is to count the items, which are ordinal and interval variables. In the case of variable mean interval will be reduced from the raw values and the results will be divided by the mean. Then the raw score will be re-expressed by a number of standard deviation from the mean position. This process allows to scores different scales, standardized so that they can be added together to form a total score. There are two reasons to do this. First, the overall territorial functioning of two dimensions: the attitude and behaviour, as measured by different and, thus, have a different response categories. This score can not be added together until they have been standardized since they are measured by using different scale. Second, the distribution variable varies not only between the two dimensions, but also in every dimension. This is the reason that the value has no absolute meaning, but relative to the distribution in which they appear. In this case, the standard allows for each individual score to re-consider its position relative to the residual distribution. Data from case studies and face to face interviews will described by the actual words of respondents, especially in unstructured questions.

4. Results

The territorial functioning process involves the possession, definition, and marking of the area with owner’s specific identity. In Malaysia the three ethnic races were prominent with culture identity elements, security equipments, safety purpose and they spend precious times beautifying their gardens. Firstly, possession of physical material reflecting one’s culture outside the home is a way to convey position and status to the society. Thus, the more a person identifies the physical elements outside the homes the more content that person will be in their position ([11] [15]). Again, theoretically, territorial functioning differs across different ethnicity in terms of territorial behaviour, territorial attitudes and territorial markers.

The results from the theoretical strategy described earlier, the study examined five elements of the survey that is territorial functioning, victimization, fear of crime, neighborhood watch and ethnic relations. Predatory crimes discussed were obtained from the respondent’s household members who will be admitted within the last six months 1) victims of violence in the neighborhood or 2) a household burglary or theft victimization.

The analysis of the statistics indicate that the analysis generated suggest that the sample were adequate (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, 0.804; Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity with a Chi-square value of 1604.917) is not significant at ($p > 0.05$, $df = 66$).

This signifies that the territorial functioning score could not be totaled as a whole score. According to the screen test method, two factors that explain 52.5% of the total variation was extracted. The first factor is important because it balances a large proportion of variance among the items. In the analysis, the factors that exposed this factor account for 15.8% of the total variance and the eigenvalue is 6.307. The analysis indicates that there is a clear distinction in how residents perceive territorial functioning. Factor 1 represents territorial attitudes while Factor 2 represents 15.8% of the total variance. As a result from the factor analysis, the territorial attitudes and behaviour scores were not combined to form a total score for territorial functioning but were analyzed separately. The territorial functioning scores were then ranked high, medium and low by applying the trichotomised scale as suggested by ([20] [21]) The associations of territorial functioning and demographic characteristics were

then examined by employing the Spearman's rank correlation when the variables were ordinal in nature, while the Mann-Whitney test was used particularly to the nominal variables.

4.1. Territorial Functioning and Demographic Characteristics

These analyses investigate the relationships between territorial functioning (territorial attitudes and territorial behaviour) and demographic characteristics. The result of the analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between territorial attitudes and gender. This reveals that men are found to display more territorial attitudes than women. The results of the analysis disclose that there is a significant relationship between territorial attitudes and age (older people displays higher territorial attitudes). The existence of significant relationships between territorial functioning (territorial attitudes and territorial behaviour) and duration of tenancy indicates that people who live in the area longer display higher territorial functioning (territorial attitudes and territorial behaviour). Size of household has a significant relationship with territorial behaviour. Furthermore, this concludes that people who live in a bigger household size display more territorial behaviour.

4.2. Territorial Functioning and Victimization

Results showed that the relationship between Territorial Functioning is significant. The victimization findings reveals that people who have not been victims display higher territorial behaviour. Thus it can be concluded that those who are active in neighbourhood watch schemes engage in displaying stronger territorial behaviour. As for the safety features, most of the residents feel safer and were safer in the gated environments and utilising the padlocks while the alarms is an alternative and additional safety features for the residents.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, most of the territorial markers that were displayed in USJ 18 indicated possession of each resident. In terms of security, almost all of the residents were conscious of it because they were actively involved in Neighbourhood Watch programme in the housing estate. According to the chairman of the Neighbourhood Watch committee in an interview who said that community and family ties were important. The family environment could help to develop kindred spirits and care among the residents in USJ 18 to stay together and create helpful environment. By doing so, they could have a strong defence of their own neighbourhood towards strangers.

Further research on territorial attitudes and territorial behaviour should examine in different settings. It would therefore that future research should place more importance of deeper and thorough understanding. One part of the setting would be to compare territorial functioning between residents living in villages with those living in the cities. It is also suggested that comparison that is worth pursuing is to examine territorial functioning between gated and non-gated property. Indeed, comparative studies of this kind could contribute towards our greater understanding in the future research.

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