

**Laiba Rani<sup>1</sup>, Malik Kaleem Ullah<sup>2</sup>**

1. BS Criminology, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

2. Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

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**Corresponding Author:****Laiba Rani**Email: [laibaghaffar931@gmail.com](mailto:laibaghaffar931@gmail.com)**License:**

**Abstract:** Street crimes including theft, mobile snatching, robbery, harassment, and vehicle theft have increasingly become a serious concern for public safety in urban areas of Pakistan. In recent years, situational crime prevention (SCP) has gained attention as an effective preventive approach that focuses on reducing criminal opportunities through environmental and situational modifications. This study empirically investigates the effectiveness of situational crime prevention measures in reducing street crimes in Sargodha, a medium-sized city in Punjab, Pakistan. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from 100 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analysis was used to examine public perceptions regarding CCTV surveillance, street lighting, police patrolling, access control, and physical security measures. The findings reveal that situational crime prevention strategies are widely perceived as effective in discouraging street crimes and improving public safety. In particular, CCTV surveillance, improved street lighting, and visible police patrolling emerged as the most influential measures. The study concludes that situational crime prevention plays a significant role in enhancing urban safety and recommends strengthening and expanding these measures through evidence-based local policies.

**Introduction**

Crime continues to pose a major challenge to social order and public safety, particularly in urban settings of developing countries. In Pakistan, the increasing prevalence of street crimes such as theft, mobile snatching, robbery, harassment, and vehicle theft has generated widespread fear and insecurity among citizens. These crimes not only result in financial losses but also negatively affect psychological well-being and trust in public institutions responsible for maintaining law and order.

Traditionally, crime control strategies in Pakistan have focused primarily on reactive measures, emphasizing arrest, prosecution, and punishment after the commission of crime. Although these approaches are essential, they often fail to address the situational and environmental factors that create opportunities for criminal behavior. In response to these limitations, situational crime prevention

has emerged as a proactive approach that aims to reduce crime by altering immediate environmental conditions rather than changing offender motivation.

Situational crime prevention focuses on increasing the perceived effort and risk associated with committing crimes while reducing potential rewards. Common SCP strategies include CCTV surveillance, improved street lighting, police patrolling, access control mechanisms, and physical security measures. These strategies are designed to influence offender decision-making by limiting opportunities for crime. In the context of Sargodha, a rapidly developing city, the application of situational crime prevention measures has increased; however, empirical research assessing their effectiveness remains limited. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining public perceptions of situational crime prevention and its role in reducing street crimes in Sargodha.

Situational Crime Prevention was introduced as a practical crime control approach that emphasizes opportunity reduction rather than offender rehabilitation (Clarke, 1995). Rooted in environmental criminology, SCP is closely linked to Routine Activity Theory and Rational Choice Theory, both of which explain crime as a product of situational opportunities and rational decision-making processes (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Cornish & Clarke, 1986).

Routine Activity Theory argues that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable target in the absence of capable guardianship. Situational crime prevention strengthens guardianship through surveillance, improved lighting, and police presence, thereby reducing opportunities for crime. Rational Choice Theory further suggests that offenders evaluate risks and rewards before engaging in criminal acts. As SCP strategies increase the likelihood of detection and reduce rewards, offenders are less likely to commit crimes.

Empirical evidence strongly supports the effectiveness of situational crime prevention measures. Studies have shown that CCTV surveillance is particularly effective in reducing property crimes and street offenses in public spaces (Welsh & Farrington, 2008; Piza et al., 2019). Improved street lighting has also been identified as a cost-effective strategy that reduces crime and fear of crime by enhancing visibility and natural surveillance (Painter & Farrington, 1999).

Similarly, police patrolling and hotspot policing strategies have been found to reduce street crimes while increasing public confidence in law enforcement agencies (Braga et al., 2014; Skogan, 2006). Community-based initiatives and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) further contribute to crime reduction by strengthening informal social control and collective efficacy (Sampson et al., 1997; Cozens et al., 2005). In developing countries such as Pakistan, situational crime prevention faces challenges related to limited resources; however, available evidence suggests that even low-cost interventions can produce positive outcomes (UNODC, 2010; Naeem et al., 2020).

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative and descriptive research design to examine the effectiveness of situational crime prevention measures in reducing street crimes in Sargodha. The population of the study comprised students of the University of Sargodha, with an estimated population size of approximately 35,000. A sample of 100 respondents was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation from different localities.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The questionnaire measured respondents' perceptions regarding various situational crime prevention strategies, including CCTV surveillance, street lighting, police patrolling, access control measures, and physical security mechanisms. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, and descriptive statistical techniques were employed to summarize the results.

## Results

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The sample consisted of 51% male and 49% female respondents. A majority of the respondents (75%) belonged to urban areas, while 25% were from rural backgrounds. Most participants were young adults, with a large proportion falling within the age range of 18 to 27 years. In terms of education, a significant number of respondents possessed postgraduate-level qualifications, indicating an educated study population.

### Perceptions of Situational Crime Prevention Measures

**Table 1: Public Perceptions of Situational Crime Prevention Measures (N = 100)**

Situational Measure	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)
CCTV surveillance reduces street crimes	73%
CCTV increases feelings of safety	78%
Improved street lighting reduces crime	68%
Police patrolling prevents street crimes	72%
Police visibility enhances public safety	66%
Physical barriers protect property	66%
Access control reduces suspicious movement	62%

The findings indicate strong public support for situational crime prevention strategies. CCTV surveillance received particularly high levels of approval, with a large majority of respondents believing that offenders avoid areas monitored by cameras. Improved street lighting was also widely perceived as effective in reducing suspicious activities. Police patrolling emerged as a critical factor in enhancing safety and deterring street crimes.

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of situational crime prevention strategies in reducing street crimes in Sargodha. Consistent with Rational Choice Theory, respondents perceived that increased surveillance and police presence raise the perceived risks associated with criminal behavior, thereby discouraging offending.

The strong endorsement of CCTV surveillance aligns with previous research highlighting its deterrent effect on street crimes and its role in increasing public confidence (Welsh & Farrington, 2009; Piza et al., 2019). Similarly, the perceived effectiveness of improved street lighting supports existing literature that emphasizes the role of environmental design in reducing crime opportunities and fear of crime (Painter & Farrington, 1999).

Police patrolling and visibility were also found to play a significant role in shaping public perceptions of safety. This finding is consistent with earlier studies that stress the importance of proactive and visible policing in deterring crime and improving community trust (Braga et al., 2014; Skogan, 2006). Overall, the results suggest that situational crime prevention strategies operate collectively to reduce street crimes and enhance urban safety.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that situational crime prevention strategies are effective in reducing street crimes and improving public safety in Sargodha. Measures such as CCTV surveillance, improved street lighting, police patrolling, and access control mechanisms were widely perceived as successful in discouraging

criminal activities. Among these, police patrolling emerged as the most influential factor in enhancing public confidence and deterring street crimes.

The findings also support the applicability of Routine Activity Theory and Rational Choice Theory in explaining the relationship between situational crime prevention and crime reduction. By increasing guardianship and reducing criminal opportunities, situational crime prevention offers a practical and cost-effective approach to urban crime control.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that CCTV surveillance be expanded in crime-prone areas and that existing systems be properly maintained and monitored. Municipal authorities should prioritize the installation and maintenance of adequate street lighting, particularly in poorly lit areas.

Additionally, law enforcement agencies should strengthen

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