

Territorial Functioning and Victimization in Housing Area

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Abstract: Territorial functioning represents a collection of behaviors, markers, and attitudes expressed by people in small groups as a way to manage their environments and the spaces they physically occupy. This paper examines attitudes and marking behavior associated with territorial functioning by residents of two housing areas in Malaysia that differ in terms of land uses and in residents' perceptions of the level of crime in their neighborhoods. In the study, 144 participants participated in the survey. They reported levels of crime similar to the ones reported in the British survey of crime in 2015. The data generated by the survey were then analyzed using PSS; descriptive and structural equation modeling that combined the three elements of territorial functioning—behavior, markers, and attitudes—to create an overall measure of territorial functioning. The results of the analysis indicated that territorial functioning is negatively associated with the number of break-ins of homes in a neighborhood regardless of the type of neighborhood.

Keywords: Territorial Functioning, Crime Prevention, Victimization, Fear of Crime.

1. Introduction

Crime is a significant concern in every country in the world, and numerous scholars, law enforcement agencies, and policymakers are involved in multiple efforts to reduce crime and enhance safety for citizens. Naturally, a primary concern is the level of police protection provided in terms of the number of officers deployed for resident patrols. Effects of an inadequate ratio of officers to citizens on curbing residential crime have been heavily debated and the issues are still not been resolved [1]. According to Interpol [2], the ideal ratio of officers to citizens is 1:250. In Malaysia, there are approximately 120,000 officers and a population of 31.7 million, resulting in a ratio of 1:270.

Another approach to crime prevention in Malaysia is a “neighborhood watch” style program called “Ops Cantas” that includes various policing strategies and is being implemented nationwide [3]. It was introduced in Malaysia on October 2013 and led to a reduction in break-ins of 456 cases in 1999 and 1,661 cases in 2000 and a decline in burglaries of 914 cases in 1999 and 2,346 cases in 2000 [1]. According to Taylor (1988), there are three elements that are significant in Territorial functioning, which is territorial attitudes, territorial markers and territorial behavior are interwoven and responded to support and provoke one another. If one of the elements should be higher as well. Taylor (1988) clearly noted that

territorial functioning was highly variable across different communities, although it was also essential to a community's long-term health (Frost *et. al.*, 2000). As such, occupants who join a Neighbourhood Watch anti-crime group, might define the residential block as a secondary territory that would respond defensively to strangers who would use the block as a public territory. Territorial functioning has been proposed as an effective way to reduce crime in Baltimore. [4]. In his foundational work, Taylor [4] defines territorial functioning as a system of attitudes, sentiments, and behaviors that are specific to a clearly marked location. These behaviors, patterns, and markers signify that a group of residents has some expectations of exclusivity of use of a space, as well as responsibility for and control over activities in that space. Provided the hot weather even the spacious compound does not persuade the residents to remain outside for long. Only half of them do stay out of the house frequently. Half of these residents interacted since remained outdoors had increased the opportunity for interaction and surveillance. Where physical design had been known to affect social activities outside home garden in terms of security, this should be taken into serious consideration in the future planning of houses. Houses should be constructed such a way that there is maximum opportunity for interactions and surveillance. The prevalence of crime at the corner lot homes frequently account provided that it is easy opportunities for criminals to break-in and scurried off after the criminal attempts. Physical appearance with high maintenance of garden, demarcation and territorial displays is also important for the burglars to determine the signals of valuables inside home as prominent and targeted for burglary [4].

2. Materials and Methods

The primary objectives of the study are to: (1) identify associations between residents' demographic characteristics and the outcome of territorial functioning and victimization, (2) examine any differences between two types of neighborhoods in territorial functioning, fear of crime, and perceptions of the severity of crime, and (3) analyze any associations between the types of offenses that occur and types of neighborhood in which they occur. Figure 1 presents a model of the variables analyzed in the study.

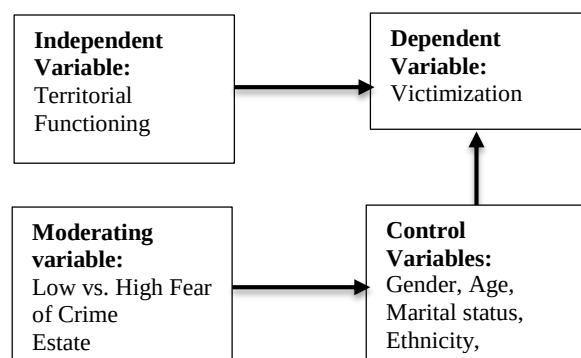


FIGURE 1

Two neighborhoods in Selangor, Malaysia occupied by both low-income and high-income residents were selected as study sites. They are typical of a majority of ungated landed residential properties in urban Malaysia. Both are situated mainly in residential areas with

commonly available basic shopping facilities provided within the estates. The survey asked respondents to rate the degree of territorial functioning to which they agreed with three statements describing territorial functioning (knowing their neighbors' names, feeling responsible for their neighbors' properties in their absence, and feeling comfortable living among their neighbors), how the level of fear of being victims of five crimes (burglary, assault, sexual harassment, rape, and vehicle theft), and the degree to which they felt five other crimes occurred in their neighborhood (burglary, car theft, vandalism, drug abuse, and hooliganism) (see Table 1). A cross-tabulation analysis was used to partition the respondents' profiles by type of estate—a high or low fear of crime. The analysis showed that none of the control variables (gender, age, marital status, education, and income) varied significantly between the two estates. This is an important measure in ensuring that the sampling strategy is not biased.

3. Results

Territorial Functioning, Fear of Crime, and Perceived Crime

To identify differences in the two estates in *territorial functioning*, *fear of crime*, and *perceived crime*, a nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted using the responses from the survey. The nonparametric test was selected because the study variables were ranked ordinally for the nominal estate type. The results of the analysis are reported in Table 1. The analysis indicates that none of the measures of territorial functioning varied with the type of estate. Likewise, there were no significant differences between the high-crime and the low-crime estates in terms of the five fear factors of being *burgled*, *assaulted*, *sexually harassed*, and *raped* and of having *a vehicle stolen*. Thus, it appears that the two estates shared a similar degree of fear about those crimes. There were differences, however, in their perceptions of the prevalence of the five types of crime in their neighborhoods. Residents of the high-crime estate perceived the rates of burglary, car theft, vandalism, drug abuse, and hooliganism as significantly higher than residents of the low-crime estate. The comparison confirms that the two neighborhoods selected for study were indeed heterogeneous in terms of some perceptions of crime.

TABLE 1

Territorial Functioning, Fear of Crime, and Perceived Crime in the Low-crime and High-crime Estates

	Low-crime Estate	High-crime Estate	Mann-Whitney U-test
<i>Territorial Functioning</i>			
I know the names of most of my neighbors	95.36	76.35	510
I feel responsible for watching over my neighbor's house when they are on holiday	90.25	91.20	465
I feel comfortable living among my neighbors	89.54	85.14	419
<i>Fear of Being a Victim of a Crime</i>			
Being burgled	288	167	98
Being assaulted	15.22	13.25	91
Having a vehicle stolen	14.66	11.72	74.3
Being sexually harassed	13.79	15.21	83
Being raped	15.78	17.79	91.5

Perception of the Prevalence of a Crime

Burglary	81.23	53.10	1520**
Car theft	78.42	56.71	1567**
Vandalism	77.76	56.34	1587**
Drug abuse	77.08	61.39	1685**
Hooliganism	76.27	58.28	1726**

** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.

Victimization

A second cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to determine if there was any association between being a victim of five types of offenses and the type of estate. Those results are reported in Table 2. The analysis identified that there was no significant difference between the low-crime and the high-crime estates for tampering with vehicles and stolen parts. However, residents of the high-crime estate perceived the number of successful and attempted break-ins as much greater than residents of the low-crime estate.

TABLE 2*Victimization: Low-crime vs. High-crime Estate*

Type of Crime		Estate					
		Low-crime (n = 58, 40.28%)		High-crime (n = 86, 59.72%)		Total	
Parts stolen from vehicles ($\chi^2 = 0.54$)	Yes	16	(53.3%)	14	(46.7%)	30	(21.5%)
	No	31	(36.9%)	53	(63.1%)	84	(78.5%)
Vehicles tampered with or damaged ($\chi^2 = 2.7$)	Yes	10	(25%)	30	(75%)	40	(35.7%)
	No	30	(41.7%)	42	(58.3%)	72	(64.3%)
Burglary [†] ($\chi^2 = 3.58$)	Yes	2	(28.6%)	5	(71.4%)	7	(4.9%)
	No	72	(52.6%)	65	(47.4%)	137	(95.1%)
Unsuccessful attempt at burglary* ($\chi^2 = 5.022$)	Yes	4	(19%)	16	(76.2%)	21	(14.6%)
	No	61	(49.6%)	62	(50.4%)	123	(85.4%)
Defaced or damaged house* ($\chi^2 = 4.749$)	Yes	5	(33.3%)	10	(66.7%)	15	(13.6%)
	No	52	(49.5%)	53	(50.5%)	105	(95.5%)

[†] p < 0.10, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.***Relationship between Territorial Functioning and Crime***

In the third analysis, the model described in Figure 1 was run using the data from the survey to determine whether the relationship between territorial functioning and crime was affected by the type of estate. Those results are presented in Table 3 and further illustrated in Figure 2. The results show that territorial functioning are negatively correlated with the number of break-ins in both estates.

TABLE 3*Hierarchical Regression of the Dependent Variable: Number of Trespasses*

Variables	Model 1 Territorial Functioning (TF)	Model 2 TF + ET	Model 3 TF + ET + (TF x ET)
Territorial Functioning (TF)	−0.191**	−0.185**	0.167
Estate Type (ET)	—	0.161*	0.745 [†]
TF x ET	—	—	−0.677
ΔF	7.677**	6.007*	1.96
ΔR^2	0.041	0.029	0.008

Notes: Estate 1 = low-crime; Estate 2 = high-crime. ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; [†] $p < 0.10$. The values for the variables are standardized β s.

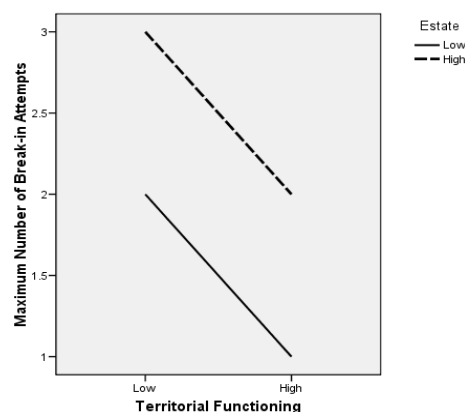


**FIGURE 2: The effect of territorial functioning and trespasses:
Low-crime estates vs. high-crime estates**

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This research is concerned with territorial functioning as a method of crime prevention. Scholars have measured territorial functioning using numerous methods but little attention has been paid to cross-validation of individual features such as socio-economic characteristics. Malaysia is an important area for studies of territorial functioning because territorial attitudes and territorial markers have a stronger influence in Malaysia than in nations in the United Kingdom. The results of this study demonstrate that territorial functioning had a negative impact on incidences of burglary in both low-crime and high-crime estates. Further research on territorial functioning should examine additional settings such as gated versus ungated communities with high and low rates of crime. Future studies could also broaden the analysis of various types of territorial functioning to provide a more comprehensive picture of its effects on crime. Such comparative studies could make significant contributions to our understanding of the effects of territorial functioning and crime prevention.

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