

Comparison of Crime Statistics Collection Method: Case Study between the Royal Thai Police's Five-Group Crime Statistics Collection and the Crime Survey for England and Wales

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Abstract

The purposes of the research are to study crime statistics collection method in England and Wales, study crime statistics collection method in Thailand, and to develop the Royal Thai Police's Five-Group Crime Statistics Collection. This research employs the mixed method consisting of 1) Documentary Research, namely the studies of crime statistics compilation processes in England, Wales, and Thailand 2) Quantitative Research by means of collecting data from 400 police officers under the Metropolitan Police Bureau (total population of 1,764) 3) Qualitative Research by means of in-depth interviews of fifteen experts: five Ministry of Justice personnels, four Royal Thai Police personnels, and six experts on crime statistics collection. The conclusion of the research is that The existing Royal Thai Police's Five-Group Crime Statistics should be revamped by changing both the number of offence groups and offences to better reflect current situation. This should be executed by applying England and Wales' crime statistics collection method, culminating in a new grouping of crime statistics. This revised format of crime statistics shall consist of 103 offences in the following 8 offence groups: Group 1: Violence against the Person, Group 2: Sexual Offences, Group 3: Robbery, Group 4: Theft Offences, Group 5: Criminal Damage and Arson, Group 6: Drug Offences, Group 7: Public Order Offences and Group 8: Fraud Offences. Recommendations from the research include the establishment of an agency and development of personnels responsible for crime statistics preparation within the central agency of the Royal Thai Police and enlisting private agencies with expertise in statistics to help develop and refine the format of crime statistics.

Keywords: Crime Statistics, Crime Survey, Royal Thai Police

Introduction

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is regarded as the epitome of comprehensiveness and efficiency when it comes to collecting crime statistics. (Maguire, 2007) Therefore, this research aims to study CSEW's data collection process, categorisation of offences, statistical analyses, as well as the dissemination of such statistics, in order to apply any appropriate practices to develop the existing Royal Thai Police's Crime Statistics Collection, or the Five-Group Criminal Offence Statistics. (Royal Thai Police, 2014) In this research, much emphasis is placed on improving the crime statistics data collection system of the Royal Thai Police, the current configuration of which is the categorisation of crime into 5 offence groups (37 offences). To this end, the means to collect crime statistics should be adapted to keep pace with the current trends in crime. This shall culminate in the design of crime prevention measures that is more apposite and cost-effective.

Research Question

Should the methods of crime statistics collection in England and Wales be adapted to develop the Royal Thai Police's 5-Group Crime Statistics Collection?

Research Objectives

- 1) To study the methods of crime statistics collection in England and Wales
- 2) To study the methods of crime statistics collection in Thailand
- 3) To develop the Royal Thai Police's 5-Group Crime Statistics Collection

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed research method comprising

- 1) Documentary Research, namely the studies of crime statistics compilation processes in England, Wales, and Thailand
- 2) Quantitative Research by means of collecting data from 400 police officers under the Metropolitan Police Bureau (total population of 1,764)
- 3) Qualitative Research by means of in-depth interviews of fifteen experts: five Ministry of Justice personnels, four Royal Thai Police personnels, and six experts on crime statistics collection.

Data collection

This research submit the questionnaire to experts in order to be proved for validity, which are content, construct, and wording validity. Then, improve the questionnaire by experts' suggestions. The improved questionnaire will be used as a tool to collect data from the samples, who are responsible for five-group statistics (quantitative). After that, the data will be analyzed and applied to the crime reclassification, which is expected to be more suitable for criminal situation in Thai society. The researcher will use in-depth interviews along with questions and approaches developed from quantitative data collection to analyze and synthesize the way to interview. The data collection processes are as followed. Prior the interview, the researcher will clarify the research purposes, process of data collection, discussion style, privacy of the interviewees, the academic use of information, and anonymousness of the interviewees. The interviewees have rights to refuse answering uncomfortable questions, including rights to stop giving information at anytime. The researcher will also inform the benefits and values of the interviews that it is to improve crime statistics system in Thailand in general in order to be suitable for the present criminal situation in Thailand. The one-on-one interview will aim to reveal motivation and vision of the interviewees in broad topics in order to cover all objectives of the research. During the interviews, the researcher will record important points that are interesting and beneficial to the research along with informing the interviewees that the records will be transferred into texts exactly as given. Moreover, the records will be submitted to the interviewees to recheck before using in the analytical process.

Analysis

This research will analyze information received from questionnaires and in-depth interviews, which can be categorized as below.

- 1) Quantitative research
 - 1.1) Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage will be used to analyze personal variables of the samples

1.2) Descriptive statistics such as means and Standard Deviation (S.D.) will be used to analyze and interpret the suitability of each offence in crime statistics.

Score	Meaning
Level 5: Average score 4.21-5.00	Highest
Level 4: Average score 3.41-4.20	High
Level 3: Average score 2.61-3.40	Medium
Level 2: Average score 1.81-2.60	Low
Level 1: Average score 1.00-1.80	Lowest

According to the analytical results of the suitability of offence classification in crime statistic, this research finds out only level 5 or Highest is suitable for the crime statistics.

1.3) Other offences that should be add into the crime statistics, problems of crime statistics collection or the implementation of crime statistics, including suggestions and content analysis.

2) Qualitative research

In-depth interview in order to gain insights would lead to the improvement of the Royal Thai Police's five-group statistics. This is conducted by questions and content analysis.

Research Result

The methods of crime statistics collection in England and Wales

Crime statistics collection in England and Wales begun in 1805. Initially, the Home Office collected merely the statistics from the Court of Justice, dividing the cases between those still in court, and those where verdicts had been delivered. Not until 1857 did crime statistics from the police reports were incorporated into crime statistics at large. Since crime statistics had initially been employed as a means to assess the policemen's performance, the unfortunate consequence of this was that the police constantly meddled with their own crime statistics to paint a misleading picture of their performance. Moreover, the categorisation of crime in each area differed so vastly that the data cannot be meaningfully compared.

Since 1960, there was a renewed interest in crime statistics as crime problems in England mounted. Crime statistics began to dominate discussion in political circles, and was even touted as a solution to the crime problem by politicians hoping to win votes from the public. Its importance was such that crime statistics was employed as a means of assess the Home Office's performance. In 1981, the Home Office has introduced the data collection by means of victimisation survey. This was officially known as "The British Crime Survey (BCS)" (Smith, 2006), and its purpose was to affirm the validity of the crime data collected by the police.

Since 1997, the Home Office started to publish the police-recorded crime statistics on the annual basis, and the BCS biannually. The crime statistics collection method has also undergone constant revision, especially on the "Counting Rules". That is, criminal cases that had previously been ignored by police officers, whether it be because of the triviality of the cases or intentional neglect from the officers, were now included as offences in crime statistics. The immediate consequence of this was that crime statistics rose so drastically that the public viewed them with confusion and distrust. Later on, the crime statistics collection method underwent further modification and development, culminating in it being the key piece of information of subsequent governments in devising crime prevention strategies. (Maguire, 2007)

The CSEW currently employs two main methods of data collection;

1) Police recorded crime: This is the compilation of crime statistics from cases where the policemen in various have reported and recorded. However, this does not include cases or incidences that have not been reported to the police, or not recorded as such. This comprises over

60 percent of the cases. (The said data was compiled from 43 police police stations in England and Wales and British Transport Police-Office for National Statistics, 2012) The majority of police recorded crime are cases with moderate severity which have been reported to the police. The data is then delivered monthly to the Home Office, before being forwarded to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), who publish the overall crime statistics in England and Wales. (This was previously the Home Office's responsibility) In 2014, the Home Office has issued the New Data Collection System to officers in order to make data compilation more detailed and effective.

2) The Crime Survey for England and Wales. (previously known as the British Crime Survey) The responsibility for the collection of this data was transferred from the Home Office to ONS. (ONS, 2012) This is the crime statistics collection by means of surveying over 40,000 samples randomly picked from the population in various region with no limitations on sex, age, or ethnicity. It is the survey of the number of crime or antisocial behavior left unreported to the police, public and social perception towards crime, and public satisfaction towards police operations or the criminal justice system. The survey is generally conducted in face-to-face interviews, initially with people aged 16 or more (who lived in private residence). Since 2009, the survey was expanded to include interviews with young people aged from 10 to 15. (British Market Research Bureau, 2009)

Each of the two aforementioned methods has its own strengths and limitations. Therefore, the amalgamation of these two methods, with data analyses performed with the pros and cons of each system in mind, allows us to see a wider picture of the state of crime than individual analysis of either method. Each year, the Home Office publishes the statistics from both sources in the form of academic papers. (Crime in England and Wales: Findings from the British Crime Survey and Police Recorded Crime) Within these, criminal offences are divided by type of offence, crime scene, and time of offence. The analyses also extend to public attitude on crime and data comparison to paint a wider picture of crime in the country, with past and future crime trend also being examined at length.

The Police recorded crime statistics is divided into the following 8 offence groups; (with 140 individual offences) (ONS, 2014)

- Group 1: Violence against the Person
- Group 2: Sexual Offences
- Group 3: Robbery
- Group 4: Theft Offences
- Group 5: Criminal Damage and Arson
- Group 6: Drug Offences
- Group 7: Public Order Offences
- Group 8: Fraud Offences

The methods of crime statistics collection in Thailand

In essence, crime statistic collection in Thailand does not differ markedly to that of England and Wales. That is, it includes both statistics compiled from cases reported to the police and statistics compiled directly from people who have been victims of crime. The main difference, however, lies in the categorization of crime and data collection methods.

1) Royal Thai Police's Five-Group Crime Statistics. Back when the Royal Thai Police was "the Police Department" under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, criminal offences were already divided into five groups, with emphasis on cases with significant impact on social order and public safety, hence the name "Five-Group Crime Statistics. The data illustrates all instances

on criminal offences in Thailand, sorted by monthly and yearly occurrences by agency. The Central Information Technology Centre, under the Royal Thai Police, is responsible for collecting data from all units. The collection begins with the compilation of crime data recorded by investigators or committed duty officers, during their own shift, in police stations all over the country. The data is then reported to the agency along the higher chain of command, such as divisions and bureaus, up to the Office of Information Technology and Communications (ICT), Royal Thai Police. The offences are divided into the following five offence groups (37 individual offences) (Trimek, 2014);

Group 1: Serious Crime
 Group 2: Violent Crime
 Group 3: Property Crime
 Group 4: Interesting Crime
 Group 5: Victimless Crime

2) Crime Victimization Survey. The Office of Justice Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, conducted the first nationwide public crime statistics collection in 2007. This survey research involves in-depth interviews of people aged 15 or more who have been victims of crime in the following four basic crime groups (Office of Justice Affairs, 2009);

Group 1: Crime against property
 Group 2: Crime against the Person
 Group 3: Sexual Crime
 Group 4: Crime related to False Claims of Financial Information

The results of this survey were then utilized to develop the public crime statistics database for Thailand. In 2012, the Office of Justice Affairs conducted a second Crime Victimization Survey, with plans to conduct such survey over subsequent five-year intervals. (Suwannanon et al., 2013)

Development of the Royal Thai Police's 5-Group Crime Statistics Collection

The researcher compiled data by using questionnaire in the checklist format, based on the crime categorisation method employed in the CSEW. The questionnaire is divided into five parts.

Part 1: Respondents' personal information. This is conducted in the form of checklist.
 Part 2: Appropriateness of offence designation in crime statistics. The questionnaire in this part is in the form of the rating scale, with the weighting done in the following Likert Scale;
 Part 3: Other offences which should be included in the crime statistics. The questionnaire in this section consists of open-ended questions.
 Part 4: Problems in recording criminal offences or the application of crime statistics. The questionnaire in this section also consists of open-ended questions.
 Part 5: Other suggestions. This part also consists of open-ended questions.

Respondents' Personal Information

Upon surveying personal information of 400 respondents, more than half of these are male (68.50 percent), with the rest (31.50 percent) being female. 33.75 percent of the respondents are between 31-40 years old, with 32.75 percent being 31 years old or less, and 25.50 percent aged from 41 to 50 years old. More than half of the respondents (66.00 percent) have a bachelor's degree, with 17.50 percent having the secondary education, while the rest (13.00 percent) having a master's degree or better. 26.50 percent of the respondents have the rank of Senior Sergeant Major, 22.50 percent being Lance Corporal, and 20.50 percent being Corporal. With regard to responsibilities, 37.25 percent work in interrogation, 25.25 percent are responsible for general affairs, and 21.15 percent work in investigation.

Appropriateness of offence designation in crime statistics

The researcher has designed the questionnaire to determine the appropriateness of each of 140 offences in 8 offence groups based on the categorisation used in the CSEW. After data collection has finished, the researcher opted to retain only the offence groups with the highest level of appropriateness (average score 4.21-5.00) to ensure that the new crime statistics collection only includes the most relevant of offences. The results of the appropriateness test was that out of the original 140 offences, 37 were removed, leaving the 103 offences (which have been verified by personnels responsible for recording the five-group crime statistics) as the appropriate offences to be used in Thailand crime statistics.

To affirm the validity and practicality of the research, the researcher has forwarded the verified data consisting of 103 offences in 8 offence groups to experts well-versed in both the theoretical and practical aspects of crime statistics to further verify and determine offence appropriateness. The experts were also asked to comment and make suggestions on how to improve Thailand's crime statistics collection. The results are as follows;

The criminal justice experts, hereby consisting of personnels from the Ministry of Justice, the Royal Thai Police, the National Statistics Office, and experts on crime statistics, all agree on the new format of crime statistics consisting of 103 offences in 8 offence groups. With the statistics becoming more detailed, it should be easier to demarcate and construe the overview of each type of crime. However, the experts raised concerns over the possible mistakes in recording the information due to increased complexity. As for the development of the Royal Thai Police's crime statistics collection, the experts has offered the following advices;

- 1) Future crime statistics collection should be conducted with more granularity and dimension, all while keeping abreast of social changes, in order to ensure the statistics' relevance as a supporting tool in designing crime prevention and suppress policies.
- 2) The offences in crime statistics should be more detailed so as to better reflect crime problems in each respective area. This will also be more used to practitioners who will be able to better utilize the data in enacting measures to prevent and suppress crime.
- 3) Each agency in the criminal justice system should integrate their operations in preparing crime statistics. Better yet, there should be a common crime statistics database that is generally accepted by each agency, to be used at its convenience.
- 4) Should this new form of crime statistics be developed, it is imperative that the user manual be written and distributed to personnels in order to ensure the uniformity of data collection and recording.
- 5) Emphasis should be placed on developing electronic storage of data and creating a user-friendly software to ease the operations and enable systematic data analyses. The personnels who shall be using this data should also be well trained.

Discussion

According to the study of the developmental guidelines on the criminal case statistics making models of the Royal Thai Police, the researcher found that if more detailed criminal statistics are collected, people concerned are able to efficiently analyze or process the statistical information. More detailed criminal statistics can be used for analyzing the criminal models and the trend of the crimes which may occur in the future such as issuing the criminal policy which attaches the importance to a specific offence, analyzing the gender or ages of the offenders who may risk the criminal commission or the criminal commission risk area. For example, a crime occurred on December 2016 in Thailand. The inquiry officer of Rattanathibet Police Station, Nonthaburi

Province disguised himself as a woman and was able to arrest an offender who robbed the female victim sitting at the bus stop. After analyzing detailed facts, the researcher found that the inquiry officer, Rattanathibet Police Station continuously collected and used the criminal statistics information in the area until he was able to know the criminal committing areas. This led to making the criminal preventing policy. The police officers were ordered to closely watch the offender. A police officer disguised himself as a woman to attract the offender to commit the crime in the period and the place where the offender often committed the crime. According to the efficient criminal prevention policy, it is necessary to collect the information or develop the criminal statistics to have more details and be consistent with the social changes and improve the offences of the criminal statistics to have more details. More detailed criminal statistics enable related agencies to find more efficient measures or guidelines on the criminal prevention and suppression. Moreover, the agencies of the justice process should work together to make the criminal statistics and develop the criminal statistics making models to be the same database and be accepted by every agency of the justice process. After development of the criminal case statistics making models, the Royal Thai Police should provide the work manuals to enable the officers to correctly work. It should develop collection of data in the computer, create the software for the easier use, and systematically analyze data by developing and giving knowledge to users. The research results are consistent with the concept and background of criminal categorization of Douglas et al. (2006) who said that the first important thing explaining the concept of criminal categorization is the understanding of the criminal problems in a society, especially, persons who are the beginning of all criminal committing processes.

Conclusion

The existing Royal Thai Police's Five-Group Crime Statistics should be revamped by changing both the number of offence groups and offences to better reflect current situation. The research results revealed that the 103 offences with the highest level of appropriateness (average score 4.21-5.00) from the 8 offences groups (as stipulated in the Crime Survey for England and Wales) should be included in Thailand's crime statistics. Recommendations from crime statistics experts includes the establishment of an agency and development of personnels responsible for crime statistics preparation within the central agency of the Royal Thai Police, bringing in private agencies with expertise in statistics to help develop and refine the format of crime statistics, and conducting the co-research among all agencies responsible for preparing the Five-Group Crime Statistics in order to update the basic crime data. This will culminate in the crime statistics being so granular that it accurately reflects the severity of crime in the society.

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