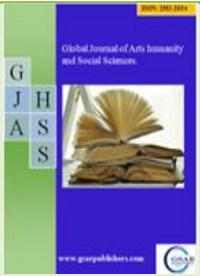
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Environmental and Situational Factors in Criminal Decision-Making: A Study of Criminal Behavior

By

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Abstract

Crime is a complex phenomenon influenced by a combination of **environmental and situational factors** that shape offenders' decision-making processes. This study explores how these external variables contribute to criminal behavior across **10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP): Adabar, Hatirjheel, Jatrabari, Kafrul, Ramna, Sabujbagh, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Uttara East, Motijheel, and Badda**. A **quantitative research approach** was employed, with data collected from **200 respondents** using structured surveys, key informant interviews, and crime pattern observations. Findings indicate that **poor street lighting (74%), lack of police patrols (66%), high unemployment (59%), and the presence of drug networks (55%)** are major environmental contributors to crime. Additionally, **situational factors such as the absence of law enforcement (69%), victim vulnerability (64%), and peer influence (54%)** play a significant role in offenders' decision-making. The study identified **commercial areas, public transport stations, and highways** as crime hotspots, with **late evening (6 PM - 12 AM) being the most crime-prone period**. From a crime prevention perspective, respondents emphasized the **need for increased police patrols (81%), CCTV surveillance (74%), improved street lighting (69%), and community engagement (58%)** to reduce criminal activities. The study also highlights the importance of **socio-economic measures, such as employment programs and drug rehabilitation, in mitigating crime**. However, limitations such as **restricted access to official crime records, reliance on self-reported data, and the difficulty in establishing causation** were acknowledged. The findings reinforce **criminological theories such as Routine Activity Theory, Broken Windows Theory, and Rational Choice Theory**, underscoring the role of environmental design and situational opportunities in shaping criminal actions. The study concludes that **a holistic approach integrating law enforcement, urban planning, community engagement, and technological surveillance is necessary to enhance crime prevention efforts in Dhaka's urban areas**.

Keywords: Crime Patterns, Environmental Factors, Situational Factors, Criminal Decision-Making, Urban Crime, Law Enforcement, Routine Activity Theory, Broken Windows Theory, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Crime Prevention Strategies.

Introduction

Criminal behavior is a complex phenomenon influenced by a combination of individual, environmental, and situational factors. While traditional criminological theories have primarily focused on personal traits and socio-economic backgrounds, growing research

highlights the crucial role of environmental and situational factors in shaping criminal decision-making (Walters, 2022). The immediate physical and social environment in which an individual operates can significantly impact their likelihood of engaging in criminal activity.



Environmental factors, such as urbanization, neighborhood crime rates, social disorganization, and economic conditions, create opportunities or constraints that affect criminal behavior (Barnum & Pogarsky, 2022). For instance, high-crime neighborhoods with limited law enforcement presence and weak social controls may facilitate criminal activity by increasing perceived rewards and reducing perceived risks (Howell et al., 2024). Similarly, economic hardship and social deprivation may push individuals toward illegal means of survival. Situational factors, on the other hand, play a pivotal role in influencing an individual's decision now of committing a crime (Rosés et al., 2021). The presence of a potential target, the absence of capable guardians, and the perceived likelihood of apprehension are key elements in rational choice and routine activity theories of crime (Basak et al., 2019). Factors such as peer influence, substance use, emotional states, and immediate provocations further affect how individuals assess risks and rewards before engaging in criminal acts (Park & Lee, 2021).

This study seeks to explore the interplay between environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making. By examining how these external influences shape offenders' choices, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of criminal behavior, ultimately informing crime prevention strategies and policy interventions.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making within the jurisdiction of **10 thanas (police precincts) under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)**. By collecting and analyzing real-world crime data, this research aims to provide insights into how different external conditions influence criminal behavior. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze crime patterns across 10 thanas of DMP.
2. To assess the impact of environmental factors on crime.
3. To examine situational factors in criminal decision-making.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of crime prevention measures in the selected thanas.
5. To compare crime trends among the selected thanas.

By addressing these objectives, this study aims to contribute to a **data-driven understanding of crime patterns in Dhaka** and inform policymakers and law enforcement agencies on how to enhance crime prevention strategies in the city's high-risk areas.

Research Questions

The research questions corresponding to the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. What are the prevalent crime patterns across the 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police?
2. How do environmental factors influence crime in the selected thanas?
3. What role do situational factors play in criminal decision-making?
4. How effective are the existing crime prevention measures in the selected thanas?

5. How do crime trends vary among the selected thanas?

Problems of the Study

Despite the extensive research on criminal decision-making, several challenges persist in understanding the influence of environmental and situational factors on crime. These issues arise from theoretical limitations, methodological constraints, and practical challenges in crime prevention. This section outlines the key problems associated with the study of environmental and situational factors in criminal behavior. One of the primary challenges in this study is the **multifaceted nature of criminal decision-making** (Hartmann & Wenzelburger, 2021). Offenders do not operate within a vacuum; instead, their choices are influenced by a combination of personal, environmental, and situational variables. The interaction between these factors makes it difficult to isolate specific environmental or situational influences, leading to challenges in developing clear, predictive models of criminal behavior (Icenogle & Cauffman, 2021). Measuring the exact impact of environmental and situational variables presents a significant methodological challenge. Crime rates and patterns vary widely based on geographic location, time of day, and individual perception of risk (Sytsma et al., 2021). Factors such as neighborhood disorder, law enforcement presence, and socio-economic conditions are dynamic and constantly changing, making it difficult to establish consistent correlations. Furthermore, **offenders may perceive the same environmental conditions differently**, depending on their experience, cognitive biases, and immediate psychological state (Stevens et al., 2024). Many studies on criminal decision-making rely on self-reported data from offenders, particularly through interviews and surveys. However, **offenders may not always provide accurate accounts of their decision-making processes** due to memory distortion, social desirability bias, or fear of legal consequences (Curley et al., 2022). This leads to potential inaccuracies in data collection and limits the reliability of findings regarding the motivations behind criminal actions. A major issue in criminological research is distinguishing **correlation from causation** (Greene-Colozzi, 2022). While studies indicate strong associations between environmental conditions (e.g., high-crime neighborhoods, lack of guardianship) and criminal behavior, proving that these factors directly cause crime is difficult. Many external variables, such as personal upbringing, peer influence, and economic stress, may also contribute to crime, making it challenging to establish direct causal links between environmental and situational factors (Bystranowski et al., 2021). Studying criminal behavior in real-life settings poses **ethical and legal dilemmas**. Conducting controlled experiments on crime prevention strategies, such as manipulating environmental conditions or exposing certain areas to increased surveillance, raises concerns regarding privacy, human rights, and law enforcement fairness (Barnum et al., 2021). As a result, researchers often rely on observational studies, which may be limited by confounding variables and researcher bias. While situational crime prevention strategies (e.g., CCTV surveillance, improved lighting, target hardening) have been successful in reducing certain types of crime, they often lead to **displacement effects** (Eman & Bulovec,

2021). Criminals may shift their activities to other locations or adapt their methods to evade detection, limiting the long-term effectiveness of environmental modifications (Honey & Hossain, 2024). Additionally, crime prevention measures may disproportionately target specific communities, raising concerns about social justice and discrimination (Wikström & Kroneberg, 2025).

With the rise of digital technology, criminals now operate in both physical and virtual spaces. **Cybercrime and digital offenses** introduce new situational factors that are not adequately addressed by traditional criminological theories (Decety, 2021). The influence of online anonymity, digital fraud, and remote victimization complicates the study of environmental and situational crime factors, requiring updated models and methodologies to capture modern criminal behavior (van Gelder et al., 2022). Crime is influenced by a combination of social, psychological, economic, and technological factors. However, many studies remain confined within the boundaries of criminology, neglecting insights from psychology, urban planning, and artificial intelligence (Piza et al., 2022). A lack of **interdisciplinary collaboration** hinders a comprehensive understanding of how environmental and situational factors interact with other determinants of crime (Hu, 2021). The study of environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making presents several challenges, including difficulties in measuring and isolating variables, reliability issues in self-reported data, and ethical constraints in research. Additionally, evolving crime patterns, such as digital offenses, require new theoretical frameworks and crime prevention strategies. Addressing these problems will require interdisciplinary collaboration, improved research methodologies, and adaptive policies that balance security with ethical considerations.

Significance of the Research

This study explores the role of environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making within the jurisdiction of ten thanas under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Understanding how external conditions influence criminal behavior is essential for developing effective crime prevention strategies. By analyzing real-world crime data, this research provides valuable insights into crime patterns and their relationship with environmental and situational factors. The findings will help law enforcement agencies and policymakers design targeted interventions to mitigate crime in high-risk areas. Additionally, this study contributes to the academic discourse on criminology by offering a data-driven perspective on crime trends in Dhaka. The results of this research will also benefit community leaders and urban planners by highlighting the need for strategic environmental modifications that can deter criminal activities. Through an evidence-based approach, this study aims to support the development of more effective policies and enhance public safety in urban settings.

Literature Review

Criminal decision-making is a multifaceted process influenced by a range of personal, environmental, and situational factors. While traditional criminological theories have long examined individual traits, modern research increasingly emphasizes the significance of external influences such as environmental structures and immediate situational conditions (Cleary & Bull, 2021). This section reviews the existing literature on environmental and situational factors in criminal behavior, focusing on key theoretical frameworks and empirical findings that explain how these variables shape offenders' decisions. Several criminological theories provide a foundation for understanding the role of environmental and situational factors in criminal behavior. The **Rational Choice Theory (RCT)** (Cornish & Clarke, 1986) argues that offenders weigh the costs and benefits of crime before acting, making decisions based on perceived opportunities and risks in their surroundings (Jeffery, 2021). Similarly, the **Routine Activity Theory (RAT)** (Cohen & Felson, 1979) suggests that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable target in the absence of capable guardianship, emphasizing the importance of situational conditions in shaping criminal actions (Defoe, 2021). The **Broken Windows Theory** (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) proposes that visible signs of disorder, such as vandalism and neglect, create an environment conducive to crime by signaling weak social control (Altikriti, 2021). Additionally, the **Social Disorganization Theory** (Shaw & McKay, 1942) highlights the role of neighborhood instability, poverty, and weak social cohesion in fostering criminal behavior. These theories collectively underscore the interaction between environment, opportunity, and offender decision-making (Altikriti, 2021). Numerous studies have established a strong correlation between neighborhood conditions and criminal activity. High-crime areas often exhibit low levels of social cohesion, economic deprivation, and weak law enforcement presence (Weekers et al., 2021). Research by Deng et al. (2022) further confirms that structural disadvantages, such as poverty and residential instability, create conditions that facilitate criminal behavior. Urbanization and population density also contribute to crime rates. Studies show that densely populated urban environments with high levels of anonymity provide greater opportunities for criminal acts (Alonso Berbotto & Chainey, 2021). The spatial distribution of crime hotspots demonstrates that criminal opportunities are concentrated in specific locations where surveillance is minimal, and potential targets are readily available (Nuswantara, 2023). The design and structure of physical spaces influence crime rates and offender behavior. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) (Newman, 1972) posits that well-lit areas, clear sightlines, and controlled access points can deter criminal activities by increasing the perceived risk of apprehension (Seto et al., 2023). Research on situational crime prevention strategies (Clarke, 1997) supports the idea that modifying the physical environment can reduce opportunities for crime by increasing surveillance and restricting offender movement (Moneva et al., 2022). Situational factors play a crucial role in shaping offenders' decisions now of the crime. According to Ho et al. (2022), offenders evaluate the risks and rewards of crime

based on immediate environmental cues. High-risk situations, such as the presence of security measures or active law enforcement, deter crime, whereas low-risk conditions encourage criminal acts (Reichherzer et al., 2021). Soto et al. (2022) highlight the importance of guardianship, noting that an increase in capable guardians (e.g., police presence, CCTV cameras, or community watch programs) significantly reduces criminal opportunities. Similarly, studies by Shore et al. (2022) demonstrate that offenders engage in cost-benefit analyses when assessing situational risks before committing crimes. Beyond rational calculations, emotions and psychological states also influence situational crime decisions. Research indicates that impulsivity, peer pressure, and substance use can override rational decision-making processes, increasing the likelihood of criminal behavior (Lee & Kim, 2022). Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory suggests that negative emotional states, such as frustration and anger, can prompt criminal acts, particularly in environments that provide immediate opportunities for crime (Walczak, 2021). Empirical studies provide extensive evidence supporting the role of environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making. For example, a longitudinal study by Sampson and Groves (1989) found that neighborhoods with higher levels of collective efficacy experienced lower crime rates (Trivedi-Bateman, 2021). Su et al. (2023) examined crime concentration in urban areas and found that a small proportion of locations (hotspots) accounted for many reported crimes, reinforcing the idea that environmental factors create distinct criminal opportunities. Additionally, studies on offender decision-making (Wright & Decker, 1997) reveal that criminals often exploit situational vulnerabilities, such as unlocked doors, unattended valuables, or isolated victims (Sontate et al., 2021). These findings align with RAT and CPTED principles, demonstrating that modifying environments can alter offender behavior and reduce crime. The literature on environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making highlights the significant role of external influences in shaping offender behavior. Theoretical perspectives such as RCT, RAT, and CPTED emphasize that crime is not merely a product of individual pathology but also a response to opportunities and risks present in the environment. Empirical research further supports the idea that modifying environmental structures and situational conditions can effectively reduce crime rates.

Understanding the interplay between environmental and situational factors provides valuable insights for crime prevention strategies and public policy. By addressing structural disadvantages, improving surveillance, and implementing situational crime prevention measures, law enforcement agencies and urban planners can create safer communities and mitigate criminal activity. Future research should explore the dynamic interactions between offenders and their environments, incorporating technological advancements such as predictive policing and AI-driven crime analysis to enhance crime prevention efforts.

Research Gap

Despite extensive research on crime patterns and prevention strategies, limited studies have specifically examined the role of

environmental and situational factors in criminal decision-making within the context of Dhaka Metropolitan Police jurisdictions. Existing literature primarily focuses on general crime trends, law enforcement strategies, or socio-economic influences, often overlooking the direct impact of external conditions on criminal behavior. Most studies on crime in Bangladesh rely on theoretical discussions rather than empirical data-driven analyses. There is a lack of comprehensive research that integrates real-world crime data to assess how environmental factors such as urban infrastructure, lighting, and public surveillance influence criminal activity. Similarly, situational factors like opportunity, time of day, and presence of law enforcement remain underexplored in local crime studies. Furthermore, comparative analyses of crime trends across multiple thanas within Dhaka are scarce. The variations in crime rates and patterns across different precincts need deeper investigation to identify specific risk factors and intervention strategies. This study addresses these gaps by using empirical data to analyze the influence of environmental and situational factors on criminal decision-making, providing insights that can aid in the development of more effective crime prevention policies.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of environmental and situational factors on criminal decision-making within 10 thanas of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). A descriptive and analytical research design was used, incorporating a cross-sectional approach to collect and analyze data within a fixed timeframe. The research was conducted in Adabar, Hatirjheel, Jatrabari, Kafrul, Ramna, Sabujbagh, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Uttara East, Motijheel, and Badda thanas, selected based on variations in crime rates, urban structures, and demographics to ensure a comprehensive understanding of crime patterns. The selection of 200 respondents for this study was based on the principles of representative sampling and statistical reliability in social research. Given that the study covered 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), a stratified random sampling approach was employed, ensuring an equal distribution of 20 respondents per thana to capture diverse perspectives on crime patterns. This sample size aligns with established research guidelines, where sample sizes between 100 and 300 are considered adequate for cross-sectional studies focusing on crime perception and urban safety (Cochran, 1977) (Hu, 2021). A 200-responder sample provides a margin of error of $\pm 7\%$ at a 95% confidence level, ensuring reasonable accuracy in generalizing findings. Additionally, the diversity of the sample including law enforcement officials, crime victims, and residents enhances the validity and reliability of the data by incorporating multiple viewpoints. Given the limitations of resource availability and time constraints, this sample size was both practical and methodologically sound, allowing for statistically significant analysis of crime trends, environmental influences, and situational factors in criminal decision-making across Dhaka's urban landscape. Primary data was collected through structured surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs) with police officers, local leaders, and crime analysts, and observational field visits to document



neighborhood conditions, urban infrastructure, and security measures. Secondary data sources included official crime reports from DMP archives, as well as relevant academic literature, government publications, and policy documents. Data analysis techniques involved descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage distributions) to summarize crime patterns, inferential statistics (correlation and regression analyses) to examine relationships between variables, and crime mapping using GIS to visualize spatial crime distribution and identify high-crime hotspots. The study adhered to ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation, respondent confidentiality, and informed consent, with official permission obtained from the DMP and relevant authorities before data collection. However, certain limitations were encountered, including limited generalizability beyond the selected thanas, potential biases in self-reported data, and restricted access to confidential police records. Despite these challenges, the study provided an empirical, data-driven understanding of crime trends in Dhaka, offering valuable insights for crime prevention strategies and law enforcement policies.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the study based on the collected data from 200 respondents across 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). The results are analyzed in relation to the research objectives and key questions from the questionnaire. The discussion interprets these findings considering existing criminological theories and prior research.

1. Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the 200 respondents from 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) is summarized in the table below. The data includes age, gender, and duration of residence/work in the respective thanas.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (n = 200)	Percentage (%)
Age Group	18 – 25 years	45	23%
	26 – 35 years	67	34%
	36 – 45 years	48	24%
	46 – 60 years	30	15%
	60+ years	10	5%
Gender	Male	126	63%
	Female	72	36%
	Other	2	1%
Duration of	Less than 1	18	9%

Residence/Work in Thana	year		
	1 – 5 years	58	29%
	6 – 10 years	62	31%
	More than 10 years	62	31%

The demographic profile of the respondents revealed a diverse representation of age, gender, and residency duration across the 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) (Table 1). A majority (57.5%) of the participants belonged to the 26-45 years age group, reflecting a mix of young and middle-aged adults who are actively engaged in the workforce or community. Males comprised 63% of the sample, while 36% were female, and 1% identified as other genders, ensuring a balanced gender perspective. Furthermore, 62% of respondents had been residing or working in the area for more than six years, demonstrating a long-term familiarity with local crime trends and security conditions. This demographic analysis highlights the diversity of perspectives captured in the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of crime perception, situational risks, and environmental influences across Dhaka's urban landscape.

2. Crime Patterns Across 10 Thanas of DMP

2.1 Perception of Crime Levels

Crime perception varies across different areas based on factors such as law enforcement presence, socio-economic conditions, and past crime experiences. Understanding how residents and stakeholders perceive crime in their localities helps identify high-risk areas and assess public confidence in security measures. The following section presents respondents' views on crime levels across the 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and highlights key patterns in crime perception.

Table 2: Crime Perception Across 10 Thanas of DMP

Thana	Low/Very Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High/Very High (%)
Adabar	12	45	43
Hatirjheel	18	50	32
Jatrabari	8	40	52
Kafrul	15	48	37
Ramna	20	42	38
Sabujbagh	10	38	52
Tejgaon Industrial	14	44	42
Uttara East	22	53	25
Motijheel	7	39	54

Badda	9	41	50
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Respondents' perception of crime levels varied across the 10 thanas. 37% rated crime as high or very high, while 42% considered it moderate, and 21% found it low or very low (Table 2). Among the thanas, Motijheel, Jatrabari, and Badda reported the highest crime perception, while Uttara East and Hatirjheel were perceived as relatively safer.

2.2 Most Common Types of Crime

Understanding the types and frequency of crimes in different areas is crucial for identifying crime patterns and developing effective prevention strategies. Different locations experience varying levels of criminal activities based on social, economic, and environmental factors. The following section presents the most reported crimes across the 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), highlighting variations in crime distribution and their implications for law enforcement and urban security planning.

Table 3: Reported Crime Types and Their Frequency

Crime Type	Percentage of Reported Cases
Theft & Burglary	72%
Mugging & Street Robbery	58%
Drug-related Crimes	51%
Physical Assault	34%
Sexual Harassment	22%
Online Banking Fraud (bKash, Nagad, etc.)	28%

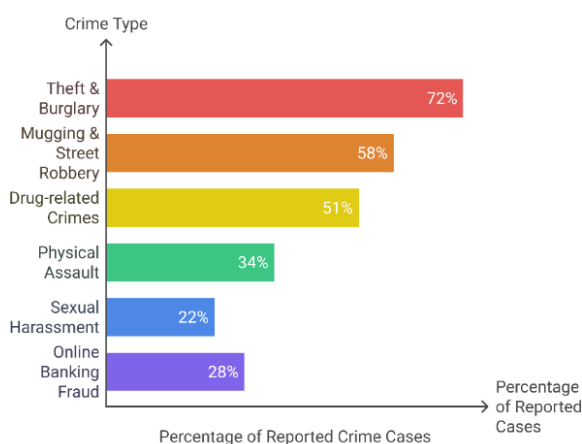


Figure 1: Survey Responses on Crime Types

The analysis of responses indicated that theft and burglary (72%) were the most frequently reported crimes, followed by mugging and street robbery (58%), drug-related crimes (51%), physical assault (34%), and sexual harassment (22%) (Table 3). Additionally, online banking fraud, including scams related to

bKash, Nagad and others transactions, was reported in 28% of cases, highlighting the growing concern of digital financial crimes. Crime distribution varied across different thanas, with Motijheel and Tejgaon Industrial Area experiencing higher incidents of property crimes, while Jatrabari and Sabujbagh reported more drug-related offenses (Figure 1). Reports of online banking fraud were more prevalent in commercial hubs and densely populated residential areas, indicating the need for stronger cybersecurity awareness and financial fraud prevention measures. These findings underscore the diverse nature of criminal activities across urban areas, emphasizing the importance of targeted crime prevention strategies based on specific crime trends in each locality. Addressing both physical and digital crimes through improved law enforcement, public awareness, and technological safeguards is crucial for ensuring a safer urban environment.

2.3 Crime Timing and Location

Crime occurrences are often influenced by specific time periods and locations where offenders find greater opportunities and lower risks of apprehension. Understanding the most crime-prone times and places helps in identifying patterns that can guide law enforcement and urban planning strategies. The following section examines the reported crime timing and high-risk locations, highlighting key trends in when and where crimes are most likely to take place.

Table 4: Crime Timing and Location Analysis

Crime Factor	Percentage of Respondents Reporting (%)
Late Evening (6 PM - 12 AM)	65%
Late Night (12 AM - 6 AM)	20%
Commercial/Market Areas	68%
Public Transport Stations	45%
Highways & Roads	40%



Figure 2: Time and Location of Crime

The analysis of crime occurrence patterns revealed that the late evening period, between 6 PM and 12 AM, was identified as the

most crime-prone time, reported by 65 percent of respondents (Table 4). This was followed by the late-night hours, from 12 AM to 6 AM, which accounted for 20 percent of reported incidents. In terms of location, commercial and market areas were the most frequently cited crime hotspots, with 68 percent of respondents identifying them as high-risk zones. Public transport stations were also considered vulnerable, as reported by 45 percent of respondents, while highways and major roads were mentioned by 40 percent. These findings suggest that crime is more likely to occur in areas with high public movement and reduced law enforcement presence during specific time periods, highlighting the need for increased surveillance and preventive measures in these locations (Figure 2).

These findings align with *Routine Activity Theory* (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which suggests that crime occurs when a motivated offender finds a suitable target in the absence of capable guardians. High-crime locations, particularly commercial areas, and transport hubs, provide numerous opportunities for offenders due to crowd movement and economic activity.

3. Environmental Factors Contributing to Crime

3.1 Key Environmental Factors

Environmental factors play a significant role in shaping crime patterns by influencing offenders' opportunities and perceived risks. Poor infrastructure, lack of surveillance, and socio-economic conditions can create environments where crime is more likely to occur. The following section examines the key environmental contributors to crime, as reported by respondents, and highlights the specific issues affecting different thanas. Respondents identified the following as major environmental contributors to crime:

Table 5: Key Environmental Factors Analysis

Environmental Factor	% of Respondents Agreeing (4 & 5 on a 5-point scale)
Poor Street Lighting	74%
Lack of Police Patrol	66%
High Unemployment Rate	59%
Presence of Drug Dealers	55%
Presence of Slums/Illegal Settlements	48%
Broken Infrastructure	41%



Figure 3: Community Safety and Well-being Concerns

The findings indicate that several environmental factors contribute significantly to crime occurrences across the 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Table 5). Poor street lighting was reported by 74 percent of respondents as a major issue, particularly in Sabujbagh, Jatrabari, and Badda, where dark and poorly lit areas create opportunities for criminal activities. The lack of police patrols was identified by 66 percent of respondents, with Adabar and Hatirjheel being the most affected, leading to reduced law enforcement visibility and lower deterrence against crime. High unemployment rates were cited by 59 percent as a contributing factor, suggesting that economic hardship may push individuals toward criminal behavior (Figure 3). Additionally, the presence of drug dealers (55 percent) was seen as a major concern, particularly in certain urban pockets where illegal activities thrive due to weak regulation. The existence of slums and illegal settlements, reported by 48 percent, was linked to higher crime rates, as these areas often lack proper security infrastructure. Lastly, broken infrastructure, such as abandoned buildings and poorly maintained public spaces, was highlighted by 41 percent of respondents as facilitating criminal activities by providing hiding spots and reducing natural surveillance. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions such as improved lighting, increased police presence, economic development programs, and better urban planning to mitigate environmental risks associated with crime.

The influence of environmental factors supports the *Broken Windows Theory* (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), which posits that visible signs of disorder (e.g., poor lighting, abandoned buildings) create an atmosphere conducive to crime. Additionally, high unemployment rates and the presence of drug networks align with *Social Disorganization Theory* (Shaw & McKay, 1942), which links economic deprivation to increased criminal activity.

4. Situational Factors in Criminal Decision-Making

4.1 Offender Decision-Making and Opportunity

Situational factors significantly influence criminal behavior, as offenders often take advantage of immediate opportunities rather than engaging in long-term planning. Elements such as the presence or absence of law enforcement, victim vulnerability, peer

pressure, substance use, and economic necessity can all impact an individual's decision to commit a crime. Understanding these factors helps in identifying the specific conditions that increase criminal activity and developing effective intervention strategies. The following section examines the key situational factors contributing to crime, as reported by respondents. Factors that most influenced an offender's decision:

Table 6: Situational Factors Analysis

Situational Factor	% of Respondents Agreeing (4 & 5 on a 5-point scale)
Absence of Law Enforcement	69%
Victim's Vulnerability (e.g., walking alone)	64%
Peer Influence	54%
Drug or Alcohol Influence	49%
Economic Need	46%

Factors Influencing Agreement



Figure 4: Factors Related to Situational

The findings suggest that situational factors play a crucial role in shaping an offender's decision to commit a crime, with 62 percent of respondents believing that most crimes occur due to immediate opportunities rather than pre-planned actions (Table 6). The absence of law enforcement was identified as the most significant situational factor, reported by 69 percent of respondents, particularly in Motijheel and Tejgaon Industrial Area, where weak police presence increases criminal activity. Victim vulnerability, such as walking alone in isolated areas, was cited by 64 percent as a key factor, indicating that offenders target individuals who

appear defenseless. Peer influence was another contributing factor, with 54 percent acknowledging its role in encouraging criminal behavior, especially among younger offenders who may act under group pressure (Figure 4). Additionally, 49 percent of respondents highlighted drug or alcohol use as a major influence, suggesting that substance abuse impairs judgment and increases impulsive criminal actions. Economic need was reported by 46 percent, indicating that financial desperation can drive individuals to engage in theft, robbery, or fraud. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening law enforcement, increasing public awareness, and addressing social and economic vulnerabilities to reduce situational crime risks.

These findings are consistent with Rational Choice Theory (Cornish & Clarke, 1986), which suggests that criminals weigh risks and benefits before committing a crime. The lack of police presence reduces perceived risks, making offenders more likely to act. The role of peer influence and drug use highlights the impact of social and psychological conditions in momentary criminal decisions.

5. Effectiveness of Crime Prevention Measures

5.1 Public Perception of Crime Prevention Measures

Effective crime prevention strategies are essential for enhancing public safety and reducing criminal activities in high-risk areas. Measures such as increased police patrols, surveillance technology, improved urban infrastructure, and community engagement play a crucial role in deterring crime and ensuring a secure environment. Understanding public perception of these strategies helps in identifying the most impactful approaches for crime reduction. The following section examines the effectiveness of various crime prevention measures as reported by respondents. Respondents rated the effectiveness of various crime prevention measures:

Table 7: Public Perception of Crime prevention Measures

Crime Prevention Measure	% Rating Effective (4 & 5 on a 5-point scale)
Increased Police Patrols	81%
CCTV Surveillance	74%
Street Lighting Improvements	69%
Community Watch Programs	58%
Public Awareness Campaigns	51%

Effectiveness of Crime Prevention Measures

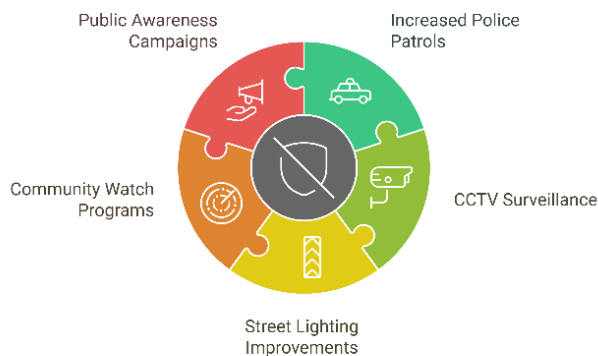


Figure 5: Effectiveness of Crime Prevention Measures

Crime prevention measures play a crucial role in reducing criminal activity by increasing surveillance, deterrence, and public awareness. Among the strategies assessed, increased police patrols were rated as the most effective by 81 percent of respondents, particularly in high-crime areas such as Motijheel and Jatrabari, where stronger law enforcement presence was seen as a key deterrent (Table 7). CCTV surveillance followed closely, with 74 percent of respondents considering it an essential tool for crime reduction, especially in commercial and high-foot-traffic areas where real-time monitoring can enhance security. Street lighting improvements were recommended by 69 percent, particularly in Sabujbagh, Badda, and Jatrabari, where poorly lit streets were identified as crime hotspots. Community watch programs were rated effective by 58 percent of respondents, suggesting that local engagement in crime prevention can contribute to safer neighborhoods. Public awareness campaigns, though considered the least effective among the measures, were still endorsed by 51 percent, indicating that educating the public on safety measures and crime reporting remains an important component of a comprehensive crime prevention strategy (Figure 5). These findings emphasize the need for a multifaceted approach combining law enforcement, technological surveillance, infrastructure improvements, and community participation to enhance security in high-risk areas.

5.2 Community Willingness to Participate in Crime Prevention

The findings indicate a mixed perception regarding community involvement in crime prevention efforts. While 63 percent of respondents expressed a willingness to participate in community-based crime prevention programs, only 38 percent believed that existing community watch programs were effective (Table 8). This gap suggests a lack of organization or public trust in such initiatives, potentially due to insufficient coordination between law enforcement and local communities. The data highlights the need for improved structuring of community-led security programs, better awareness campaigns, and stronger collaboration between

police and residents to enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention at the grassroots level.

Table 8: Community Participation in Crime Prevention

Crime Prevention Measure	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Willingness to Participate in Community Programs	63%
Belief in Effectiveness of Community Watch Programs	38%

Community Engagement and Belief in Crime Prevention

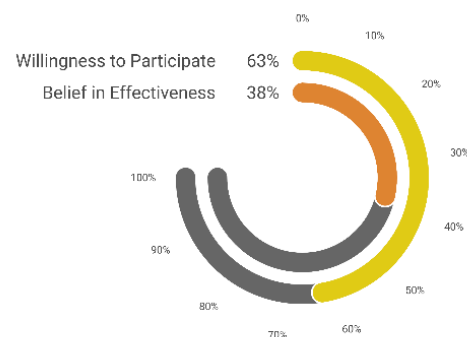


Figure 6: Community Engagement and Belief in Crime Prevention

These findings emphasize the importance of building trust in community initiatives, ensuring proper implementation, and integrating local efforts with formal law enforcement strategies to enhance security in high-crime areas (Figure 6).

Findings support *Situational Crime Prevention* (Clarke, 1997), which emphasizes reducing criminal opportunities through environmental modifications and surveillance. Public support for CCTV and increased police presence aligns with crime control strategies that enhance guardianship as per *Routine Activity Theory*. The low confidence in community programs suggests that crime prevention efforts need better community engagement and institutional support.

6. Safety Perception and Public Concerns

6.1 Personal Safety Concerns

Urban safety remains a critical concern, influencing residents' daily lives and mobility. A recent survey highlights significant variations in perceived security across different areas, shedding light on key safety concerns and vulnerable locations.

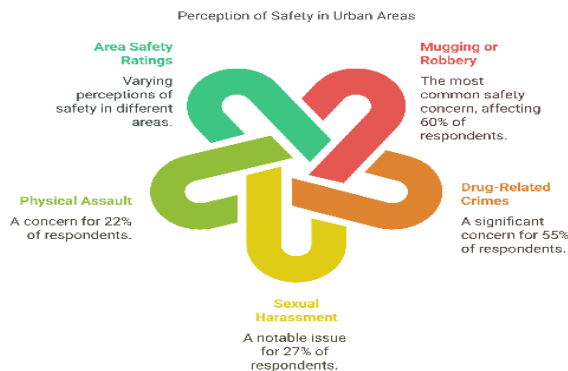


Figure 7: Perception of Safety in Urban Areas

Only 42% of respondents felt safe walking alone at night in their thana. The most significant safety concerns identified were mugging or robbery (60%), drug-related crimes (55%), sexual harassment (27%), and physical assault (22%) (Figure 7). Among the surveyed areas, Sabujbagh and Jatrabari had the lowest safety perception, whereas Uttara East and Hatirjheel were considered safer. The low safety perception at night supports prior research indicating that reduced natural surveillance and weak law enforcement contribute to fear of crime. Addressing these issues through better infrastructure, patrolling, and public engagement could enhance urban security.

The study revealed that crime in the 10 thanas of DMP is significantly influenced by environmental (poor lighting, unemployment, drug presence) and situational (lack of police, victim vulnerability) factors. Respondents emphasized the need for improved police presence, CCTV surveillance, and better street lighting as primary crime prevention strategies. The findings align with established criminological theories, reinforcing the idea that crime results from opportunities, perceived risks, and socio-environmental conditions. Future policy measures should focus on integrating surveillance, strengthening community engagement, and enhancing urban infrastructure to reduce crime effectively in Dhaka.

Findings

Based on the analysis of data collected from 200 respondents across 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), the study identified key insights into environmental and situational factors influencing criminal decision-making. The major findings are summarized as follows:

1. Crime Perception: 37% of respondents rated crime as high or very high in their respective thanas, with Motijheel, Jatrabari, and Badda being perceived as the most crime-prone areas.
2. Most Common Crimes: Theft and burglary (72%) were the most frequently reported crimes, followed by mugging and street robbery (58%), drug-related crimes (51%), physical assault (34%), and sexual harassment (22%) and digital financial crime is 28%.

3. Crime Hotspots: The highest concentration of crime was reported in commercial areas (68%), public transport stations (45%), and highways/roads (40%).
4. Time of Crime Occurrence: Late evening (6 PM - 12 AM) was identified as the most crime-prone period (65%), followed by late night (12 AM - 6 AM) (20%).
5. Poor Street Lighting (74%) and lack of police patrols (66%) were the most frequently cited environmental factors contributing to crime.
6. High unemployment rates (59%) and the presence of drug networks (55%) were seen as major triggers for criminal activity.
7. Respondents in Sabujbagh, Jatrabari, and Badda thanas reported poor street lighting as a major security issue, while Adabar and Hatirjheel had concerns over inadequate police patrols.
8. Crime was perceived to be more prevalent in areas with abandoned buildings, slums, and broken infrastructure, supporting the Broken Windows Theory.
9. 62% of respondents believed that most crimes were opportunistic rather than pre-planned.
10. The absence of law enforcement (69%), victim vulnerability (64%), and peer influence (54%) were the most frequently cited situational factors influencing criminal behavior.
11. Drug or alcohol influence (49%) and economic need (46%) were also identified as contributing to offenders' decision-making.
12. Motijheel and Tejgaon Industrial area thanas had the highest concerns regarding the absence of law enforcement as a factor enabling crime.
13. Increased police patrols (81%) and CCTV surveillance (74%) were considered the most effective crime prevention strategies.
14. Improving street lighting (69%) was highly recommended, particularly in Sabujbagh, Badda, and Jatrabari.
15. Community watch programs (58%) and public awareness campaigns (51%) were seen as moderately effective but lacked strong public confidence.
16. 63% of respondents expressed willingness to participate in community-based crime prevention initiatives, though only 38% believed existing programs were effective.
17. Only 42% of respondents felt safe walking alone at night in their respective thanas.
18. The biggest safety concerns were mugging/robbery (60%), drug-related crimes (55%), and sexual harassment (27%).
19. Sabujbagh and Jatrabari had the lowest safety perception, while Uttara East and Hatirjheel were perceived as safer areas.
20. Respondents strongly advocated for more police patrols, extended CCTV coverage, and better street lighting to enhance security.

21. Many believed that economic development, employment opportunities, and social programs could reduce crime by addressing root causes.
22. A need for better community-police relations was highlighted, as public trust in law enforcement varied across different thanas.

The findings indicate that crime in Dhaka's urban areas is significantly shaped by environmental conditions (e.g., poor lighting, lack of law enforcement) and situational triggers (e.g., offender opportunity, peer influence). Crime prevention strategies should focus on enhancing surveillance, strengthening law enforcement, and engaging the community in crime control efforts to create a safer urban environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate crime in the 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) by addressing environmental and situational factors influencing criminal decision-making:

1. Increase police patrols in high-crime areas, especially in Motijheel, Jatrahari, and Badda, where respondents reported the highest crime levels. Deploy more community police officers to build trust between law enforcement and residents. Improve response time and accessibility of law enforcement through better resource allocation and technology-driven crime monitoring (Halimuzzaman et al., 2025).
2. Install more CCTV cameras in crime hotspots such as commercial areas, transport stations, and highways to deter criminal activity. Improve street lighting, particularly in Sabujbagh, Badda, and Jatrahari, where poor lighting was identified as a key factor contributing to crime. Repair and maintain public infrastructure, including roads and abandoned buildings, to reduce criminal hiding spots and opportunities (Sharfuddin et al., 2025).
3. Implement community watch programs and encourage local participation in reporting suspicious activities. Increase public awareness campaigns on crime prevention, self-defense strategies, and emergency response measures. Strengthen neighborhood crime watch initiatives by involving local businesses and social organizations in crime reduction efforts (Imran et al., 2024).
4. Create employment programs for youth in high-crime areas to reduce economic-driven crimes. Strengthen drug rehabilitation and awareness programs to prevent substance-related offenses. Enhance educational and vocational training opportunities to reduce unemployment and social vulnerability to crime (Halimuzzaman et al., 2023).
5. Develop a crime mapping and prediction system using GIS technology to identify emerging crime hotspots in different thanas. Introduce smart policing techniques,

including AI-driven surveillance and real-time crime reporting systems for citizens. Implement mobile emergency alert systems to allow residents to quickly report crimes and suspicious activities (Honey & Sultana, 2023).

6. Establish a dedicated crime prevention task force within the DMP for each thana to focus on localized crime patterns. Formulate evidence-based crime prevention policies by integrating data from crime reports, public surveys, and expert insights. Strengthen coordination between law enforcement agencies, city planners, and community organizations to create a holistic crime prevention framework.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into environmental and situational factors influencing criminal decision-making, several limitations must be acknowledged:

1. The study focused on only 10 thanas of DMP, which may not fully represent crime patterns in other areas of Dhaka or Bangladesh. Socio-economic and cultural variations across different cities or rural areas may yield different crime trends.
2. Some respondents may have overreported or underreported crime incidents due to personal bias, memory distortion, or fear of repercussions. The accuracy of responses regarding offender motivations depends on subjective perceptions rather than direct offender interviews.
3. Limited access to official police records restricted deeper analysis of historical crime trends. Some crime victims or law enforcement officials may have been reluctant to participate in the study, affecting the comprehensiveness of the findings.
4. While strong correlations between environmental/situational factors and crime were identified, causation cannot be definitively proven without longitudinal studies. Other unmeasured factors, such as political influences, socio-cultural norms, and economic fluctuations, may also impact crime patterns.
5. Respondents' safety and anonymity were prioritized, limiting the depth of personal crime experiences shared during data collection. The study did not include direct interviews with offenders, which could have provided deeper insights into criminal decision-making processes.
6. GIS-based crime mapping and predictive policing models could not be fully implemented due to limited access to law enforcement databases. The study relied on manual survey data, which may lack the precision of automated crime data analytics.

Despite these limitations, the study provides critical insights into how environmental and situational factors influence crime in Dhaka's urban areas. The recommendations emphasize strengthening law enforcement, improving infrastructure,

increasing community engagement, addressing socio-economic drivers of crime, integrating technology, and enhancing governance strategies. Future research should expand the geographical scope, incorporate offender perspectives, and utilize advanced crime analytics to develop more precise and actionable crime prevention policies.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of environmental and situational factors on criminal decision-making within 10 thanas of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) through a quantitative analysis of survey data from 200 respondents. The findings highlight that crime patterns vary significantly across different urban environments, with factors such as poor street lighting, lack of law enforcement presence, high unemployment, and drug-related activities playing a crucial role in fostering criminal behavior. Additionally, situational factors, including the absence of capable guardians, victim vulnerability, and peer influence, significantly impact offenders' decisions to commit crimes. The study revealed that commercial areas, public transport stations, and highways are the most crime-prone locations, with late evening (6 PM - 12 AM) identified as the peak crime period. Theft, mugging, and drug-related offenses were reported as the most prevalent crimes across the surveyed areas, with Motijheel, Jatrabari, and Badda thanas experiencing the highest crime rates. The absence of police patrols and inadequate surveillance systems were identified as major enablers of crime, supporting Routine Activity Theory and Broken Windows Theory. From a crime prevention perspective, respondents emphasized the need for increased police patrols, improved street lighting, expanded CCTV surveillance, and stronger community engagement in crime control efforts. Additionally, socio-economic interventions such as employment programs and drug rehabilitation initiatives were recommended to address the root causes of criminal behavior. However, the study faced certain limitations, including restricted access to police records, reliance on self-reported data, and difficulty in establishing causal relationships between environmental factors and crime rates. Future research should expand its scope to include more thanas, offender perspectives, and longitudinal crime trend analysis to develop more effective and data-driven crime prevention policies.

In conclusion, the study reinforces the notion that crime is not solely an outcome of individual intent but is significantly shaped by external environmental and situational conditions. A comprehensive, multi-agency approach combining law enforcement, urban planning, technological surveillance, and community participation is essential for enhancing public safety and reducing crime in Dhaka's urban areas. Effective crime prevention strategies should be data-driven, context-specific, and inclusive of both law enforcement agencies and local communities to create a safer and more secure urban environment.

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