



A Jamaican Security Phenomenon: Crime Rates & Public Safety between 2020 and 2024

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Abstract

Introduction: Crime poses a significant threat to public safety and socioeconomic development, affecting the well-being of citizens, the stability of society, and the effectiveness of public institutions. Different types of crime, including violent, economic, and cybercrime, pose multi-layered challenges. However, public perceptions of the threat of crime often differ from actual statistics due to media influence and social stereotypes.

Purpose: This study provides an in-depth and systematic examination of crime, its perception, and how understanding the issues frames policies. **Methods:** The systematic literature review was based on an analysis of theoretical concepts, such as Deterrence Theory, Routine Activity Theory, and economic models of crime, as well as empirical evidence on socioeconomic factors influencing crime rates. The revised studies used statistical data, law enforcement reports, and surveys of crime threat perceptions among the population. **Results:** The literature review found that improving the perception of safety only sometimes accompanies decreasing crime rates. In some regions, such as Jamaica, low crime detection rates reduce the overall level of trust in law enforcement. Cybercrime was highlighted as a growing threat requiring increased technical and educational measures. Social factors, such as income inequality and access to education, significantly influence crime dynamics.

Conclusion: Effective crime reduction requires a comprehensive approach, which includes tailored social programs, technological innovations, and active engagement with local communities. Particular attention should be paid to preventing cybercrime and improving digital literacy. Future research should consider cultural specificities and the long-term influence of the strategies used.

Keywords: Crime Rates, Public Safety, Cybercrime, Law Enforcement, Deterrence Theory, Routine Activity Theory, Community Engagement.

Introduction

Crime is one of the significant threats to public safety and the sustainable development of society, which negatively influences the personal well-being of citizens, social stability, economic growth, and public institutions. Crime is defined as behaviour that violates the laws established by the state and is considered particularly harmful to public safety (Fox, 1963; Grant, 2007; Moore et al., 1988; National University, 2024). This phenomenon can take many forms, including violent, economic, or organised crime. However, which actions should be considered criminal and which ones are deviations from the norm often imply a sociological context. Public concern about crime is an essential aspect of determining public policy priorities. Crime has remained a serious problem for many countries over the past decades, affecting national security and individual communities' lives. At the societal level, crime increases social divisions and contributes to the spread of fear among the population (Garofalo, 1981; Lanfear et al., 2019; Office for National Statistics, n.d; Moore et al., 1988; Silva & Guedes, 2022; Smith, 1984). In the long term, this can lead to decreased social cohesion and stability, which hinders the effective functioning of public and state institutions. Thus, the perception of crime and its influence on public safety might align differently from the actual statistics. Moreover, the issue of crime rates and public safety is closely linked with the effectiveness of law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and the influence on public institutions, such as education, health care, and social policy. In recent decades, research has focused on the impact of the militarisation of police forces and strategies to reduce crime rates, including using modern technology and changing approaches to policing (McLaughlin, 2022). In countries with high rates of violent crime, the need for rapid action to ensure public safety is pronounced.

This literature review will analyse epidemiological studies on crime rates and their influence on public safety. It examines existing approaches to analysing crime rates and public safety and assesses their impact on social stability. Particular attention will be paid to various theoretical and empirical studies that examine the relationship between the perception of the threat of crime, actual crime statistics, and public safety. Moreover, the prevalence of different types of crime, including violent, economic, and organised crime, and factors influencing their prevalence, such as socioeconomic conditions, demographic characteristics, and cultural contexts, will be examined. The review will be based on data obtained from official sources, such as crime reports and sociological studies on the perception of the threat of crime among the population. In addition, studies focusing on the effectiveness of law enforcement and the influence of social and economic factors on crime dynamics will be considered, emphasising various approaches to reducing crime rates and improving public safety. Overall, understanding the discrepancies between actual crime statistics and public perceptions and assessing the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies is essential for developing policies that improve public safety and promote social stability. Hence, this study aims to provide an in-depth and systematic examination of the crime phenomenon, its perception, and how an understanding of the issues frames policies.

Methodology

This systematic literature review is a qualitative research method that allows for an in-depth analysis of the theoretical and empirical aspects of the problem under study (Mengist, 2020;

Seers, 2015; Snyder, 2019). A qualitative approach was chosen to understand the complex social processes associated with crime and its influence on public safety and to identify key trends, research gaps, and suggestions for improving law enforcement strategies. A search for relevant publications was conducted using databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, PubMed, JSTOR, and SpringerLink. Moreover, the keywords were used to ensure the comprehensiveness of the analysis, such as crime rate, public safety, violent crime, the social influence of crime, the criminal justice system, crime trends, social factors influencing crime, the impact of crime on communities, crime prevention, and law enforcement strategies. Synonyms and qualifying phrases were used to broaden the search scope. Further, the retrieved articles were assessed for inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

1. Topic: Publications directly discussing various types of crime and their influence on public safety, as well as the study of policy in the field of law, order, and security;
2. Type of publication: Peer-reviewed scientific articles, books, reports by human rights organisations, studies conducted by state and international agencies, and conference publications;
3. Year of publication: Sources published in the last 5 years;
4. Research methods: Inclusion of empirical studies, meta-analyses, and theoretical works using modern methods of studying crime and security.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Topic: Publications not directly related to crime or public safety;
2. Publication Type: Non-academic sources, such as news articles, blogs, or other publications without peer review;
3. Publication Year: Sources published more than 5 years ago;
4. Methodology: Publications with insufficiently rigorous or inadequate research methods, such as poorly powered samples or unsubstantiated conclusions.

Data Analysis

The chosen sources will be analysed thematically, considering the problems, trends, common approaches, key factors influencing crime rates, and strategies to ensure public safety. This approach allows for synthesising the results of existing research. It suggests further study in crime and public safety, thus filling the gaps related to underestimating individual factors and a need for more understanding of the problem and solutions.

Systematic Literature Review

Trends

Van Dijk et al. (2022) report that crime rates worldwide vary by region, with the highest rates in Africa and Latin America, where crime rates are rising, while other areas, such as Europe and

North America, have stable or declining crime rates. The main determinants of crime are governance, poverty, inequality, and the proportion of young people, as evidenced by the correlation between changes in these factors and crime dynamics over the years (van Dijk et al., 2022). Bourne et al. (2024) examined crime trends in Jamaica in 2022 and 2023, finding both declines and persistent problems in solving serious and violent crimes. In 2023, there was a 10% decrease in crimes compared to 2022, with the most significant reductions recorded in the categories of rape (16.6%), robbery (15.1%), and burglary (12.9%) (Bourne et al., 2024). However, despite this decrease, crime clearance rates remain low. In 2023, 43% of such crimes were cleared, slightly up from 39.5% in 2022 (Bourne et al., 2024). Notably, only two crime types, namely rape and aggravated assault, had relatively high clearance rates — 79.8% and 73.6%, respectively.

Meanwhile, for homicides, shootings, robberies, and burglaries, these rates remained low, not exceeding 50% and reaching minimal values, such as 0.1% for homicides and robberies (Bourne et al., 2024). These findings point to systemic problems with the effectiveness of law enforcement, including a lack of responsiveness and low punishment, which reduces the overall level of crime deterrence. It is noted that the majority of crimes remain unsolved, and offenders often escape punishment, which contributes to the increase in violent acts, including murders and robberies (Bourne et al., 2024). In addition, a high number of thefts and murders are committed with firearms, confirming the persistent problem of gun proliferation in Jamaica. Although there was a slight decrease in crime in 2023 compared to the previous year, the overall situation remained tense, and detection rates remained low (Bourne et al., 2024). Therefore, a more effective justice and police response is needed.

Factors of Crime

Bun et al. (2020) focused on research in the economics of crime and punishment, which traditionally focuses on how various factors, such as deterrence and incapacitation, influence crime rates. In their work, the authors found that criminals act rationally, weighing the benefits and risks of committing crimes. According to this assumption, increasing the expected costs of criminal activity, including the risk of apprehension and the severity of punishment, should reduce crime rates (Bun et al., 2020). However, empirical research spanning over 40 years provides no consensus on how increasing punishment reduces crime. In particular, the effectiveness of a justice system based on the increase of the sentence is often limited, and much depends on how the different stages of the justice system, such as the police, the court, and the prison, are perceived, as well as their influence on society (Bun et al., 2020). In the context of community safety, it has been argued that criminal activity may be sensitive to the likelihood of arrest and the social stigma associated with conviction. Results from an analysis of crime data in New South Wales, Australia, suggest that social reactions to arrest and conviction may significantly reduce motivation for criminal activity beyond formal punishment (Bun et al., 2020). In particular, convicted offenders face limited labour market opportunities and loss of social reputation, which are already significant deterrents. Such trends support the hypothesis that community sanctions and social mobility effects may be key to reducing crime (Bun et al., 2020). However, despite these findings, the extent to which different types of punishment affect

long-term crime dynamics remains a matter of debate in the economic and criminological literature.

Campedelli et al. (2020) examined the influence of specific factors on crime rates, focusing on community safety measures. In this context, the introduction of social distancing policies and mobility restrictions has been found to significantly influence crime rates by changing citizens' daily routines and patterns of social interaction. According to Routine Activity Theory, changes in people's everyday habits, such as reduced mobility and social interaction during a pandemic, can significantly reduce opportunities for crime (Campedelli et al., 2020). For example, restricting access to public spaces, closing businesses, and increasing isolation can reduce theft, robbery and other property crimes. This is supported by studies showing that several countries have decreased crime after introducing COVID-19 containment measures, especially in cities with high levels of social isolation and strict quarantine measures (Campedelli et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that the effects of government interventions may be mixed and depend on the specific socioeconomic conditions and characteristics of individual communities. Under long-term restrictions, such as stay-at-home orders, new forms of crime may emerge because of increased stress, financial hardship, and social isolation. Moreover, crime rates may vary across different city areas due to differences in socioeconomic status, population density, and access to resources. Therefore, it is essential to examine the spatial and temporal aspects of changes in crime in response to government measures to develop more effective strategies to address crime in emergencies.

Anser et al. (2020) focused on a broader study of the influence of social and economic factors on crime rates. According to the researchers, income inequality, unemployment, and education and healthcare costs play a significant role in crime dynamics (Anser et al., 2020). Research shows that high inequality in income distribution contributes to an increase in crime, especially considering violent crime. In conditions of economic growth, when income is distributed unfairly, social stability deteriorates, which leads to a rise in crime, especially among the most vulnerable groups of the population. Unemployment, in turn, is an essential factor contributing to the increase in crime since a lack of jobs and economic opportunities contributes to social exclusion and deterioration of living conditions, which increases the propensity to delinquency (Anser et al., 2020). At the same time, increasing public spending on social infrastructure, especially in education, healthcare, and social protection, can significantly reduce crime rates. Spending helps improve the poor's quality of life by creating additional opportunities for education and professional development and enhancing access to healthcare and social support. Moreover, countries where social policies aim to improve the poor's living conditions tend to have lower crime rates, as evidenced by the parabolic relationship between crime and poverty (Anser et al., 2020). Crime in such countries may be reduced by reforms aimed at improving social protection and increasing equality, which helps to eliminate social tensions and crime.

Theories

Key theoretical approaches explain the mechanisms of crime and its influence on public safety, serve as a basis for developing effective strategies to combat crime and strengthen public order, and help understand the main factors influencing crime rates in different societies and cultures.

For example, according to Acting and Gottschalk (2022), Convenience Theory explains criminal behaviour, especially in white-collar crime, through economic, organisational, and behavioural dimensions. The theory argues that crime often becomes the most rational and convenient way to achieve goals, especially if perceived as quick, easy, and less risky (Asting & Gottschalk, 2022). Privileged individuals, such as corporate executives or professionals, use their positions and access to resources to commit illegal acts with minimal chances of detection. An example is the case of Norwegian lawyer Hallstein Seli, who fraudulently used clients' funds, which was possible because of a lack of control and organisational capabilities (Asting & Gottschalk, 2022). Thus, Convenience Theory helps to understand how financial motives, organisational conditions, and the willingness to engage in deviant behaviour create a favourable environment for crimes, which are difficult to detect but significantly compromise public safety and trust in institutions.

Apart from this, it is essential to note the concept of deviant behaviour, which implies deviation from social norms. According to the idea, deviance is a product of cultural and social contexts rather than a fixed behaviour characteristic (Nickerson, 2024). Deviant behaviour includes actions that violate socially accepted norms, ranging from unethical acts to violent crimes. According to Nickerson (2024), deviance's situational nature is essential. Thus, what is considered deviant in one culture may be a norm in another. For example, substance use or acts of violence are classified as deviant in most societies. However, the perception of other actions, such as arranged marriages or redistribution of resources, depends on the cultural context. In addition, Durkheim's Anomie Theory and its development by Merton explain deviance as a consequence of the gap between socially approved goals and the available means of achieving them (Nickerson, 2024). Thus, deviant behaviour, although not always criminal, has a profound connection with public safety, affecting social stability and necessitating mechanisms of social control.

Over time, many studies have examined the relationship between law enforcement practices, crime deterrence, and public safety, drawing on various theoretical frameworks. According to Bourne et al. (2024), one of the most influential approaches is Cesare Beccaria's Deterrence Theory, which is based on the classical school of criminology and suggests that crime can be deterred through the prompt, confident, and proportionate application of punishment. Beccaria's ideas, particularly those related to the immediacy and certainty of punishment, are often cited in discussions of crime prevention and policing strategies. According to this theory, the fear of being caught and punished is the most effective deterrence from engaging in criminal activity (Bourne et al., 2024). In the context of the Jamaican case, Deterrence Theory is relevant considering the country's long-standing struggle with high crime rates, especially homicide. The Jamaica Constituency Force (JCF) has consistently implemented various crime control strategies to curb the prevalence of violent crime. However, challenges persist due to low detection rates for serious crimes (Bourne et al., 2024). Moreover, Shortridge et al. (2024) focused on Deterrence Theory and systems that should play a key role in understanding cybercrime control and public safety in the context of cyber threats. According to the Deterrence Theory, the threat of punishment can deter individuals and organisations from committing illegal acts, such as cybercrime (Shortridge et al., 2024). The statement is relevant in cybersecurity, where strict protections and penalties for cybercrime can serve as an effective means of preventing attacks.

Finally, Systems Theory emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to cyber defence, viewing security as an interconnected system of people, processes, and technology (Shortridge et al., 2024). The concept acknowledges that cybersecurity requires coordinated efforts at all levels, from technological solutions to the human factor. In the Jamaican context, where the digitalisation of the economy and public infrastructure is developing, it is essential to integrate these approaches into cybersecurity strategies to create a sustainable and effective cybersecurity system (Shortridge et al., 2024). Thus, the theoretical framework surrounding crime and public safety emphasises the need for confidence and speed in law enforcement to reduce crime.

Apart from this, Johnson (2019) focused on Deterrence Theory, which underpins many modern approaches to crime regulation, and argued that increasing punishment can deter criminal activity by increasing crime costs. According to this theory, rational individuals weigh the benefits and risks of committing crimes. The high probability of apprehension and punishment and quick and severe consequences are expected to reduce the motivation to commit crimes. The works of such scholars as Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham emphasise the importance of the severity of punishment and its immediacy and certainty as key factors in deterring criminals from committing crimes (Johnson, 2019). A modern economic model of deterrence developed by Gary Becker emphasises rational choice, in which criminals weigh the costs and benefits of crime, and how increasing the probability of apprehension can be more effective in reducing crime than simply increasing punishment (Johnson, 2019).

Furthermore, current research suggests that increasing the cost of crime, whether it is the likelihood of being caught, the speed of punishment, or the severity, can significantly influence reducing crime. Moreover, empirical evidence supports the idea that people who perceive a high likelihood of being caught and punished are less likely to commit crimes (Johnson, 2019). However, implementing these strategies requires careful assessment of their influence in different contexts and consideration of multiple factors, including economic and social conditions, access to legal options, and community support (Johnson, 2019). Thus, increasing punishment will only sometimes reduce crime unless other factors, such as poverty, mental illness, or access to drug treatment, which also influence crime in a community, are taken into account.

Cybercrime

According to Bossler and Berenbloom (2019), cybercrime is a growing threat to public safety since it involves using modern technology to commit illegal activities ranging from data theft to attacks on critical infrastructure. Shortridge et al. (2024) focused on cybercrime, particularly relevant for developing countries like Jamaica. As societies and economies become digitalised, the vulnerability of critical infrastructure, including financial institutions, educational institutions, and small businesses, to cyberattacks increases. According to reports from the Jamaica Cyber Incident Response Team (JaCIRT), the number of reported incidents in 2023 has increased significantly compared to previous years, highlighting the growing threat in the area of cybersecurity (Shortridge et al., 2024). This trend aligns with global cybercrime concerns, where phishing and ransomware attacks are among the top cyber threats. In addition, Awad et al. (2024) note that cybercrime significantly influences crime rates and public safety, increasing the risks of

financial losses, data breaches, and threats to national infrastructure. Crimes cause economic losses and undermine public trust in digital technologies and government institutions, which can increase public fears and crime rates (Awad et al., 2024). Further, the research into global practices shows that, in the context of rapidly increasing digitalisation, it is necessary to develop local defence strategies that consider specific threats and challenges for each country (Shortridge et al., 2024). In the Jamaican context, where cybercrime is becoming an increasingly common threat, creating a deterrent system by strengthening accountability and punishment for cybercrime is an important part of the national security strategy. Finally, public safety in cybercrime requires strengthening technical measures and developing social and educational protection aspects. With cybercrime becoming an integral part of national security threats, raising awareness among citizens and organising effective incident response mechanisms is necessary. Local studies highlight the importance of creating a comprehensive cyber defence system with technological solutions and training programs for youth and small entrepreneurs (Shortridge et al., 2024). It is important to prioritise public-private cooperation and investment in cybersecurity at the national strategy level.

Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Agencies and Strategies

The effectiveness of law enforcement in combating crime often depends on various factors, including the quality of policing, the level of public trust in law enforcement, and the ability of law enforcement to adapt to changing conditions. An important aspect of effective law enforcement is using proactive methods, such as crime prevention, rather than simply reacting to crimes that have already occurred. Modern approaches include actively using technology, such as CCTV systems, crime data analysis, and artificial intelligence (AI) to predict crime trends. In addition, improving cooperation between public safety agencies, including the police, prosecutors, and the judiciary, plays a key role in creating a comprehensive crime control strategy (Sani et al., 2024). In a theoretical context, Social Control Theory and Social Protection Theory are often used to analyse approaches to reducing crime and improving public safety. For example, Social Control Theory suggests that the more social connections and responsibilities a person has, the less likely they are to commit a crime (Sani et al., 2024). The concept emphasises the importance of social institutions, such as family, schools, and workplaces, in preventing crime. In turn, Social Norm Violation Theories, such as Robert Merton's Anomie Theory, argue that crime occurs when people face the inability to achieve social goals through legitimate means (Sani et al., 2024). Approaches that focus on strengthening social and economic opportunities for all members of society, including education, healthcare, and social protection, can effectively reduce crime and improve public safety.

The effectiveness of law enforcement in reducing crime and ensuring public safety depends on many factors, including the methods and strategies they use. Traditionally, law enforcement has relied on reactive strategies, such as patrolling and responding to calls, which has limited their ability to address underlying crime problems. In recent decades, the concept of proactive strategies, such as problem-oriented policing (POP), which focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes of crime and disorder, has emerged (Hinkle et al., 2020). The approach uses the scan, analyse, respond, assess (SARA) model, which enables police to respond to incidents, analyse why they occur, and develop tailored responses, which may include collaboration with

local communities and other government agencies (Hinkle et al., 2020). Diversity in policing approaches allows for a more flexible response to crime and community problems. For example, the hotspot strategy focuses on intensive interventions in areas where crime occurs most frequently, which has been proven effective in the study by Hinkle et al. (2020).

Meanwhile, prevention-focused approaches, such as the POP program, can reduce crime and prevent it by addressing its causes early. Using different approaches can reduce crime and increase public trust in the police by improving the perception of their work (Hinkle et al., 2020). Ultimately, the success of these strategies depends on their implementation, evaluation of results, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions and public needs.

In addition, governments have taken various measures to combat the rise in crime, including law enforcement reforms, improvements in the criminal justice system, and social programs aimed at crime prevention. One of the most popular crime control strategies in recent decades has been militarising police forces. Police militarisation refers to equipping law enforcement agencies with military equipment and weapons, using military tactics and methods in law enforcement, and incorporating military structures and approaches into everyday policing (McLaughlin, 2022). This process has begun to gain popularity in response to the rise in violence and threats associated with organised crime and terrorism. Police militarisation is an attempt to effectively combat violent crime using increased force and influence, which often results in harsher interactions between the police and the civilian population (Sani et al., 2024). However, according to Flores-Macias and Zarkin (2019), despite its popularity, especially in countries with high levels of violence, the model has been criticised for potential human rights violations, increased repression, and violence by law enforcement. De Bruin (2021) adds that while militarisation increases the police's ability to use force, it complicates the process of collecting information and contributes to the emergence of indiscriminate violence, which can increase protest sentiment and resistance. Therefore, Flores-Macias and Zarkin (2019) highlight another key approach. This community-oriented policing model aims to improve the interaction between the police and citizens, establish trusting relationships, and work to prevent crime through prevention and the involvement of residents in security decisions. The approach implies active cooperation with civil society organisations, improving public communication, and addressing social problems underlining crime (Flores-Macias & Zarkin, 2019). Contemporary approaches to crime reduction often involve a combination of these models, emphasising reforming law enforcement, improving its effectiveness, and ensuring citizen safety through preventive and punitive measures (Flores-Macias & Zarkin, 2019). It is important to remember that long-term solutions to security problems require a comprehensive approach that implies law enforcement and improving socioeconomic conditions, education, social protection, and justice systems.

Methods

The reviewed literature presents various methods for studying crime and its influence on public safety, including theoretical and empirical approaches. Theoretical methods are based on concepts such as deterrence theory, routine activity theory, and economic models of crime, which help explain the motivation for criminal behaviour and its mechanisms. Empirical studies are based on the analysis of crime statistics, law enforcement reports, and sociological surveys

studying the perception of the threat of crime among the population. In addition, comparative analysis methods were used, which made it possible to assess the influence of socioeconomic factors, such as income inequality, educational level, and unemployment, on crime dynamics. Further, several studies paid special attention to the study of specific types of crime, such as cybercrime, through the analysis of incidents and the assessment of technical countermeasures. This synthesis of methods made it possible to form a comprehensive understanding of the crime problem and offer strategies to address it.

Synthesis of Results

Research on various factors affecting crime rates confirms the multifaceted nature of the problem. Ban et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of rational criminal behaviour and the effectiveness of the punishment system. However, the authors argue that harsh measures may need to be effectively revised, especially considering the social sanctions and stigma accompanying convictions. Campedelli et al. (2020) note that external factors, such as social distancing during the pandemic, can significantly reduce crime rates by changing people's daily habits and social interactions. Research by Anser et al. (2020) reveals the key role of income inequality, unemployment, and social security levels in crime dynamics, emphasising that improving social conditions can significantly reduce crime rates.

Moreover, law enforcement's effectiveness depends on their approaches, including such effective strategies as prevention and community collaboration (Hinkle et al., 2020; Sani et al., 2024). At the same time, police militarisation strategies, while helpful in combating violence, have been criticised for violating human rights and increasing repression (Flores-Macias & Zarkin, 2019; McLaughlin, 2022). Thus, effective crime control requires a comprehensive approach that includes punitive measures and improvements in socioeconomic conditions and law enforcement.

A review of crime and public safety theories reveals that crime behaviour is often explained through several key theoretical approaches. The Convenience Theory proposed by Asting and Gottschalk (2022) views crime as a rational choice, especially among privileged groups, such as corporate executives. This approach explains white-collar crime through economic, organisational, and behavioural factors. Moreover, it is essential to mention the Theory of Deviant Behavior, according to which deviance is a product of social and cultural contexts, according to Nickerson (2024), as well as the Anomie Theory, which links deviance to the gap between socially approved goals and the available means of achieving them. Deterrence Theory, developed by Beccaria and analysed in modern research by Bourne et al. (2024) and Shortridge et al. (2024), emphasises the importance of swift and sure punishment to prevent crime. In turn, Johnson (2019) notes that increasing the cost of crime and the likelihood of apprehension can significantly reduce crime. However, as research from Jamaica shows, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on multiple factors, including weak law enforcement and high rates of unsolved crime (Bourne et al., 2024). Crime trends, such as the observed decline in violent crime in Jamaica in 2023, underscore the importance of timely and effective responses. At the same time, global experience shows that crime rates vary by region, with high levels of criminal activity in Africa and Latin America (van Dijk et al., 2022). With the rise of digitalisation, cybercrime is becoming an increasingly pressing threat to public safety (Bosler & Berenblum,

2019; Shortridge et al., 2024). Cybercrimes, such as phishing and ransomware attacks, are becoming a significant threat in countries where the digital infrastructure is still developing, as is the case in Jamaica (Shortridge et al., 2024). Developing comprehensive cyber defence strategies that include technological measures and public awareness programs to combat this issue is essential. Thus, to reduce crime and ensure public safety, it is necessary to consider a wide range of factors, from theoretical foundations to practical approaches, with a special focus on integrating technology and public control into security strategies.

Discussion

Summary of Key Findings

The systematic literature review demonstrated that crime significantly influences public safety and socioeconomic development, affecting the personal well-being of citizens, the resilience of societies and the effectiveness of public institutions. Despite the decline in statistical crime rates in some regions, public perception of the threat remains high. This trend is associated with the influence of media and stereotypes that distort the perception of the real situation. For example, in such countries as Jamaica, low crime detection rates reduce trust in law enforcement, which creates additional obstacles to strengthening public safety. The review found that social factors, such as economic inequality, education level, and access to social services, play an important role in crime dynamics—inequitable income distribution and high unemployment increase criminal activity, especially among vulnerable groups. At the same time, investments in education, healthcare, and social programs reduce crime and improve security. In turn, cybercrime was highlighted as a growing threat that requires comprehensive solutions. With the increasing digitalisation of the economy and society, the vulnerability of critical infrastructure and personal data has increased. Examples of cyber threats include phishing, ransomware attacks, and data breaches. Preventing them requires technical and educational measures, such as improving digital literacy and strengthening cybersecurity systems. Effectively reducing crime requires a comprehensive approach that combines social programs, modern technologies, and active engagement with local communities. Considerable attention should be paid to improving law enforcement, including the introduction of preventive methods, such as problem-oriented policing and the use of analytics to predict crime. Moreover, ensuring transparency and strengthening citizens' trust in law enforcement is important.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Systematic Literature Review

The systematic literature review has several strengths, including up-to-date data and a multidisciplinary approach, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the crime problem. Further, current research focusing on such aspects as cybercrime and the influence of socioeconomic factors provides a basis for practical recommendations. However, weaknesses relate to the limitations of the review. For example, the focus on recent publications excludes the possibility of analysing older data, limiting the comprehensiveness of understanding long-term trends. In addition, more detail in some methodologies may help the replicability of the results in other contexts.

Policy Implications

The review's results have important policy implications. To increase citizen trust, policymakers must address the gap between crime rates and public perceptions. Strengthening digital literacy and developing cybersecurity systems should be a priority in national security strategies. In addition, law enforcement reforms to increase their effectiveness and transparency can help increase trust in institutions. Policies aimed at reducing social inequality and improving access to education will contribute to long-term reductions in crime and improvements in social stability.

Key Stakeholders

First, law enforcement agencies are key stakeholders in solving the crime problem. They need to implement modern technologies and strengthen preventive work to increase their efficiency. In addition, government agencies play an essential role in developing and implementing social programs to reduce economic inequality and improve quality of life. At the same time, local communities' involvement in planning and implementing security strategies is important in increasing trust and reducing crime. The private sector, including business, especially in the technology sector, can actively participate in developing solutions to improve cybersecurity. Finally, covering crime and security issues in the media helps to reduce panic and inform the public.

Recommendations for Future Research

To deepen knowledge of crime and improve the effectiveness of crime prevention measures, it is recommended that the role of media in shaping public perceptions of safety and crime levels be explored. Future research should also consider the cultural characteristics of different regions and the long-term effects of proposed strategies. In particular, attention should be paid to studying the influence of media on the perception of crime and developing sustainable approaches to counter cyber threats.

Conclusions

Although crime rates have decreased in some regions, public perceptions often do not reflect these changes. This trend is related to the role of the media, which can distort the real picture of crime and the low crime detection rate. As a result, public perceptions of security become less objective, which leads to increased anxiety and mistrust of law enforcement agencies. Effective crime control requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving social infrastructure, introducing technological innovations, and actively involving local communities. Addressing underlying social problems, such as poverty, unemployment, low levels of education, and social exclusion, can significantly reduce crime in the long term. Particular attention should be paid to the problem of cybercrime, which is rapidly growing and represents a new threat to public safety. Cybercrime requires the development of special technologies and protection mechanisms and constantly updating the regulatory framework and educational programs to prevent such crimes. Integrating the efforts of law enforcement agencies, technology companies, and educational institutions is important and can contribute to forming a safer digital environment. Thus, successful crime control requires a comprehensive, flexible, multifaceted approach combining

social, technological, and educational efforts. In a rapidly changing world, with the rise of new threats, such as cybercrime, it is important to adapt crime control strategies to ensure the safety and stability of society.

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