

## Determinants of victim willingness to report crime: A case of the Uganda national household governance survey

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to identify determinants of reporting crime to the police in Uganda. The assessment was done using a logistic regression model and secondary data from the Uganda National Governance Baseline Survey (2013) comprising of 3750 households selected country-wide using a three stage stratified cluster sampling design .

The decision by a victim to report crime or not was significantly affected by sex, age, region, whether one has ever been coerced against seeking justice by the police and whether one knows how to lodge a complaint with the police. The probability of reporting crime was expected to increase among; males, persons aged 31 and above, residents of Eastern Uganda, persons who know how to lodge a complaint with the police and have ever been coerced against seeking justice by the police.

The study recommended promoting girl child education, sensitizing women and men on the rights of women, increasing awareness of institutions through which women can seek justice other than the police such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA). Empowering local council courts to handle and settle disputes especially those regarding domestic violence and petty conflicts and youths sensitization and discouraged against taking the law into their own hands coupled by restoring citizen trust in the police force.

**Keywords:** reporting crime, Uganda, police, victim, justice

### 1. Introduction

Crime and insecurity are major challenges in African countries threatening both national development and individual quality of life <sup>[18]</sup>. There has been a growing interest in rates of reporting to police worldwide and has been noted that the costs of unreported crime can have many repercussions on both victims and society as a whole <sup>[15]</sup>. Police recorded crime is, as known, not equivalent to “all” crime <sup>[7]</sup>. A well-known fact is that a large proportion of “all” crime remains unrecorded <sup>[7]</sup>.

When crimes are not reported to the police, victims may not be able to obtain necessary services to cope with the victimization, offenders may go unpunished, and law enforcement and community resources may be misallocated due to a lack of accurate information about local crime problems hence the need to understand characteristics of crimes unknown to police, victims who do not report crimes and the reasons these crimes are not reported so as to identify gaps in the provision of criminal justice services and inform police practice and policies <sup>[12]</sup>. Furthermore, according to <sup>[13]</sup>, victims of crime are at risk for experiencing a range of psychological problems including posttraumatic stress disorder <sup>[6]</sup>, depression <sup>[20]</sup>, substance abuse <sup>[5]</sup>, injury and health-related problems <sup>[3]</sup>.

There have been a number of studies with regards to crime reporting among specific groups of the population including <sup>[8]</sup> among college student victims whereas other studies focused on plausible determinants of ones decision to report crime including <sup>[1]</sup> on the impact of mobile devices, <sup>[11]</sup> on victim fear, feelings of helplessness, perceived powerlessness of the police and threat of further victimization from authorities, <sup>[9]</sup> on seriousness of the crime, relationship between the victim

and perpetrator and mutual trust between citizens, <sup>[10]</sup> on victim gender and ethnicity.

#### 1.1 Crime in Uganda

In 2014, the number of reports and complaints made to the Uganda Police Force were 258,771 out of which 103,720 cases were criminal in nature compared to 99,959 criminal cases investigated in 2013 thereby reflecting an increase in the volume of crime by 3.8% <sup>[17]</sup>. As regards unreported crime, there is no official information or statistics in Uganda which is not any different across many African countries causing many crimes to go unpunished evidenced by high rates of defilement, female genital mutilation, rape, drug abuse and other crimes reported in the media but a reflected not to be widespread by crimes reports released by the police. This calls for the need to study possible factors that influence one’s decision to report a crime committed against them or to which they were a witness so that efforts are directed towards addressing them enabling victims access justice and support whereas ensuring that perpetrators of these crimes are dealt with fully under the law.

#### 1.2 Conceptual framework

In order to explain crime reporting <sup>[4]</sup> developed the socio-ecological model which assumed that as long as the expected benefits of reporting crime outweigh the expected costs, people are likely to report crime <sup>[16]</sup>. The socio-ecological model states that characteristics of the offence, the victims, the offender(s), and the crime context (e.g. where the crime took place) all influence this cost–benefit evaluation <sup>[16]</sup>. Similarly, western research has focused on investigating three types of correlates of crime reporting, that is, victim-specific (individual or

household), incident-specific and environmental –specific variables [19]. The current study focuses on the characteristics of victims or victim-specific variables as well as the environmental-specific characteristics which are not necessarily in line with the where the crime may have been committed but rather the geographical location in which the

victim resides. In order to understand the influence of these characteristics on one’s decision to report or fail to report a crime to the police is the motivation behind this study. These characteristics are summarized in table 1 below and have been broken down into the demographic, location, information and political factors,

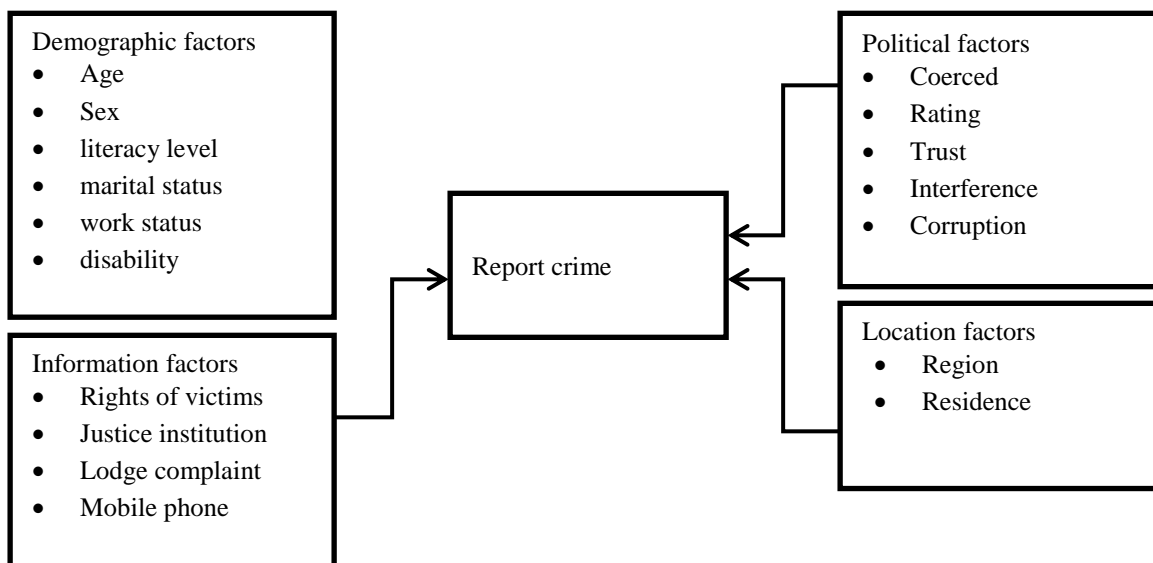


Fig 1: Conceptual framework for determinants of reporting crime

Figure 1 shows that the location factors which represent environment-specific variables are hypothesized to directly influence a victims’ decision to report crime. Similarly, victim-specific variables have been broken down into; information factors which are with regards to the victims’ knowledge of information relating to victim rights, crime reporting

procedure, possession of a mobile phones as a communication means; political factors that focus on an individual’s perception and attitude towards the police on different aspects ranging from trust, corruption, professionalism and performance; and demographic factors which focus on both physical and social attributes of respondents.

Table 1: Description of model variables

Variable	Description	Data Type
Sex	Sex of respondent	Binary
Age	Age in complete years	Ordinal
Literacy level	Ability to read and write	Ordinal
Marital status	Marital status of respondent	Nominal
Region	Region where respondent is located	Nominal
Residence	Type of residence where respondent is located	Binary
right of victims	Aware of the rights of victims	Binary
Disability	Have difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, remembering	Ordinal
Justice institutions	Know institutions to seek justice from i.e. Police	Binary
lodge compliant	Know how to lodge complaint with police	Binary
Coerced	Coerced against seeking justice by police	Binary
Rating	Rate the police in delivery of justice	Ordinal
Trust	Level of trust in the police	Ordinal
Interference	Police operates without government interference	Ordinal
Mobile phone	Have a mobile phone	Binary
Corruption	Extent of police involvement in corruption	Ordinal
Work status	Have a job or are employed	binary

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Data source

The data used was from the Uganda National Governance Baseline Survey (2014) conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with Makerere University, School of Statistics and Planning. This comprised of 3750 households selected countrywide using a three stage stratified cluster sampling design. 75 enumeration areas were first selected from each stratum using Probability Proportional to Size, then 10

households were selected from each enumeration area using systematic sampling and thirdly two adults were selected from each household.

2.2 Data analysis

Analysis was done in STATA Version 13.0. Firstly, a descriptive summary of demographic, information, political and location factors of respondents will be carried out using frequency distributions. Secondly, association between

reporting crime and the plausible independent variables will be assessed using the Pearson’s chi-square test. Variables that are significantly associated with reporting crime at this level will be considered for further analysis.

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^2 \sum_{j=1}^2 \frac{(O_{ij}-E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \tag{1}$$

Where  $O_{ij}$  is the number of individuals observed in the  $i$ th row and  $j$ th column cell,  $E_{ij}$  is the number of individuals expected in the  $i$ th row and  $j$ th column cell

Finally, since reporting crime was binary, the logistic regression model was fitted to identify significant determinants of a victim’s willingness to report crime. The model is

summarized as shown below;

$$\log \left[ \frac{p_i}{1-p_i} \right] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \dots + \beta_K X_K + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{2}$$

Where  $p_i$  is the probability of reporting a crime,  $\beta$ ’s are regression coefficients,  $X$ ’s are independent variables and  $\epsilon_{ij}$  the error term.

### 3. Results

Results on the relationship between reporting crime and demographic, information, location and political factors are presented. A discussion of the findings is provided subsequently.

**Table 2:** Description of respondent characteristics

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	730	49.19
	Female	754	50.81
Age	18 to 30	596	40.16
	31 to 59	739	49.80
	60 plus	149	10.04
Literacy level	Unable to read and write	471	31.87
	Able to read only	59	3.99
	Able to read and write	945	63.94
	Use braille	3	0.20
Marital status	Never married	182	12.27
	Married	1,078	72.69
	Divorced	108	7.28
	Widowed	115	7.75
Region	Kampala	243	16.37
	Central	363	24.46
	Eastern	276	18.60
	Northern	261	17.59
	Western	341	22.98
Residence	Urban	402	27.09
	Rural	1,082	72.91
Right of victims	No	421	28.37
	Yes	1,063	71.63
Disability status	No difficulty	1,229	82.82
	Some difficulty	242	16.31
	A lot of difficulty	13	0.88
Justice institutions	No	459	30.93
	Yes	1,025	69.07
Lodge compliant	No	513	34.57
	Yes	971	65.43
Coerced	Yes	62	4.21
	No	1,411	95.79
Rating	Very good	192	13.00
	Good	576	39.00
	Fair	343	23.22
	Poor	282	19.09
	Don’t know	84	5.69
Trust	Low	483	32.55
	Moderate	522	35.18
	High	408	27.49
	Don’t know	71	4.78
Interference	Yes always	338	22.78
	Yes to some extent	393	26.48
	No	484	32.61
	Don’t know	269	18.13
Mobile phone	No	608	40.97
	Yes	876	59.03
Corruption	Not at all	77	5.23

Work status	Slightly	127	8.62
	Somewhat	229	15.55
	Very much	1,040	70.60
	No	329	22.17
	Yes	1,155	77.83

The highest proportion of respondents were; female (50.81%), able to read and write (63.94%), married (72.69%), employed (77.83%), rural residents (72.91%), aware of the rights of victims (71.63%). 69.07% of the respondents knew the police as one of the institutions to seek justice from with 65.43%

knew how to lodge a complaint with police. Majority of the respondents; reported not to have been coerced against seeking justice by police (95.79%), had mobile phones (59.03%), 70.6% believed the police was very much involved in corruption.

**Table 3:** Association between reporting crime and plausible independent factors

Variables		No	Yes
Sex	Male	49.73	50.27
	Female	60.88	39.12
		Chi2(1)=18.6592 Pr=0.000	
Age	18 to 30	61.74	38.26
	31 to 59	51.01	48.99
	60 plus	51.68	48.32
		Chi2(2)=16.2969 Pr = 0.000	
Literacy level	Unable to read and write	53.29	46.71
	Able to read only	59.32	40.68
	Able to read and write	56.08	43.92
	Use braille	33.33	66.67
		Chi2(3)=1.9757 Pr = 0.577	
Marital status	Never married	60.44	39.56
	Married	55.57	44.43
	Divorced	52.78	47.22
	Widowed	47.83	52.17
		Chi2(3) = 4.8514 Pr = 0.183	
Region	Kampala	57.2	42.8
	Central	59.78	40.22
	Eastern	40.58	59.42
	Northern	49.81	50.19
	Western	65.69	34.31
		Chi2(4) =45.5831 Pr = 0.000	
Residence	Urban	54.73	45.27
	Rural	55.64	44.36
		Chi2(1) =0.0985 Pr = 0.754	
Right of victims	No	56.29	43.71
	Yes	55.03	44.97
		Chi2(1) =0.1943 Pr = 0.659	
Disability status	No Difficulty	55.74	44.26
	Some Difficulty	53.72	46.28
	A lot of difficulty	53.85	46.15
		Chi2(2) =0.3457 Pr = 0.841	
Justice institutions	No	54.68	45.32
	Yes	55.71	44.29
		Chi2(1) =0.1343 Pr = 0.714	
Lodge compliant	No	60.43	39.57
	Yes	52.73	47.27
		Chi2(1)=8.0536 Pr = 0.005	
Coerced	No	55.99	44.01
	Yes	40.32	59.68
		Chi2(1) =5.8974 Pr = 0.015	
Rating	Very good	60.94	39.06
	Good	56.77	43.23
	Fair	52.48	47.52
	Poor	50.71	49.29
	Don't know	61.9	38.1
		Chi2(4)=7.9560 Pr = 0.093	
Trust	Low	54.45	45.55
	Moderate	52.49	47.51

	High	60.29	39.71
	Don't know	54.93	45.07
		Chi2(3) =5.9256 Pr = 0.115	
Interference	Yes always	57.1	42.9
	Yes to some extent	51.15	48.85
	No	57.02	42.98
	Don't know	56.51	43.49
		Chi2(3) =3.9253 Pr = 0.270	
Mobile phone	No	58.06	41.94
	Yes	53.54	46.46
		Chi2(1) =2.9680 Pr = 0.085	
Corruption	Not at all	51.95	48.05
	Slightly	61.42	38.58
	Somewhat	59.39	40.61
	Very much	54.33	45.67
		Chi2(3)=4.1713 Pr = 0.244	
Work status	No	55.62	44.38
	Yes	55.32	44.68
		Chi2(1)=0.0092 Pr = 0.923	

**Demographic factors and reporting crime**

Literacy level, marital status and disability status had no significant ( $p>0.05$ ) association with reporting crime whereas age, sex and work status had a significant association with reporting crime. The majority of female respondents (60.9%) never reported crime committed against them whereas the highest proportion of males (50.3%) did report crimes. Across all age groups, the highest proportion of respondents never reported crimes though it was highest amongst those aged 18 to 30 (61.74%). Similarly, among respondents who both working (55.3%) and not working (55.6%), the highest proportion never reported crimes committed against them to the police.

**Information factors and reporting crime**

Apart from victim's knowledge on how to lodge a complaint none of the other information factors had a significant association with reporting crime. The highest proportion of respondents who knew how to lodge a complaint with the police (52.7%) never reported crime though the proportion was

higher among respondents who didn't know how to lodge a complaint with the police (60.4%).

**Location factors and reporting crime**

Whether the respondent resided in a rural or urban area, this had no significant ( $p>0.05$ ) association with reporting crime. On the contrary, region had a significant association with reporting crime. The eastern (59.4%) and northern (50.2%) regions had the highest proportion of respondents reporting crimes whereas the western region (65.7%) and central region (59.8%) had the highest proportion of respondents not reporting crimes.

**Political factors and reporting crime**

Among the political factors, only coercion against seeking justice by police had a significant association with reporting crime. 59.7% of respondents who had ever been coerced against seeking justice by the police reported crime whereas the highest proportion of those who had never been coerced against seeking justice by the police (55.9%) never reported crime.

**Table 4:** Determinants of reporting crime

Variables	Odds ratio	Std. Err	z	P> z	95% C.I	
Sex						
Male	1.000					
Female	0.660	0.072	-3.800	0.000	0.532	0.817
Age						
18 to 30	1.000					
31 to 59	1.513	0.176	3.550	0.000	1.204	1.901
60 plus	1.488	0.284	2.080	0.037	1.024	2.163
Region						
Kampala	1.000					
Central	0.830	0.145	-1.070	0.284	0.590	1.168
Eastern	1.965	0.365	3.640	0.000	1.366	2.828
Northern	1.337	0.250	1.560	0.119	0.928	1.929
Western	0.676	0.121	-2.180	0.029	0.476	0.961
Lodge compliant						
No	1.000					
Yes	1.266	0.148	2.020	0.043	1.007	1.592
Coerced						
No	1.000					
Yes	1.989	0.546	2.500	0.012	1.161	3.408
Constant	1.228	0.383	0.660	0.511	0.666	2.264

Results from the logistic regression model indicate that all independent variables considered for multivariate analysis had a significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on one's decision to report or not to report a crime to the police. Female respondents were 0.66 times less likely to report a crime to the police compared to males other factors constant. Regarding age, respondents aged 31 to 59 were 1.51 times more likely to report a crime to the police compared to respondents aged 18 to 30 other factors constant. Similarly, respondents aged 60 and above were 1.49 times more likely to report a crime to the police compared to respondents aged 18 to 30 other factors constant. Pertaining to region, respondents residing in the Eastern region were 1.97 times more likely to report a crime to the police compared to respondents residing in Kampala other factors constant. On the contrary, respondents residing in the Western region were 0.68 times less likely to report a crime to the police compared to respondents residing in Kampala other factors constant. As regards knowledge of how to lodge a complaint with the police, respondents with knowledge of how to lodge a complaint with the police were 1.27 times more likely to report a crime to the police compared to respondents who didn't know how to lodge a complaint with the police other factors constant. As for coercion by police against seeking justice, respondents who have ever been coerced by the police were 1.99 times more likely to report a crime to the police compared to respondents who have never been coerced against seeking justice other factors constant.

#### 4. Discussion

The study focused on the effect of victim-specific and environmental-specific factors on a victims' decision to report or not to report a crime. Based on the study findings, the significance of age and sex was consistent with findings by <sup>[2]</sup> who reported increased tendency to report crime among older and female victims compared to their younger and male counterparts respectively though in case of this study, females were less likely to report crime. The study reported positive relationship between reporting crime and if an individual has ever been coerced by the police against seeking justice inconsistent with <sup>[2]</sup>. This may be attributed to citizens' lack of awareness of other institutions from which they can seek justice such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Inspectorate of Government (IGG) hence will keep reporting to the police even though they have had negative experiences in the past. The variations in region reporting of crime can be attributed to regional differences in crime rates and awareness regarding rights of victims, police mandate, institutions from which justice can be sought and access to justice institutions. Some parts of the country have also reported higher levels of mob justice compared to the others such as the northern region which may be attributed to war which ravaged the region for over 20 years.

#### 5. Conclusion

As a nation, a lot still needs to be done to empower women so that they too can have equal access to justice and protection of their rights just like their male counterparts. This can be achieved through various avenues such as promoting girl child education, sensitizing women and men on the rights of women, increase awareness of institutions through which women can seek justice other than the police such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Uganda Association of

Women Lawyers (FIDA). The government of Uganda should empower local council courts to handle and settle disputes especially those regarding domestic violence so as to enable people especially in rural communities have easy, cost effective and timely access to justice. The youths should be sensitized and discouraged against taking the law into their hands coupled by restoring citizen trust in the police force.

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