Critical Analysis of Car Theft Practices in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and State's Response to Curb the Menace

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Abstract:

This paper explores the critical issue of car theft in Pakistan, which poses significant challenges to state authority and citizen prosperity. Contributing factors include political instability, regional conflict, and the complex nature of organized crime. Despite the serious implications, law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in Pakistan struggle to effectively combat car theft due to inadequate resources, lack of advanced technology, and systemic inefficiencies. The absence of specialized Anti-Car Lifting Cells (ACLCs) in several districts and inadequate legal frameworks further complicate the issue. Recommendations for addressing these challenges are proposed, encompassing short, medium, and long-term measures. These include enhancing resource allocation, establishing new ACLCs, improving inter-organizational coordination, and implementing advanced technological solutions such as the Safe City Project and GIS-based crime analysis.

Key words:
Car theft, Law enforcement, Organized crime, Pakistan, Crime prevention

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Introduction

Like many developing countries, Pakistan faces the overwhelming menace of a significant incidence of crimes against property, such as robbery, stealing, and car theft (Hussain et al., 2015). Furthermore, not only has a rise in the crime rate been witnessed in Pakistan in recent years, but it has also been observed that the modes and means adopted by criminals for the commission of crimes have become more complex and advanced (Khalid et al., 2015).

Among the category of crimes against property, car theft poses very serious challenges to the state's authority by endangering the prosperity of its citizens (Hedayati, 2008). Different destabilizing factors, such as political instability and war in neighboring countries, have contributed to the high ratio of car theft in Pakistan (Hussain et al., 2015). There is also empirical evidence to support the assertion that there has been a marked rise in the incidence of car snatching in some of the biggest cities in the country (Ahmad et al., 2013). According to government statistics regarding the extent and magnitude of organized criminal activities, around eleven thousand vehicles are stolen annually in the country, with an approximate cost of two billion Pakistani rupees (Capital Territory Police Safety Plan, Islamabad, 2015).

Though, in many cases, organized criminal gangs attempt to resell the stolen vehicles to the owners, the menacing nature of car theft in Pakistan is further intensified by the fact that stolen vehicles are also used in the commission of heinous crimes such as murder, drug smuggling, and kidnapping for ransom (Hussain et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding the serious implications of the high incidence of car theft, Pakistani LEAs tasked with curbing property crimes such as car theft have not been able to tackle this menace effectively, owing to deficient human and physical resources as well as the absence of the much-needed advanced technological equipment (Khalid et al., 2015).

Literature Review

Definitions

Crime is a legally punishable act due to statutory prohibition and being harmful to public welfare (Schneider and Kitchner, 2004), while crime prevention refers to all policies and measures aimed at reducing the different types of damage caused by criminal acts (Mahavene, 2012). Theft denotes the act of illegally taking away property from its possessor (Steenkamp, 1999), while carjacking is the unlawful act of forcing the owner of a vehicle to give up its possession (Mahavene, 2012). The felonious taking of property from a person by violence or force is defined as robbery (Pakistan Penal Code, 2021). Under Pakistani law, it changes to the crime of dacoity when committed

jointly by five persons or more.

Crime Prevention Approaches

In the context of car theft, two vital crime prevention approaches include situational crime prevention and social crime prevention (Clarke, 1997). Situational crime prevention focuses on limiting the chances of committing crime, such as installing surveillance equipment in car parking lots to prevent car theft, while social crime prevention stresses the need for transforming the social environment and the offenders' motivation (Clarke, 1997).

Stakeholders' Involvement

The complex nature of car theft necessitates that a wide range of stakeholders be involved in crime prevention rather than solely relying on the police: the general public has a major role in following precautions relating to car safety; car manufacturers have to contribute by installing reliable anti-car theft devices, while the management of car parking lots must fulfill their responsibility regarding the provision of foolproof security against car theft (Mahavene, 2012).

Motivations for Car Theft

Researchers have identified three major motivations for car theft. Older criminals usually resort to car theft for gaining profit. Car theft for securing transportation is habitually committed by younger criminals, while occasionally, adolescents indulge in car theft for recreation and thrill (Suresh and Tewksbury, 2012).

Harmful Consequences

Car theft seriously challenges the authority of the state by undermining its central role of protecting the person and property of the citizens (Alar, 2010). It not only inflicts enormous monetary harm on the victims but also imposes psychological damage upon the whole society by creating a deep sense of insecurity (Gillani et al., 2011).

Crime Hotspots

Most research studies on car theft indicate that the crime tends to be committed predominantly in urban hubs as compared to rural areas (Copes, 2006).

Need for Greater Research

The dearth of academic literature on car theft as a major category of property crime indicates that it is one of the most minimally developed bodies of research on types of crime (Mahavene, 2012). Thus, there is a dire need for

more empirical studies to explain, predict, and eventually prevent car theft with the application of scientific theories of crime control (Mahavene, 2012).

Problem Statement

In the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, crimes such as car theft have witnessed a surge due to the destabilizing impact of the unceasing turmoil in Afghanistan (Ullah, Bashir, Hakim & Baig, 2009). The crime trends in the last decade also indicate a rise in car theft cases in KP (Bureau of Statistics, Government of KP, 2014). Because of the huge monetary loss inflicted on the victim, car theft is rightly considered to be the costliest property crime (Hussain et al., 2015). In the wake of the enormous losses caused by terrorism, car theft in KP also has another sinister dimension due to the connection between stolen vehicles and terror financing (Hussain, 2012). Stolen vehicles are either resold to their owners in the black market or used in heinous crimes such as dacoity and murder (Islamabad Safety Plan, 2015).

Unfortunately, the increase in the incidence of car theft is matched conversely by the declining trend in the conviction of cases related to car theft in KP. As per the statistics provided by the Crimes Branch of KP Police, the number of convictions in car theft cases fell from 95 in 2010 to only 65 in 2012 (Hussain et al., 2015). The declining conviction trend evidently indicates that the response by KP Police in curbing the menace of car theft leaves much to be desired. Despite the gravity of the crime of car theft in KP, both in terms of its widespread incidence and its rising frequency, very few research studies have been carried out to investigate the incidence of this grave crime and critically analyze the response by the Government of KP to curb this menace. This serious gap highlights the immediate need for empirically analyzing the prevalence of car theft in KP and scientifically evaluating the governmental response, with the aim of facilitating informed decision-making for effectively responding to this ever-challenging property crime.

Scope of the Study

This study aims to identify and examine the different techniques adopted by criminals for perpetrating the crime of car theft in KP in order to understand and assess the modes and means involved in the commission of car theft. It also attempts to explore the frequency of car theft in KP over the last three years to ascertain whether there is a rising or declining trend in the incidence of car theft.

Additionally, the study attempts to critically analyze the response by the Government of KP in terms of curbing car theft, with the aim of determining the efficacy of this response. In this connection, different aspects of the crime

prevention paradigm in KP relating to car theft, such as prevention, deterrence, and interdiction, are analyzed in detail.

Research Questions

Based on the scope of the study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Has the incidence of car theft increased or decreased in KP in the last three years, i.e., from 2019 to 2021?
2. What are the different car theft techniques adopted by criminals in KP?
3. How effective has the response by the Government of KP been in controlling car theft?
4. Are there any gaps in the response by the Government of KP in controlling car theft?
5. If there are any gaps in the response by the Government of KP in controlling car theft, how can these gaps be filled?

Limitations

Due to time, access, and resource constraints, the study could not focus on the following areas:
- Identifying the socio-economic factors contributing to the rise in car theft, e.g., unemployment, political unrest, economic depression, etc.
- Exploring the extent and magnitude of monetary losses due to car theft and their effect on economic development.
- Investigating the nexus between car theft and terror-financing.
- Gathering firsthand information from victims of car theft.
- Analyzing the role of Pakistan Customs, Excise Department, and Motorway Police in supporting KP Police to control car theft.

Research methodology

For the purpose of data collection, a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques was adopted. Quantitative longitudinal data regarding the frequency of car theft in KP from 2019 to 2021 was obtained from the ACLCs.

In order to examine the response by KP Police to control the crime of car theft, the following quantitative data was collected from the crime records available with ACLCs:

- The number of cases registered against car theft from 2019 to 2021
- The number of untraced stolen and snatched cars from 2019 to 2021
- The number of recovered stolen and snatched cars from 2019 to 2021

For a profound understanding of the crime of car theft from the phenomenological perspective and to determine the efficacy of the state's response, key informant interviews were conducted with persons falling into the following categories:

- Seasoned officials of KP Police serving in the ACLCs
- Management of security companies providing security guards for deployment in commercial car parking lots
- Car mechanics specializing in car locking systems
- Administration of private car parking facilities
- Representatives of major Bazaar Unions in Peshawar

For further critical analysis of the Government's response to car theft, the following four modes of analysis were adopted:

i. Situational analysis
ii. Institutional analysis
iii. Legal analysis
iv. Comparative analysis

Organization of the Paper

The paper has been organized into three main sections, as per the following details:

- Section 1 provides a situational analysis of car theft in KP and the response by the Government of KP to tackle this grave crime.
- Section 2 focuses on the institutional analysis of the organizational setup, capacity, strengths, and weaknesses of the ACLCs, besides examining the symbiotic linkages between organized criminal gangs involved in car theft.
- Section 3 deals with the legal analysis of the criminal laws in KP for countering car theft and the scrutiny of the non-criminal legal measures that are essential for preventing car theft.
- Section 4 concentrates on the comparative analysis of some effective measures for preventing car theft in other provinces of Pakistan and some foreign countries with the prevailing practices in KP.
- Conclusions and recommendations are finally submitted, based on the findings and discussion in the study.

Situational Analysis

This section provides an overview of the dynamics of car theft as a property crime in KP, as well as the response by the Government of KP to tackle this

serious crime. Firstly, a detailed description of the specific car theft practices adopted by car thieves in KP is given. Secondly, vital statistics regarding the incidence of car theft and the performance of KP Police in countering car theft are discussed.

Analysis of the Car Theft Techniques

A detailed analysis of car theft techniques is essential not only for understanding the complexity of car theft as a property crime in KP but also for assessing the vital requirements for ensuring an effective response by the government. Based on the information gathered from the key informant interviews of the personnel of the ACLCs, the car theft practices prevalent in KP can be broadly bifurcated into two categories: stolen vehicles and snatched vehicles. Both of these are discussed in detail under the succeeding headings. The situational analysis of the car theft practices in KP evidently reveals the overwhelming complexity of the property crime of car theft, both in terms of its multifaceted nature and its combination of different crimes like theft, robbery, criminal intimidation, grievous hurt, murder, attempt to murder, and possibly dacoity, besides the use of advanced technical means.

Stolen Vehicles

This category of car theft refers to all situations where the owner of the vehicle or its user is deprived of their movable property, including any type of vehicle (i.e., motorcar, jeep, Light Traffic Vehicle, Heavy Traffic Vehicle, or motorcycle) by means of stealth, without the use of force. This mode of car theft has the following variants:

Unlocked Vehicles

This sub-category involves the theft of vehicles that the owners leave unlocked inadvertently or due to negligent behavior, either by not locking the doors of the vehicle or by leaving the windows open. Since the vehicle is unlocked, the car thieves do not have to use any tools, gadgets, or equipment to steal the vehicle. However, vigilant reconnaissance of the targeted vehicle and its owner is carried out to ensure that the theft is carried out without any interruption or resistance by the owner, police patrols, or private security guards.

Opening Manual Car Locks

This mode of car theft involves breaking or opening the manual locking system of the vehicle. Unlike the case of unlocked vehicles, in this sub-category, the vehicle is stolen despite being properly locked by the owner through its manual locking system. This type of car theft involves the use of manual tools to overcome the manual locking system. The most common technique adopted by car thieves is the opening of the rear door quarter window glass using a screwdriver and subsequently using the opening to

insert their hand to pull open the door locks.

Defeating Keyless Locking Systems

The keyless locking systems can be of two types. In the first instance, the Remote Keyless Central Locking System (RKCLS) is provided by the original manufacturer of the car, which can be operated by pressing a few buttons on the car's key. In the second type, which is more predominant in terms of use in KP, RKCLS is not provided by the original manufacturer of the vehicle, and the owner of the vehicle installs it by purchasing it from the open market. In such cases, a separate electronic remote locking key is provided, separate from the car's manual key, usually having the following options:

1. Centrally locking the vehicle's doors
2. Centrally opening the vehicle's doors
3. Opening the vehicle's boot
4. Arming the theft alarm
5. Disarming the theft alarm

In advanced systems, additional options may also be provided. Car thieves use two techniques to defeat the RKCLS. The first technique involves a combination of remote signal jammers and manual tools to defeat the keyless locking system. Firstly, jammers available in the black market, such as Karkhano Bazaar in Peshawar, are used to make the RKCLS dysfunctional, as it cannot function without signals, followed by manually breaking open the car locks. In the second technique, after making the RKCLS dysfunctional using jammers, a digital frequency matching system is used to make a duplicate remote. The duplicate remote overrides the original remote so that even if the car's owner or user tries to operate the original remote, it ceases to function. The duplicate remote is then used to open the car's locks before it is driven away by the car thieves. RKCLS or anti-car theft systems provided by the original manufacturers are more difficult to overcome than the ones bought from the open market.

Overcoming the Digital Tracking System

Many owners of expensive vehicles get a tracking system installed in their vehicles for added security. The GPS Tracking System (GTS) not only provides GPS tracking of the vehicle but also acts as an effective check against its theft, as the owner has the option to stall or immobilize the vehicle by calling the vendor of the system, who then stops it by activating the secretly installed digital stalling system. Such systems are quite difficult to defeat or override because of the complexity of the digital devices used and the secret location of the tracker installed in the vehicle.

In order to defeat the digital tracking system, the involvement of a mechanic who has previous experience working with a vendor offering digital tracking

systems is crucial. Such mechanics know the secret locations where the digital tracking devices are normally installed in the vehicles. After detecting the tracker's location, the electric wires that provide power to the tracker are detached so that the tracker stops functioning. Once the vehicle is taken away and parked at a secret location by the car thieves, the tracker is then taken out and physically destroyed. Interestingly, in cases where the registration documents are not found inside the stolen car, the brand of the tracker is used by the car thieves to get information about the owner of the vehicles, who is then contacted by them to negotiate the resale of the stolen vehicle.

Another highly deceptive practice involves the installation of a second tracker in the car. This is perhaps the most elaborately planned car theft technique adopted by organized criminal gangs. The vehicle is lawfully bought, and in addition to the tracker already installed in the vehicle, a second tracker is also installed. The vehicle is then legally sold to a buyer, who is not informed about the installation of the second tracker. Besides, the buyer is also not provided with the second remote of the RKCLS, with the false pretext that the second remote has somehow been lost. After some time of the sale of the vehicle, the second hidden tracker is used to locate the vehicle, and the second remote of the RKCLS is used to unlock the vehicle. After the vehicle is stolen, the first GTS is removed from the car and physically destroyed.

Vehicle Stolen by a Group of Criminals

This most prevalent sub-category of stolen vehicles involves the commission of the offense by more than one person. In most of the reported cases, three persons are involved. The first one is the driver of the vehicle, which is used by the car thieves to follow their target. The second one discreetly follows the owner or the user of the targeted vehicle once they park and get out of the vehicle. The third one opens the targeted vehicle's locking system. The second person informs the third one if the owner or the user of the targeted vehicle returns to the vehicle.

Snatched Vehicles

This category, also referred to as carjacking, is much more serious as it involves the element of criminal use of force or the threat of using criminal force to snatch the vehicle from its owner. Car snatching falls into the category of heinous crimes as it not only involves loss of property but also threats to life in terms of bodily harm or even death of the victim. As the vehicles are snatched by force, the use of manual tools and gadgets is not involved unlike in the case of stolen vehicles, and deadly weapons such as firearms are used instead by the perpetrators. The sub-categories are discussed as follows:

Snatching Moving Vehicles

This sub-category involves snatching vehicles that are plying on the roads or are on the move. It is obvious that the commission of an offense falling under this sub-category necessitates first that the vehicle has to be stopped by any of the following means:

- By deception;
- By a threatening posture; or
- By creating a physical hurdle on the road.

The use of deceptive means normally employed includes signaling by a woman or a child to stop the vehicle, apparently in a distressful condition. Once the targeted vehicle is stopped, the second party immediately emerges from a nearby hidden spot to snatch the vehicle by force. Other reported instances of deception include taking the driver of a taxi to an isolated location, where he is drugged deceivingly, and the vehicle is then snatched.

Snatching Static Vehicles

The mode of theft in this category does not require stopping the vehicle first, since the targeted vehicle is already static. The location of such snatching is usually at a relatively isolated place such as outside a house or in a deserted street. Normally, cars with a lone occupant are selected for snatching in such instances, to minimize the risk of any resistance by the occupants of the vehicle. Snatching with Threat of Using Force
In most cases, only the threat of the use of deadly force suffices to pressurize the owner of the vehicle to hand it over to car snatchers. Most police personnel specializing in countering car snatching are of the opinion that car snatchers are not usually inclined to the use of actual force and prefer to use threatening measures only. However, the possession of a firearm and its threatening display is necessary to incite palpable fear of its deadly use in the victim.

Snatching with Use of Force

In some unfortunate cases, the actual use of force is used by car snatchers to snatch the vehicle. This might be in the form of physical force to beat up the victim and to forcefully remove him from the vehicle, or in more serious cases, the victim is fired upon by the car snatcher. As per the expert opinion of ACLC personnel, firing in most cases proves fatal mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, the victim is shot while normally trying to quickly escape from the scene of the crime, and the criminal firing at him shoots instantly so that he does not have time to aim for a less vulnerable area of the body. Secondly, only the upper body of the victim occupying the vehicle is visible

to the car snatcher, and that is where he aims. As the upper body has all the vital organs, the chances of a fatal injury are optimal.

LEAs' Response for Countering Car Theft

In order to analyze the performance of the LEAs, i.e., KP Police tasked with countering the crime of car theft, the following data for the last three years was obtained from the ACLCs:

- Number of First Information Reports (FIRs) registered
- Total number of stolen or snatched vehicles that could not be traced
  Total number of stolen or snatched vehicles that were traced and recovered

FIRs registered

As per the data provided by the ACLCs, 246 FIRs relating to car theft were registered in 2019, 330 FIRs were registered in 2020 and 396 FIRs were registered in 2021. Figure 1 shows the same data through a bar chart, indicating a constant rise in the number of car theft cases as each FIR is registered in consequence of an incident of car theft.
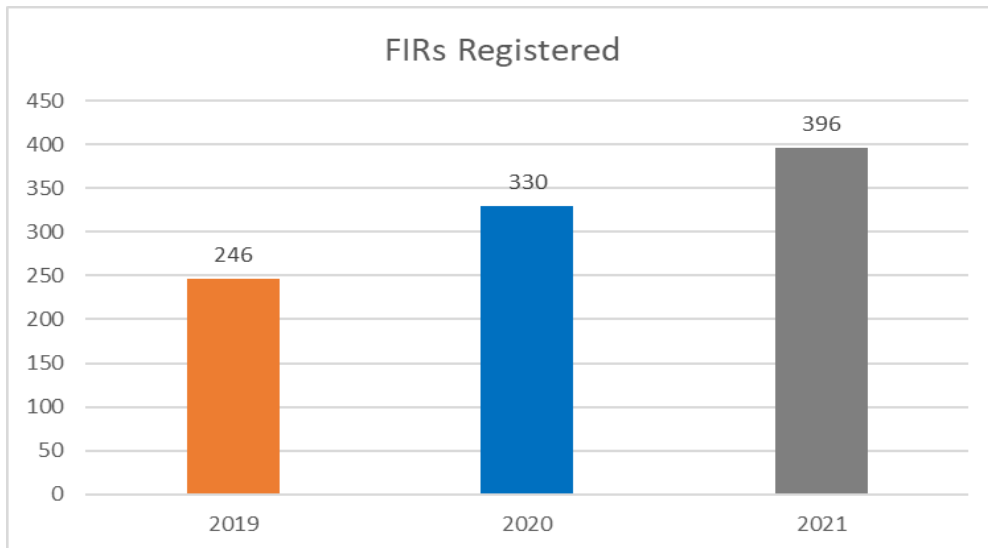

Figure 1. FIRs registered by ACLCs in the last 3 years in KP

Untraced Vehicles

According to ACLC statistics, in 2019, 155 out of a total of 246 stolen or snatched vehicles remained untraced. In 2020, 208 out of 330 stolen or snatched vehicles could not be traced. In 2021, as many as 250 out of 396 stolen or snatched vehicles were untraced. Figure 2 shows that the ACLCs could not trace 613 out of a total of 972 vehicles stolen or snatched in the last three years. Hence, 63 percent of the stolen or snatched vehicles remained untraced.
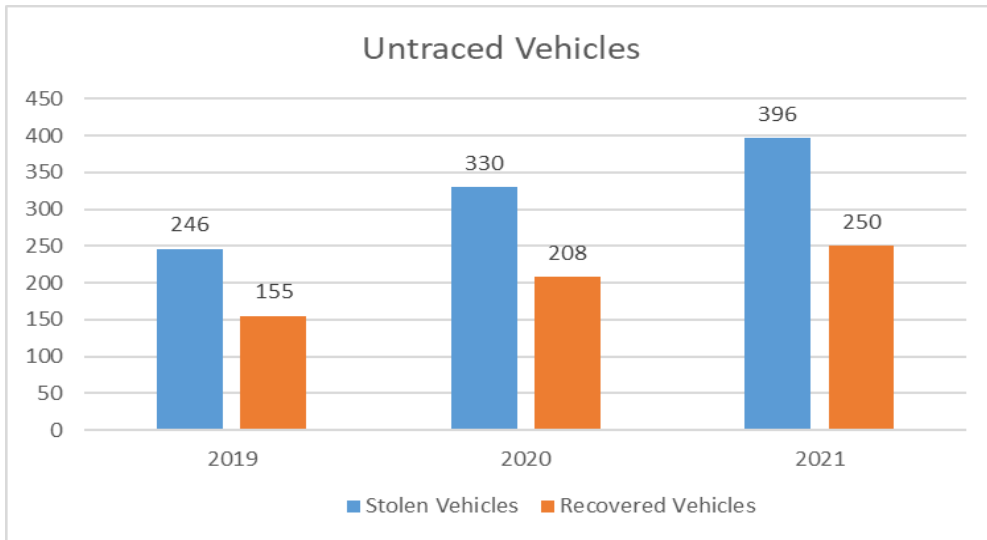
Figure 2. Untraced stolen cars in the last 3 years in KP

Recovered Vehicles

The figures regarding the stolen or snatched vehicles recovered by the ACLCs reveal that in 2019, 91 out of a total of 246 stolen or snatched vehicles were recovered and handed over to their owners. In 2020, 122 out of the total of 330 stolen or snatched vehicles were recovered. In 2021, 146 out of the total of 396 stolen or snatched vehicles were recovered. As illustrated by Figure 3, the ACLCs could only recover 359 out of the total of 972 stolen or snatched vehicles in the last three years. Thus, only 36 percent of the stolen or snatched vehicles were recovered.
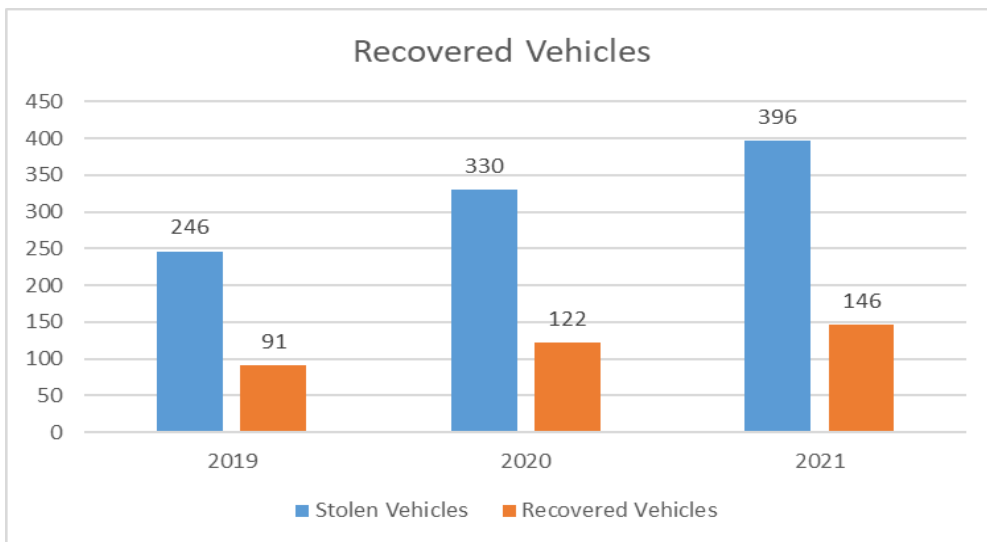

Figure 3. Stolen vehicles recovered by ACLCs in the last 3 years in KP

The results of the situational analysis of the Government's response to counter car theft clearly indicate that the performance of ACLCs of KP Police is far

from satisfactory. Moreover, the complex nature of car theft and the use of advanced means by car thieves substantiate the assertions cited in the Literature Review regarding the need for involvement of a variety of stakeholders for effective crime prevention of car theft. Therefore, strict adherence to car safety precautions by the general public, installation of strong anti-car theft devices by car manufacturers, and provision of a safe security environment by the management of car parking facilities are direly needed.

Institutional Analysis

The institutional analysis in this section focuses not only on the organizational setup, capacity, strengths, and weaknesses of the ACLCs but also on the symbiotic linkages between organized criminal gangs involved in car theft.

Organizational Orientation of ACLCs

The establishment of ACLCs in KP Police reflects the commitment of the Government of KP to address car theft as a priority, given that ACLCs have a specialized mandate for recovering stolen and snatched vehicles.

In terms of territorial jurisdiction, ACLCs are district-based, meaning that each district in KP should ideally have an operational ACLC. Regarding rank, each ACLC is headed by officers ranging from the rank of Sub-Inspector to Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs), who report directly to the respective District Police Officer (DPO).

District-wise Coverage of ACLCs

Despite their mandate, ACLCs face a serious capacity issue in terms of district coverage. Figure 1.4, illustrating the district-wise presence of ACLCs, reveals that 27 districts in KP do not have ACLCs established. These districts include major cities such as Nowshehra, Charsadda, Haripur, Mansehra, Kohat, and DI Khan, where a significant number of car theft cases are reported.

Figure 4. District-wise coverage of ACLCs in KP
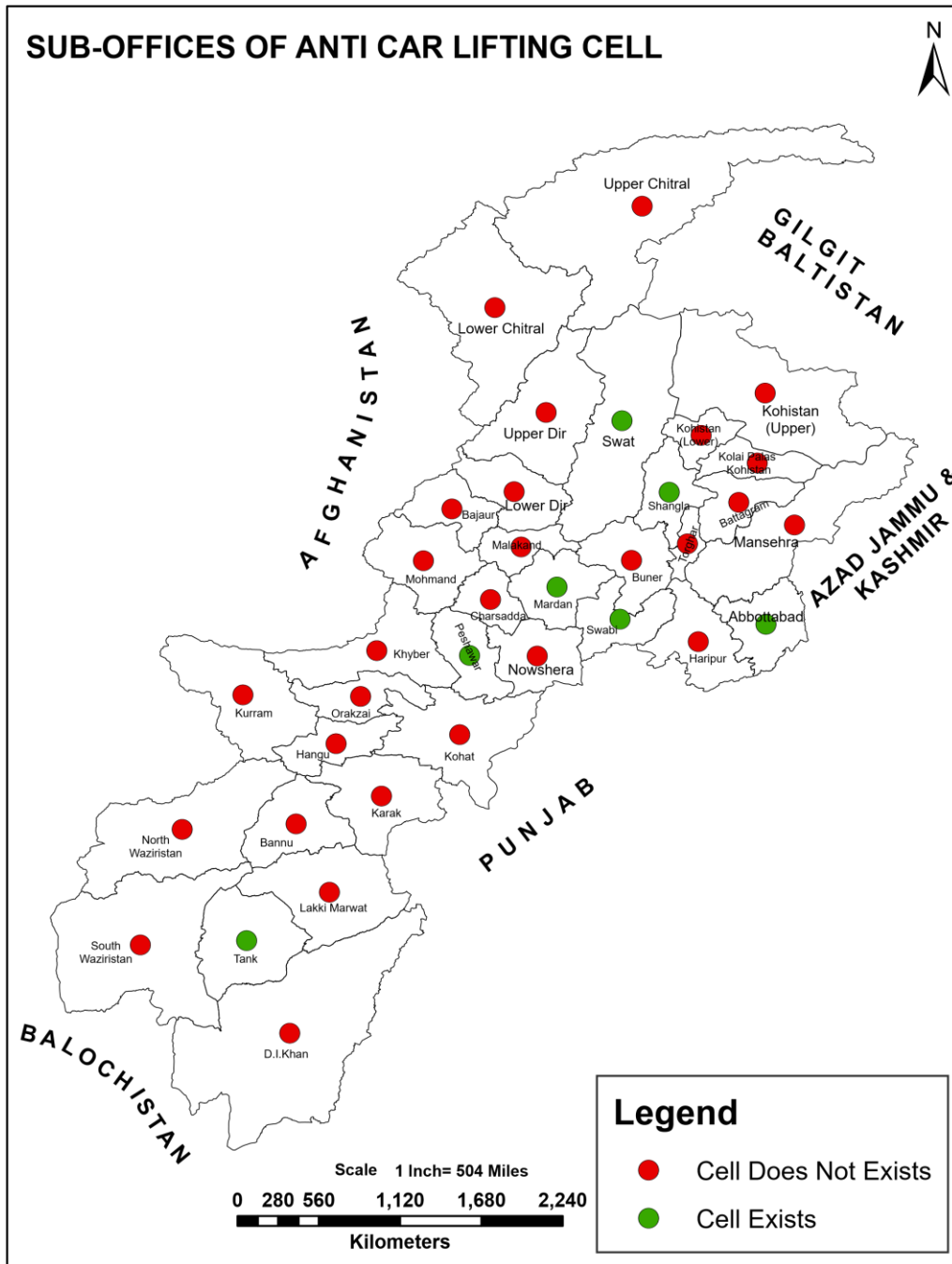
Operational Focus

To effectively counter car theft, a combination of crime prevention and response-based measures is required (Mahavene, 2012). However, ACLCs focus primarily on response-based measures such as lodging FIRs, conducting investigations, and emphasizing the recovery of stolen or snatched vehicles. Critical preventive actions such as patrolling car theft

hotspots, inspecting security at parking lots, and surveilling crowded urban areas are notably absent.

Crime Reporting Mechanism

Immediate reporting of car theft is crucial for ensuring swift responses like alerting all police check posts to intercept stolen vehicles. However, negative public perceptions, often linked to the "Thana Culture" in Pakistan, discourage timely reporting (Abbas, 2009). Moreover, there is no helpline or user-friendly app to facilitate quick police reports on car theft cases without the usual complexities of approaching law enforcement.

Resource Constraints

The unsatisfactory performance of ACLCs can also be attributed to severe resource constraints. Officials unanimously lamented inadequate resources such as patrol vehicles, fuel shortages, lack of technological aids like tracking devices, and specialized training programs for ACLC personnel.

Integrity Issues

Beyond the Thana Culture, concerns about police corruption, collusion with criminal gangs, and human rights abuses contribute significantly to public reluctance in reporting car thefts (Hussain et al, 2015). There is no effective vetting mechanism, such as vetting by neutral agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB), to ensure that ACLC personnel have unblemished service records.

Operational Linkages

Efficient operational linkages could mitigate resource mobilization issues by pooling resources from partner organizations for a coordinated response. For instance, actionable intelligence sharing between ACLCs and prime agencies like the IB and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) could fill intelligence gaps, but current coordination forums are lacking. Similarly, joint operations could be enhanced by utilizing street patrol units like the Ababeel Force for swift responses, yet institutional arrangements for such joint operations are absent within ACLCs.

Symbiotic Criminal Linkages

Interviews with ACLC personnel reveal symbiotic relationships between car-lifting gangs and those illegally selling stolen vehicles. Separate gangs specialize in car-lifting and resale, with stolen vehicle images quickly shared among receiver gangs. These receiver gangs set prices and, upon agreement, acquire stolen vehicles for resale, often resorting to fraudulent registration

documents for vehicles unsold to owners. Smaller vehicles may be dismantled, with parts sold in markets like Shuba Bazaar, Peshawar.

Tables detailing major car-lifting and receiver gangs in KP were compiled from ACLC investigation officer interviews.

Car-lifting Gangs

Sr No.	Name	Base	Area of criminal operations
1	Bilal Sabit Gang	Pishtara, Peshawar	All over KP
2	Najeeb Gang	Mathra, Warsak Raod,	All areas except Peshawar, especially Hazara and Swat Division
3	Alizar Gang	Charsadda	Peshawar and surrounding districts
4	Ilyas Gang	Prang, Charsadda	Peshawar

Receiver Gangs

Sr No.	Name	Base	Area of criminal operations
1	Sakheemullah Gang alias Sakhat	Bannu	Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Karak
2	Taj Muhammad alias Kohat Haji Gang	Darra Adamkhel	Entire Kohat Division
3	Asghar & sons Gang	Darra Adam Khel	Kohat, Peshawar, Charsadda and Mardan
4	Nosherwan alias Baba Gang	Batkhela, Malakand	Swat and Hazara Divisions

Comparative Analysis

In this section, effective measures for preventing car theft in other provinces of Pakistan and foreign countries are compared with prevailing practices in KP to assess their feasibility for replication.

Evidence-based Crime Prevention

Complicated crime scenarios such as car theft cannot effectively be countered through outdated crime prevention techniques characterized by resource mobilization based on administrative needs rather than empirical evidence

(Khalid et al., 2015). Interviews with ACLC personnel in KP police reveal a similar tendency towards resource mobilization for car theft prevention based on administrative compulsions rather than scientifically verifiable data. An attempt to shift towards evidence-based crime prevention was piloted in Faisalabad in 2015 through the use of cartographic techniques for spatio-temporal analysis of car theft hotspots (Khalid et al., 2015). This initiative employed GIS-based analysis to mark frequent crime locations, identify areas with high crime rates and density, and map crime hotspots. The data gathered was utilized for Network Analysis to develop need-based plans for resource allocation and deployment, replacing previous practices based solely on administrative setup rather than actual crime prevention needs (Khalid et al., 2015). This evidence-based crime prevention paradigm could be replicated in KP by piloting it initially in Peshawar, with technical support from the Strategic Analysis Wing (SAW) of the Home Department, KP, renowned for its expertise in cartographic techniques.

Safe City Project

Similarly, Safe City Projects in Islamabad and Lahore have significantly contributed to car theft prevention through meticulous video surveillance of potential car theft hotspots and intelligent detection systems for tracing stolen and snatched vehicles. Although a Safe City Project is included in the Annual Development Plan (ADP) of KP for the Current Financial Year (2022-2023), its expedited implementation is crucial as it could greatly assist ACLCs in effectively preventing and intercepting car theft.

Smart Car Parking Systems

Relying solely on anti-car theft devices installed in vehicles is inadequate due to the availability of advanced theft gadgets. Therefore, additional preventive measures related to secure parking environments are essential (Mahavene, 2012). Car parks offering fully facilitated and secure parking facilities incentivize drivers to choose designated areas less vulnerable to theft compared to open parking (Khan et al., 2013). Smart Car Parking Systems (SCPS), successfully implemented in the United States, China, Sweden, and Brazil (Ahad, Khan & Ahmad, 2016), offer integrated solutions including automated detection of vacant parking slots, automated token issuance, and robust security arrangements (Khan et al., 2013). Local institutions like the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar possess the expertise to develop Wireless Sensor Network (WSN)-based intelligent car parking systems (Khan et al., 2013), supported by the KP government for piloting in commercial hubs such as Sadar Bazaar in Peshawar. To encourage private sector adoption, municipal subsidies could be offered to parking facilities adopting SCPS.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the situational, institutional, legal, and comparative analyses, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Due to the absence of ACLCs in as many as 27 districts of KP, the Government's capacity to effectively respond to car theft cases in terms of district-wise coverage is seriously compromised.
2. The disjointed sections of PPC being applied in FIRs for penalizing car theft do not provide comprehensive legal cover against the multifaceted and complex nature of the crime of car theft.
3. The absence of a crime prevention unit in the ACLCs for much-needed deterrent activities such as patrolling of car theft hotspots undermines the ACLCs' capacity for proactive response. This results in a predominant focus on reaction-based or post-crime responses such as the registration of FIRs and subsequent investigation of car theft cases.
4. Police deployment and resource allocation for countering car theft are based on the administrative needs of KP police rather than the actual requirements for countering car theft.
5. Public reluctance to report car theft, owing to widespread perceptions of incompetence and corruption in the police and the Thana culture, prevents the objective determination of the actual magnitude of car theft in KP. This inhibits informed policymaking for preventing car theft.
6. Due to the lack of sufficient parking facilities with easy access and a secure environment, car drivers prefer the less safe option of parking on roads, making their cars more vulnerable to theft.
7. Collusion between unscrupulous police personnel and car theft gangs grants car thieves access to personal data about targeted cars and prior information about police actions such as raids, seriously undermining anti-car theft initiatives.
8. The absence of city-wide centralized networks of video surveillance forces ACLCs to rely entirely on manual checks to intercept stolen or snatched vehicles.
9. Lack of human, physical, and technological resources severely restricts ACLCs' ability to curb the menace of car theft, especially in light of the highly advanced technological gadgets used by car thieves.
10. Operational linkages between ACLCs and other LEAs are absent, leaving a resource gap unfilled as resources from other organizations cannot be pooled for joint operations against car theft.
11. Disconnect between investigative agencies specializing in countering car theft such as ACLCs and intelligence agencies such as IB and ISI prevents the former from obtaining actionable intelligence crucial for recovering stolen or snatched vehicles.
12. The absence of legislation mandating the provision of anti-car theft security devices by car manufacturers leaves cars more vulnerable to theft,

as anti-theft devices available in the open market are often unreliable and easily overcome by car thieves.

Recommendations

Here are the corrected recommendations structured into short, medium, and long-term measures:

Short Term:

1. To prevent the entry of unscrupulous police personnel into ACLCs, personnel should undergo thorough background checks conducted by neutral intelligence agencies such as the IB, to filter out corrupt individuals.

2. Immediate provision of necessary physical and human resources to ACLCs should be ensured, including patrolling vehicles, tracking devices, surveillance equipment, and specialized training for Investigation Officers to enhance their capacity in countering car theft.

3. Implementation of the Safe City Project, already reflected in KP ADP 2022-2023, should commence immediately by piloting it in divisional headquarters with intelligent features for detecting stolen or snatched vehicles.

Medium Term:

4. To improve district-wise coverage of car theft, ACLCs should be established promptly in all 27 districts where they are currently absent.

5. A dedicated preventive unit should be integrated into ACLCs, focusing on deterring car theft through actions such as identifying hotspots, patrolling vulnerable areas, inspecting security arrangements in private parking facilities, and conducting aerial surveillance of crowded urban hubs using drone cameras.

6. Replicate the evidence-based crime prevention paradigm from Faisalabad in KP, utilizing cartographic techniques for GIS-based spatio-temporal analysis to identify car theft hotspots. This approach ensures resources are allocated based on empirically identified crime prevention needs, supported by the GIS expertise of the Strategic Analysis Wing (SAW) within the Home Department, KP.

7. Address public reluctance in reporting car theft by developing a user-friendly computer application named "Car Muhafiz." This app allows victims to swiftly report car theft incidents to ACLCs, facilitating

immediate dissemination of information to all police checkpoints for stolen vehicle interception.

8. Narrow the resource gap of ACLCs by establishing formal Inter-Organizational Coordination (IOC) avenues, fostering operational linkages between ACLCs and other law enforcement entities such as the newly established mobile Ababeel Force of KP Police. This collaboration aims at pooling organizational resources for joint operations against car theft.

9. Establish a regular forum for intelligence sharing between major agencies such as IB and ISI with ACLCs. This initiative enables targeted Intelligence-Based Operations (IBOs) against organized car-lifting gangs, enhancing recovery efforts for stolen vehicles.

Long Term:

10. Introduce specialized anti-car theft legislation akin to the US Anti-Car Theft Act. This legislation strengthens investigation and prosecution of car theft cases by providing comprehensive legal cover and prescribing more severe penalties.
11. Develop an effective Smart Car Parking System (SCPS) in collaboration with UET Peshawar. SCPS offers an integrated solution to parking issues with features like automated vacancy detection, token issuance, and robust security via Wireless Sensor Network (WSN) technology. Local subsidies can incentivize private parking lot managers to adopt SCPS.
12. Enact legislation mandating all car manufacturers to install standardized anti-car theft security devices. Modeled after laws in the US and major European countries, this legal framework ensures compulsory installation of effective anti-theft devices, enhancing overall car theft prevention measures.
13. These recommendations aim to address the identified issues comprehensively and provide practical remedial measures in a logical sequence, catering to short, medium, and long-term needs for countering car theft effectively in KP.

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