

Essay 2: Digital policing – Critically analyse the investigation of complex internet-related crime and outline the extent of the police's role in investigating such crimes.

Sextortion is a cyber-enabled criminal offence, it is a type of blackmail, whereby a person or group will threaten to publish sexual images or videos of a person to family and friends, in turn forcing them to part with money or do something against their will to prevent this from happening. Those responsible often use false names, address and photographs to deceive the victim and make it near impossible for Police to investigate.

In this essay, I will analyse the Police investigation process of Sextortion, what actions Police take and to what extent the Police's role is in investigating such a complex crime, where the offenders are hard to reach.

Blackmail is defined under Section 21 of the Theft Act 1968 as; "when a person with a view to gain for themselves or another or intending to cause loss to another makes an unwarranted demand with menaces."

This crime type is becoming more common due to the increased use of technology and lack of restrictions on access to the internet, such as age consent has aided this. Many incidents of this type of crime are not reported due to shame and embarrassment of what the Police will think of them (Wittes *et al*, 2016). This unknown figure is known as the 'dark figure of crime', which is crime that is not reported to Police.

However, in 2021, David Jones, from the National Crime Agency stated to the Independent that there had been a rise in the reporting of incidents of Sextortion from victims to Police, and them having confidence in the Police to take such complaints seriously and deal with them in an empathetic manner. This comes after the National Crime Agency have worked with Police to improve reporting procedures (Oppenheim, 2021).

Despite there being a clear issue with regards Sextortion in our communities, Sextortion is vastly understudied (Wittes *et al*, 2016). Although with the Police it is known to be an issue, the UK Government have not addressed the problem and it appears to have been ignored. The Office for National Statistics holds no data on the exact offence, neither does the Home Office publish any information or guidance for victims or the Police.

For Police, the investigation of such crime is very difficult and often does not result in a positive outcome. This is due to many offenders in these cases being overseas or part of organised crime groups, therefore it is often difficult for Police to identify them due to the difficulty of engaging with Police Services in countries where this type of crime are committed e.g. Africa.

As well as this, from experience many victims who report this type of cyber-enabled crime to Police have already deleted evidence, often blocked contact with the persons or a period of time has lapsed between the time of the offence and the time of reporting, meaning access to the information is limited and evidence has been lost.

The National Crime Agencies, Anti-Kidnap and Extortion Unit do have an overview on web-cam blackmail and provide Police forces with a guidance on how to approach investigations which Officers can follow when attending such incidents (Crew, 2022).

When investigating such crime, Officers can conduct Golden Hour enquiries as per any offence. This includes obtaining images, account names, IP addresses and account numbers of the social media or bank accounts used to make the demands. With this information Police can utilise investigatory tools such as conducting Police system checks, Charter, and Voters checks to obtain further information on the identities and addresses of the offender. However, this investigatory action is often only viable if the offender lives in the UK, and as discussed above, in most cases they do not, meaning the offender is not identified. This means the investigation, although with the best intentions is often ineffective.

With regards to the financial element of the offence, criminals often use alternative means of obtaining funds from the victim which are untraceable. This includes money transfers through apps such as; 'CashApp' which are not regulated in the same way as UK bank accounts. Accounts such as this are regularly linked to false identities overseas, meaning Police cannot conduct financial checks as they would with a regular bank account. This again, results in investigating such crime and identifying offenders near impossible and disappointing for the not only the victims, but the investigator themselves.

As part of the investigation, due to the difficulty in ascertaining details of the offender, Officers focus mainly on safeguarding. This includes educating and preventing further crime. Safeguarding involves blocking the accounts used to make contact and disconnecting the WiFi router which ensures that no further contact can be made by the offender. Officers will also submit Public Protection Notices to Social Services if the victim is a child or the victim is an adult at risk or has suicidal thoughts; which is a regular occurrence for victims of such a degrading offence. Many victims often suffer with declining mental health and depression;

therefore officers will support them through this, refer them to the appropriate agencies and put help in place if required by liaising with the relevant agencies/charities.

The Police's role in investigating Sextortion can only stretch so far and the Police only have a limited role in its investigation and prevention. It is important for online companies such as; Facebook, Google and Instagram to take some responsibility for the incidents occurring and take the necessary steps to prevent them from re-occurring. As they are the platforms which are enabling such offending to occur. The UK Government and other agencies, such as Schools need to provide more education in relation to preventing Sextortion and take a stronger stance against overseas scamming operations. The Police's resources are near depleted due to demand at home, and it is necessary for others including law enforcement overseas to assist in combatting this type of cyber-enabled crime. It is also important to start to build effective partnerships with Police services in host countries, in order for Police to have a chance of bringing such criminals to justice, provide the best possible outcome for victims and also prevent other members of our communities from becoming victims too.

1030 WORDS

Essay 3 - Critically assess the effectiveness of processes used to evaluate and analyse information and intelligence in order to mitigate against the impact of personal bias.

Information and intelligence is key in effective Policing. It allows police to make decisions, assist in combatting crime and also in managing different situations and resources. Information is defined a piece of data, such as something which has been seen or heard. When different pieces of information and viewed together, reviewed and analysed it can produce intelligence, which assists in the actions and decisions the Police make (Innes and Sheptycki, 2004, p.6)

Information and intelligence gathered and held by the Police is regulated under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2016.

Information which is processed into intelligence can be gathered in many different ways such as; Community Intelligence, tasked intelligence from sources such as CCTV and ANPR, forensic intelligence product, through communications data and also through Covert Human Intelligence Source (College of Policing, 2015).

Community Intelligence is the main form of intelligence submitted and used by front line police officers. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service defines this form of intelligence as;

"Local information, direct or indirect, that when assessed provides intelligence on the quality of life experienced by individuals and groups, that informs both the strategic and operational perspectives in the policing of local communities." (The College of Policing, 2020)

The first process which is used to grade and evaluate information submitted by Police through an Intelligence Submission Report is known as the '3 x 5 x 2 model'. The model streamlines the intelligence submission process, simplifies it and allows the credibility of the information to be determined and helps to identify bias.

The first part of the model is in relation to the source and is graded into three sections. These are Reliable, Untested and Not Reliable. The reliable grading is used when the source can be trusted, reliable and competent. Untested is selected when information received cannot be verified or this is the first time the source has provided information. Finally, Non-Reliable is when the reliability of the source is doubted, or the information is believed to be false.

The second part of the model is the assessment of the information, and further assesses the quality and trustworthiness of the information. This is separated into five parts, which are as follows; known directly by the source, known indirectly to the source but corroborated, known indirectly to the source, not known and suspected to be false.

The third part of the model depicts whether or not the information can be lawfully shared, with or without conditions.

On the one hand the 3 x 5 x 2 model is an efficient way of information being processed and disseminated into intelligence. It allows the information to be analysed by intelligence teams and graded into a high, medium and low confidence level, which in turn assists Police in making decisions.

However, this model relies heavily on the honesty and integrity of Police Officers submitting and using the information. With regards to personal bias, the 3 x 5 x 2 model counts on Officers ensuring they are working within the Code of Ethics. The model unfortunately does allow space for Officers who are dishonest, to manipulate intelligence and/or submit false intelligence reports to aid their own personal bias against a person or group of individuals, which in itself is a flaw which could be detrimental to community trust.

Another process used to evaluate and analyse information and intelligence is the National Intelligence Model. This model is a type of framework which assists Police in making decisions. Different information is processed through the model, which in turn allows Police to act on it to allocate resources, make decisions and develop plans. The model was brought into Policing in 2000 as a way of professionalising the service and to provide a streamline structure for Police decision making.

John & Maguire (2004) states that the National Intelligence Model "provides . . . a cohesive intelligence framework across the full range of levels of criminality and disorder".

The model is set up into three levels; Level 1 being the local regional command unit dealing with Local issues such as; thefts and criminal damage. The second, Level 2 which is force wide intelligence and deals with regional issues dealt with by the local command and bordering forces. The third is, Level 3 which includes national issues such as, serious and organised crime. Level 1, the most important for front line officers is focused on community issues such as, common crime and managing disorder (Kleiven, 2006).

Once intelligence has been received it is analysed and evaluated by an intelligence team. It is assessed for the following; risk and duty of care, intelligence value, accuracy of information, the consideration of further development and quality assurance. This

assessment is completed prior to the information being disseminated as intelligence to the wider police service and partners.

Whilst being analysed, analysts use the 3i Model. This is separated into A – Accuracy, B - Brevity meaning information should be concise and C – Clarity, meaning the reader should be able to clearly understand the information. This model ensures that when the intelligence is disseminated it is concise and reliable.

The analysing and releasing of intelligence rely on the quality of training provided to analysts and their ability to follow guidance and models supplied, to ensure that information converted into intelligence is factual and graded correctly.

In conclusion, all of the processes used to analyse and disseminate information and intelligence are heavily scrutinised and sanitised prior to the intelligence being used as reliable sources. Although it can be considered that police officers and civilians can provide unreliable information, the processes are all made to ensure accuracy of information and helps identify the exact reliability of the intelligence.

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Essay four: Critically evaluate the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies in relation to Serious and Organised Crime.

The Crown Prosecution Service defines Serious and Organised Crime as; “planned and co-ordinated criminal behaviour and conduct by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain. Organised crime in this and other countries recognises neither national borders nor national interests” (CPS, 2022).

Serious and Organised Crime has an effect on public services, our towns and cities, infrastructure and on members of the public more than any other security threat. It destroys lives and puts a never-ending strain on public services (Winchester, 2020).

In this essay, the focus will be placed on County Lines, including the supply of illegal drugs, and the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies used by Police to combat Serious and Organised Crime.

Drug use has a profound impact on our communities. Between 2020 and 2021, 3726 people died whilst in contact with drug treatment services. This does not include the number of people who died not on treatment (Department for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2021). This type of death is a common cause of early death in England and Wales and puts a strain on the NHS in order to treat those who are suffering from addiction and overdosing of illegal drugs. There is also a significant link between those addicted to opioid drugs and repeat offending of crime, such as theft and prostitution. These such crimes are committed to fund their addiction, with 1 in 8 people arrested having an addiction to heroin or crack cocaine (UKDPC, 2008).

The National Crime Agency have also evidenced that 88% of police forces have running county lines in their areas, with 74% including the exploitation of vulnerable people (NCA, 2017).

Organised crime groups, who specialise in the illegal drug trade prey on the vulnerable. This includes those who are young and in poverty, easily influenced and less likely to be caught by the Police. Criminal gangs exploit these people to transport and deal drugs out of cities and into towns and rural areas (NCA, 2018). Those who are addicted to the drugs they are supplying, are often targeted and ‘Cuckooed’, which means their homes are used as bases for drugs supply. In return the victims of cuckooing will receive payment, by means of drugs for their own personal use. This attack on the vulnerable and UK wide transportation of illegal drugs is known as ‘County Lines’. (NCA, 2017)

Whilst discussing the effects that Serious and Organised crime has on police forces and the communities, there has been a clear need for intervention and prevention needed. Due to the serious effect of County Lines on our communities and its links to gang and knife crime, a number of crime prevention strategies have been put in place to combat the illegal drugs network and safeguard communities.

In 2019 the UK Government introduced the 'County Lines Programme' as a way of preventing the distribution of illegal drugs. This included expanding the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre, which increased operational activity towards the main county lines which export drugs from the Manchester, London, Liverpool and Birmingham area. Also increasing investment in Automatic Number Plate Recognition Technology and improved support for victims (Home Office, 2022).

According to Government figures, this appears to be an effective crime prevention strategy with over 1500 lines being removed, over 7400 people being arrested, over £4.3m of cash being seized, as well as safeguarding over 4000 people and engaging over 4000 in safeguarding interventions (Home Office, 2022).

The effectiveness of this approach relies on the accuracy of government data, and the continued investment of time and funding in such programmes. The strategy has clearly made an impact on county lines; however, the drugs trade is still heavily prominent in our communities and clearly more work needs to be done to prevent it. It is also unknown from this data, whether the outcomes are as a direct result of the programme, whereby the Government has taken credit, or whether the data is as result of Police increasing resources and time into tackling the problem.

As well as the strategy discussed above, on a more local level increased focus on intelligence and identifying vulnerability has aided in preventing drugs activity. Intelligence can be gathered in many different ways such as through the community, through officers on the ground and through Covert Human Intelligence Sources (College of Policing, 2015). Gathering intelligence, is a strategy which can provide Police with the information needed to target drugs operations and provide grounds for stop and search and the authorisation of warrants, in order to take down county lines, prevent drug dealing and cuckooing,

Covert Human Intelligence Sources are one way of gathering inside intelligence. Although previously an unregulated method of gathering intelligence, since the introduction of the Human Rights Act 1998, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Covert Human Intelligence Act 2022, the use of CHIS has become more transparent.

Covert Human Intelligence Sources are a person who covertly uses a relationship with another to gather information and disclose such information to another (police). They can infiltrate County Lines groups, providing Police with substantial information such as; who is in charge of the lines, what vehicles they are using, where the next delivery is or forms of communication methods.

Information gathered by CHIS, is invaluable and in turn assists in preventing and combatting organised crime. Although it is a valued method of gathering intelligence, there are some issues with its use.

Firstly, it is questioned as to whether the use of CHIS are ethical and in line with the Human Rights Act, mainly Article 8, the right to private and family life. However, the Covert Human Intelligence Act 2021 does regulate this and clearly states that CHIS are only to be used if necessary and proportionate to the individual case and the use must not be excessive (Home Office, 2021).

To conclude, there has been a clear increase in the awareness of Serious and Organised crime by both Police and members of the public. As well as a continued effort made to gather more intelligence, a real focus has been projected towards protecting the vulnerable and preventing them from becoming involved in criminal activity. Statistics have shown that a drive in increasing awareness of 'Cuckooing' has caused more calls for concern leading to prevention of such criminal activity (NCA, 2018).

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Essay 5: Critically assess the effectiveness of options available to reduce re-offending and consider how these are informed by evidence-based policing. You may choose a specific type of offence for this answer e.g. domestic violence, anti-social behaviour, knife crime. Your answer must be based on academic research, not personal experience.

Shoplifting is a type of theft offence, it is defined under Section 1 of the Theft Act 1968 as, “when a person dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it”.

Theft is a prevalent type of crime in our communities. According to the Office for National Statistics in the year ending 2022, there were over 2.6 million reported incidents of theft, ranging from theft from businesses, burglary and vehicle thefts (ONS, 2022).

There are many reasons why people decide to shoplift, ranging from adolescents who do not know right from wrong, opportunists, those who need to shoplift to provide and those who shoplift to fund addictions.

Routine Activity Theory is a Criminological theory that can explain this type of offending. The theory, developed by Cohen and Felson in 1979 involves three parts. The ‘likely offender’ such as; a child with anti-social traits, ‘the absence of a suitable guardian’ such as; a child unaccompanied by an adult, and a ‘suitable target’ such as; a shop with no CCTV or security guard. When all three elements coincide with each other, according to this theory they create the perfect circumstances for a crime to occur (Miró, 2014).

The first-time offender or opportunist, defined by Moore (1984) as the ‘impulse shoplifter’ is an offender who has not planned their criminal activity and feels shame and humiliation when caught. Offenders of this type are likely to have not committed the crime before. Therefore, this type of offender, would be entitled to the option of a diversionary programme to provide early intervention and prevent the person from re-offending.

In Gwent Police there are two types of programmes offered. These are known as ‘Women’s Pathfinder’ and the ‘18-25’s Early Intervention Service’. The services were introduced in 2019 after a collaboration between Gwent Police, South Wales Police, the Welsh Government and Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service.

The programmes are designed to deliver assistance with problems such as mental health, alcohol and substance misuse, addressing adverse childhood experiences and

improving relationships with family. The scheme's improve community cohesion and is designed to divert the person from criminal behaviour, whilst reducing reoffending (Gwent PCC, n.d.).

There are many benefits to this type of option. It provides the offender with an opportunity to address their criminal behaviour, addresses the root cause of the problem and provides them with the support and tools needed to prevent them from committing further offences. Furthermore, the programme prevents the person from obtaining a criminal record which could be potentially harmful to the individual. For example, causing them to lose or job or future career prospects.

Despite the benefits, there are some downfalls with this type of option. The programme relies heavily on the engagement of the individual and their willingness to learn from their mistakes. Without the offender's engagement, the programme is likely to be ineffective and the individual charged and brought before the Courts for the original offence.

Furthermore, these types of diversionary programmes can be perceived as 'soft policing'. This in some respects is correct. However, it is important to note, that this option is only available for eligible offenders for low level offences. It is also important to understand the reason as to why the person has offended, such as social and economic factors which have influenced them to make the decision to offend. As well as this, the two programmes are only available to specific demographics, leaving men over the age of 25 without the opportunity to engage with such a programme and prevent them from reoffending. This a negative in itself, which could be seen by many to be unfair and disproportionate policing.

Prolific shoplifters, defined by Moore (1984) as the 'professional shoplifter' would not be eligible for the above out of court disposal. Many prolific shoplifters, such as those who are motivated to steal to fund addiction, are often arrested and charged. However, many are released without custodial sentences. This begs the question as to how Police are to prevent this type of offender from reoffending.

According to the UK Drugs Policy Commission (2008) 81% of people arrested who used heroin or cocaine admitted to committing acquisitive crime such as theft.

One option Police have utilised to combat this type of offending is through the use of Criminal Behaviour Orders. This type of order is an evidence based policing technique introduced as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. It is designed to be used against the most persistent offenders in order to prevent them from re-offending. It replaced the previous Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and can be

applied for when an offender is brought before the Criminal Courts (Crown Prosecution Service, 2020).

This type of Order can include conditions, such as; preventing the person entering a certain street or shop where they are likely to or have been offending. These conditions can be an effective tool in preventing criminality and if breached, is triable either way and holds the sentence of a maximum five of years imprisonment (Sentencing Council, 2018) which is a higher sentence than the offence of theft.

On the other hand, such Orders can be perceived as unethical and a breach of Human Rights by preventing a person from moving freely. This is where Police must ensure applications for CBO's are necessary, proportionate and for a Policing purpose to ensure they are not overall infringing on the persons daily life.

Despite not being eligible for the programmes discussed above, offenders who commit theft to fund addiction could be referred to Drug Intervention Programmes by the Courts to address the root cause of their behaviour.

Within six months of engaging with Drug Intervention Programmes, 28% of offenders increase their offending, with 47% reducing their offending behaviour (UKDPC, 2008).

To conclude, it is evident that Police forces utilise many different contingencies for prevention and intervention of repeat and first-time offenders. The effectiveness of these options have been proven to be successful, however there are occasions they are not due to it being heavily reliant on the offender themselves. Whilst reflecting on the approaches, it is clear that they have been informed by evidence-based policing, based on the fact that both Gwent Police and South Wales Police have utilised the programmes.

1044 WORDS

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