



Success of Scene of Crime Officers: A Study on Police Perception

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Abstract

Scene of Crime Officers (SOCOs), in Karnataka are deployed by the Karnataka State Police to assist in the professional examination of crime scenes, including securing the scene, identifying, documenting, collecting, preserving, packing, and labeling physical evidence Scene of Crime Officers are a vital support agency for the Police department, having been recruited for the first time in the country by the State of Karnataka in 2021-22 with the objective of enhancing the quality of investigations under the department of the Directorate of Forensic Science Laboratory. Their role is very crucial in forensic investigations, assisting investigating officers in examining crime scenes and gathering evidence which includes protecting the crime scene and collecting evidence according to established standard operating procedures. This approach contributes significantly to building cases based on physical evidence gathered from crime scenes. There has been an emphasis on raising awareness among Police personnel about the importance and necessity of scene of crime officers, as well as their role and cooperation within every police station. The response from police personnel has been overwhelmingly positive, indicating a strong recognition of the value that Scene of Crime Officers bring to the investigative process.

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Introduction

Crime is a phenomenon which is unstoppable but it can be controlled by the inculcation of various advancements in crime investigation techniques. To enhance Police investigations additional support from

specialized units is essential. This is the need of the hour for recruiting Scene of Crime Officers in the state of Karnataka. Over the past two years, these officers have played a crucial role in supporting Police personnel in their work. This study will help emphasize

the necessity of Scene of Crime Officers within the police department. The effective investigation of crimes relies significantly on the collaborative efforts of various professionals within the criminal justice system. Among these professionals, Scene of Crime Officers play a crucial role in identifying, collecting, and preserving evidence from crime scenes. Their work is vital for maintaining the integrity of forensic evidence, which is essential for solving crimes and achieving successful judicial outcomes [1]. Despite their important contributions, the perception of Scene of Crime Officers among other law enforcement personnel, particularly police officers, is a matter of interest. Police officers are often the first responders at crime scenes, and their interactions with Scene of Crime Officers greatly impact the quality and efficiency of evidence collection and analysis [2]. Police perceptions of Scene of Crime Officers can significantly influence investigative practices, inter-agency relationships, and resource allocation during crime scene management. While some officers see Scene of Crime Officers as essential partners in the investigative process, others may underestimate their contributions due to a lack of understanding of their specialized skills and responsibilities [3]. Such perceptions can create challenges in communication and coordination within teams. Addressing these perceptions is crucial for fostering mutual respect and improving investigative outcomes. For this research, Police personnel have been surveyed as respondents and asked a few key questions.

This paper examines police perceptions on Scene of Crime Officers and their roles in crime investigations, highlighting the implications for inter-professional collaboration, procedural efficiency, and overall investigative success. By exploring this dynamic, the study aims to deepen our understanding of the challenges and opportunities for enhancing crime scene management practices within the criminal justice system. In this paper, we explore the opinions of police officers holding the ranks of CPI/PI, PSI, ASI, and CHC. These opinions serve as the primary focus of our discussion, helping us to examine the role of the Scene of Crime Officers and their importance at crime scenes. A total of 35 Police personnel participated and gave valuable input.

Earlier there are some researches taken up in this

regard.

The Role of Scene of Crime Officers in Modern Investigations which opines that (Scene of Crime Officers) play a crucial role in the scientific collection, documentation, and preservation of evidence. According to Scene of Crime Officers serve as a bridge between physical evidence and forensic interpretation, creating important connections that aid in solving crimes [1]. Their work is essential for maintaining the integrity of the evidence chain, which is vital for successful prosecutions. However, Scene of Crime Officers often face challenges in their operational environment, especially when navigating complex relationships with police officers, whose understanding of the CSO role can vary significantly.

Another notable work identified is that Police and CSO Collaboration in Investigations Effective collaboration between police officers and Civil Society Organizations (Scene of Crime Officers) is crucial for conducting seamless investigations. highlight the interdependence between police first responders and forensic specialists, noting that miscommunication or lack of coordination at the crime scene can compromise evidence [4]. This study further examines how differing perceptions of authority and expertise affect the dynamics between police officers and Scene of Crime Officers.

The perception of expertise among Scene of Crime Officers (Scene of Crime Officers) significantly affects their interactions with police officers. [3]. argue that traditional hierarchies in law enforcement can sometimes overshadow the specialized knowledge that Scene of Crime Officers possess. This gap in perception can lead to the underutilization of their skills, which may negatively impact the integrity of the evidence collected and the overall quality of the investigation.

Challenges of Team Dynamics in Crime Scene Management Poor understanding of Scene of Crime Officers' roles can lead to friction in team dynamics during investigations. highlights that police officers often prioritize rapid decision-making, which can conflict with the detailed, methodical approach required by Scene of Crime Officers [5]. This study underscores the need for mutual respect and inter-professional training to enhance teamwork.

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Objectives

- To Know the role of Scene of Crime Officers in crime investigation.
- To know the perception of Police on Crime Scene officers in crime investigation.

Methodology

The Karnataka State Police serves as the framework for this study, while the Belagavi District Police is the selected sample. A total of 35 samples were collected from 3 CPI/PI, 5 PSI, 10 ASIs, and 17 CHC. The purposive sampling technique was adopted and data were collected through questionnaires.

• Roles of Scene of Crime Officers in Crime Investigation

Scene of Crime Officers (Scene of Crime Officers) play a crucial role in crime investigations, serving as the primary link between the crime scene and the judicial system. Their responsibilities encompass several critical tasks aimed at ensuring the scientific integrity of the investigative process. These tasks include identifying, documenting, collecting, and preserving evidence that can withstand scrutiny in forensic analysis and court proceedings.

Evidence Collection and Preservation: Scene of Crime Officers methodically collect physical evidence, such as fingerprints, DNA, and trace materials. Proper handling of evidence prevents contamination and ensures its admissibility in court.

Documentation of the Crime Scene: They meticulously document the crime scene through photographs, sketches, and notes. This visual and written record is essential for reconstructing events during the investigation and trial.

Collaboration with Law Enforcement: Scene of Crime

Officers work closely with police officers, detectives and forensic experts. Their ability to communicate findings effectively ensures that investigations are guided by accurate and reliable evidence

Forensic Analysis Support: The evidence gathered by Scene of Crime Officers forms the foundation for forensic analysis. Their expertise in locating and preserving evidence enhances forensic laboratories' ability to provide meaningful insights.

Crime Scene Reconstruction: Using the collected evidence, Scene of Crime Officers often assist in reconstructing the sequence of events, helping investigators understand the circumstances surrounding the crime.

Importance of Scene of Crime Officers in Crime Investigation

The success of any investigation largely depends on the quality of evidence collected at the crime scene, and the specialized skills of Scene of Crime Officers ensure that critical evidence is neither overlooked nor mishandled. Their systematic and unbiased approach enhances the objectivity of the investigative process, significantly reducing the risk of errors or wrongful convictions. Furthermore, by adhering to established protocols, Scene of Crime Officers maintain the chain of custody, ensuring that evidence remains credible throughout the judicial process.

Result and Discussion

• Perception of Police on Scene of Crime Officers in Crime Investigation

Table 1: Awareness of Scene of Crime

Sl.No	Awareness about Scene of Crime Officers among the Police.	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	YES	32	91
2.	NO	03	09

The data from the table highlights the awareness of police personnel regarding Scene of Crime Officers (Scene of Crime Officers). A significant majority of respondents, accounting for (91%) of the total, are aware of the roles and functions of Scene of Crime Officers. This indicates that most police personnel are familiar with the specialized duties related to crime scene investigations. The high percentage of awareness positively reflects the integration and recognition of Scene of Crime Officers within the police force, suggesting effective dissemination of information and training regarding the role of these officers in criminal investigations. However, a small minority of respondents, representing (9%) of the total, reported that they are not aware of Scene of Crime Officers. This lower percentage may indicate potential gaps in communication or training within specific areas of the police force. While the majority of officers are well-informed, the presence of this small group highlights the need for continued education and awareness programs to ensure that all police personnel are fully aware of the roles and importance of Scene of Crime Officers in crime investigation and justice administration.

Table 2: Necessity of Scene of Crime Officers in Crime Scenes

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	28	80
Agree	05	14
Neutral	02	06
Disagree	00	00
Strongly Disagree	00	00

The data presented in Table No. 2 highlights a strong belief in the necessity of Scene of Crime Officers at crime scenes. A significant majority, 80%, strongly agree with the statement, indicating robust support for the presence of these officers in such situations. This reflects a high level of consensus on the value of their specialized role in ensuring proper evidence collection and crime scene management. Additionally, 14% of respondents agree with the necessity of Scene of Crime Officers, further strengthening the overall support for their presence. However, a small proportion, 6%, remain neutral, suggesting that while they are not strongly in favour or opposed, they do not have a definitive stance on the matter. Importantly, no respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that the concept of Scene of Crime Officers is generally accepted without significant opposition. Overall, the data suggests a clear consensus on the importance of these officers in maintaining the integrity of crime scenes.

Table 3: Workload of Police

Sl.No	Reducing workload of Police in the Investigation	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	YES	27	77
2.	NO	08	23

The data in the table reflects respondents' perceptions of the impact of Scene of Crime Officers on the workload of police officers during investigations. A significant majority (77%) believe that the presence of Scene of Crime Officers significantly alleviates the burden on police officers. This indicates that most respondents recognize the important role Scene of Crime Officers play in managing specialized tasks, such as evidence collection and scene preservation, which allows police officers to focus on other critical aspects of the investigation. A smaller portion of respondents (23%) feel that Scene of Crime Officers do not contribute to reducing the workload of police officers. This may suggest that these respondents either do not fully understand the role of Scene of Crime Officers or believe that their involvement introduces additional coordination challenges, complicating the investigative process. Nevertheless, the strong support for the role of Scene of Crime Officers in reducing workload indicates that their presence is generally viewed as beneficial for streamlining police operations.

Table 4: Handling, Packing and Forwarding

Sl.No	Scene of Crime Officers Follow the Handling, Packing and Forwarding of Evidences	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	YES	25	62
2.	NO	03	08
3.	Depends on Cases	12	30

The data from this table presents the perceptions of respondents regarding the adherence of Scene of Crime Officers to proper evidence handling and packing procedures. A majority of respondents (62%) believe that Scene of Crime Officers consistently follow the correct protocols when handling and packing evidence. This demonstrates strong confidence in the professionalism of these officers and their commitment to ensuring that evidence is preserved appropriately for investigative and legal processes. However, (30%) of respondents indicated that the adherence to evidence handling protocols by the Scene of Crime Officers varies depending on the case. This suggests that the application of procedures may fluctuate, potentially influenced by the complexity or nature of the situation. A smaller group of respondents (8%) expressed concerns that Scene of Crime Officers do not follow proper evidence handling and packing procedures. While this highlights some possible issues, it is important to note that this group is relatively small compared to the overall support for the practices of Scene of Crime Officers.

Table 5: Cooperation Between Scene of Crime Officers and Police

Sl.No	Cooperation Between Scene of Crime Officers and the Police During the Inspection of a Crime Scene.	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	YES	33	94
2.	NO	02	06

The data from this table shows a high level of cooperation between Scene of Crime Officers and the police during crime scene inspections. A significant majority of respondents (94%) reported that there is effective collaboration between Scene of Crime Officers and police officers. This reflects a strong working relationship that likely enhances the efficiency and accuracy of investigations, as both parties collaborate to collect and preserve evidence and assess the scene. Only (6%) of respondents indicated that there is a lack of cooperation between Scene of Crime Officers and the police during inspections. While this percentage is small, it highlights potential areas for improvement in inter-departmental collaboration. These isolated instances may arise from communication breakdowns, resource constraints, or differing responsibilities. Nevertheless, the overwhelmingly positive response underscores the importance of teamwork in handling crime scenes and emphasizes the generally well-coordinated efforts between the two groups.

Table 6: Need of Scene of Crime Officers in Every Police Station

Sl.No	Need of Scene of Crime Officers in every Police station.	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	YES	30	86
2.	NO	05	14

The data from the table reveals a strong consensus on the necessity of having Scene of Crime Officers in every police station, with (86%) of respondents in support of this idea. This indicates that the majority of participants recognize the value of having specialized personnel available at each station to effectively handle crime scenes. Having dedicated Scene of Crime Officers could enhance the quality of evidence collection, ensure proper handling and preservation of crime scene materials, and contribute to more efficient investigations. This is particularly important for maintaining consistency and professionalism across all police stations. (14%) of respondents opposed the idea of having Scene of Crime Officers in every police station. Although this percentage is smaller, it represents a differing perspective that could be influenced by factors such as resource availability, the frequency of serious crimes, or the belief that Scene of Crime Officers may be more beneficial in larger, specialized units rather than at every station. Nevertheless, the overwhelming support for Scene of Crime Officers emphasizes the general belief in their essential role in the investigative process.

Findings

- The high level of awareness among police officers in Belagavi district about the role of Scene of Crime Officers indicates effective training and communication within law enforcement agencies. Over (91%) of police personnel are aware of these officers and their roles in crime investigations, while only (9%) are not aware.
- Data shows a strong consensus on the essential nature of Scene of Crime Officers, with (80%) of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing on their necessity. An additional (14%) of police personnel agree, while (6%) remain neutral on this issue. This overwhelming support highlights the crucial role these professionals play in preserving evidence and managing crime scenes effectively.
- A significant majority, (77%), believe that the presence of Scene of Crime Officers greatly alleviates the burden on police officers, while (23%) of respondents disagree.
- Regarding the handling and packaging of evidence, (62%) of respondents believe Scene of Crime Officers perform this task properly. Meanwhile, (8%) say they do not, and (30%) state that it depends on the specific case.
- A notable (94%) of respondents say that Scene of Crime Officers cooperate during crime investigations, with

investigations, with only (6%) of police personnel claiming they do not cooperate.

- Additionally, (86%) believe that Scene of Crime Officers should work at every police station, while (14%) disagree.

Conclusion

Investigating crimes is not an easy task, especially when an offender is motivated and intentioned. However, the crime scene can reveal the true story of the crime. It is essential for Investigation officers to detect and analyse the crime scene thoroughly. This paper emphasizes the importance of Scene of Crime Officers in the investigation process. Police personnel recognize the value of these specialists, who cooperate during investigations and assist police in gathering crucial evidence. Scene of Crime Officers are trained in the proper handling and packaging of evidence in a scientific manner, which can significantly reduce the workload for police officers. To improve crime investigations, it is recommended that Scene of Crime Officers be recruited at every police station. Generally, police personnel respond positively to the contributions and work ethic of

Scene of Crime Officers. This should be encouraged by other states also keeping the State of Karnataka as a model for the recruitment of SOCO for every police station [6].

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