The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)- Advantages and Disadvantages

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) is the reporting system used for collecting and reporting data on criminal occurrences in the United States. NIBRS is the incident-based reporting system which includes the changes and modifications implemented in the Uniform Crime Report (UCR)system. The NIBRS system has some great advantages when compared to its predecessors. However, NIBRS has certain disadvantages just like other investigative analysis systems.

NIBRS was developed because of a 1980 report which examined the growing requirements for data collection and analysis in criminal justice system. (Doerner & Lab, 2012). NIBRS is a part of FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) summary-level data collection and reporting system. The uniqueness of NIBRS is that it has an incident-based system. Law enforcement agencies collect and submit a full range of information about crime incidents. Occasions of arrests also are reported in a similar way. (Incident Based Reporting Resource Center, n.d). The most important goal of introducing NIBRS was to improve the statistical reporting and analysis capabilities of the law enforcement agencies. FBI was the primary law enforcement agency involved in the development of NIBRS. A collaboration of law enforcement and criminal justice agencies worked together to develop the features and provisions of NIBRS. The collaboration included FBI, local, state and national criminal justice organizations and other professional agencies in law enforcement. (Incident Based Reporting Resource Center, n.d.).

Law enforcement agencies that already has an incident based reporting system, must comply with NIBRS requirements by undergoing required modifications. (Incident Based Reporting Resource Center, n.d.). Law enforcement agencies can greatly benefit from the NIBRS data. They can access a more comprehensive picture of the specific crime that is investigated. It is

very helpful for them to take appropriate action on the specific event. Similarly, researchers who conduct studies on behalf of law enforcement, also can benefit from the comprehensive data obtained through NIBRS. (Doerner & Lab, 2012). NIBRS system provides useful data that law enforcement agencies can use to handle crime problems in the nation. NIBRS provides information on practically all major criminal justice issue that is known to the law enforcement agencies. It is expected that more and more law enforcement agencies should take part in NBRS by submitting their data. In that case, legislators, academicians, administers and the public can make use of the system (Resource Pages, 2015).

There are several advantages of using NIBRS system when compared to the traditional UCR data. It is an incident-based reporting system for crimes identified by the police. It means, whenever a crime happens and the law enforcement attends it, a variety of data is collected about the event. The collected data will include comprehensive information such as criminal offenses involved in the crime event, unique features of victims and offenders and details about stolen or recovered property. Thus, the system provides a wide range of information about the crime event that is very useful for the criminal justice procedure. The data collected through NIBRS is well organized and it has several aspects of the same crime event. Law enforcement agencies and academic communities make use of the NIBRS data for training and research purposes. Compared to other available data systems, NIBRS data is more reliable and useful. (National Incident-Based Reporting System Resource Guide, n.d).

Another advantage of NIBRS system is the availability of expanded offense categories. NIBRS collects complete information on 22 categories and24 sub categories of offenses whereas the previous system could collect only eight Index Offenses. In that system, the most serious index offenses could only be counted using the traditional hierarchy rule. NIBRS data

provides reports on all involved offenses occurring with a criminal incident. For every single crime incident, 53 data elements are collected in NIBRS. Such detailed information is not available in the traditional UCR data. The expanded data collection process includes additional information like victim offender relationship, injuries and property loss. The process also covers information on presence of weapons, arrestee information, location of the offenses and number of victims and offenders. (Doerner & Lab, 2012).

Local agencies who implement NIBRS can utilize the sophisticated data for studying crime problems. The system is equipped to provide historic data pertaining to a specific crime event. Thus, it is very helpful for law enforcement officials to find answers to several questions that they need to answer. The integrity of police crime data will be enhanced when more agencies participate and involve in NIBRS system. NIBRS data can be utilized effectively for examining crimes like intimate partner violence, child- hood victimization, and hate crimes. (Doerner & Lab, 2012). In the United States, most of the law enforcement agencies have their own mechanism to produce comprehensive statistics in their own areas. The national requirements of crime data can be met by local and state incident-based reporting systems. NIBRS being a derivative of those law enforcement systems, the data provides more common links among agencies. Involvement of more law enforcement agencies will enable the NIBRS to identify common criminal offenses or tendencies among similar jurisdictions. NIBRS allow the agencies to work together and develop possible solutions or practical approaches for addressing issues in criminal justice system. (Resource Pages, 2015).

The NIBRS system has a few disadvantages that needs immediate attention. The system requires local law enforcement agencies to comply with several data entry requirements and data-processing facilities to participate in NIBRS. These agencies are required to undertake rigorous

procedures and follow complicated guidelines for involvement. NIBRS has not been implemented nationally due to the complexity of the requirements. One of the main disadvantages of NIBRS is that the data gathered through the system is not nationally representative. In some cases, meaningful assessment of criminal behavior is not possible through the system. The reason for this limitation is the inadequate adoption by agencies without properly utilizing the greater possibilities of NIBRS system. NIBRS System reflects the crimes that are reported to the police. It is already observed that only a lower percentage of crimes are reported to the police. For example, only 50 % of violent crimes are reported to police. Similarly, only less than 30 % of rape cases are reported to the police. When law enforcement agencies provide such information, manipulations are possible for political or social purposes. The certification is a lengthy process and conversion to the system is very slow. For all such reasons, the coverage of NIBRS system is very limited. (Doerner & Lab, 2012).

As per the latest available statistics, there ae 31 states in the United states that are FBI certified. For the same reason, NIBRS data cannot be considered as a system that constitute a representative sample of the population, law enforcement agencies, or states. The certified states contribute to the system and other states do not participate in the system. Thus, only 25 % of the US population is represented through the system. Another concern is that smaller population areas are participating in the submission process and no areas with population more than 1 million has contributed in the NIBRS until 2005. (Crime Reports and Crime Statistics - Criminal Justice, n.d).

The UCR program is working on improving the NIBRS participation and to fulfill the complete transition from UCR program to NIBRS data collection. The long-term vision of NIBRS is to become the standard for measuring crime data within the law enforcement community. It provides an effective procedure for maintaining the significance of each piece of information.

NIBRS enables law enforcement agencies to move into the technology period with a uniform format for reports and data analysis system.

References

Crime Reports and Crime Statistics - Criminal Justice - IResearchNet. (n.d). Retrieved March 23, 2018 from http://criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com/criminology/research-methods/crime-reports-crime-statistics/6/

Doerner, W. G., & Lab, S. P. (2015). Victimology. Amsterdam: Elsevier/AP.

National Incident-Based Reporting System Resource Guide. (n.d.). Retrieved March 23, 2018, from https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/NIBRS/

Incident Based Reporting Resource Center. (n.d.). Retrieved March 23, 2018 from http://www.jrsa.org/ibrrc/index.html

Resource Pages. (2015, November 23). Retrieved March 23, 2018 from https://ucr.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/nibrs/2014/resource-pages/benefits-of-nibrs-participation_final.pdf