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Preventing Mass Shooting Through Cooperation of Mental Health Services, Campus Security, and Institutional Technology

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Preventing Mass Shooting
Through cooperation of Mental Health Services,
Campus Security, and Institutional Technology

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ABSTRACT:

After the frequent mass shootings in the United States, researchers and authorities are trying to figure out what are main reasons behind these incidents that are becoming more and more frequent. In this paper, three of the preventive methods will be discussed. They are – mental health services, campus security and institutional technology. Some research questions are prepared and interviews are taken to answer these questions.

INTRODUCTION

Mass shooting is on the rise nowadays and measures needs to be taken to curb it. Life is a precious thing for everyone. We all care about our loved ones and we care about individual lives. The United States has had a number of mass shooting, well covered in the news media. “The Oregon school shooting is evidence that the US response to gun violence ‘has become routine’, Barack Obama says. The data compiled by the crowd-sourced site Mass Shooting Tracker reveals an even more shocking human toll: there is a mass shooting – defined as four or more people shot in one incident – nearly every day,” noted The Guardian in an article titled *994 mass shootings in 1,004 days*. The article continued, stating: “this is what America's gun crisis looks like.” Being an International student, I want security in my daily life but the recent violence has caused a lot of concern. It’s hard to live being scared with such a visceral threat. The mass shooting that happened earlier in the school year has changed my outlook and complacency with living and studying in a foreign country.

I have always desired to be able to do something to prevent such tragedy. With this project, I have an opportunity to make a difference. I want to begin a project that will allow me to make a positive change starting with our University and then moving on to different schools, Universities, colleges, and one day the whole United States and beyond. The three ways to prevent mass shooting discussed here is through cooperation of mental health services, institutional technology and campus security (Weiss, 2015).

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental illness is the main reason behind these shootings and shootings are outlet of anger and frustration of the mentally ill loners. Psychiatric diagnosis can be used to predict these

crimes, On the other hand a few of the experts contradict these assumptions and they believe that mental illness is not the main reason behind this (Gordek & Folsom, 2013).

In the USA the Obama administration came out with a much publicised reform in November 2013 where regulations were issued for directing all American insurance plans to cover mental health care along with the rest of the medical services. This was thought to be a major step in the mental health services domain. However, there was one problem with this, which made the regulations almost ineffective. Reach of the scheme to the average citizens in the grass root level was woefully insignificant.

In Australia according to a survey conducted in 2010 it was found that almost 64000 people have various sorts of psychotic illness. AIHW estimates that every year approximately 8 billion USD is spent on mental health related services.

CAMPUS SECURITY:

The principal preventive measure that has to be implemented in the campus is to identify those students who can be violent. This can be done by conducting a behavioral assessment test while the students join the institution. A plan for emergency has to be made and measures must be taken to inform all within the campus when an emergency breaks out. A team who can act in emergency situation must be trained so that they can respond accordingly. CCTV cameras must be installed in the campus and any act of suspicion must be dealt with suitably. All students, staff and faculties residing in the campus so that in times of emergency like mass shooting, they can try to escape and help others to do the same thus rescuing each other must practice emergency escape plans. Classrooms can have hard doors, which will lock automatically. In addition, glass windows, which are more hardened in nature, will add to the security of the students in the campus. This might deflect the bullets (Fox & DeLateur, 2013).

INSTITUTIONAL TECHNOLOGY:

Technology plays a very important role while preventing mass shootings. Institutions must have the most recent technologies in the campus. CCTV cameras must be installed in the common areas, library, canteens and any other place where many people can assemble and should be monitored constantly. Any act of suspicion must be informed to the concerned authorities on an urgent basis. Cameras can also have a technology to detect the shooter. This will enable the authorities to locate and seize the shooter more easily. The institutions must also be equipped with smoke canisters. These can be detonated if the shooter is somehow trapped or is found single in a room or hall. This will slow down the autocracies of the shooter and will result in fewer killings. Glass windows must also have sensors, which will enable the authorities to know if someone is trying to break in, and they could have alerted the concerned personnel (Bondu & Scheithauer, 2011).

PURPOSE AND GOALS – OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research paper is to know the different reasons which causes people to commit mass shooting. The interview for this research work have been conducted keeping in mind the participants who are an integral part of the institution and have been associated with the security of the campus for years. Other people who have given the interviews are medic professionals who know the reasons behind mental illness of a person – the main reason for which a person commits mass shooting.

PARTICIPANTS:

A Primary research was conducted in the Campus by taking interviews of:

1. Public Safety Officer (Campus Public Safety) – Trever Jackson
2. Director of University Computing Services – Bill Kernan

3. Director of Student Health Counseling Center – Jaime Silva

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Some of the research questions used for the interviews were:

1. What is meant by public safety?
2. What is the role of emergency phones?
3. How important is the CCTV footages?
4. What can be done for making the campus more secure?
5. What is the role of alert systems?
6. What is mental health and mental illness? What are the policies attached to mental health problems?
7. How could one figure out whether someone is suffering from mental illness or not?

RESEARCH ANALYSIS:

Based on the three interviews, analysis is done on the research questions to fulfill the objective of the research paper. The success and shortcomings of each of these questions are mentioned and what further steps can be taken by the college management to improve the existing features have also been enumerated.

Interview 1: (Public Safety Officer)

The officer patrols only inside the campus, not anything else. Public safety means prevention and reactivity. One should respond to different policy violation and crimes, to night time calls when people were intoxicated and medical calls on campus. During the daytime, people might be in distress due to fire panel issues, door-locking issues, risk management, fire alarm system, in compliance with fire system and codes. The physical security of campus protects the property.



The above figure shows gun detector doors. My initial idea was to put a metal detector that detects weapons as soon as you enter the door. Obviously student would not like to go through metal detectors in every building, nor would perpetrators utilize such a device. So I had an idea about setting up a detector in the regular door (in every exit and entry) that will not be seen by anyone, and if it detects anything, the siren will be heard at the public safety building, and they could act without detection or alarming either the perpetrator or others.

In total, there are 13 emergency phones in the campus. Whenever someone calls from the emergency phone, the caller id pops up and shows the location of the caller. The authority takes up the call within 2 – 3 seconds and help is provided to him within a couple of minutes. If the caller could not talk, then the officer will check that particular area to see if everything is ok or not. Residents are also given Alice training. If someone doesn't understand what he should do in distress, he should call 911. Within 8 – 10 minutes, help will be provided. Training is also given on how to operate and use the emergency phone, which works like an intercom. In a critical situation, it is advised that one should call both 911 and the public safety as help will be provided by both. But, for mass shooting, one should always call 911. Even if someone calls 911, the college management authority is informed.



Also the application shown in the picture above can be in hands of each and every student too.

ALICE training-an unarmed response to Active Shooter. ALICE training has been provided by Public Safety Department. ALICE gives you options on how to respond in the critical minutes before law enforcement arrives. We get an email that there is an ALICE training coming up. People who wants to go goes and most of them don't. The ALICE training is one of the most powerful training that a student and a teacher take to prevent mass shootings. I have talked to both the Public Safety and Computer department to make this email goes to everyone in the University as there is a way people can block email preferences by which they will not get this kind of emails as everyone is frustrated by getting all student emails. We need to make sure everyone gets the notice about the training. The main things is making the training compulsory for all the students and staffs and also to new incoming students and staffs. I have been taking steps to make this email get by everyone and to put ALICE training on new student week.



A.L.I.C.E (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) educates and empowers individuals to make their own decisions in order to increase the survivability in an active killer situation.

Traditional lockdown drills are outdated and have proven ineffective. A.L.I.C.E trained individuals can become leaders to overcome indecision in the event of an active killer situation.

Interview 2: (Director of University Computing Services)

Individual departments have their own cameras. For one person, it is difficult to track all the footages. During mass shooting, if someone says that he is in a particular classroom, one can pull out the camera of that classroom and get minute details regarding the number of shooters and their position and get real time information. If someone is watching over the CCTV cameras, then he can at least let the authorities know if any sign of danger is there in the campus. The purpose of the cameras is to recover items that have been stolen and the likes. For more security reasons, one can develop software of facial recognition while entering the campus. This will prevent mass shootouts to an extent.



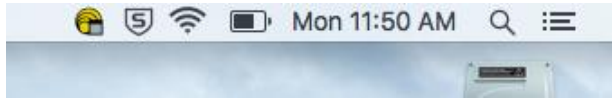
I was actually looking for face recognition cameras but I found out that it not the camera but the software that helps recognizing the face. If the camera in the main entrance and exit area of the University also has face recognition software added we can track down any new people who are not related to the University or have a criminal background will be easier to tack down. Also

if we have any idea that someone in the University has mental illness we can keep an eye on them very easily with this software. I talked to Bill Kernan and did a lot of research and it is possible to implement too.

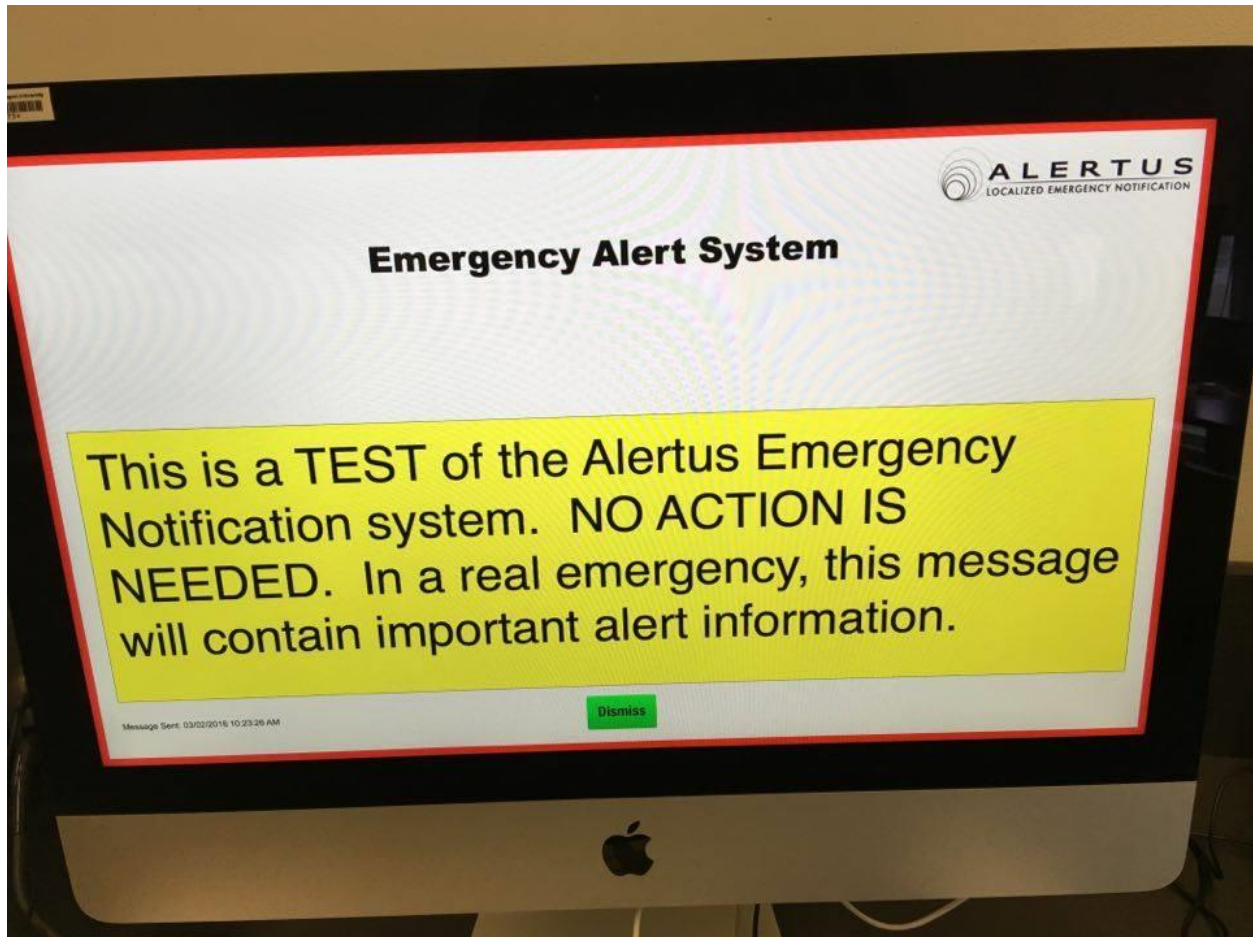


Right now the CCTV cameras are looked by the Public Safety in the front desk with very small screen to each camera in the University. The front desk; lady is busy answering the phone calls, she don't get a lot of chance to look at the cameras. If we have a room like shown above in the picture with two people looking at it makes a place a lot safer and alert and can escape a lot of problems. It's all about money. It costs a lot but the security of everyone does matters. A safer place with high security will attract more students too.

The major success for the project was “Alertus” which is software that make people aware with the message at Emergency situation in the University. If there is any incident happening in the University one can flow up the message with the help of Alertus within seconds and aware everyone. If there is a mass shooting or any critical situation in the University, the message from UCS will pop up on all the computers all around the university. A dry test was done for Alertus and it was a complete success. Currently, it’s on all the Mac computers in the university. One can see a small yellow circle icon on the far right corner of your screen that’s the Alertus. The next objective is to make it work on the entire Windows computer too and if possible pop up on the computers on certain building that the authorities want as they would not want the shooter to know that they know what is happening in the campus.



The yellow icon is the Alertus software that one will see in Mac computers.



This is the TEST of Alertus Emergency Notification system. So in an emergency situation all the computers in the University will have the same screen with the emergency message.

This is the new alert system in the campus, so that in times of distress, help can be sent quickly. Also, a flash message will appear on the screen. The software that is being implemented is in its early stages and cannot actually reveal in which building, the crisis is going on. But plans are there to implement this also by building individual stations.

The second success was the Panic button. I talked to some of the professor related, one of them is Kyeongheui Kim for my project and they requested to have a panic button in the classroom for emergency situation. There should also be the provision that if a stranger comes in the classroom, one can push the emergency button. Also when I had the interview with the Director of Student Health Counseling Center, Jaime Silva, he too requested me for the panic button in the office for the staff for SHC as they are planning to shift in a new building. He wants it to be fully prepared as Student Health Counseling Center is the first place where they do the test for mental illness and his major tension was what if a student had mental problem and attacks the staff at the time of checking or talking with him/her.

Nathan Sauer from University Computing Services did test on smart classroom for Panic button and it went successful. He did testing on Crestron controller where he put a button in Crestron controller and you just press it and it will automatically notify public safety that there is an emergency situation.



Interview 3: (Director of Student Health Counseling Center)

Mental health states how one function in the world emotionally and cognitively. It is a state of mind which expresses one's movement, judgment, affects anything that has to do with mental health. There are three departments of mental health services – medical department which offers help for all medical issues, mental health department which offers counseling and mental health services and wellness education department which offers education and prevention on campus related to mental health issues as soon as a student arrives on campus. The psychiatric department conducts and evaluates the students after the medication of depression and anxiety on how well and fast are they recovering from mental illness. Mental illness is a condition when the mental cognition is not functioning well due to many issues and the mind is not working properly as it should.

There are some policies and preventive actions to be taken to curb the mental illness. Whenever a student first comes regarding any issues of mental health, he is counseled and if required is admitted. Thereafter, he is given individual counseling sessions and discuss at length about the issues he is facing and how to overcome those. This is done so that one can be successful as student. The mental health check-up is done only for students and not for the staff and faculties of the university. It is not compulsory for the mental health check-up.

The top three mental health issues faced among the students are anxiety, depression and relationship issues. A layman can also figure out whether a person is suffering from mental illness or not. Severe anxiety will lead to panic attack. If someone is depressed, they will be crying. If someone is seen with gun or weapon, call for safety immediately. Follow safety and precaution procedures. Behaving awkwardly, they might have mental illness issues.

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