

**CRIME AND POVERTY IN URBAN AREAS OF PAKISTAN:
CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

Society is a web of social relationship, which undergoes a change necessitating their adjustment. When they fail to adjust themselves we have social disequilibrium giving birth to social problems. In this vein, crime is one of the major social problems of urban area in the world including Pakistan. This research paper surveys crime scenario in urban areas of Pakistan and findings suggest that crime rates are higher in poor urban areas than in affluent urban, suburban, or rural areas. This paper verifies the cause and effect relationship between poverty and crime in the urban locale of Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Crime is said to be a violation of rules and laws, for which any governing body/authority can prescribe and suggest punishment and conviction for related violation. Some of these crimes are socially known and the criminals are punished in one way or the other by legally established agencies or socially approved methods. However, violence and crime retard expansion and have always openly affected cities in terms of social and physical infrastructure including roads and public facilities, and the individual properties as well. Recent upsurge in crime has become major societal observable fact of urban society in Pakistan. The crime rates have increased steadily in recent years in Pakistan. Plenty of budgetary resources of the country are spent on detection, apprehension and conviction of the criminals, yet crime goes on increasing day by day. The law and order situation in Karachi is especially serious and is regarded as the most dangerous city of the Pakistan (www.defence.pk). It is estimated that there are more than five million illegal immigrants in Sindh including Biharis, Bengalis, Burmese, Afghans, Vietnamese, Bosnians, etc. in the urban areas (Sahoutara 2012). Moreover, rapidly increasing

population has pushed the infrastructure of urban society on the verge of collapse, on the other hand, steady rise in poverty in the less developed areas (*katchi abadi*) of various cities. In this way, on an average, five to ten people are killed due to political violence, murders, robberies, bombings and kidnappings (Khan 2011).

Although there was a crime in primitive societies, as well, yet the traditional customs, rites, rituals and mores were strong enough to control the individual behavior effectively. The delinquents, offenders and ruffians were severely punished at local level by the community in general (Garland 2003:5). In modern societies, the influence of mores, folk ways and traditional customs has considerably loosened and it has become difficult to compel universal observance of mores. The modern societies have population, which is heterogeneous in race and cultural background and is differentiated in various classes. They have several norms of conduct which often clash with one another and have limited control over the behavior of their members. Besides, the rapid urbanization associated with economic and social progress has engendered criminal activities. Frequency of several crimes in major cities of Pakistan shows the negative outfall of urbanization which is expressly manifested in less developed areas.

The criminal behavior is due a number of interrelated factors involving environment and personality. Urbanization, rapid economic liberation, growing mass political upheaval and inappropriate policy measures and inadequate feedback of law enforcement bodies have contributed to higher rates of crime and encouraging violence in urban areas. There are many social and economic reasons, including unemployment, which have played their role in worsening law and order in the urban areas of the country. The recent increase in suicide incidents is the result of unemployment and injustice in the society. The culture of extortion life of the common man is miserable in the urban areas. This paper explores the causes of crime in different localities of various cities in Pakistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data about nature and extent of crime is grossly inadequate and unreliable because of under-reporting in surveys by

the institutions gathering statistical data regarding the incidence of crime and violence. Thus, this research study is explanatory as well as articulated through quantitative and qualitative approaches based on previous research and data collected by different sources. Thus qualitative analysis is done in the light of secondary sources.

CAUSES OF CRIME IN URBAN AREAS

The crime has no single or simple cause. Each crime has a complex history and is usually caused by many factors, which are sometimes even difficult to determine. Among the several cause no priority can be ranked. Crime does not offer single or simple explanation for its occurrence, so crimes should be considered in their complex totality and only then can be understood and dealt with effectively. The commonly accepted view about crime today is that there is no single cause of crime, for individuals become criminals for different reasons (UCR 2004). Table-1 below gives relationship of the different modes of crime with perpetrators, victims and locations.

Table-1
Typology of Crime and Its Location Impact

Nature of crime	perpetrators	Victims	Causes	Location and Impact
Petty crime, theft	Wide variety of individuals, probably from low and middle levels	Same as perpetrators	Opportunity, necessity	Localized
Domestic violence	Men	Female partners	Culture, frustration, tradition	Household
Violent crime: murder, assault, mugging	Men between age 15-35	Same as perpetrators	Enmity, power, petty crime gone undone	Household, neighborhood

Armed robbery, household kidnapping	Men, often as part of a gang	Upper and middle class households	Ransom, enmity, high financial returns	Localized, neighborhood
Political violence	Organized or unorganized groups/parties	State, other groups	Numerous	Local, city-wide, national
Mob/gang neighborhood violence	Mafia, gangs	Other gangs, groups individuals	Terrain, power, politics	Localized
Crime against property	Mafia, state, municipality, individuals, groups	State/private land and property, other gang /groups	Need for land, housing or speculation	Localized, neighborhood
Drug trafficking	Organized groups, middlemen, police, state	Individuals across social classes	Large financial gains	Neighborhood, city, state international

Source: Crime Statistical Division, *Crime Statistics*. Ministry of Economic Affairs, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 2009.

Social Causes

In the urban setup, the family system is disorganized. The children, parents and grandparents in a family are weakly associated. The children and adult like an unrestricted life to follow their own individual paths. Due to this the sex crimes are increasing. One major cause of adultery, abortion, prostitution and juvenile delinquency is the undesirable domestic conditions. Social control in modern society has weakened. In urban areas especially in big cities people usually have very impersonal relations. In this environment one can easily commit crime and can conceal his identity. The modern system of education is lacking of ethical education that is why it has failed to develop the character of the individuals. So the individuals especially young are easily attracted and indulge in crimes. The dowry system, wrong system of mate choice, consumption of alcohol, caste system, has also been responsible for increasing criminal activity. In addition to these, the media has also contributed to the increase in crime.

Economic Causes

Poverty: Poverty as defined as the paucity of some fixed level of material goods necessary for survival and minimal well being. A hungry stomach can literally do anything in order to appease his hunger. Actually poverty and inequality are behind the crime. Poverty is commonly considered as utter dispossession while inequality is regarded as relative dispossession. Besides, inequity, there are many ways to measure both poverty and inequity in terms of unemployment, high rates of divorce, single-parent households, high population density, dilapidated housing and poor schools.

Unemployment: Many youngsters in cities having professional degrees often take to robbery and stealing when they are frustrated by continued unemployment. It is due to the need of merit in the concerned institutions, when less privileged class is not entertained in the jobs they are disappointed and drop them into the inferiority complex which show the ways to the individual in the crime. In the end frustrated youngsters fall into the hand of criminals and gangsters and eventually they chose their way of life by the way.

Industrialization: Urbanization is the result of industrialization. In cities the society fails to exercise social control. Some thinkers are of the opinion that geographical causes also stimulate crime. Sometimes, people connected with political groups also assist criminals and make use of them to inflict injury or to defame members of the opposing groups. In current years, however, the 'deep anger' explanation has become more famous, and many criminologists now relate economic inequality with violent crime. Perhaps the most common connection is with conventional or street crime. In cities the society fails to exercise social control.

Political Causes

In addition to these, the political groups also assist criminals and create law and order situation in the countries especially in big cities like Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta. The political setup also encourages the crimes for their own vested interests and political array for achieving power and status in the

society to govern on the suppressed and depressed class with their power and authority. In our modern times government machineries are slow and inefficient with the result that this becomes premium on the illegal activities of the criminals. Also, the legal system in Pakistan is complex and complicated and the criminals are confident that they can escape free (ICG 2010). They know that by their illegally earned wealth they can purchase as well as mould the course of law. Besides, the politicians encourage the criminals for the one reason or the other.

SUGGESTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Since there is no single cause of crimes a single measure for remedy cannot be suggested. However, improvements in the following areas can decrease the crime ratio in urban localities:

- Education develops respect for law among people and promote sense of understanding the environment in a better way an educated person prove to be a better citizen than an illiterate and ignorant person. Thus, education of masses will decrease the nature and rate of crimes in the country.
- Every effort should be made to improve the living standard of the people, as the improvement in the living standard brings better housing and sanitary facilities will ultimately lead to healthy socialization of an individual.
- Social security and insurance facilities against unemployment, old age or other mishaps may decrease the crime rate in society. It may be mentioned here that as the criminal behavior is the product of social disorganization, total prevention of the crimes is next to impossible. The only remedy is to adopt preventive measures on the one hand and treat the criminals by providing them better chances for their readjustment so that they can become the normal and useful members of society.
- True following of religious precepts can solve the problem in the long run. Only a completely modernized peaceful society can solve the problem of crime, because it advocates reformatory rather than preventive treatment of criminals.
- The criminals in jails may be provided with adequate food, clothing and recreational facilities.

- The poverty and unemployment should be reduced by creating job opportunities, opening new industries, providing vocational training and introducing various social and economic reforms in the country.
- The character building of individuals can be done through introducing reforms in education system. In addition to this there is dire need for a public safety commission and civil society role to aware people at societal level.

CONCLUSION

As discussed in this article, the crime rate in this age and in this setup is alarming. As currently terrorist groups also share in the crime, consequently death rate of common man has increased which is also other considerable and debatable issue. In this situation appropriate strategic plan and policy is needed to curb this on grassroots level as society could work and run smoothly. After reviewing all these factors it is observed that crime and criminals are the nuisance for society and they always impair the society drastically. Paradoxically, State in Pakistan appears least interested. And if it will not be on the priority of the government to curb the crime in the urban and bordering areas of Pakistan, the Pakistani society will face more dilemmas and dangers threatening civilized living standards. Crime and criminals will increase and would become nuisance in every section of society in every sector (social, legal, societal and cultural) unless not treated firmly by the law enforcement agencies.

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