Socio-Economic factor and Criminal Behavior

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Crime has always existed from the start of human history. It occurs in every stage of development of society, irrespective of its structure, historic or system. There should be no doubt that crime is the result of numerous social and economic factors in our society. Whether we like it or not, crime is always a constant companion of our lives. This fluctuation in levels of crime is influenced by several factors whose nature is diverse. Among these various reasons, we may separate the socio-economic factors of the criminals. Several sources confirm the fact that there is a strong bond between the economic and social conditions and the fluctuations in the level of crime. Several theories also explain how the criminal is motivated to commit a crime influenced by the changes in profits and costs from the said activities. This is quite logical as criminals often commit such activities because the results they want are achieved quickly, and with less hassle, as compared to the same goal accomplished constitutionally.

Crime and changes in the ways of committing a crime are both affected by factors such as the degree of economic development of a country as well as the stability of its political system. Other factors also include the pace of industrialization and urbanization of the state, the tends of immigrations and migrations and other related variations in the social structure of the state. These transformations may be a result of a swift revolutionary process or it may be a result of steady evolutionary changes at occur at a steady and uniform pace. Each time there is a turmoil in a state, there is always a hike in criminal activities that affect the state and sometimes the states that are linked with it, either from land routes or diplomatic ones. Take the example of Sicily (Steven E. Barkan). The island itself had been under constant war due to its important strategic location. This produced a power vacuum and economic disparity that resulted in the start of one of the biggest crime families in the world, the Italian mafia. This group of organized criminals later began to affect the whole world as they managed to establish a shadow government in the US, the country that was powerful enough to influence the decision of almost all the states in the world. This syndicate of crime can be seen to be formed as a result of a lack of law and order and the economic disparity that the dwellers of Sicily faced due to numerous wars and the curse of their strategic location.

By the analysis of the socio-economic factors of crime on a much smaller scale, one can study the changes that have occurred on a global scale as well. Let us take the example of one of the states that attained freedom from communist rule, Poland (Steven E. Barkan). The dimension of economic and social changes that took place in the state managed to change the whole outlook of Western Europe. In the case of Poland, we should also consider the effects of border social changes such as the complete change of the political system in the country. This change is always accompanied by disintegration and destabilization of the entire society. This process includes things like the change in the ownership structure of the society, along with numerous changes that occur when a country changes its structure from communist to democratic regime. Thankfully, the society of the United States went through an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary one like Poland went through. So, it was saved from the devastation and hike in criminal activities which is caused by the shift in the social and economic structure of the governing regime, as well as the change in social groups and social hierarchy. In the scramble, many social groups end up as being the losers in the race of economic and social prosperity.

Another social factor that is somewhat ignored in this analysis is the possibility of cultural change. Here, two systems of culture often collide with one another. On one side, there is the system of culture that the state inherits from the previous system of government, while on the other side there is a different culture that is the process of being shaped like the country transitions in the new system of governance. This kind of change is the true breeding ground of some serious criminal activities. Let us take the example of India to elaborate on this point and its influence on the socio-economic factors that encourage criminal activities. Both the partition of the sub-continent, United India was under the autocratic rule of the British. So, after the end of the British rule and the partition of India, the tenants of the colonial system collided with the nascent system of government that was based on democratic values. Some cultural and minority ethnic groups where neglected. This resulted in a bunch of criminal activities that began to occur throughout the state of India. The most notorious of all was the Mumbai Criminal Syndicate led by a criminal that later ran off to Dubai and managed to establish political linkages in the Central Government of India that made him untouchable (Steven E. Barkan). The point that should be noted here is that if this ethnic group had not been marginalized in the process of the making of the new political system, there would not have been a crime spree that would have affected all of India. Thus, it is proven that cultural factors, such as lack of respect for human rights and marginalization of minor ethnic communities, are also somewhat responsible for the increase in crime and criminal activities.

We must also understand that the main problem that is being pointed out in these aforementioned examples is the dependence of economics and social factors with the spike in criminal activities. However, it should be noted that these are just the elements that explain the occurring and rapid increase of specific types of crime only. Some scholar also questions the predicament that economic situation often has a say in shaping the level of crime rate in the society. They argue that the effects of the influence of social and economic factors are limited to specific kinds of criminal activities only. It makes one wonder how the economic and social outlook of a society can shape the level of crime rate. The society itself is a dynamic entity as it is under constant transformations and modification, due to the changes in its demographics on an instantaneous level.

These changes are often seen as a positive influence on an economy. Poor economic outlook simply translates into an increase in unemployment in society.

There should be no doubt that unemployment may have different intensities and dimensions when it comes to its role in the increase in criminal activities. An analysis of the database of NYPD shows that there is a high chance of crime occurring at the hands of the people that are just under the age of thirty (Igor Goroshko). If a person is facing long-term unemployment, then it is likely that he may lose hope in the system and succumb to criminal activities. This may be because he may feel that he is being treated with injustice in society and may lose any hope to find any source of a legitimate source of income. However, this can be seen that the increase in unemployment can produce variation in criminal activity from various social groups.

Mostly, there are four types of criminal activities when it comes to outlining the relationship between crime and unemployment. First, the criminal may incorporate his legal business with criminal activities. The Italian mafia opened up pizza restaurants throughout the US and used these restaurants to supply Cocaine and other drugs through their pizza delivery service. Second, there are criminal activities that are done inside a legal business repeatedly by offering bribes or making dangerous threats. Thirdly, there is a possibility of doing legal and illegal activities simultaneously, but from different sources. Lastly, there is a group of people for whom engaging in crime is not an option, it is a necessity. This may be due to their immediate surroundings or the stereotypes that are attached to their racial identities. The best example that can be given in this regard the African-Americans of the Southern States of the US. Their immediate surroundings make it easier for them to engage in criminal activities while the factor of unemployment does not influence their lives whatsoever.

Another factor that has a strong association with criminal activities is that of poverty. There is an old saying “Crime is the child of poverty”. This can be easily observed everywhere in the society around us. However, it should also be needed that criminal activities are also incited by the fear of the poor by the rich. The rich are always suspicious of poor people and view them as dangerous and troublemakers of society. This feeling is often responsible for pushing people towards criminal activities. Even if the rich try to care and assist the poor, they do so in a rather controlling manner that further adds fuel to the fire. Nevertheless, there is a clear relationship between the wealthy and the gap of inequality among different classes of the society. This gap creates a general feeling of discontent and unease in society. This particularly affects the lower classes in a society. There are several studies conducted on different cosmopolitan cities of the world that have shown that when a few people have a greater level of income, the majority of the lower and poor section of the population has an incentive to move towards criminal activities.

Religion is also the root of criminal activities sometimes, but that is only true to the extent of the functioning of society based on these principles (Ohlen). Although many scholars may disagree that religion has any role to play when it comes to a spike in criminal activities, yet one can observe a clear connection when it comes to many criminal cases. In the above-mentioned case of the Mumbai Criminal Syndicate, the head of the syndicate used the argument of difference of religion to gather people of his ethnic group. This made sure that most of his criminal activities had the support of the people around him.

Now, let us move the discussion towards the economic factors of the society. This is a huge possibility that economic components of the society may also affect the criminal activities occurring in it, as economic activity surely affects the social changes in society. There is a healthy chance that economic activities may create some serious situations that may result in an increase in criminal activity in society. However, this relation is not so obvious and straightforward. A correlation of economic factors with various other social factors must be taken into account. For one, the affluence in the society may encourage people to engage in criminal activities due to ease in availability of required sources. But it can be generally seen that better economic and social status does not encourage people to engage in criminal activities in a society.

The aforementioned socio-economic factors clearly show that humankind is linked in a web of economic and social factors that make us both interdependent and interrelated. There are both social behaviors and vulnerabilities that play their role in increasing the crime rate in society. However, there are differences in trends as well, that we have tried to discuss and understand. However, this makes one thing certain. The decrease in criminal activities is not enough. The societies have to eliminate the root of the problems that force an individual to commit criminal activities. These measures must be used to eliminate social and economic inequalities in society. The balance of resources in society always promote social stability and tolerance.

Even though there are various crime control and prevention strategies that continue to be developed and implemented, they may reduce crime, but only on a smaller scale. The point is that they may not be as effective as they should be since there are too many socio-economic factors that need to be taken into account while studying the relationship between economy, society, and criminal activities. However, there should be recovery efforts to prevent crime on a local or regional level in every state to improve the living conditions of the people. Every state should work together to find the best ways to lessen the desire and necessity of a person to be involved in criminal activity.

# References

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