

Economics of Crimes in Industrialized and Non-Industrialized Societies

Dr. Preeti Misra

Associate Prof., Dept. of Human Rights, School for Legal Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow

Abstract

During the last two decades, scholars have made great progress in explaining why some individuals are more likely than others to commit crimes, but very little in explaining why the crime rate rises or falls. Everyone believes that there is more crime in economically depressed inner-city neighbourhoods than in affluent sections of the society. This fact leads naturally to the assumption that if a community becomes more prosperous, crime rates will go down, and if income levels decline, crime rates go up. Economists who have checked this view have discovered that it is often true, but not always. Economic development in a society affect the crime rate in different ways. Non-industrialized countries have a bigger problem with major human rights offences than economically developed societies. Industrialized and non- industrialized societies have their own unique problems that lead to criminal activity. Present paper analyses relation between crime and economy with reference to industrialized and non-industrialized societies.

Introduction:

Crime is generally committed out of poverty or out of greed and both the terms are related to economy. During the last two decades, scholars have made great progress in explaining why some individuals are more likely than others to commit crimes, but very little in explaining why the crime rate ... rises or falls. Everyone knows that there is more crime in economically depressed societies than in affluent societies. That fact leads naturally to the assumption that if a community becomes more prosperous, crime rates will go down, and if income levels decline, crime rates go up. Economists who have checked this view have discovered that it is often true, but not always. ..

Economic development in a society affect the crime rate in different ways. Theorists today believe criminal behavior is caused more by social factors than by biological ones. The assumption is that the barbaric crimes, such as maiming, will drop when a society becomes industrialized, while, at the same time, other crimes such as property crimes will rise. Non-industrialized countries have a bigger problem with major human rights offenses than

economically developed societies. Industrialized and non- industrialized societies have their own unique problems that lead to criminal activity.

Emile Durkheim, a social theorist, "demonstrated that much human behavior, including criminal behavior, is caused by social factors rather than biological or psychological factors" Durkheim coined the **term anomie**, which explains that "during periods of rapid social change, traditional norms may be viewed as no longer applicable to behavior, leaving **people free to pursue any ends by any means**". Durkheim was the first theorist to explore this, but **today theorists see this as the dominate way of explaining crime. Presently in India too we are witnessing the situation of anomie. Various scams of present times and use of religion in minting money strengthens this fact.**

Relation Between Crime and Economy

So far as relation between crime and economy is concerned, we can better understand it in context of Affluent Societies. Robert Merton used the theories of Durkheim to analyze developed societies. Society in the United States is a very status and materialistic driven culture. Merton saw the United States as having an inherent problem with people consistently having legitimate means to reach their goals. In the United States there is an unequal distribution of opportunities to succeed. Depending on where a person comes from, such things as a college education may be impossible or nearly impossible to achieve, whereas for others it is simply a given. This disparity in opportunities leads some people to resort to other, illegal activities, such as property crimes and drugs to obtain the status and material goods they desire. In some cases the urge to commit a crime comes from simple expectations. People in a developed society are expected to achieve certain things, and when they cannot they are tempted to resort to crime to gain what they feel they need, to be accepted by society. The failure to achieve such expectations may lead to such emotions as anger, resentment, rage, dissatisfactions, disappointment, and unhappiness-that is, all the emotions associated with crime in criminology.

While many violent crimes remain in an industrialized society, many of the more brutal and barbaric crimes of non-industrialized societies are drastically reduced. Many countries and societies that are not economically developed suffer from many human rights violations. Recently India has witnessed escalation in cases of brutal violence against women and women burning though acid. Such brutal crimes are certainly not seen as often in an

industrialized country such as the United States. Violent crimes do occur in the United States, for example, homicide and rape, but as a society the United States suffers from fewer brutal crimes than a non-industrialized country.

Property crimes are the most increased type of crime when a society becomes more economically developed. A person's interest goes from being socially centered to being self-centered. Rather than focus on what is good for the society as a whole the person starts to think only of what is good for them. This may create a low moral code in a person and lead them to a life of crime in order to obtain the material goods that they feel they deserve. "Some groups in society find the institutionalization means, blocked or closed to them". The changing economy leads to varying crime rates. It only stands to reason that the more the economy struggles in an industrialized society, the higher the crime rate will rise. However, studies have also shown crime rates to rise in a strong society. Durkheim dealt with this concept in his book *Le Suicide*. "In analyzing suicide rates, he noticed that suicides not only go up during periods of economic depression, but also during periods of sharp economic growth". He felt the sharp economic growth led to "confusion about social norm". Any drastic change in a society's economy may lead to an increase in crime.

Another factor that has an effect on a society's crime rate is when a society turns to status and material items, when a society tends to turn away from family and other traditional institutions. "The major institutions family, school, and political system-are all subservient to economic institutions". If a person does not feel strong family ties they may be more likely to commit a criminal act. "Adolescent with conventional social supports are better able to respond to objective strains in a non-delinquent manner", without social supports such as family, it is harder for a juvenile to resist delinquent activities, especially if they are being carried out by his peer group. "For example, it is more difficult for parents to effectively socialize and supervise their children when parents must devote the bulk of their time and energy to work".

With little or no supervision from parents, the juvenile gets more and more detached from family. These non-economic institutions give way to the pursuit of money and status. Also, if a person in an economically developed society, finds gaining the status he needs, difficult, he turns to illegitimate means to gain what he wants, especially with no supervision or social controls to hold him back from engaging in criminal activity.

With each delinquent act, a person will find less and less morally wrong with achieving what he desired by whatever means necessary.

Conclusion

The relation between crime and economy is very complex and difficult to explain. We see that both industrialized and non-industrialized societies suffer with crime. Each type of society struggles to control differing types of crime. Crime rates will rise in an industrialized society, especially property related crimes known as organized crime, syndicate crime or professional crimes. While an industrialized society is mostly able to get away from brutal crimes such as maiming, but such a society is not immune from violent crime: rape, human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution or beggar, drug peddling and murder still occur far too frequently in such society.

It is difficult to link rising crime during the prosperous 1960s to economics. On the other hand, a declining economy provided a plausible theory to explain increases in crime during the 1990s. Matters become even more complicated if one goes back to the Depression of the 1930s. When we had no official data on crime rates at that time, but several studies of individual cities suggested that crime rates fell even though one-quarter of all Americans were unemployed. Why? One reasonable hypothesis is that the Depression pulled families together, and this cohesion inhibited crime. ... IT SEEMS pretty reasonable that a bad economy would increase criminal activity. People are losing their jobs and having trouble making ends meet, and it would be still surprising, really, if this didn't lead society's more desperate members to resort to crime to obtain basic necessities. Some studies appear to demonstrate a positive relationship between downturns and crime, but others clearly do not.

So answer to the question - can the economy help explain fluctuations in crime? The answer is sometimes yes, sometimes no. The relationship between economy and crime varies depending on things like the quality of the social safety net, levels of national identification and ethnic conflict, and other idiosyncratic variables.

The increasing crime, rising population, growing pressure of living accommodation, particularly in urban areas, violent outbursts in the wake of demonstrations and agitations arising from labour disputes, the agrarian unrest, problems and difficulties of students, political activities including the cult of extremists, enforcement of economic and social

legislation etc. have all added new challenges before the law making authorities, policy makers, academicians and researchers to analyse relation between economy and crime.

References

1. Cullen, F.T., & Agnew, R., *Criminological Theory Past to Present*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury, 2003
2. Eide Erling, *Economics of Criminal Behaviour*, 1997
3. Gopalakrishnan, K.C., *Legal Economics*, Eastern Book Company, 2008
4. Posner, Richard A., *Economic Analysis of Law*, Little, Brown and Company Ltd., Canada, 1992
5. Rajan Vijaya A., "Economics of Crime" *Indian Journal of Criminology*, Vol.31 January & July, 2003, Nos. 1 & 2, Pp 1-3
6. *The Economist* "Crime and the economy", Washington, July 8th, 2009