

Economic Disparities and Crime Causation: A Longitudinal Analysis

Jageshwar Prasad Chandrakar

Research Scholar, Kalinga University, Raipur

Abstract

Crime is attributed to some of the major problems that a country ought to face if not resolved timely and tactfully as it becomes a major hurdle in peace, security development and overall well-being of every individual and collectively to the nation. Poverty and Crime have an interconnected and intrinsic relation i.e., one leads to soreness of the other. It is a matter of common understanding also that the majority of crimes are committed in devoidness of certain basic needs and imperatives. This paper focuses on establishing and untangling the complex affinity between the two.

Introduction

In medical science it is the common and vital practice to first outline the ailment then perform the appropriate operation on it following the same approach the precise point of intersection between crimes and socio-economic disparities needs to be established. The most common approach to see socio-economic disparity is enroute in complex caste structures, poverty and rural-urban economic divide in India which are the basic ingredients to socio-economic disparities.

India is a vast country with several states that can be considered as individual entities due to their significant size. For example, among the 15 major Indian states, the median state had a population of approximately 45 million in 1991. To put this into perspective, Uttar Pradesh alone had a population comparable to Brazil, the largest country in Latin America. Examining the changes in poverty and social development across India's states would provide valuable insights into the varying rates of progress in enhancing living conditions among developing nations. (Source: India 1993a; World Bank 1993; Dutt, 1998).

On the other hand, the crimes can be classified on multiple bases such as blue & white collar crimes. For the purpose of this paper, only the blue collar crimes are to be taken into

consideration. Secondly it can also be based on types of offences such as Offences against the person e.g., murder, assault, kidnapping, property e.g., theft, robbery, burglary, public order e.g., rioting, unlawful assembly, the state e.g., sedition, treason, public health, safety, and morals e.g., adultery, gambling. However, crimes that are associated with socio-economic disparities are certainly related to crimes against body and/or property. So the focal point should be roaming around the nexus of poverty, caste ailments and rural-urban divide with offences such as murder, hurt, kidnapping, theft and robbery.

Crime Rates in India

Table 1: Top 13 countries by different crime heads

Rank	Total Crimes		Total Convicted		Murders		Burglaries	
	Figures	Country	Figures	Country	Figures	Country	Figures	Country
1	11,877,218	US	3,576,010	Egypt	37,170	India	2,151,875	US
2	6,523,706	UK	1,436,552	UK	28,904	Russia	1,055,812	Germany
3	6,507,394	Germany	1,183,630	Russia	26,539	Colombia	951,418	UK
4	3,771,850	France	1,069,550	France	21,553	South Africa	436,865	Australia
5	2,952,370	Russia	972,124	Turkey	16,204	United States	393,959	South Africa
6	2,853,739	Japan	923,769	Japan	13,144	Mexico	370,993	France
7	2,683,849	South Africa	667,061	Poland	8,022	Venezuela	304,625	Poland
8	2,516,918	Canada	604,547	India	6,553	Philippines	296,486	Japan
9	2,231,550	Italy	522,916	Germany	5,140	Thailand	274,894	Canada
10	1,764,630	India	468,984	Thailand	4,418	Ukraine	169,430	Italy
11	1,543,220	Korea, South	329,784	Canada	3,453	Argentina	139,679	Mexico

Source: The 8th United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2002), UN Office on Drugs & Crime, Centre for International Crime Prevention

Table 1 presents a list of countries with the highest incidence of crimes, including murders and burglaries, along with the number of convictions. It is evident from the data that India ranks among the countries with the highest crime rates globally. It is noteworthy that many of the countries listed in the table are affluent and developed nations, highlighting the significant burden India faces with not only high poverty rates but also elevated levels of crime.

Social Pressure

When we look around ourselves we can observe that socio-economic disparity exists all around all of us. If not, how can there be huts beside large apartments? How can one person afford to live in a penthouse while others are left looking up at the ceiling during rainy days, fearing water leaks? How one can't afford two meals a day, while others could visit different restaurants and cafes in a day? It exists. Socio-economic disparity is a glaring reality that pervades every corner of society, casting a shadow over communities worldwide. Its manifestations are evident in the stark contrasts observed in daily life: the coexistence of humble huts beside towering high-rise apartments, the juxtaposition of opulent penthouses against dilapidated dwellings vulnerable to leaky roofs, and the glaring discrepancies in access to basic necessities like food and shelter. These visible markers of inequality serve as poignant reminders of the profound socio-economic divides that persist within our societies.

The sight of huts nestled amidst affluent neighborhoods or sprawling urban landscapes underscores the stark disparities in wealth and living standards. While some individuals reside in spacious apartments equipped with modern amenities, others are relegated to makeshift shelters characterized by overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and precarious living conditions. This stark juxtaposition reflects not only the unequal distribution of resources but also the systemic barriers that perpetuate poverty and marginalization.

Similarly, the contrast between luxurious penthouses and humble dwellings highlights the vast disparities in income and social status that define our communities. For those fortunate enough to afford lavish penthouses, rainy days may be spent in comfort and security, shielded from the elements by sturdy roofs and reinforced structures. In contrast, individuals residing in substandard housing face the constant threat of water leaks, structural instability, and other hazards exacerbated by their precarious living conditions. This disparity in housing quality

not only reflects unequal access to resources but also underscores the systemic neglect and disinvestment that perpetuate poverty and inequality in marginalized communities.

Moreover, the discrepancies in access to food and nutrition further exacerbate socio-economic disparities, with some individuals struggling to afford even two meals a day while others enjoy the luxury of dining out at upscale restaurants and cafes. The inability to access an adequate and nutritious diet perpetuates cycles of poverty and malnutrition, impeding individuals' physical and cognitive development and perpetuating intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. This stark divergence in food security underscores the systemic inequities that perpetuate poverty and deprivation, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities and exacerbating socio-economic disparities.

The existence of socio-economic disparity is not merely a matter of material wealth but also encompasses broader dimensions of social exclusion, marginalization, and inequality. In addition to unequal access to resources, opportunities, and services, socio-economic disparity manifests in disparities in health outcomes, educational attainment, and economic mobility, perpetuating cycles of poverty and disadvantage across generations. These intersecting dimensions of inequality intersect and reinforce one another, creating entrenched systems of privilege and oppression that undermine social cohesion and economic prosperity.

Addressing socio-economic disparity requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles its underlying structural causes while also addressing its immediate manifestations. This includes implementing policies aimed at promoting equitable access to resources, opportunities, and services, including affordable housing, quality education, healthcare, and social protection. Additionally, addressing systemic barriers to economic mobility, such as discrimination, exclusion, and lack of access to credit and capital, is essential for dismantling entrenched systems of privilege and disadvantage.

Furthermore, fostering a culture of solidarity, empathy, and social responsibility is essential for building inclusive and equitable societies that leave no one behind. This includes promoting dialogue and understanding across social divides, challenging stereotypes and biases, and advocating for policies that promote social justice and human rights. By working together to address the root causes of socio-economic disparity and promote inclusive development, we can build a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

However the interesting fact to be noted here is how society judges and expects every individual to have a similar standard of living for example in a friend circle all friends expect from each other to spend collectively and proportionally without considering each other's economic statuses and due to the fear of inferiority a person who cannot manage it tries to make ends meet. This creates a deep psychological impact on a young child's mind and the web of false 'financial stability' if not 'superiority' begins to take shape. Such a person would initiate to equalise his status with all of his surroundings but the intrinsic problem lies with financial resources that would come from poor family background, instability of source of income in the family which leads to lack of support from the family itself and drains the person into illegal activities in some cases.

Socio-economic disparity is an undeniable reality that permeates every corner of society, manifesting itself in stark contrasts between the haves and the have-nots. The coexistence of huts beside large apartments, the disparity in living conditions between individuals residing in penthouses and those struggling with leaky roofs during rainy days, and the discrepancies in access to basic necessities like food and shelter are poignant reminders of the deep-rooted inequities that persist within our communities.

Indeed, the juxtaposition of affluent lifestyles against abject poverty serves as a glaring testament to the profound socio-economic divides that plague our society. In a world where opulence and deprivation coexist, it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore the glaring disparities that define our social landscape. The stark juxtaposition of luxury and destitution serves as a constant reminder of the systemic injustices that perpetuate inequality and marginalization.

What is perhaps most troubling about socio-economic disparity is not merely its existence, but the pervasive societal norms and expectations that exacerbate its impact on individuals. Society often operates under the assumption of a level playing field, where everyone is expected to adhere to a certain standard of living regardless of their economic circumstances. This pressure to conform to societal norms of consumption and material wealth can be particularly burdensome for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, who find themselves grappling with the constant pressure to keep up appearances and maintain a facade of financial stability.

Within social circles, this pressure to conform to a certain standard of living can be particularly pronounced. Friends and peers often expect each other to participate in collective activities and expenditures, regardless of their individual economic realities. Whether it's dining at expensive restaurants, indulging in leisure activities, or splurging on luxury goods, the expectation to spend lavishly can place immense strain on individuals who are unable to afford such extravagances. This pressure to keep up with the spending habits of one's peers can lead to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and self-doubt, as individuals from less privileged backgrounds struggle to reconcile their economic limitations with societal expectations.

For young children growing up in environments characterized by socio-economic disparity, the psychological impact can be profound and long-lasting. From a young age, children are acutely aware of the disparities that exist within their communities, whether it's the disparity in living conditions, access to resources, or opportunities for advancement. This awareness can fuel feelings of resentment, envy, and inferiority, as children from disadvantaged backgrounds grapple with the stark realities of their circumstances.

Moreover, the pressure to achieve financial stability or even superiority can drive individuals from impoverished backgrounds to extreme measures in their pursuit of economic success. In cases where familial support is lacking or economic opportunities are scarce, individuals may resort to illicit activities or exploitative labor practices in a desperate bid to escape the cycle of poverty. This perpetuates a vicious cycle of marginalization and disenfranchisement, further entrenching socio-economic disparities within society.

To address the pervasive issue of socio-economic disparity, it is imperative to adopt a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of inequality while also providing support and resources to those most affected by it. This includes implementing policies aimed at promoting economic mobility, expanding access to education and healthcare, and combating discrimination and systemic barriers to opportunity. Additionally, fostering a culture of empathy, understanding, and solidarity can help dismantle the societal norms and expectations that perpetuate inequality, creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

In the modern era every person is undergoing strains and stresses due to goal and legitimate means disparity. Legitimate means available are not sufficient to satisfy goals; means are provided to a person because of his status and position. As Gandhiji observed that there's enough to fulfil everyone's need but not everyone's greed similar is the case in today's societies in Indian context that the welfare state of India is striving hard to fulfil the basic needs of the countrymen but these fulfilments are limited by finite resources and methods of distribution. Further, goals are also provided by society and out of those a person selects his own goal on the basis of his socialisation. Men want more and more of materials in the modern world not only for the purpose of meeting the basic needs but also for the fulfilment of self-satisfaction of fame, desires and pseudo ostentation. Goal attaining willingness becomes desires and ultimately desire may take the shape of passion. To some extent this passion leads to crime as well.

Family Pressure

As a law student, it is crucial to recognize and analyze the multifaceted challenges faced by breadwinners in India in providing for their families. The issue of the "rat race" to earn enough to sustain a family of four in the face of escalating living costs is emblematic of broader socio-economic dynamics and can be examined through various legal, economic, and social lenses. One of the fundamental factors contributing to this challenge is the rising cost of living, particularly pronounced in urban areas. Urbanization has led to increased demand for housing, resulting in soaring real estate prices and rental rates. The lack of affordable housing options exacerbates the financial strain on breadwinners, who must allocate a significant portion of their income towards housing expenses, leaving limited resources for other essential needs. Education expenses represent another significant financial burden for families in India. While education is often considered a pathway to socio-economic mobility, the cost of tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and other related expenses can be prohibitive for many families. Additionally, the prevalence of private education institutions with exorbitant fees further exacerbates the financial pressure on parents, compelling them to make difficult choices between investing in their children's education and meeting other essential needs.

Healthcare costs also pose a considerable challenge for breadwinners. Despite efforts to expand access to healthcare services through government schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, out-of-pocket expenditures remain high, particularly for specialized treatments and procedures not covered by insurance. Moreover, the quality of healthcare services varies widely across different regions, with rural areas often lacking access to adequate medical facilities and personnel, forcing families to incur additional expenses for transportation and treatment in urban centers.

The burden of daily necessities such as food, clothing, and transportation further strains the financial resources of breadwinners. Inflationary pressures, coupled with stagnant wages, diminish the purchasing power of families, making it increasingly difficult to afford basic essentials. This is particularly acute for low-income households, which are disproportionately affected by rising prices and economic instability.

From a legal perspective, there are several policy measures that can be implemented to alleviate the financial burden on breadwinners and their families. Strengthening social safety nets through targeted welfare programs and subsidies can help mitigate the impact of rising living costs on vulnerable populations. Additionally, measures to enhance labor rights and enforce minimum wage laws can ensure that breadwinners are fairly compensated for their work and are able to provide for their families without undue hardship.

Furthermore, promoting financial literacy and empowering breadwinners with the knowledge and skills to manage their finances effectively can help improve their economic resilience and long-term stability. This could involve initiatives such as providing access to financial education programs and microfinance services tailored to the needs of low-income households.

The challenge of earning enough to sustain a family of four in India's competitive and rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape underscores the need for comprehensive policy interventions that address the underlying structural barriers to economic opportunity and social mobility. By adopting a holistic approach that integrates legal, economic, and social strategies, policymakers can create a more equitable and inclusive society where all families have the opportunity to thrive.

In the case of *Gurdev Singh v State of Punjab* (CRIMINAL APPEAL NO. 375 of 2021) it was argued by the appellant that the person accused of murder is the sole breadwinner of the family and a poor man was not accepted by the hon'ble Supreme Court as a mitigating circumstances in the favour of the accused. So even the court of law does not see under many cases the reason for poverty and the breadwinner tag to get away with heinous crimes like murder & grievous hurt.

Though the criminal jurisprudence in this aspect is yet to develop In the case of *Lochan Shrivastava v State of Chhattisgarh* (CRIMINAL APPEAL NOS. 499-500 OF 2018) considering that the appellant was a young person, who was 23 years old at the time of commission of the offence, came from a rural background and his conduct in the prison had been found to be satisfactory and the fact that he had no criminal antecedents, the Bench held that it could not be said that there was no possibility of the appellant being reformed and rehabilitated foreclosing the alternative option of a lesser sentence and making imposition of death sentence imperative (SCC Online). Analysing the two cases presented before us tough having different circumstances in terms of nature of crime committed but the former is case is about poor background in terms of economic perspectives was a major contention while in the latter case the socio-economic background was taken into consideration. It can roughly be inferred that the court still paves way for acquittal in a strict sense of socio-economic background of the accused but not only under the tag of breadwinner.

Despite these challenges, many breadwinners in India demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination in their pursuit of providing for their families. They may seek out multiple sources of income, pursue education and skills training, or even migrate to urban centers in search of better opportunities. However, the reality remains that for many, the task of earning enough to feed a family of four members continues to be a significant and ongoing challenge in India's socio-economic landscape

Conclusion and suggestions

The longitudinal analysis presented in this study has shed light on the complex relationship between economic disparities and crime causation in the Indian context. Through an examination of longitudinal data spanning several decades, it has become evident that

economic disparities play a significant role in shaping patterns of crime and criminal behavior. The findings suggest that areas characterized by high levels of economic inequality are more likely to experience higher rates of crime, including property crimes, violent crimes, and white-collar crimes.

One of the key insights gleaned from this analysis is the role of socio-economic factors in mediating the relationship between economic disparities and crime. While economic inequality itself is a potent predictor of crime, it is often compounded by other socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, lack of access to education and healthcare, and social exclusion. These factors create fertile ground for the proliferation of criminal activities, as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to resort to illicit means to meet their basic needs and achieve social mobility.

Moreover, the analysis highlights the differential impact of economic disparities on various types of crime. While property crimes such as theft, burglary, and robbery are more prevalent in economically deprived areas, violent crimes such as assault, homicide, and domestic violence may also be influenced by socio-economic factors such as unemployment, substance abuse, and family dysfunction. Similarly, white-collar crimes such as fraud, embezzlement, and corruption are often perpetrated by individuals in positions of power and privilege, exploiting their socio-economic advantage for personal gain.

Furthermore, the analysis underscores the importance of considering the broader structural and systemic factors that contribute to economic disparities and crime causation. In the Indian context, historical legacies of colonialism, caste-based discrimination, and unequal distribution of resources have created enduring patterns of inequality that perpetuate cycles of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion. Addressing these underlying structural factors requires comprehensive policy interventions aimed at promoting economic development, social justice, and inclusive growth.

Suggestions in the Indian Context:

1. **Economic Empowerment Programs:** Implement targeted economic empowerment programs aimed at alleviating poverty, creating employment opportunities, and promoting inclusive growth. This could include initiatives such as skill development programs, microfinance

schemes, and entrepreneurship training, particularly targeting marginalized communities and economically disadvantaged regions.

2. **Strengthen Social Safety Nets:** Enhance social safety nets to provide support and assistance to individuals and families living in poverty or facing economic hardship. This could involve expanding access to social welfare programs, including food subsidies, unemployment benefits, healthcare services, and housing assistance, to ensure basic needs are met and individuals are able to achieve economic security.

3. **Improve Education and Healthcare:** Invest in education and healthcare infrastructure to promote human capital development and reduce socio-economic disparities. This could include increasing funding for public schools and colleges, expanding access to vocational training and higher education opportunities, and strengthening healthcare systems to provide affordable and quality healthcare services to all citizens.

4. **Promote Financial Inclusion:** Expand access to financial services and promote financial literacy among marginalized communities to empower individuals to manage their finances effectively, build assets, and access credit and capital for economic advancement. This could involve establishing community-based financial institutions, providing financial education programs, and promoting digital financial inclusion initiatives.

5. **Address Corruption and Governance Issues:** Combat corruption and improve governance to ensure equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. This could include implementing transparency and accountability measures, strengthening anti-corruption laws and enforcement mechanisms, and promoting ethical leadership and good governance practices in both public and private sectors.

6. **Foster Social Cohesion and Inclusion:** Promote social cohesion and inclusion through initiatives aimed at reducing social divisions, fostering dialogue and understanding across diverse communities, and combating discrimination and prejudice based on factors such as caste, religion, gender, or ethnicity. This could involve promoting interfaith and inter-caste dialogue, celebrating cultural diversity, and promoting social justice and human rights for all citizens.

In conclusion, addressing economic disparities and their impact on crime causation requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of inequality while also promoting inclusive development and social justice. By implementing targeted policies and programs aimed at alleviating poverty, promoting economic empowerment, and fostering social inclusion, India can work towards building a more just, equitable, and prosperous society for all its citizens.

Reference

1. Mrs. Falak Khan is a young wife with two children and lives near Jamia Milia Islamia University- a Muslim populated locality of New Delhi. The interview was conducted and published by Mayank Austen Soofi, on his blog <http://hindumuslimindia.blogspot.com/>
2. SLL includes Act related to possessing Arms, Gambling, Indian Passport, Copyright etc. See page 27 of Crimes in India, 2002 for a complete list
3. These are the fifteen "composite" states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab (including Haryana), Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal
4. Poor defined by World Bank as those who live below \$1.25 a day poverty line set by 2005 International Comparison Programme, World Bank (2008)
5. The Eighth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice
6. Indian Express, Feb 04, 2009. <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/telling-it-like-it-is/418946/>. Nina Singh is an IPS officer and Daniel Keniston is a researcher in Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
7. Allen, R. C. (1996) "Socioeconomic Conditions & Property Crime: A Comprehensive Review and Test of Professional Literature", American Journal of Economics & Sociology, 55, 293-308
8. Anderson, E. (1990)
9. "Streetwise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community", Chicago: University of Chicago Press Anderson, E. (1999)
10. "Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City", New York: W.W. Norton and Company Becker, G. (1968)
11. "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach", Journal of Political Economy, 169-217 Bennet, R.R. (1991)
12. "Development and crime: A cross-national, time-series analysis of competing models", The Sociological Quarterly, 32(3), 343-363 Bernard, T. J. (1987)

12. "Testing Structural Strain Theories", *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 24(4), 262-80 Blau, J. R. and P. M. Blau (1982)
13. "Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime," *American Sociological Review*, 47(1), 114-129 Block, M. K. And J. M. Heineke (1975)
14. "A Labor Theoretic Analysis of the Criminal Choice", *American Economic Review*, 65(3), 314-25 Braithwaite, J. (1979)
15. "Inequality, Crime and Public Policy", London: Routledge Brier, S. S. and S. E. Fienberg (1980)
"Recent Econometric Modeling of Crime and Punishment: Support for the Deterrence Hypothesis", *Evaluation Review*, 4(2), 147- 91 Brown, S. E., F. Esbensen and G. Geis (1991)
16. "Criminology: Explaining Crime and its Context", Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing Company
Brush, J. (2007)
17. "Does Income Inequality lead to more crime? A comparison of cross sectional and time series analysis of United States Counties", *Economic Letters*, 98, 262-68
18. *Atlantic Review of Economics – 1st Volume 2014 Revista Atlántica de Economía – Volume 1 - 2014* Burdett, K., and D. T. Mortensen (1998) "Wage Differential, Employer Size, and Unemployment", *International Economic Review*, 39(2), 257–273