

Increasing Crimes vs. Population Density in Megacities

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Abstract

The paper intends to reflect criminology in the fast-changing world of the present time. As the control in many developing societies is not so easy, many crimes of different qualities and size appear in such societies. Criminology as the core science is involved with how crimes emerge, their roots and the way to control and decrease its frequency. In modern times, various socio-economic classes of people commit different crimes. Increasing urbanization largely contributes to the emergence of crimes, social norms and laws. The transfer of rural poverty to urban areas eventually contributes to the emergence of increasing crimes in the new areas. Rate of crimes has almost doubled in rich countries between 1968 and 1980. It is even worse in developing countries where data is not available.

Keywords: Crimes; Criminology; Breaking laws; Reforms; Pathology

Introduction

Any deviation from the permissible acts in any society is an abnormal behavior. If these abnormal acts are pronouncedly deviant and pose threat to communal peace and order, then they are known as crimes. Therefore, crime may be defined as an act inimical to social peace and harmony. So, crimes are hurtful to social stability, and are more expected to appear in larger cities. To be able to control and prevent crimes, we need to study the various causes and roots of crimes in a systematic manner. However, the discipline involved in such a systematic investigation is known as criminology.

Scope of Criminology

The scope of criminology is quite vast and wide. It is relates to all social classes and structures. However, criminologists have tried to limit its scope so as to be able to study the subject scientifically and systematically. To elaborate it, here are the viewpoints of some notable criminologists:

According to Sutherland et al. [1] the science of criminology “includes within its scope the process of making laws, of breaking laws, and of reacting towards the breaking of laws”. According to Sutherland’s description of the scope of criminology, we can divide it into departments: The sociology of law, criminal etiology and penology.

The Viewpoints of Elliot and Merrill [2]

The eminent scholars Elliot and Merrill have made exhaustive and thorough study regarding the scope of criminology as follows: Nature of crime, investigation into causes of crime, individualized study of criminals and finally study of prevention of crime and reform of the criminal.

Since offences committed by criminals are crimes; and as crimes occur in society, the term criminology fully means a study of crimes as well as criminals in relation to society with special reference to larger cities. How do social laws, conventions and traditions get formulated? How and why does an individual break them? Is there an element of compulsion or coercion in his/her defiance of the law? Or it is deliberate? These and other allied matters are studied by criminology with a view to find adequate answers which may help in formulating the effective preventive measures and controls in large urban areas. Similarly, the reaction of society towards a criminal, and this disposition of criminal towards a given society are the important matters for investigation which would help to adequately understand the phenomenon of crime.

Urban Growth and the Trend of Crimes

From the viewpoint of urban pathology, it is always expected to have more crime in cities. As the pattern of urban areas is always subject to change, and the citizens cannot easily conform to the new lifestyles, they are prone to deviations of all kinds — manifest and latent. While the deviants and criminals were of older age groups, they are nowadays of age groups 20 or younger, and that includes more individuals. This change of trend is counted for as a big threat to society as a whole.

Generally speaking, all types of crimes are on increase, and the increase is not just related to the USA [3]. Statistics show that in Britain and Wales in 1900, there was 3 crimes for every 1000 people, while in 1974 it had increased by 13 times to; 40 crime for every 1000 people. Such an increase could be observed in every society. That is due to increasing urbanization, change in traditions, cultural change, emergence of new different classes of people etc. The trends that industrial societies experienced at the outset of the 20th century, developing societies have experienced in the last decades of the 20th century. Therefore, social pathologists and social psychologists need to intervene and play better roles to pacify the situation. Crimes and delinquencies if not controlled in a society, they will be unpreventable after sometime [4]. For example, if supposedly there are two germs at the bottom of a bucket of water, statistically, they will double every hour, and then the bucket will be full of germs, after one hundred hours. Thus, deviance and crimes are prone to increase in the same way in a society. The extension of rural poverty while transferred to urban areas through migration, it contributes to the emergence of crimes [5].

As investigated, delinquencies of the adolescents also in different types and forms being on increase, have moved from the US to Europe [6]. Such a phenomenon has abnormally entered large cities of the world, and widely affected the youth as the most vulnerable people.

Emile Durkheim [7] stated that the phenomenon of crime has a

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Year	Rate of Crime within Every 1000 People
1968	34
1969	37
1970	40
1971	42
1972	40
1973	42
1974	49
1975	53
1976	53
1977	51
1378	51
1979	55
1980	59

Table 1: Increasing Trend of Crimes in US 1968-1980.

world-wide nature. While it is the break-down of law, it threatens the welfare and the normal conditions of the people of any society, and it usually occurs in urban societies. Regardless of socio-economic conditions of societies, crimes develop in all societies. Its development is more due to the development of communications within societies.

The above Table 1 represents the increasing trend of crimes in an extra-ordinary industrial and urban society with all watch and controls. The frequency of crimes almost doubled within 22 years. Other countries are also so, or even worse in developing countries such as Iran with increasing economic imbalance.

Functional Theory of Crimes

Based on this theory, the emergence of crimes is much related to the society; therefore it is not an imported phenomenon, but a derivative of society. In other words, the emergence of crimes originates from the social structure of a society. In case the urban administration does not continue in an inter-sectoral manner, the frequency of crimes will rise. Merton [8] as an American sociologists adds: in case people do not reach their goals and aspirations, settings are made ready for any deviations and crimes to achieve the desired goals.

However, societies need to gather and analyze data on vulnerable individuals and populations in order to construct healthy societies

and more sustainable social health. They must also properly target adequate social policies [9]. In urban areas, in some cases it is necessary to incapacitate the criminal from the scene in order to control the violence. In this way, the urban security would be in less danger [10].

Conclusion

As found out, increasing types of deviations is inevitable in densely-population areas with special reference to the developing world. Various thinkers such as Sutherland, Elliot etc. are of the opinion that criminology must be used in order to measure crimes, their roots, and eventually prevent them from further spreading. Increasing urbanization and the changing societies make the grounds suitable for the emergene of vulnerable citizens, or what we call criminals in this paper. However, social pathologists and social psychologists could be accompanied by the criminologists to intervene to reduce crimes especially in larger cities. Similarly, breaking law and committing crimes, is a threat to the welfare and the normal conditions of the people of any society.

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