

Crime and Institutional Response: A Study of Mobile Snatching and Street Assaults in Pakistan

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Abstract

Crime rates seem to be severely augmenting over the past several years in Pakistan which has perpetuated concerns as to what, when and how this upsurge will be eradicated. State institutions are supposed to be in utmost perplexity, given the enormity of worsening law and order situation, compelling government on the flip side to expend more resources in strengthening institutions to confront crime, whereas, the economy has been confronted with massive energy crisis, mass unemployment and considerable inflation which has rendered most of the people into articulate apprehension as to how to satisfy basic necessities.

A framework to investigate the variability in the rising street crimes, as affected by social and institutional outcomes, has been established using a cross sectional study. Questionnaire, entailing seven sections incorporating numerous patterns of behavior and history of involvement in different crimes for potential street criminals was observed as data collection instrument. In order to specifically explicate the intent of street crimes on micro level, various motivational and de-motivational factors that stimulate people to resort to street crimes were scrutinized. Intent of mobile snatching and intent of street assault as potential dependent variables were examined using numerous variables that influence the occurrence and intent of these crimes using ordered probit along with ordered logit and tobit as competing models. Model Estimates asserts that intent of mobile snatching has been significantly enhanced owing to perceived judicial inefficiency and lower ability of police reforms to operate effectively, which signifies the inefficiency of institutions that are entitled to deliver justice and maintaining law and order respectively. Whereas, intent of street assaults, as an outcome, affirms that people with lack of self-stability and severe childhood punishments were more tempted to be involved in violent acts.

Keywords

Deprivation, Street Assault, Self control, Police Reform

Introduction

Lawlessness and violence can be traced back to the very inception of Pakistan. Intensity of crime and crime related acts enhanced with the passage of time and with the availability of new weapons. Crime against property and crime against person has been on a rise with time owing to alarming increase in population and urbanization. Specially, Karachi has been lightened up the most by crime scenes as it is the biggest metropolitan city and centers a large number of incumbents belonging to different ethnic, cultural and political backgrounds. Criminal justice system incorporates institutions that are involved in maintaining law and order and provide justice to people. While, a defective criminal justice system may impart a great deal

of loss in maintaining law and order. System of witness protection in Pakistan is considerably weak or can be termed as nonexistent. Subsequently, people who are investigating officers, judges or witness against strong criminals are rendered no protection which has often result in their assassination. Conviction in such cases is a hard process to pursue due to which most of cases with similar intensity remains pending. Apprehended offenders have to be presented in the lower courts or magistrates courts within 24 hours which are operated by highly unprofessional and incompetent judges. This provides a room for offenders to resort unlawful mean to turn the conditions in their favor¹. It provides an incentive for those who can bargain conviction for wealth. The dilemma in case of Pakistan is that most of the criminals sought political veil as to avoid apprehensions and it has been seen that they possess much better position in terms of ammunition, resources, wealth and planning (Nadeem, 2002). Many reforms have been introduced in terms of high salary, better training and modernize equipment, especially in the metropolitan cities of the country. To curb crime rates, it is imperative to provide resources to facilitate necessary training and guidance to the police in form of police reforms². Police officials do not find themselves properly equipped to cope with the modern world challenges (Fasihuddin, 2009).

Proposed Framework of Analysis, Review of Literature and Model Building Preferences

Intent of Mobile Snatching and Street Assault

Property and violent crimes exist in societies purposely and it is quite evident that it transpires with some intention. There are various aspects that motivate and motivates criminals in pursuing deviant acts. Crime is committed by keeping in view certain benefits and costs and it is deemed that if net benefits are greater than there will be a higher incidence of crime. Besides financial gain, there are several other factors that instigate intentions for resorting to crimes. Rational choice theory endorses the fact that criminals tend to base their decisions of whether or not to commit crime on the notion of utility maximization. Deterrence is also affected by sanctions and positive punishments. One might refrain from committing a deviant act not because he is fearful of getting apprehended but instead concerned about the envisioned loss of reward. Reasonable level of rationality is critical in committing crimes as it involves an in-depth scrutiny of benefits and costs (Akers, 1990).

Amalgamation of Socio-economic Deprivation and Societal Bindings, and the Prevalence of Street Crimes

Financial deprivation³ has been taken as the variable that incorporates the effects and implications of socio-economic deprivation, which is also of prime

importance regarding this study. It has been endorsed in various studies as part of potential independent variables which grasps the effect of poverty and financial disability. Deviant peers association is another such variable entailing factors actuating people to resort deviant or illegal acts. People replicate the way their friends or peers behave. It was presumed that incidence of crime would be greater a person have more high association with deviant peers. People with better “Educational Profile” are considered to be more intellectually stable and gentle and hence have lower incidence in crimes⁴.

Baron (2006), by using the further application of Classical Strain Theory stated that incidence of crime is directly related to economic conditions and affirmed that relative deprivation, monetary dissatisfaction and desire to achieve monetary goals leads to crime . Classical Strain Theory by Merton (1968) Merton approach that poverty leads to criminality is not supported by evidence. Theorists argued that relation between crime and deviant association is a causal relationship where people with antisocial sentiments tend to form a separate group that encourages substance abuse and crime involvement⁵. People, at younger age, when exposed to drugs and other substances, try to form the community of same sort which further motivates and encourage them to resort to deviant activities, often crime (Horwood, 2002).

Plunged Self-stability and Social Disharmonies, Triggering Abrupt Flare-ups

Low self-control can be attributable to changing family structure, working women, parents fight, parent divorce and low monitoring as studied by Jeannie A. Fry (2010). She adopted a time series approach and incorporated data from time period 1960 to 2005 and the area of study was Virginia, U.S. The findings signified that adverse variation in the family structures (divorce/separation) adversely impacts parents' potential to give required attention and monitoring which leads to low self-control in children and later leads to crime (Fry, 2010). According to a study results, scholars based their opinion in the light that proportionally boys are hit more often and with greater intensity as compared to girls, so higher proportion of severe childhood punishments may result in higher violence in men later⁶. Studies revealed that parents who belong to a family where they have been brought up in a harsh and aggressive environment tend to practice same violence on their children as compared to people with mild family backgrounds⁷.

Inducement of Police Reforms Effectiveness (Police Efficiency) and Glaring Street Crimes

As part of institutional variables, Police Reform Efficiency has been introduced as a de-motivational variable which shows the efficiency of police and law enforcement agencies in apprehending the criminals. And this efficiency in

turns hinges on the resources awarded to police in shape of better training, weapons and increased salaries. So, this variable measures the level of police efficiency which has been raised by the provincial government through various reforms.

Scholars suggested that most effective way to hamper the upsurge in crimes rate is to increase the police force⁸. This implies that greater police to public ratio, lower would be the crime rate. Raising the level of police is very critical to curb crime rate and studies have shown that country with lower level of police per thousand people confronts more problems in terms of crimes. But, gradual enhancement in police population per thousand people in same area experienced lower levels of crime⁹. Community policing came out to be a rapid way to discourage street crimes as probability of apprehension rises and it makes them more vigilant.

Portrayal of Judicial Incompetence and Crime Temptation

In order to explicate the effect of judicial efficiency, a variable was introduced which measured the judicial ineffectiveness as “perceived probability of conviction” in hampering crimes. It has been observed that criminals with higher perception of conviction probability tend to commit fewer crimes and those with lower or weak perceptions of judicial performance are more prone to involve in crimes. Derek Pyne (2012) examined the effect of probability of punishment and enhanced severity of punishment on magnitude of crime, that which out of two have a greater deterrence impact. He argued that criminals hold abilities, which is gauged by the probability of not getting caught. As criminals keep on committing crimes, they perpetually update their level of abilities. He showed that greater probability of conviction will reduce the crimes in both current and later time periods (Pyne, 2012).

Statement of Research Hypothesis

- Pre-testing the hypothesis that institutional outlay (as measured by police reforms) on intent of mobile snatching is significant/ insignificant.
- Pre-testing the hypothesis that self control on intent of street assault is significant/ insignificant.

Estimation, Analysis and Conclusion

Table 1 comprises of intent of mobile snatching as a dependent variable with five set of independent variables used in a model as motivational and de-

Table 1: Estimates of Model with Dependent Variable as Intent of Mobile Snatching

Intent of Mobile Snatching	Ordered Prob it	Ordered Log it	Tob it
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Financial Deprivation	1.037 (2.40)*	1.827 (2.28)	0.3770 (2.62)
Deviant Peers Association	1.515 (2.74)*	2.651 (2.63)	0.3546 (3.17)
Police Reform Efficiency	-1.194 (-2.19)*	-2.054 (-2.19)	-2.777 (-2.35)
Educational Profile	-0.2997 (-1.18)**	-0.5347 (-1.14)	-0.0789 (-0.78)
Perceived Probability of Conviction	-1.118 (-2.62)*	-1.9334 (-2.53)	-0.2946 (-2.64)
Log Likelihood	-14.933853	-15.077	-25.7134
Pseudo R2	0.6831	0.6801	0.5015

It shows the estimates of model with dependent variable as intent of mobile snatching. Results show that all variables are significant except for the educational profile which is highly insignificant and do not lie under 90% confidence interval. Under Model 1 financial deprivation, deviant peer has a positive sign as proposed in all three models. Likewise, police reforms efficiency has a negative sign which asserts that lower value of this variable will lead to increase involvement in mobile snatching. It implies that areas where police reforms are efficiently operating tend to pose as a de motivation for the street criminals and resulted in lower mobile snatching. 50% of the sample recorded that they fear getting apprehended by the police and hence have lower incidence in mobile snatching. Simper (2005) showed that enhancing police population will not always increase the police performance rather it has to be accompanied with relative efficiency which he measured as ratio of occurrence of crime to that of clearance of crime¹¹. Findings showed that areas which were operated by police with additional resources tend to confront lower street crimes in form of lower vehicle theft and burglaries. This asserts that areas operated by police, who are made subject of the reforms in terms of training and modern weapon, curbs the street crimes more effectively and efficiently. Approximately, 48% of the respondents who showed high participation in mobile

snatching doubted judicial system as highly inefficient in awarding conviction which explains their primary motivation that even if they get caught by the police, they will not be convicted. Perceived probability of conviction and educational profile both represents a negative sign which means they have a deterrence effect on mobile phone snatching.

Table 1: Estimates of Model with Dependent Variable as Intent of Mobile Snatching

	Ordered Prob it	Ordered Log it	Tob it
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Socio Cultural Deprivation	1.928* (2.13)**	3.3051 (2.09)	0.2110 (2.08)
Self-Control	-1.447* (2.13)**	-2.442 (-2.25)	-0.2891 (-2.69)
Family Disputes	2.443* (2.05)**	4.15 (2.05)	0.247 (2.69)
Childhood Punishments	1.412* (2.26)**	-4.945 (-2.32)	0.2753 (2.82)
Parent Monitoring	-2.91* (-2.36)**	2.46 (2.15)	-0.4087 (-3.15)
Log Likelihood	-9.68867	-9.832	-21.24467
Pseudo R2	0.7871	0.7840	0.5814

Table 2 shows the relationship of street assault with five independent variables. Socio cultural deprivation is positively related to street assaults. Self-Control shows a negative sign which asserts that lower self-control leads to higher involvement in street assaults. Childhood punishments depict a positive sign which implies that it is directly related to street assaults. It is highly significant under 95% confidence interval.

Conclusion

The rationale underlying this study was to highlight glaring factors that in one way or another tend to encourage or discourage street criminals to carry their activities. The intent behind street crimes has been deeply scrutinized. To have an insight, street crimes were decomposed into mobile snatching and street assault. To ascertain the intent of crime along with the motivational and de-motivational factors, different set of variables were analyzed with both dependent variables.

Ordered probit model was used to analyze the outcomes. Results were corresponding to the theories in practice which suggested that weak institutional setup leaves loopholes which makes potential criminal to participate in street crimes more bravely. Lower Perceived probability of conviction represents higher judicial inefficiency which becomes the root cause of soaring street crimes. Police reforms efficiency represents higher police control and effectiveness as part of 2002 police reform act presented which involves greater autonomy of police with improved communication and training. Areas where there was effective implementation of police reforms, those areas posed a threat to street criminals which led to decrease in their activities. Moreover, it has been empirically found that people with low self-control and severe childhood memories are people who are more likely involved in street assaults and possess less tolerance levels. Few policy guidelines, in view of estimated models, are enumerated below.

End Notes

¹Special report of United States Institute of Peace, on Pakistan titled “Reforming Pakistan's Police and Law Enforcement Infrastructure. Is It Too Flawed to Fix

²Police reform is the practice of improving the existing police structure by introducing few changes which enhances police efficiency and affectability. Police reforms are used in the context of new reforms that were being introduced as part of Punjab Police Act 2010, to check its validity, applicability and effectiveness in hampering street crimes.

³Deprivation is the inability to obtain something that one's feel he or she is entitled to possess, which not only includes financial resources but also social, political and cultural participation

⁴Baron (2006) in his Street youth, Strain theory, and Crime suggested that a person is motivated to street crimes due to high level of deprivation and monetary dissatisfaction. People with higher aims to get money but end up with empty pockets usually feel deprived as compared to others and thus are persuaded to commit crimes.

⁵It is suggested by Rosenfeld in “Robert Merton's contribution to the sociology of deviance” from page 453 to 456 that how deviant association leads to deviant acts. He presented the notion that if one is more prone to conceive from his friends rather than family then that person can be highly susceptible to erroneous acts depending on the company he is sitting in. If he has a sitting with drug abusers that there is a high probability that he will join their stance as well.

⁷Miller in his research article “Parental physical and psychological aggression: Psychological symptoms in young adults” from page 1-3 as published in “Child Abuse” explained how the physical punishments by parents change the course of later children and how they get involved in aggression and violence.

⁸Family structure has an enormous effect on the grooming and upbringing of children and usually it has been seen that families with ignorant and careless attitude usually are more violence orientated.

⁹The effectiveness of community policing in reducing violence is evident in various studies while studying developed countries, in particular by William Lloyd.

¹⁰A research paper presented by John L. showed relationship between levels of police population and crime. He affirmed that higher police per capita is imperative to curtail crime rates and this strategy is more effective in long run perspective.

¹⁰This value is the coefficient for the variable.

* It shows z value which is a ratio of coefficient standard error. P-value is significant at 95% confidence interval which means it satisfies 0.05 alpha value.

¹¹Simper empirically showed how police efficiency counters the offences and relationship between police efficiency and crime incidence as negative (Police Efficiency in Offences Cleared: An Analysis of English “Basic Command Units”)

** It shows the z value which is a ratio of coefficient to standard error. Z values of all the variables have P value less than alpha value of 0.05 which shows that all variables are significant under 95% confidence interval.

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