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[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Abstract

Poverty and unemployment increases crime rates. When poverty and unemployment occur together with other factors like high population density, low income rates and minority group, the levels of crimes are even higher. Poverty and unemployment results to increase stress levels which may cause mental disturbance, a common cause of crimes. Poverty and unemployment also results to dishonesty which prompts people to indulge in offenses. Crime is also an alternative source of living for the poor and the unemployed.

Poverty

Unemployment

Mental illness

Crime

Dishonesty

Poverty and Unemployment

According to Shapiro and Stiglaz (439), crime is one thing that exists everywhere in the world. It is common with the poor and the rich alike. It is one of the acts that are found with all type of people, the Hispanics, the French, the American black and the American Whites. Indeed, the urban and the rural are equal participants in crime. In attempt to bring an end to the persistent crime rates, the government officials in the rural areas have focused on programs that can reduce the crime rates. However, they have established that the crime rates in their constituencies are not just persistent without a cause, but instead there are external factors which play key roles.

Further studies into the urban area crimes have revealed consistent results with the ones of the rural poor. In these findings, the urban areas with very high poverty and unemployment levels have been found to harbor high rates of crime. However, a deeper analysis of the likely causes of these high crime rates among the poor and unemployed urban reveals that it is not only poverty that plays a leading role, but instead there are a number of interrelated factors that plays along. Moreover, these studies have hinted at population density, age distribution and minority groups as the interrelated factors that increase crime rates. These studies have also established that these factors affect poverty, and together they contribute to crime.

Therefore, it can be easy to tell whether poverty can cause crime when all the above factors are controlled. Additional studies have hinted at the strong association between unemployment and poverty, and these studies have indicated that, poverty and unemployment alone can contribute to almost 40% of the crimes experienced in the urban poor. However, these studies have not conclusively been done to establish the role of the two, unemployment and poverty in increasing crime rates. This is because; most of the studies have been done in the presence of other factors which has made it hard to tell whether, it is poverty, unemployment or additional factor that results to crime. Therefore if studies can be done to establish the roles of poverty and unemployment rates in increasing crime rates, more money might be saved by the government since efforts will just be directed in reducing poverty and unemployment rates. In fact following the above researches it is easy for one to postulate that unemployment and poverty cause's crime (Baker and Dugger, 184).

One way through which poverty affects crime, is through the mental health. It has been established that most of the mental illness observed are found within the poor in the society. According to Whaple (449), poverty can lead to high rates of mental illness because of the stress. Poverty alone is enough to increase an individual's stress levels, and with high stress levels it is very easy for people to commit crime, particularly, robbery, theft and other violent activities. In addition, with very high poverty levels, people are not likely to go to school. This implies that the youths are not likely to get good jobs and they are likely to spend most of their time in the streets. This decreases the youths opportunity cost of good morals and raises their possibilities of engagement in crimes and violent acts.

Poor people are impoverished and they can't meet their basic needs. So when crime presents solutions to their needs they are left with no solution but to play along. Through crime, the poor can meet their basic needs without necessarily working hard or suffering much. The youths with time realizes that instead of working their way out, they can just become violent and use force to meet all their needs. Therefore, the youths chooses to become violent and take whatever they need by force. These youths are influenced by poverty to commit violent acts like robbery which is ranked the second highest crime in the world. These youths are not hindered by the risks of their crimes. Instead the reward that they envisaged to get by using force to meet their needs is more than the risk of being caught or found by the police. These youths have got lower opportunity rates to not committing crime, and they hardly lose on anything when they commit crime. Thus, poverty is a definite cause of crime (Baker and Dugger, 185).

As much as poverty can influence an individual to commit criminal acts, there are other factors which are correlated with poverty that equally contribute to crime. One of those factors is the unemployment. Higher unemployment will definitely increase poverty because when an individual is unemployed he/she is likely to be engaged in poverty. Furthermore, unemployment causes depression in individuals, and the fact that one is depressed increases the opportunity costs of an individual engaging in the criminal acts. Without employment an individual is going to get less income per capita, and economists have established that income per capita is inversely proportional to poverty. This implies that the thieves will need more wealth which means more stealing until the business is done. However, studies have revealed that as much as per capita income increases poverty levels thus leading to high crime rates, they do not affect poverty to a greater extent. This is because there is a very big social class difference and the gap between the rich and the poor. Therefore, with the big differences in the social class, the section of population with access to good amount of income is very small, making them the few rich. However, these differences in the social class induce more crime (Whaple, 449).

Studies by Baker and Duger (180) revealed that teens that are living in high poverty areas are more likely to be involved in violent crimes. A similar study by Graham (66) revealed that teens with the same characteristics as those living in high poverty areas, when taken to low poverty areas will grow to people with good morals. Therefore, one way that the police can control crime rates is by moving the juveniles from the high poverty areas to low poverty areas. Indeed this has been practiced in some cities and it has

resulted to reduce crime rates by these juveniles, and less offenses.

However, Baker and Duger (181) had a different finding when he established that high poverty areas have got low crime rates when compared with high poverty urban areas. He argued that teens and the youths are very obedient at their age and can't be involved in violent acts. Therefore, the areas with high poverty levels are not likely to experience higher crime rates as noted by Baker and Duger (183).

According to Shapiro and Stiglitz (440), the severity of crimes committed in an area increases with the increase in the poverty levels. In these areas money is reinvested but not in the right financial channel. It is reinvested in the black market where it brings out high return, but with very risky ventures. There are violent groups which takes advantage of the existing poverty in high poverty areas. These groups use the high poverty rates as an opportunity to make quick wealth. This means that children in the high poverty areas grow up knowing that hooliganism is the best way to live a good life. When they grow to maturity in these high poverty areas, they follow the trend of their role models, in this case the opportunists.

Studies by Graham (80) have established that crime is not significantly influenced by unemployment. However, in the presence of other factors like poverty, the study revealed that unemployment significantly results to increase in crime rates. Nevertheless, the study revealed that only the property abuse offenses are greatly influenced by high unemployment rates. Further studies between the links of unemployment and high property abuse offenses indicated that unemployment leads to dishonesty. A dishonest person was established that, in presence of poverty is easily influenced to

adopt absurd behaviors which contribute to high crime rates. Unemployed person living in regions with very high poverty levels is likely to exhibit crime related behaviors. These push the person to risk his/her life in order to make ends meet. Therefore, the studies indicated that unemployed person can be motivated to crimes of theft due to dishonesty that is created by the unemployment levels. These kinds of acts may cause the individual to be involved in acts of burglary and car theft, and with time the person matures into a big robber (Whaples, 450).

Additional studies have established that unemployment together with low income can also contribute to crime rates. In these studies, regions with very high income rates were found to have low crime levels whereas areas with low income and high unemployment rates were found to be very high in crime rates. The reasons for the high crime rates were attributed to dishonesty resulting from lack of job and the stress resulting from unemployment. In these studies, unemployed person was found to be highly stressed with many questions about the future. These motivate the person to indulge in crime so that he/she can find answers to the questions arising about the future. The studies also revealed that unemployment rates alone only contribute to insignificant crime rates. However when poverty and unemployment occur together there are high rates of crime that occurs. The studies further indicated that high poverty levels and unemployment rates together with other factors like low income and population pressure results to even higher rates of crime. Therefore, it is true that poverty and unemployment increases crime rates as discussed above.

Since poverty and unemployment increases crime rates the best ways for

policy makers to address crime levels is by ensuring that they find solutions to poverty and unemployment in the regions with the leading crime rates. However, the studies have also noted that, addressing poverty and unemployment rates only will not help in finding lasting solutions, instead policies must be created which address the whole issues leading to crime. Thus, the policies created must address issues of low income, inequality and high population pressure in areas with high crime rates. i