

Example of research paper on interconnection of social problems

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



Research Paper Outline

Punishment, crime, and poverty have long been linked together during criminological and sociological investigations. These links are strengthened by the fact that poverty causes deprivation of basic and luxurious needs and this in turn breeds the temptation to commit crime hence victimizing the concerned parties in the process. Scholars in the social sciences have therefore resorted to grouping people according to their socioeconomic statuses in a bid to monitor their motivations and behaviors. These studies have ended up associating high crime rates with poverty and socioeconomic inequality. These crimes then bring up the subject of punishment and its role in the ethnic and racial inequality, these two factors also being with a large extent the cause of crime hence this looks like a cycle repeating itself. This essay therefore seeks to demonstrate how the interaction between crime and punishment results in a socioeconomic disadvantage system, which can be held to account for the frequent changes in inequality.

Young black Americans have low levels of education hence they are more likely to engage in criminal activities than any other group. For instance African Americans form 13 percent of the total US population, which is the lowest of any race. In the prison population, they are the majority with 47 percent of the total population. When the law catches up with these individuals and they are convicted of a felony, it becomes almost impossible for them to obtain employment opportunities, housing assistance, and student aid for higher education. These consequences may even extend to their families and communities (Branton & Jones, 2005). The criminal punishment further distorts family ties and stigmatizes the concerned parties

because of the federal laws that deny convicts a chance to participate in education, family life, politics, and labor markets. Sanctions imposed after an individual completes his/her sentence imposes a fresh challenge of blending in with society therefore children of these ex-convicts are forced to brace themselves for reduced household incomes. In the year 2003, more African American men were imprisoned than those who attended college or served in the military then (Wheelock, & Uggen, 2006).

Political leaders solicit votes by promising increased sentences and the introduction of mandatory minimum sentences not knowing that by doing this, they are hurting society more than helping it. This leads to the imprisonment of criminals with minor offenses hence packing the prisons mainly with African Americans and the poor. Lack of checks on the public expenditure on punishment has also escalated this situation further. The emphasis on dangerous sects by the justice system rather than focus on individual reforming and rehabilitation is also synonymous with the poor. These dangerous sects are mostly made up of the poor and most of the poor population comprises of the blacks (Wheelock, & Uggen, 2006). Researchers have deduced that the major cause of racial disparities in imprisonment is caused to some extent by the cold treatment of Hispanic and African American criminal defendants by the police compared to the white defendants. This kind of treatment is also extended by release boards and judges therefore leaving the prisons filled with racial minorities sometimes unfairly. These minority races are viewed as racial threats and hence most of them are victimized innocently just because of their skin color.

Prisoners also tend to be at a disadvantage socio-economically as statistics

show that most of them have low levels of literacy and education with only 33 percent of them being holders of a high school diploma while 87 percent of those in the general population hold the same. According to a survey in 1997, only 56 percent of them hold a full-time job at the time of arrest while 75 percent of their counterparts in the general population who hold full time jobs. Even those inmates with jobs earned meager salaries averaging at one dollar less than their free counterparts per hour do do. These statistics clearly indicate that individuals at a socioeconomic disadvantage are more likely to commit crime than those who are stable socially and economically (Branton & Jones, 2005).

Some of the after effects of criminal punishments are rather negative and damage the victim even further. These effects include discrimination from society, restrictions for obtaining necessities and earning living, diminished levels of human social capital, which affect an individual's future employment prospects and economic security adversely. The prison sentences reduce an individual's possible lifetime earnings and in most cases, they take away an individual's productive years. The criminals also suffer civil disabilities, which cripple their democratic rights as citizens and their participation in social policy. Voting bans on the felons maintains the inequality by silencing the voice of the poor and minorities. These sanctions escalate racial inequalities because of the social cycle of disadvantage the racial minorities go through (Wheelock, & Uggen, 2006). The racial minorities are the majority of the prisoners therefore these sanctions hit them hard and do not help them break from these negative vicious cycles. The same racial minority compose majority of the poor victims therefore proving that these

social factors are somewhat all linked up.

In conclusion, disparity in class leads to the penalization of the poor more harshly due to systematic biases. Information from the National Crime Victimization Survey is sufficient proof that racial minorities are victimized more as shown by the fluctuating victimization rates across racial and ethnic lines. These effects are escalated further by low occupational and educational status among the victims of crime. The ax of punishment consequences similarly falls heavily on the poor and racial minorities. Criminal punishment therefore goes hand in hand with social and racial stratification creating a continuous cycle that disadvantages the poor and racial minorities while benefiting the rich and racial majorities. If this system is not changed, the poor and racial minorities will remain poor and disadvantaged. Some policies that can improve this situation include reforms in sentencing, reduction of the criminal punishment to resize the criminal class and reviewing the criminal sanctions.

References:

- Wheelock, D. & Uggen, C. (2006). Race, poverty, and punishment: the impact of criminal sanctions on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequality. National poverty center
- Branton, R. P., & Jones, B. S. (2005). Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 359-372. doi: 10. 1111/j. 0092-5853. 2005. 00128. x.