HOMICIDE : PSYCHOLOGICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STRESSORS

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Sample of the study consisted of 163 convicted inmates undergoing imprisonment for homicide. Most of them were serving life time imprisoned. Age range of these convicts was 19 to 72. All the convicted inmates included in the study were males. An interview schedule was constructed to seek information regarding demographic details, family history and environmental factors of the convicted inmates. It was found age of criminal was associated with crime. Education and crime were closely related. Most of the crimes are committed due to emotions overpowering judgment. No significant difference was found between coping well not well. The childhood family environment had no significant impact on an individual committing crime. Social support played an important role in coping of an inmate.

Introduction

A large body of research indicates that crime is highly correlated with youthfulness and male gender, and that early involvement in crime is predictive of subsequent involvement. Similarly, poverty, inequality, disrupted families, inadequate socialization, and the presence of criminal opportunities all seem to be important correlates of crime (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993; Reiss and Roth 1993; Tonry, Ohlin, and Farrington 1991; Land, McCall, and Cohen 1990; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Blau and Schwartz 1984).

Conforming to Merton's earlier sociological theories, a survey of inmates in state prisons in the late 1990s showed very low education levels. Many could not read or write above elementary school levels, if at all. The most common crimes committed by these inmates were robbery, burglary, automobile theft, drug trafficking, and shoplifting. Because of their poor educational backgrounds, their employment histories consisted of mostly low wage jobs with frequent periods of unemployment.

Educational achievement is not just a matter of favorable attitudes; opportunities must be available to those who seek them. For, many members of the lower class, struggling to maintain a minimum level of subsistence, the goal of advanced education must seem remote indeed. In a family that can scarcely afford food, shelter, and clothing, pressure is exerted upon young to leave school early in order to secure employment and thereby help the family.

Criminologists have long associated young age with more crime, and the prediction of demographic rises in youth population have at the same time been used to increase penalties for youth crime and redirect the juvenile justice system towards a more punitive orientation (Brown, 2009). Instead of immutable factors like age, sociological factors like structural conditions and cultural adaptation are offered as explanations for the linkages between race and violence (Kaufman, 2005; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). Structural conditions like poverty, racial discrimination, and community mobility and cultural adaptations like the "code of the streets" and family dysfunction have likewise explained how violent crime becomes concentrated in disadvantaged communities.

Aim of Study: The study is designed to find out the causes of homicide committed by the convicted prisoners, and to investigate their coping styles.

Hypotheses

1. Severe crimes are frequently committed by younger criminals
2. Severe crimes are frequently committed by poorly educated criminals.
3. Inmates who are in touch with family have better coping mechanism.
4. Homicides are mostly due to emotional reasons.
5. Individuals committing severe crime have disturbed childhood family environment.

Method

Participants: Total participants consisted of 163 convicted inmates undergoing imprisonment for homicide. Most of them were serving life time imprisonment. Age range of these convicts was 19 to 72. All the convicted inmates included in the study were males.

Tools used for Data Collection: Semi structured interview: An interview schedule was constructed to seek information regarding demographic details, family history and environmental factors of the convicted inmates. The interview was designed to enquire other factors like the cause for the crime, addiction and any mental issues if they were going through. There was scope to ask questions other than those given in the schedule.

Procedure of Data Collection: Personal interview technique was used for collecting data. Data was collected from the one of the central jail in Maharashtra, after seeking permission from the IG (Prison). A time was decided with the Superintendent of jail to interview the convicted inmates. Sample selection was done on the basis of random sampling. Each interview took around 30-40 minutes. Semi-structured interview method was used to collect the information.

Results and Discussion

Table1. Indicating age wise distribution of jail inmates

AGE	N=160	percentage	chi square
18-28	80	50	
29-38	39	24	
39-48	22	14	
49 and above	19	12	36.6
p<0.01			

It was believed that Involvement in crime diminishes with age. The research literature on biological aging (Steffensmeier & Allan 2000; Shock 1984) suggests that peak functioning is typically reached between the ages of twenty-five and thirty for physical factors plausibly assumed to affect one's ability to commit crimes (strength, stamina, aerobic capacity, motor control, sensory perception, and speed of movement). Although decline sets in shortly after these peak years, it is very gradual until the early fifties, when the decline becomes more pronounced (Shock). Other commonly mentioned physical variables like testosterone levels peak in late adolescence but then remain at or near peak level until at least the mid-forties. In contrast, the age curves for crimes like robbery and burglary that presuppose the need for physical abilities peak in mid-adolescence and then decline very rapidly. Results of the study strongly support that the more sever crime are committed by younger people. The age range for the study was 18 to 75. The population was divided into four age groups as indicated in the table 1. The percentage for the age group 18-28 was 50% where as it was 39% for age group 29-38 and 22 % for age group 39-48 and for the 49 and above age group it was 19 %. This clearly indicates the decline in crime rate as the age range increases. The x^2 obtained was 36.6 df =1;p<.01 the score shows number of crimes committed to be significantly more at younger age and proves the hypothesis 1 to be true.

Table 2 Indicating education of Jail Inmates

Education status	N=163	Percentage	chi square
Educated	44	27	
Poorly Educated	119	73	21.16
p<.01			

Out of the present sample of 163 participants 27% percent were educated; the remaining 73% were poorly educated. If the data of educated (27 percent rounded), and poorly educated (73 percent) are treated by x^2 test then significant results are obtained (x^2 =21.16, df =1, p <.01). The results suggest, that age and educational standard are closely related to crime. Education helps in developing maturity, hence educated people generally do not involve in severe types of crimes, such as murder rape etc. still there are a few cases of educated people committing severe crimes, this they had done under rage or under intoxication. However these are rare cases.

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Table 3. Causes of crime

Cause	N=163	percentage	chi square
Financial	13	7.98	
Dispute	56	34.36	
Accident	10	6.13	
Influence of alcohol	10	6.13	
Emotional	74	45.4	68.99
p<.01			

Motive of the crime was another focus of the study. As it was hypothesized that most of the crimes are committed due to lack of control on impulse, rage, revenge seeking, failure in love affairs, doubting the spouse or extra marital affairs for which the cause of crime was divided in six categories like financial, dispute(property, land etc.), accident, under the influence of alcohol (drugs, or substance abuse) and lastly emotional(lack of control on impulse, rage, revenge seeking, failure in love affairs, doubting the spouse or extra marital affairs). Highest percentage of crime that is 46.62% (76 out of 163) are committed for emotional reasons. The second main reason of committing the crime was dispute 35.58%. The dispute was due land, property or communal reasons. This was followed by financial reasons for homicides which were 8.58 percent. Accidents and Alcohol or substance misuse were 6.74% each. chi square shows significant difference in occurrence of crime in accordance to reason.

Table 4. Showing coping in jail inmates

Coping status	N=163	Percentage	Chi-square
Coping well	75	46	
Coping not well	88	54	0.64
Not significant			

Interview included questions intended to explore the coping of the inmates. The information like if they are working in jail, attending yoga sessions or dance sessions, are they interacting with other inmates, how often they feel sad, loss of interest in activities, insomnia or hypersonic, psychomotor agitation, persistent anger or irritability, suicidal Ideation, appetite, delusions or hallucinations, outlook for future, personal hygiene, body movement, gait etc. were noted while interviewing Considering the above points it was found that out of 163 participants 75 that is 46% of the population were coping well, while the other 54% had some problems in coping. The chi square results were not significant which means there is statistically no significant difference between the number of inmates coping and not coping well they are equally distributed.

During the course of interview it was found that the yoga and meditation sessions being held in jail on regular basis has helped many to overcome anxiety and depression.

Table 5.showing childhood family environment			
Childhood family environment	N=163	Percentage	Chi-square
Cordial	95	58	
Dysfunctional	68	42	2.56

Not significant Criminologists, Sociologists and many other researchers made attempts to search the possible causes of crimes. In most cases, the experts stress the early life experiences, which are believed to have strong influence on the development to criminality, because individual acquire their traits sequentially. However, demographic stressors seem to be equally influential in developing criminality. For example poverty, lack of education, high crime neighborhood, unemployment etc. do influence the development of criminality. The above table illustrates the childhood family of inmates it was found during the interview that 41.71% (68 out of 163) inmates had dysfunctional family environment in childhood.

58.28% belonged to cordial family background. The dysfunction in family could be for various reasons like father being alcoholic or abusive, step father or mother, negligent patents etc. the chi square results were not significant and it shows that the number of inmates coming from disrupted families and ones coming from cordial family were equally distributed.

Table 6. Number of jail inmates presently in touch with family			
Family	N=163	percentage	Chi-square
In contact with family	125	76.68	
Not in contact with family	38	23.32	28.48

P<.01

Family support for incarcerated individuals is an important issue that receives little consideration in society even though it may be one of the greatest factors for change in the jail system for combating recidivism rates. This study investigated the percentage of inmates who had family support and were in regular touch with family. It was found that 76.68 % of the inmates were in touch with family through letters phone calls or parole visits. 23.31 % of the population had no family support.

Conclusion
1. Involvement in crime diminishes with age.
2. Age of criminal is associated with crime.
3. Education and crime are closely related.
4. Most of the crimes are committed due to emotions overpowering Judgment.
5. There was no significant difference between inmates coping well and not coping well.
6. The childhood family environment had no significant effect on individual committing crime.

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