

Sociological Analysis of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice**Hari Om**

The movement of females towards parity with males in terms of incidence of crime, along with the shift of women into offence patterns that have traditionally been "men's crimes" have been interpreted by Adler. She discussed the physical and psychological behavior of women and argued that male-female differences are much more the result of social factors. Examining the impact of improving status of women, she recognized that with the loosening of restraints, females are more likely to subject to pressures that can increase crime. However, Adler was not the first to opine a connection between the liberation of women and their increasing rates of crime. In 1931, Bishop proposed a similar explanation. Though he did not agree being an anti-feminist, he, like Adler, argued that increasing emancipation has resulted in more female crime.

In 1975 came the study by Datesman and Scarpitti which are found to be one of the few studies to have examined the relationship between female delinquency and broken homes. As Wilkinson (1974:35-55) has put it, "although the research on the broken homes and male delinquency has yielded inconsistent results, this relationship between the broken home and female delinquency, has been consistently supported." The authors have concluded that the higher incidence of broken homes among female delinquents, irrespective of the type of offence, has shown their greater involvement in offences such as ungovernability, running away, and promiscuity. **Collection of Data:** A study like the present one required data collection from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Source: For the collection of primary data, individual responses of inmates were obtained through personal interviews, with the help of duly pre-tested interview schedule, and observations in the interacting situations within a prison. Further, some depth interviews were also conducted.

Secondary Source: Secondary data were collected from the official records kept in the prison. The "history tickets" in the office of prison were frequently consulted to trace a particular inmate or to check on the information given by the inmate regarding her name, caste, offence, punishment etc. Some information was also gathered about life of inmates inside the prison with the help of jail manual and official documents.

Data collected in the present study consisted of following steps and procedures:-

(a) Population and locale of study:

In view of the criminal population being scattered over a narrow geographical area, the researcher in the initial stages, endeavored to make contacts with as many women offenders present in different sub-jails and district jails as possible. However, the researcher was guided by the following considerations - (1) those convicted and sentenced for more than six months imprisonment were studied, and (2) those in the age bracket of more than sixteen years at the time of committing the crime, were studied.

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, research attention has been focused on the central prisons only. As 'central prisons' have a sizeable population of both long and short-termers, occasional and habitual, therefore, the central prison was considered appropriate locale to undertake the study. The subjails and district jails are usually small jails located at the intermediate towns which provide an alternative arrangement for keeping the undertrials, before they are convicted and shifted to central prisons. On the other hand, the population of the central prisons consists of almost all types and varieties with different terms of imprisonment.

In India, though the traditional social patterns appear to have been exercising a considerable influence on women, yet, women were being apprehended for committing offences such as abortion, witchcraft, etc., and rigorous penalties were imposed on those committing heinous crimes. Traditionally, superstition was considered to be a prime factor in crimes by women. Although the influence of superstition appears to be attenuating, yet its impact on human beings could be felt in a variety of ways including the belief of human beings in omens and superstitions, more by females than the males. These forces make the phenomenon of crime amongst women perplexing and complex, be it any sector of a society.

The Scholars on this issue have generally viewed deviance amongst women broadly from two perspectives. One group perceives women who commit crimes as poor creatures, who are victims of male oppression and society's indifference and disinterest. For example, women as the victims of marital violence, rape, divorce, dowry death, suicides etc. are all blamed and held responsible for their own situation in the name of male chauvinism, and male oppression and the laws are generally seen against the interests of women.

The other group perceives women offenders as being more cunning than men; as having learned how to commit crimes that are more difficult to detect, and as enjoying the chivalry of male law enforcement officials to avoid arrest conviction and imprisonment. **Objectives:**

1. To elucidate the sociocultural and economic antecedents of convicted women offenders, which seemingly force them to resort to crime;
2. To evaluate the role of family of orientation and, if possible, provide explanations in regard to the linkages between the socialization patterns and deviance amongst women;
3. To find out the relationship between the experiences in marital life and the criminal propensities amongst women;
4. To determine and examine the nature and patterns of criminality amongst women;
5. To highlight the nature of victim-offender relationship;
6. To assess the perceptions of convicted women offenders in regard to examine the nature of experiences of imprisonment; and
7. To analyze the attitudes of women offenders towards functionaries of criminal justice system in general and prison officials and fellow inmates in particular.

Methodology:

The primary data of the study were collected on the basis of a comprehensive pre-tested interview schedule, which was administered in the jail setting. Subsequent to these interviews, certain offenders were selected for depth interviews. In addition, the researcher engaged herself in a great deal of observation of the offenders' behaviour patterns in the jail so as to develop greater insight into the data.

In all, two hundred offenders who were lodged in jails located in Delhi, Ludhiana, Jaipur, Lucknow and Hissar were interviewed. This figure was not obtained on the basis of a sample but included all available offenders in the selected jails. The data collected were subjected to cross-checking through reference to jail records and 'history tickets' of the offenders. The data collected were analyzed for the purpose of finding out association between various factors and the criminality of women. The method of cross-tabulation was adopted, and with the help of 'percentage distribution', the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables were examined and their implications analyzed.

Findings and Conclusion:

The major findings of the study will now be briefly discussed. These are linked and presented in the same order as the objectives of the study.

First, socialization processes, with the help of which the basic elements of social development are determined, were found to have a vital association with criminal behaviour of these women offenders. Of such processes, the characteristic peculiarities of home - environment with special emphasis on parental role and parental care, affective ties between parents and children, characteristic surveillance by the parents and relations with siblings, contributed to problems of adjustment, further leading to criminal behaviour in later life.

Here it appears that parental indifference and inconsistency coupled with a feeling of powerlessness, rejection by parents and overt encouragement of violent behaviour by authority figures within the family resulted in expressing frustrations either upon themselves or against others, both during their childhood and later, when frustrated as adults.

From this finding, it may be concluded that criminal behaviour of a woman is not a product of any single factor or maladjustment, but, the outcome of a complex and dynamic interaction among multiple factors operating within their life pattern.

Next was the finding that women offenders had to put up with a lot of unhappiness and maladjustments in family life after marriage. This leads to the conclusion that the family of procreation is a potent factor or source of criminal behaviour of women.

It was further noted that, the characteristic peculiarities of the husband-wife relations and relations with in-laws, played a significant role in terms of contributing to maladjustment processes. These were not determined by any single factor but by a number of factors such as age-difference between husband and wife, lack of expression of affection by the husband, his inconsiderate and uncooperative behaviour, and his addiction to undesirable habits such as womanizing, alcoholism, illicit affairs, habitual criminality, nagging and uncompromising behaviour of in-laws etc.

The intra-familial conflicting role patterns which produced maladjustments in inter-personal relations were found to create complexities and conflicts within the relational structure of the family. This disruption of family life, possibly leads for women to deviate from expectations, and to get involved in various major crimes.

The third finding indicated the existence of a significant association between the victim-offender relationships, and, that when a married woman kills a family member, it is in a great majority of cases, her husband who is a victim. This suggests that the provocation caused by the victim has a definite part in the etiology of homicide, either by inciting the offender to commit by creating or fostering a situation likely to lead to homicide. This type of victim can provoke homicide by his or her own action. The higher frequency of victims from the family of procreation leads to the possibility of the severely strained marital relations so as to killing of a person - may be the husband.

Prison created certain stresses and strains in the offenders. Although the degree of feeling of deprivations involved varied in each inmate in relation to the length of imprisonment and the duration spent in the prison, yet, to most of them prison experience appeared to be of considerable significance with implications in rehabilitative process.

On the basis of this finding, it may be concluded that to some extent, at least, the prison inmates at least in terms of overt behaviour get influenced by the process of prisonization. But, the mental strains of imprisonment and deprivations continue to persist and impose several restrictions on the offenders. It may therefore be concluded that the process of personality growth and development of the inmates is affected by incarceration. Inmates' beliefs about the criminal justice system, including the police, the courts and the judicial system, were found to be no less significant because, in sharing these beliefs with each other, they find common identity with each other on the one hand, and reflected their bias and prejudice which were largely shaped through the experience which they had undergone. Thus, most of the inmates think that police are corrupt and inefficient and that justice is generally not done in courts. Another way in which their common identity was observed is their perception of cooperation received from fellow inmates. It may therefore be concluded that there are certain factors which give support to, and form basis of, prison friendship among inmates.

Suggestions:

The present study has been a step forward in understanding the criminal behaviour among women. The empirical evidence has shown that both sociocultural, particularly the family environment, and economic factors have a vital role to play in the phenomenon of female crime. Based on this general finding it may now be suggested that as an ameliorative step there is considerable need and scope in our society for family counseling, particularly among the

lower socioeconomic strata. Additionally, there clearly appears to be great need for suitable family welfare (social and economic) interventions. Given the rapid changes occurring in our society neglect in this area may inflate the incidence of female crime.

Further, the study has indicated the need to undertake a followup study of the released women offenders in order to delineate the factors and forces that affect their readjustment in society. In the light of this, rehabilitative programmes both in and out of prison may be designed.

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