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Role of Women in Prevention of Crime: A Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

The increased ratio of corruption and crime has become one of the most pressing problems of Indian society. Statistical data clearly indicates the increased ratio of crime but there may be numerous cases which one may not come across in police records for example cases of white collar crime, sex crime, rape murders, theft. If this increased ratio has to be controlled multifaceted strategy must be adopted by the government. There must be the active participation of the people for prevention of crime which should be the moral duty of every individual. Hence the paper focuses on the need to recognize the role of role of women as an agent of social control.

Keywords: *Women, Gender perspective, Empowerment.*

Introduction

Crime is one of the biggest problem faced by every society. It is a major social phenomenon of modern civilized and advanced societies. Though crime also prevailed in primitive societies but it was not a social problem in those days. For in primitive societies the mores were sufficient enough to regulate the behavior of people and the few who disobeyed the rules were not considered a threat to society. But in advanced contemporary societies the influence of mores has lessened and it is difficult to compel the universal observance of mores. The culture in primitive societies being static and homogenous there was little crime. But like many other social problems of modern society, crime is also the price which we have to pay for the advantages of

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civilization. In India too it is steadily increasing in recent years. In every society we find people breaking social norms. While some disregard marriage and family norms, others are involved in activities like shoplifting, drug abuse or alcoholism. All these are instances of deviance. No society can claim to have a complete conformity to its norms. Society has a balance conformity to and deviance from norms. However all forms of deviance from criminal behavior to civil disobedience are considered deviance because people perceive and interpret them as such. Norms and deviance are associated with cultural values and crime is the major aspect of deviance. Crime has been defined both socially and legally too. From a legal point of view, "Crime is an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law (statutory and case law), committed without defense or justification and sanctioned by state as a felony or misdemeanor."1 Thus crime is an intentional act and the person knows the result of his action. A criminal act is the violation of criminal law of the land. Thus, the legal definition of crime emphasizes the circumstances in which a crime is committed. On the other hand, the social explanation of crime highlights the non-legal aspects of crime. In this sense crime is a behavior or activity which disregards the social codes of the community. Such a deviation is called anti-social act. Caldwell has stated crime as an act or failure to an act that is considered to be so detrimental to the well being of a society, as judged by its prevailing standards, that action against it cannot be entrusted to private initiative or to haphazard methods but must be taken by an organized society in accordance with tested procedures.' Since the crime threatens the social order and endangers the person and property, it is considered as dysfunctional to society as well as individual.

Factors Promote Crime in Society

If we want to study, analyze the ratio of crime in society, we need to understand the causes behind it. Crime is not a product of one single factor but there are multiple factors which results in the causation of crime. Some of the major are –

1. **Environmental:** The family and home are the fundamental social institutions having greater influence on the development of personality of the child for broken homes

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constitute an important factor in the causation of juvenile delinquency, mainly because of mother-child relationship. Lack of family ties, broken homes caused by divorce, separation or voluntary break ups, absence of loving mother in early childhood, loosening of family cohesion, absence of sound and stable family are environmental factors contributing to the increase of delinquents. When the home is immoral or when there are drunken, insane or feeble minded parents in the family, the child is easily led astray and becomes disorganized.

2. **Economic:** It has generally been observed that crime increases with economic depression and unemployment and decreases with good living conditions. Crimes are also committed when people are not satisfied with their lawful earnings and adopt unsocial conduct for satisfaction of their desires. Such offences as burglary, house and shop breaking and robbery show a marked tendency to increase in the time of economic depression and a decrease when times are good. Poverty is a degrading experience. It lowers down the moral of the individual. It often results in frustration, jealousy and bitterness; and through them to preserve political advertisement. Large scale unemployment means social disorganization which leads to crime.

3. **Emotional:** Disturbance in emotional condition makes life unhappy . The emotional upsets may be the result of, feeling keenly either rejected, reproved, insecure ,not understood in affectional relationships involved in or that love has been withdrawn, bitter feeling of jealousy towards one or more sibling or a feeling of being discriminated in the family at the cost of other, a feeling of confused unhappiness due to deep seated depression ,internal mental conflict, intense feeling of discomfort about family disharmony, parental misconduct, parental error, the unhealthy conditions of family life in management and disciplines, from a conflict arising out of natural curiosity and the moral standards of society.

4. **Biological:** Early puberty also results in criminal behavior. Early physical maturity but emotional immaturity may lead to crisis in adolescence. There is a link between

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brain, mind and psychological conditions which produces romantic symptoms. Thus physical maturity and low level of intelligence leads to delinquency.

5. **Social:** When the parents either because of ignorance ,poverty or unfortunate moral attitude are not able to provide the child with suitable home surroundings, and the child may be forced to grow up in the neighborhood unsuited for him to live. Many of the homes are so overcrowded that decency is not possible. Overcrowding results in lack of privacy and as such the child from his earliest years becomes habituated to scenes from which he should be protected .Undirected use of leisure time is also peril to a child. More of the children spend their time in desultory unguided pursuits in the absence of play facilities and develop certain undesirable traits. In addition to this influence in the community affects the conduct of the persons. Young children ,especially the adolescents are subjects to the attitudes and opinions operating in their group and community.

6. **Urbanization & Industrialization:** The rapid growth of industries in particular areas has led to agglomerations of the people in massive strength, whose people are strangers to one another. They are often alone and have come far away from their families and therefore deprived of the stabilizing factors of home & family life. And they are unable to adjust according to the circumstances and to the new social values, hence they drift towards a criminalist pattern.

Theoretical Explanations of Crime

Social Learning

Gabriel Tarde was one of the first theorists to believe that crime was something learned by normal people as they adapted to other people and the conditions of their environment. Tarde viewed that through imitation or modeling, a person can learn new responses such as criminal behavior, by observing ithers, without performing any overt act.4According to social learning theory, people engage in crime because of their association with others who engage in crime.

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Their criminal behavior is reinforced and they learn beliefs that are favorable to crime. They essentially have criminal models that they associate with. As a consequence, these individuals come to view crime as something that is desirable, or at least justifiable in certain situations. Learning criminal behavior is the same as learning to engage in conforming behavior: it is done through association with or exposure to others. In fact, association with delinquent friends is the best predictor of delinquent behavior other than prior delinquency. Sutherlands theory was known as Differential Association which developed in 1934 stated that people become criminals when they associate themselves with others who are criminalist. Together with its more recent modifications, this theory remains one of the most influencing theories of crime causation.5

Social Labelling

Labeling theory is rooted in the idea of the social construction of reality, which is central to the field of sociology and is linked to the perspective of symbolic interactionism. As an area of focus, it flourished within American sociology during the 1960s, thanks in large part to sociologist H. Becker. However, its core ideas can be traced back to the work of founding French sociologist Durkheim. The theory of American sociologist G.H. Mead, which focused on the social construction of the self as a process involving interactions with others, was also influential in its development. Others involved in the development of labeling theory and the conduct of research related to it include Frank Tannenbaum, Edwin Lemert, Albert Memmi, Erving Goffman, and David Matza.

Psychogenic Explanations

The psychogenic theories locate crime in the defects of personality system. The psychological theory is based on feeblemindedness, where Henry Goddard maintained that very low IQ level causes delinquency and crime. William Healy, a psychiatrist in Chicago put emphasis on personality defects and disorders as the causes of crime. In broader sense these traits include extroversion, introversion, dominance or submission, optimistic or pessimism, emotional dependence or independence, self confidence or lack of it, egocentric or socio-centric etc. Whereas Sigmund Freud considered undeveloped ego and superego which is caused by lack of

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affection bonds is the main reason behind deviance and criminality. Psycho-analytical theory on the underdeveloped ego and instincts or inferiority complex**.**

Economic Explanation

The theory relates criminal behavior and the economic conditions in the society. It maintains that the criminal is a product of the economic structure of thew society which provides the goals and ideals to the criminal. An Italian scholar Fornasari talked of the relationship between the crime and poverty in 18884. A Dutch scholar Bonger highlighted the relationship between crime and capitalist system in 1916.Marxian view also states that economic determinism creates the private ownership of property which leads to poverty. Sutherland has also stated that more criminals' are found in poor houses because it is easy to locate them.

Durkheims View

The basic premise of Durkheim is that society is more than a simple aggregate of individuals; it is a reality sui generis (unique) 2. For Dukheim, crime too is a social fact. It is a normal aspect of society although different types of societies should have greater or less degrees of it. The cause of crime for Durkheim is **anomie,** that is the dissociation of individual from the collective conscience, or the general sense of morality of times. He not only believed that crime is normal social fact but functional for society as it lays down the boundaries of morality. Hence he advocates that crime needs to be committed with reasonable boundaries. Durkheim warned that too much crime could destroy society.

Anomie or Strain Theory

In an article published in 1938,Robert.k.Merton observed that a contradiction between cultural goals and institutional means are the main reasons behind crime which existed in United States which he named as anomie.3For cohen it is caused by the inability of juveniles to achieve status among peers by socially acceptable means.

What role can women play in eliminating crime and creating a better world

Women play a great role in the growth and development of the society and making it an advanced and modern society. There is a famous saying by the Brigham Young that, "You

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educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation." Educating and giving power to the women is of great importance which needs to be followed in the society to bring women empowerment and development of society. Because it is true that, if a man is getting educated and empowered, only he can be benefitted however if a woman is getting educated and empowered, whole family and society can be benefitted.

Women are not things which can be neglected because of their less power and authority instead they should be empowered and promoted to get higher education. Women are the half population of the world mean half power of the world. If women of any country are not empowered mean that country is lack of half power. By nature, women play their all the roles with great responsibilities and have capability to make a healthy family, solid society and powerful country. Lots of efforts have been done however still women are backward and limited to home activities. We need to understand that if an uneducated woman may handle home properly then why not a well educated woman can lead the whole country like men.

Without woman nothing is possible for men, they are basic unit of the society, they make a family, family make a home, home make a society and ultimately societies make a country. So the contribution of a woman is everywhere from taking birth and giving birth to a child to the care for whole life and other areas. All the roles and responsibilities of the women can never be neglected by the societies. Without education and women empowerment no development is possible in the family, society and country. Women know well how to talk, how to behave, how to deal with people of different classes, etc. She knows to handle all the situations because she knows well the basic fundamentals of a good society and play her roles politely as a main contributor in building a strong society. The above mentioned theories indicates that most of the people turns to criminality as a result of emotional imbalances, environmental factors be it immoral attitude of parents, broken homes, absence of loving mothers in childhood, jealousy among siblings or lack of moral education. All these signifies that a woman plays a crucial role in physical, psychological and social development of the child. There is an old African proverb that says it takes a village to raise a child. While a child is influenced and shaped by the entire society there is a mother who plays a crucial role.

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As a Nurturer

Mothers have an instinctive ability to be sensitive with their children. She reads the signs better right from childhood. As mother is most intimate to the child she can keenly observe emotional, physical and behavioral changes by which she can realize any problem early without waiting for it to turn into a situation.

As a Secure Anchor

One of the most prominent reason behind deviation is emotional imbalances. As a child recognizes mother first, can feel her presence, touch and voice ,it all provides him a sense of security and prevents him from being a prey to emotional and psychological disturbances. As an emotional actor she can teach a child how to deal with emotions better. It helps a child to improve his emotional intelligence and sensitivity to others.

As an agent of Socialization

She teaches a child social habits, makes them aware of culture, customs, traditions ,mores and value system of society. She is there to listen him, understand him, made him feel secure, guide him and make him mentally strong. She not only shows affection but set certain standards also which keeps the behavior of child in control. She teaches the child social norms and teaches the child the consequences of violating the norms and traditions of society and thus acts as a true agent of social control.

As a Peer

It is often noticed that when there is no family contact or when parents are more authoritative adolescents often find ways to connect with young peer groups to share their problems which often deviated them from their customary track. Hence, it is the mother who can realize the changing needs of the child and could gradually change her approach from authoritative to collaborative. In this a warmth understandings more important than judgmental comments. If a women behaves friendly with a child in the same the child could be protected from being deviated.

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Earlier, when the lives of women were worse than slaves, women were considered as animals and used as sex toys. It was a sin for women to give birth to a girl baby, either they were killed, buried alive or thrown away by the male head of the family. However, the condition has become advance now in many means but not completely.

Recommendations

The old notion that a criminal is born and nothing can be done for reforming and rehabilitating him still holds its ground. The law enforcement is still largely punitive and revengeful. Even in many civilized societies and developed countries the treatment meted out to criminals is still in terms of tooth and eye for an eye. The criminals are isolated from society, kept in prisons and punishment such as lashing, serving of hands and legs, hanging given in public not to deter the criminals from further offences but also to prevent others from indulging in such acts. However as a result of increase knowledge in human behavior and criminal psychology there are changes in general attitude of public. What else can be suggested in this direction is that parents should be aware of psychology of the child so that they can treat and handle their children with understanding and provides them an environment for the satisfaction of their basic needs. It requires parental education through guidance services and voluntary social services. Since a child learns delinquent behavior from his different associates, may be parents or peer groups hence family members, teachers and school authorities should keep a close eye on the activities and social environment of the children and take proper care so that they do not fall in bad company. Anti social elements and criminals often seek out youngsters for their own purpose. Attempts must be made to save children from them and they should be educated in keeping away from them. School environment should be healthy and congenial. The curriculum methods of teaching, discipline, classroom behavior of the teacher and social atmosphere of the school should be rectified so that children do not involve themselves in emotional and social maladjustment problems. The attitude of teachers to impose their authority on children and do not understand their basic needs should be changed. Sometimes it is difficult to bring a change in the defective family environment or the influences of the neighborhood and peer groups. In such circumstances children should be removed from their original environment for their emotional

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and social adjustment. Womenfolk need to be supported to weave a new social fabric, robust enough to withstand the stress of rapid change in the society. Certain pilot projects must be started by government where the agents of social control could be trained to help a child in overcoming anti social elements. As crime is a product of multiple factors all organizations that can influence these factors must participate in these projects to make a safe community. Government must ensure that effective planning and sustainable success in reducing crime will reach well into the next century, a long –term prevention strategy should be encouraged for the sustenance of crime –free and tranquil society. Anti- crime programs which includes integration of gender perspectives must be started by government. Safety courses needs to be started by government which could women the risk reducing techniques, safety tools and awareness raising programs, self defense program and knowledge of their physical power for such programs could not only brim a new confidence among them but helps them in creating a better world.

Conclusion

Women can be an effective agency of social control as women are more focused, responsible and sincere when it comes accomplishments of various tasks. Social surveys clearly indicated that women are more aware of surroundings, concerned about their decisions regarding safety and more confident in defending them against various attacks. Hence the paper outlines the need to bring women into the mainstream of society as an agent of social control and at the same time there is a need to integrate women in a gendered approach.

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