

# Exploring the Relationship between Poverty and Crime

Sringa M S

**Abstract:** This article explores the intricate relationship between poverty and crime, shedding light on the multifaceted impacts poverty has on individuals and communities. Poverty, characterized by the lack of essential resources and financial support for a decent standard of living, manifests in various ways, including inadequate housing, limited access to clean water, insufficient nutrition, and healthcare disparities. The international poverty line, set at 2.15 per person per day as of 2017 by the World Bank Group, serves as a critical benchmark in assessing poverty levels globally. This study delves into the two primary categories of poverty: absolute and relative poverty, while also considering the numerous factors that contribute to a nation's poverty status, such as government policies, international aid, corruption levels, literacy rates, and political stability. Moreover, it investigates how both urban and rural areas grapple with poverty, with urban regions generally exhibiting lower poverty rates due to improved infrastructure and access to essential services. Furthermore, this research unveils a compelling correlation between poverty and crime rates, particularly evident in countries with high poverty and crime levels, notably in African nations. Inequality within society further exacerbates this relationship, as countries with greater income inequality tend to experience higher crime rates. Elevated unemployment, limited educational opportunities, and disrupted family structures all conspire to elevate poverty, consequently fueling criminal activities. The research emphasizes the necessity of addressing poverty alongside corruption for effective crime reduction strategies, providing valuable insights for policymakers at various levels.

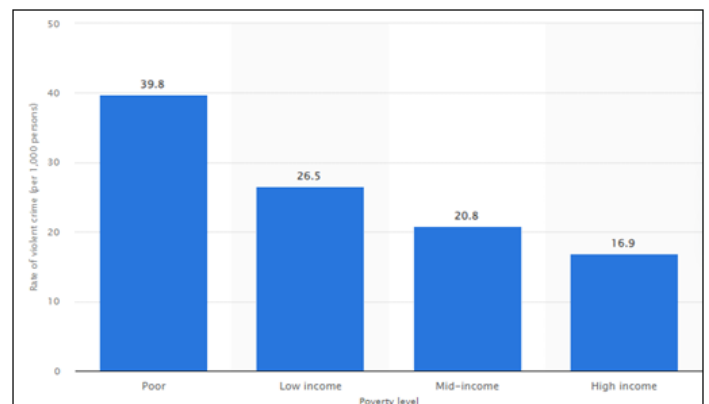
**Keywords:** Poverty, Crime, Inequality, Government Policies, Poverty Eradication

## 1. Background and Context

Poverty is when a community or individual lacks essential resources and financial support for a minimum standard of living. It affects an individual or their family in different ways, like not having proper accommodations, access to clean water, healthy food for living, and medical care (Creamer *et al.* 2022). As per the World Bank Group, the international poverty line has been set to \$ 2.15 per person per day as of 2017 (The World Bank Group, 2023). Poverty has been divided into two types: absolute poverty and relative poverty. The state of poverty in a country depends upon many factors like government schemes and policies regarding poverty eradication, international aid to the country, corruption level in the country, the country's literacy rate, and the country's political condition. The society is divided into two segments: rural and urban areas, but poor are seen in both the country's regions. However, the urban areas have a lower poverty rate than the rural areas as it has better electricity connection, better health care facilities, better employment opportunities, and others.

Meanwhile, there have been trends that countries with higher poverty rate and crime rate are also higher. It can be said that there is a close relationship between poverty and crime, and countries of the African continent are the prime example of it. As per the report published by the US Department for International Development, poverty is not the only ingredient that drives crime, it is supported by inequality in society as well (US Department for International Development, 2023). The countries in the world which are having higher levels of income inequality have a higher crime rate. In comparison, the countries which have lower levels of income inequality have lower crime rates. Higher unemployment rates, incomplete education, limited opportunities, and breakdown of family

structures bring up poverty in a nation. All of these factors are equally responsible for bringing a nation under the threat of crime and criminal activities.



**Figure 1:** Victimization percentage as per their poverty level from 2008 to 2012 in the US  
(Source: Statista Research Department, 2023)

The above graph shows the victimization rate in the US from 2008 to 2012 as per their poverty levels, which are poor, low-income, mid-income, and higher income. The percentage of poor on the list is 39.8% while the share of low-income was around 26.5% (Statista Research Department, 2023). Hence, from the above analysis, a significant relationship exists between crime and poverty in the US. For eradicating corruption from the region, the problems of poverty must be addressed, too, as both are interested. Hence, this research will further help in gaining a better understanding of the relationship between poverty and crime for better intervention policies by government at various levels.

## Aims and objectives

This research proposal aims to understand the relationship between crime and poverty.

- To evaluate the correlation between crime and poverty.
- To understand the role of poverty in increasing the rate of crime rates.
- To figure out government policies to eradicate poverty and crime rates.
- To find the possible solution that can be adopted for reducing crime through reducing poverty.

## 2. Literature Review

Weidner & Schultz (2019), the incarceration rate in the US is one of the highest in the world and incarceration is undivided by the different races in the country. African Americans are incarcerated almost six times the average white population, and the poverty rate for African Americans is higher than that of ordinary whites. Anser *et al.* (2020) state that income inequality in a country and the rising unemployment rate are responsible for the increasing rate of crimes. It has been found that equal distribution of income in a country results in higher crime rates, while unequal distribution increases crime rates. Meza *et al.* (2023) unemployment rates are higher in juveniles, and so do the crime rates. This can easily be witnessed in the Latin America region, people of African-American descent in the United States, and others. Juveniles involved in criminal activities mostly get motivated from an early age of neighbour violence.

Estévez-Soto (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole world and increased global poverty. It has resulted in the increasing crime rates in Mexico, but the activity has been shifted. Crime like street robbery has been reduced due to lockdowns; all the shops were closed, and streets remain empty, but crimes like burglary have significantly increased. Becker (2021) states that crimes in the United States have increased due to two different factors: poverty & unequal distribution of money and radicalization. It has been seen that most of the Jewish population of the US are elites and are less towards crime; hence, anti-Jewish sentiment is always driven in the society of the US. Dong *et al.* (2020) poverty crime relation is widely accepted by most of the academic literature, and it can also be seen in countries like China. Violent crimes in any country negatively affect nations, and countries like China have also seen its effect when migrant workers have burned the houses of mothers and children with whom they worked.

Cabrera-Barona *et al.* (2019) state that crimes worldwide are co-related with factors like population, poverty, and policing activity in the country. Poverty, lack of resources, and inequality are more related to increasing the crime rates in a country. Some of the most widespread crimes are murder, drug trafficking, kidnapping, and robbery. Van Dijk *et al.* (2021), African and Latin American countries reported the

highest rates of crimes, followed by Asia. Countries in North America, Europe, and Australia report lower crime levels due to lower poverty levels and better law and order situations in these countries. The story of common crimes has been reduced globally except in the countries of the African continent.

Manhica *et al.* (2021), the childhood and adolescent period is the best period when these young minds easily get influenced by drug abuse and are later convicted. Around 8.7% of children moving out of poverty were convicted of drug abuse. The drug-related crime is relatively higher in young males than in females. Derose *et al.* (2019) found that most of the crimes globally are committed mainly by Males rather than females, and in a Los Angeles survey, it was found that most of its parks were mostly visited by men rather than women. The reason was straightforward: due to increased poverty, most men are committed to criminal activities against women.

## Main Research Questions

- What is the relationship between crime and poverty?
- How is poverty playing a critical role in increasing crime rates?
- What are the steps taken by the government worldwide to address poverty and crime?
- How to reduce crime by reducing poverty?

A total of four main research questions are going to be answered through this research. The first question is explaining about the relationship between poverty and crime. The answer will be carried out through the statistical figures, showing how increased poverty has increased crime. The next question is about the role played by poverty in increasing global crime rates. In the next part, the steps taken by governments worldwide to address the issues of poverty and crime-related situations in their respective countries will be analysed. The final question that this research will answer is what steps to be taken to reduce poverty in a country while simultaneously reducing the crime rate in a country.

## 3. Methodology

A research methodology is the process by which research is going to be conducted, like the nature of data, the way it will be collected, and the way it will be analysed. Various research methodologies, research designs, data collection methods, and data analysis methods exist. **Research design:** there are three types of research: qualitative design, quantitative design, and mixed design. In a research study, a research design is a strategy by which the research question will be answered with the help of empirical data (Sileyew, 2019). For carrying out this research, the research is the design that will be used in both the qualitative and quantitative design. **Qualitative** research design is the design that is concerned with bringing out answers to questions like whys and hows (Tomaszewski *et al.* 2020). **Quantitative** research design is the research design for answering questions like how many of them think, how

many of them act, and others. In short, quantitative is more objective, while qualitative is more subjective.

The data collection procedure is the method of collecting data for carrying out a particular research. There are three different ways by which the data can be ordered for analysis: primary data, secondary data, and mixed methods. **Primary data is collected** through surveys, interviews, and experiments by selecting a sample size (Franzitta *et al.*, 2020). **Secondary data** are those collected from indirect sources like peer-reviewed journals, books, authentic websites, research papers of other researchers, and government surveys. The data collection method that has been used for carrying out this research is both the primary data and the secondary data. The surveys will collect the primary data for the study, while the secondary data will be collected with the help of peer-reviewed journals.

Data analysis is the final part, where the collected data is a systematic method in which logical techniques are used for evaluating data, and research questions are answered through profound illustration (Hariri *et al.* 2019). There are various ways by which data can be analysed, such as statistical analysis, quantitative analysis, thematic analysis, and systematic analysis. The data analysis method will be used for the research thematic analysis and systematic analysis. **Thematic analysis** is the way of analysing the data in which the pattern of a set of data is read and discussed with the help of different themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The compositions are prepared as designed per the research aims and objectives for meeting each of these aims and objectives. **Systematic analysis** is the data analysis method in which systematic methods are used to obtain all the answers by gathering all the available empirical research. There are many advantages to data analysis with the help of thematic analysis. It doesn't require any prior expertise, it doesn't require any algorithms, and it is easy to carry out. Systematic analysis, on the other hand, has its advantages: it is simple and convenient and helps reduce any biases that generally happen in research. This is the research for which both thematic and systematic data analysis are carried out.

#### **Significance of the Research and original contribution to knowledge**

Poverty and crime have existed in society ever since human civilization was started, and they will remain in the community even if nations meet all their priorities. Studying poverty and crime helps to understand why governments worldwide have never been able to end poverty and how some countries have become so rich. Poverty and crime are not societal phenomena, but they can also be witnessed in country-to-country phenomena. Carl Preston Oglesb was an American academic, writer, and political activist who had the concept of global North and global South countries per the economic properties and standard of living (Ojo, 2020). In the international North countries, most of the nations have a higher standard of living and are economically prosperous; hence, the crime rates in these nations are less. At the same

time, the countries in the global south are mostly underdeveloped, emerging economies, countries with poor political structures, and high poverty rates.

Thus, most of the nations located in the Global South also have a higher crime rate, and this is clear evidence that crime is directly related to the poverty rate. This research is thus essential to understand the gap between these global south countries and global north countries in terms of financial, poverty, and crime rates. It has been said that inequality in wealth distribution is yet another cause for which a person is motivated to commit crime, and due to inequality in Africa and Latin America, most nations are engaged in criminal activities. Terrorism is becoming a standard norm in the Sahel region of Africa, while the Panama region of the South American continent has become a drug trafficking region (Lopez-Lucia, 2020). Both of these are the worst crimes in the world, and every year, millions of innocent lives become their victims. Hence, this study will help to understand the pain of the everyday citizens of these regions who have been suffering from the pain of both poverty and crimes and in turn bring the attention of policymakers in order to take the issue seriously.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This comprehensive study illuminates the intricate interplay between poverty and crime, offering critical insights into the challenges faced by individuals and societies worldwide. Poverty, characterized by the lack of fundamental resources and financial support for a decent standard of living, manifests in various dimensions, impacting housing, clean water access, nutrition, and healthcare access. With the international poverty line set at 2.15 per person per day, this research underscores the importance of understanding both absolute and relative poverty and the myriad factors influencing a nation's poverty status, including government policies, international aid, corruption, literacy rates, and political stability. Notably, urban areas tend to fare better than their rural counterparts due to superior infrastructure and access to essential services. The study also unveils a significant correlation between poverty and crime, particularly evident in countries with high poverty and crime rates, notably in African nations. Furthermore, it underscores how societal inequality exacerbates this relationship, with countries marked by greater income inequality experiencing higher crime rates. Unemployment, limited educational opportunities, and disrupted family structures all contribute to the vicious cycle of poverty and crime. This research underscores the imperative of addressing both poverty and corruption as complementary strategies for effective crime reduction. By illuminating these connections, this study offers valuable insights to inform policymakers at various levels, paving the way for more targeted interventions in the fight against poverty and crime.

## References

- [1] Anser, M. K., Yousaf, Z., Nassani, A. A., Alotaibi, S. M., Kabbani, A., & Zaman, K. (2020). Dynamic linkages between poverty, inequality, crime, and social expenditures in a panel of 16 countries: two-step GMM estimates. *Journal of Economic Structures*, 9(1), 1-25.
- [2] Becker, M. H. (2021). When extremists become violent: Examining the association between social control, social learning, and engagement in violent extremism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44(12), 1104-1124.
- [3] Cabrera-Barona, P. F., Jimenez, G., & Melo, P. (2019). Types of crime, poverty, population density and presence of police in the metropolitan district of Quito. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 8(12), 558.
- [4] Creamer, J., Shrider, E. A., Burns, K., & Chen, F. (2022). Poverty in the United States: 2021. *US Census Bureau*.
- [5] Derose, K. P., Han, B., Park, S., Williamson, S., & Cohen, D. A. (2019). The mediating role of perceived crime in gender and built environment associations with park use and park-based physical activity among park users in high poverty neighborhoods. *Preventive medicine*, 129, 105846.
- [6] Dong, B., Egger, P. H., & Guo, Y. (2020). Is poverty the mother of crime? Evidence from homicide rates in China. *PloS one*, 15(5), e0233034.
- [7] Estévez-Soto, P. R. (2021). Crime and COVID-19: Effect of changes in routine activities in Mexico City. *Crime Science*, 10(1), 15.
- [8] Franzitta, V., Longo, S., Sollazzo, G., Cellura, M., & Celauro, C. (2020). Primary data collection and environmental/energy audit of hot mix asphalt production. *Energies*, 13(8), 2045.
- [9] Hariri, R. H., Fredericks, E. M., & Bowers, K. M. (2019). Uncertainty in big data analytics: survey, opportunities, and challenges. *Journal of Big Data*, 6(1), 1-16.
- [10] Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical teacher*, 42(8), 846-854.
- [11] Lopez-Lucia, E. (2020). A tale of regional transformation: From political community to security regions the politics of security and regionalism in West Africa. *Political Geography*, 82, 102256.
- [12] Manhica, H., Straatmann, V. S., Lundin, A., Agardh, E., & Danielsson, A. K. (2021). Association between poverty exposure during childhood and adolescence, and drug use disorders and drug-related crimes later in life. *Addiction*, 116(7), 1747-1756.
- [13] Meza, J. I., Bondoc, C., Keshav, N., Bosco, J., & Barnert, E. (2023, June). Exploring the link between neighborhood violence and health among African-American and Latinx youth returning home after incarceration. In *Child & Youth Care Forum* (Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 533-558). New York: Springer US.
- [14] Ojo, A. (2020). *GIS and machine learning for small area classifications in developing countries*. CRC Press.
- [15] Sileyew, K. J. (2019). Research design and methodology. *Cyberspace*, 1-12.
- [16] Statista Research Department, (2023). U.S.: rate of violent victimization from 2008 to 2012, by poverty level. *Statista*. Retrieve from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/422520/us-rate-of-violent-victimization-by-poverty-level/>
- [17] The World Bank Group, (2023). Measuring Poverty. *The World Bank Group*. Retrieve from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/measuringpoverty>
- [18] Tomaszewski, L. E., Zarestky, J., & Gonzalez, E. (2020). Planning qualitative research: Design and decision making for new researchers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1609406920967174.
- [19] US Department for International Development, (2023). Relationship between poverty and crime *USAID*. [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00XGJN.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XGJN.pdf)
- [20] vanDijk, J., Nieuwebeerta, P., & Joudo Larsen, J. (2021). Global crime patterns: An analysis of survey data from 166 countries around the world, 2006–2019. *Journal of quantitative criminology*, 1-36.
- [21] Weidner, R. R., & Schultz, J. (2019). Examining the relationship between US incarceration rates and population health at the county level. *SSM-population health*, 9, 100466.