

Exploring Family Role as a Social Alternative of Crime Prevention in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan)

Muhammad Bilal¹, Bilal Khan² & Hassan Shah³

Abstract

We understand crime(s) as a learned behavior which can be approached through symbolic interactionism. Drawing on the same understanding, this study explores social alternatives of crime prevention. Mainly this small scholarship seeks to unearth family's role as a social alternative of crime prevention in the district Mardan of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Theoretically, this study is informed by social learning theory to question: How social interaction at family level influence sits members' socialization and can contribute to crime prevention. It is pertinent to mention here that within the social learning theory, this study specifically draws on Bandura and Walters' concepts of imitation and modeling. Interpretivist epistemology guides the methodological application of this study. A sample of 21 respondents (7 criminals, 7 police officials, and 7 lawyers) was taken through purposive sampling and collected data through interview guide. Thematic analysis helped in data analysis. The study findings suggest that mutual cooperation and understanding, love and harmony, and friendly environment among family members prove family role as strong social alternative of crime prevention.

Keywords: Family role, social alternative, crime prevention, primary crime prevention, secondary crime prevention.

Introduction

Crime prevention is a matter of global concern and even developed nations have the same social anxiety. The mentioned social problem remains under discussion in developing nations too and Pakistan is no exception in this regard. The increasing number of studies on crime prevention raised some serious questions that whether crimes can only be controlled by different law enforcement agencies or then states can also take some preventive measures for crime control (Girling, 2005). Crime is understood as learned behavior which is produced by different socializing agents i.e. family, peer's company, schooling and media etc.

¹ Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan bilal@awkum.edu.pk

² Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan

³ Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Buner, KP, Pakistan

(Oswell, 2013). Controlling crimes through law enforcement agencies is a global discourse. However, crime prevention through social alternatives is an academic debate too (Guerette, 2009).

In Pakistan, however, the academia has given very little attention to the discussion on crime prevention through social alternatives (Abbas, 2004). A very few studies have focused on the critical understanding of crime prevention through this fashion. There are different social alternatives available (i.e. the role of peers, schooling, media etc.) to crime prevention but family stands as paramount one because there is a sociological belief that gives family the status of domestic state (Henslin, 2015). Family holds this position because it fundamentally socializes its members through social interaction process. This study is thus one of the serious academic attempts to explore family role as social alternatives of crime prevention in Pakistani context, especially from sociological perspectives.

The global trend of crimes reported by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) shows rise in crime ratio from the period of 1960 to 1990. Police records even show that 11 million crimes of serious nature occur each year (Levitt, 2004). However, a decline of crime rates is noted after 1990 which is mainly caused by the serious attention of crime control agencies (Fitch, Normore & Werner, 2011). Policing mechanisms of crime control especially parole and punishment policy is worthwhile in declining crime ratio (Ekblom and Peace, 1989). The active role of judiciary is undeniable in this manner too. The crime control mechanisms through law enforcement agencies is part of the states' policies, however, crimes control through alternative ways must be considered because crime is an anti-social behavior which is highly learned through human interactions (Morris & Heal, 1981). Crime can even be prevented through social practices because it itself is a socially produced phenomenon through social processes in the society (Stanko, 2000). The socially learned or constructed nature of crime can have different types. These can be violent crimes, occupational, political, organized, and crimes against property etc. (Macionis, 2010).

The preceding discussion clarifies that crime control and prevention are two different approaches. Crime control can be a business of law enforcement agencies while prevention needs social alternatives. By crime prevention we mean eliminating an anti-social behavior before its appearance (Battisichet.al., 1995). As socially produced phenomenon crime is mainly caused by lack of family attention to individuals, having no proper company, no proper schooling and unnecessary social distancing among family members (Wortley, 2002). The prevention of crime has two aspects, primary crime prevention and secondary crime prevention.

Primary Crime Prevention

Primary crime prevention addresses small scale measurements at the beginning of some minor crimes like smoking, drinking and having other anti-social companies (Wortley, 2002). Primary crime prevention method reveals that if an individual is not properly tackled at the beginning of his anti-social behavior on small scale then it leads to joining of big gangs (Ekblom, 2005). Primary prevention attempts to improve factors of an individual social engagements (i.e. peer group involvement, familial attachments and neighbor's role) that s/he would be restricted to a proper socialization. Through proper social interaction with the mentioned agents, an individual behavior tendency of being violent or criminal can be reduced systematically (Denham, 2003). It is important to mention here that family's role among all other social alternatives is paramount in primary crime prevention that can easily bring its members on right track of socialization.

Secondary Crime Prevention

Secondary crime prevention stage comes after primary. Once the criminals have been through small scale crimes they then think to be part of the big gangs and seek instrumental approach (taking pistol, knife, sword or other killing instrument) for committing crimes. Stopping a criminal through social practices at the mentioned stage is marked as secondary crime prevention where family's role as a social alternative remains very strong and sound (Warr, 2002). A familial strong social networking is always undeniable in an individual's socialization; however, s/he needs more familial social interaction at the stage of joining big gangs of criminals. The secondary crime prevention can be ensured by the active role of family while providing love and care to the individuals and properly dealing them inside the family (Griffiths, Dandurand & Murdoch, 2007).

Literature and Theoretical Underpinnings

Crime prevention through social alternatives is widely debated in the developed and developing countries (Hughes, 1998; Sociales, 2001; Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Yoshikawa, 1994). These studies considered the role of different social alternatives (schooling, media role, religious teachings etc.) in crime prevention. Nevertheless, family role as social alternative to crime prevention is dominantly discussed and debated (Sherman, *et.al*, 1997; Hughes, 1998; Laub & Lauritsen, 1998; Warr, 2002). Family role as love and care for its members, having sentimental attachments with, and social networking is marked very effective in both the primary and secondary level crime prevention (Bhopal, Brannen & Heptinstall, 2000). Joint family role is revealed more effective in the said discourse where children are more attached with different members (uncles, aunts, cousins

etc.) of the family and they can easily share any kind of life worry with them (Farrington & Welsh, 2006).

It is understood that adopting social alternatives for crime prevention is sounder than implementing formal state laws for crime's control. Evenduring problem-oriented policing, the social alternatives are being practiced in preventing crimes (Welsh, Brandon & David Farrington, 2006) These methods proved sound because sometimes criminals get dissatisfaction from formal justice system and they become more violent where all social alternatives and especially family role becomes effective in the counseling of such type of people (Carrabine *et.al*, 2009). Crime prevention through social alternatives stands as fourth pillar in addition to police, courts and corrections. Policing, courts system and correction department are the traditional approaches to crime control, however, drawing on social alternatives for the prevention of crimes is a modern approach (Botvin, 1990).

Improving the well-being of the public is another social alternative to crime prevention. Most of the offenders get involvement in primary and secondary crimes because of their poor well-being. In this situation most of the family members including children are more exposed and adopt a criminal or violent behavior (Clark, 1997). Welfare oriented policies of state are good social alternatives to crime prevention because people's crime vulnerability can be reduced by engaging them in welfare-oriented activities (Ekblom, 2005). This kind of welfare policies can eliminate the risk among children especially while not to be exposed to adapting violent behaviors (Clarke, 1997).

Theoretically, this study is informed by social learning theory. Although, social learning theory is very broad and can be taken as whole paradigm but the key theoretical conception of this study specifically comes from Bandura and Walter's work. As social learning theorists they believe that imitation and modeling are the two important elements of an individual's socialization process (Grusec, 1994). They further argue that dependency and aggression as personality traits can be adopted through learning process and even rewards and punishments play very important role in this process. During socialization process, observation and imitation are central to learning through which individuals learn love, care, aggression and so many other acts (Lindsey, 2015). It also sociologically believes that early socialization process at family makes an individual's personality perfect because the secondary socialization process is then totally based on primary one (Macionis & Plummer, 2005). Drawing on Bandura and Walter's concepts of imitation and modeling we argue here that crime is a learned behavior and family's role cannot be ignored in this learning process. This understanding from

Bandura and Walter's work enlightens us to explore family's role in the deconstruction and prevention of criminal's criminal behavior.

The traditional legal approach to crime control is very expensive and time consuming where law enforcement agencies initially arrest criminals and then present them before the court for further process (Bhutta, 2010). More importantly, in some cases those individuals who are declared criminals by the court and have been through their announced penalty become more violent and then get involve in other major crimes (Kennedy, 2009). This study is thus, a qualitative attempt which brings Bandura and Walter's (as social learning theorists) concepts of imitation and modeling into practice in order to explore alternative ways of crime's prevention which are more realistic and effective. Family role as a social alternative is specifically explored in the prevention of crimes because it is known as domestic state where every journey of life begins.

Summarizing the empirical and theoretical literature (on the prevention of crimes through social alternatives) with critical lenses, it is important to mention here that the published literature has confirmed family's role as an effective social alternative of crime prevention. Additionally, family role as love and care during primary socialization of its members is effectively presented as strong social substitute to other formal laws of the state in the discourse of crime control (Matsueda, 2006). This study is thus, a qualitative attempt in order to explore family's role as a social alternative of crime prevention in the context of KP Pakistan especially from Sociological perspective.

Methodology

This study attempted to uncover family role as social alternative of crime prevention in the context of Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The interpretive epistemology has guided qualitative methodology of this study. The decision for the mentioned methodology was taken in line with research questions and expertise of the researchers. After meeting the preconditions, the researchers selected 21 respondents (7 Criminals, 7 Police Officials and 7 Lawyers) through purposive sampling. It is important to note here that although determining sample size before data collection in qualitative research is not logical and it normally depends upon the saturation point in the data collection process but due to the hardships in contacting the mentioned respondents, especially criminals, the sample size was fixed. Moreover, main reason behind contacting criminals was to know the in-depth reasons which caused their criminality. However, police officials and lawyers were also contacted in order to explore some other dynamics behind criminals' behavior revealed during police interrogation and court procedure.

Interview guide was used as an instrument of data collection. The interview guide comprised detailed questions about the root causes of crimes and family's role in promoting cooperation and understanding, love and harmony, friendly environment among family members and indeed in the overall socialization process of its members. The focus of all questions in this interview guide was to ask the respondents about their family's role in promoting cooperation and understanding, love and harmony, and creating a friendly environment for their socialization. After data collection through in-depth interviews, the same were transcribed into meaningful text. The transcribed data was then analyzed with the help of thematic analysis technique. The researchers then visited the data time and again for getting familiarity with and extracting some themes and categories from. The major ideas were developed then to address the main research question of this study. The differences and similarities of the respondents' views are presented below.

Results and Discussion

The preceding section presented how this study was conducted while the upcoming one discusses primary data for obtaining results of this study. First step of the discussion offers a mixed account of the responses given by different respondents (criminals, police officials and lawyers). Moreover, second step discusses respondents' opinions about their families' responsibilities in terms of their socialization and proving its improper role which caused its members being criminal.

Lack of Familial Cooperation and Understanding: An Unnecessary Social Distancing

Lack of proper cooperation and understanding at family is revealed from most of the respondent's views of this study. They were of the opinion that they have not been properly cooperated and supported by their families, especially, by their parents and there was always a social space present between us and our parents. A dominant portion of the respondents was concerned about the misunderstanding that was always existed between them and their parents which created an unnecessary social distancing at their family level. One of the respondents imprisoned in the District Jail of Mardan stated that:

“My parents do not spend much time at family and they often remain out of home for their own works. I have always been alone and remain far from my parents. I noted there was always space present between me and my parents. I have never been cooperated and stressed for my schooling because my parents did not have time for me. There was always a misunderstanding between me and my

family members. I often remained as doubtful about my all family members including my parents. As for as I remember, I continued to be detached from my family”

This was a very significant case of non-cooperation and misunderstanding at familial level which caused a person criminal. As Bandura and Walter argue that imitation and modeling serve as key socialization elements in the social learning process or learning by interaction process (Bandura and Walter, 1977), so their argument is valid here that criminals become criminal because they learn a non-cooperative behavior at their families through imitating the modeling of their parents. Another violent tendency in an individual's personality comes when misunderstanding is created among family members and the main sources are parents because they stand as models for their children.

This means that children easily internalize the non-cooperation and misunderstanding fashion created by parents and other family members. Children learn through imitation and modeling from their parents and other elders during their primary socialization at family level. It is important to discuss here that if the children become violent due to lack of familial cooperation and proper understanding, they can also become good if family properly cooperate with them and create a sound familial understanding among all its members. It can be argued here that family's role as cooperative and also played for creating a proper understanding among its members can be a strong social alternative of crime prevention.

Deficiency in Family's Role as a Domestic State of Love and Harmony

In addition to the lack of familial cooperation and understanding, absence of familial love and harmony was also reported by the respondents. Most of the respondents held responsible their families for the criminal behavior because they were not getting love from their families and even not sentimentally attached to their family and parents. A bulk of the respondents claimed that due to the busy schedule of their parents they have not been emotionally attached with their parents. One of the respondents (a police official) expressed his views that:

“Whenever we ask the criminals during the judicial custody about the reasons of their crimes, majority of the criminals blame their families for not properly focusing on their socialization with love and harmony. We get astonished sometimes when we hear about how these criminals have been dealt with unkindness and cruelty by their families. Most of the criminals we arrested claim that they did not have sentiments because neither their parents and

*other family members know about love, kindness and harmony
nor they have been educated about these kind of human feelings”*

The similar situation was almost expressed by other respondents as well. They were of the view that most of the criminals during police interrogation claim that their families have not provided a proper socialization equipped with love, harmony and other social sentiments. Lindsey (2015) argued that observation and imitation play an important role in people’s socialization through which they embody love, care, harmony, and tolerance. The respondents’ opinions here are in contrast to Lindsey’s opinion. Although, adapting criminal behavior may be the cause of so many social factors but here the main postulate of social learning theory has confirmed by the respondents of this study (criminals) that intolerance, hate and disharmony in their behavior have developed in the families they belong to. Bandura and Walters’s argument (1977) of imitation and modeling also stand best here in analyzing these responses because the respondents were not socialized with love and harmony (as conceptualized by Bhopal, Brannen & Heptinstall, 2000) by their families and they learned aggression, intolerance and other wrong acts by imitation and modeling either inside or outside the family. The crux of discussion here is that if family as domestic state performs its duty perfectly by dealing and socializing its members with love, harmony and affection then family role would become an effective social alternative of crime prevention.

Deficient Friendly Family Environment

Besides lack of familial cooperation and understanding and deficiency in family’s role as a domestic state of love and harmony, the discussion found family’s role having no friendly environment for its members. Friendly family environment is debated by the studies as important tool of socialization that can lead to a strong social instrument of crime prevention (Chatterjee, 2005). A bulk of the respondents in this study expressed that their family environment was not friendly and they were living life with faction and feuds. They also stated that their parents and other family members were dealing them like outsiders. One of the imprisoned stated that *“my parents and elder brothers never dealt me like a family member; they were always dealing me like neighbors”*. In continuation, the same response was given by another participant by saying that *“whenever I enter home, all family members look at me like an enemy and they speak to me with a very harsh language”*.

Similarly, a police constable who was performing his duty in the district jail said that *“whenever we ask the criminals about why they are committing crimes they tell us that they have been aggrieved by their families by expelling them from the home”*. One of the lawyers stated that when he asks his

accused/criminal clients that why they commit crimes, most of them reply that they were compelled by their behavior for the illegal acts. They further add that their families do not deal them well and that they always had very bad familial relationships.

Another similar response received from an imprisoned that, "*my father was beating me in routine so I escaped from home and joined working in a hotel. After sometime, I linked with a group of criminals and started committing crimes.*" It can be argued that non-friendly and bad familial environment compel its members to be violent and extremists (Idzua, 2018). Of course, most of the participants revealed that their family environment always remained disturbed and that they have been through domestic conflicts with their brothers and sisters. The heart of discussion here is that non-friendly and bad familial relationships leads to a serious personality disruption of its members and this situation leads to very bad consequences in terms of raising crime ratio and emergence of other societal diseases.

Conclusion

This study explored family's role as a social alternative of crime prevention. It found that most of the participants were questioning the role of families in their socialization. Their majority opinions were against the role of their families because of 'lack of cooperation and understanding', 'deficiency in family's role as a domestic state of love and harmony' and 'deficient familial friendly environment' in the socialization process of the respondents. However, only few participants revealed their socialization process accompanied by 'cooperation and proper understanding', 'family role full of love and harmony' and 'presence of friendly family environment'. On the whole, this study finds that family role can be one of the effective social alternatives if it is cemented with cooperation and proper understanding, love and harmony, and friendly environment during its members' socialization. The mentioned role of family as social alternative of crime prevention is not only situated by this study, rather, it has been suggested by other studies as well (Coie & Jacobs, 1993; Sherman, 1997; Lipsey, 2000; Farrington & Welsh, 2003). Over all, this study concludes that although there would have been other social factors behind the criminal behavior of the imprisoned participants in the district Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but the improper family's role during their primary socialization was the main factor behind their criminality. If family interaction with its members is not comprised of cooperation and understanding, love and care, and friendly environment during the primary socialization process then chances are there that people in majority would be involved in unlawful and immoral societal activities. Based on its conclusion,

the study recommends that family members (especially parents) have moral and ethical responsibility to deal their offspring with love, care, and cooperation to reduce the chance of criminal and violent behavior. At the end, it is worthwhile to mention that this study draws its conclusion based on opinions of imprisoned participants, police officials and lawyers which may not be drawn well. The researchers may also analyze opinions of other stakeholders, especially views of parents and elders, in order to make the study discourse more authentic.

References

- Abbas, H. (2004). *Pakistan's drift into extremism: Allah, the army, and America's war on terror*. London and New Yor: Routledge.
- Battisich, V., Solomon, D., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and student's Attitudes, motives, and performance: A multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 627-658.
- Bandura, A.& Walters, R. H. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Vol. 1). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-hall.
- Brennan, J. &Naidoo, R. (2008).Higher Education and the Achievement (and/or prevention) of Equity and Social Justice. *Higher Education*, 56(3), 287-302.
- Bhopal, K., Brannen, J., &Heptinstall, E. (2000). *Connecting children: Care and family life in later childhood*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Botvin, G. J., Baker, E., Botvin, E. M., Filazzola, A. D., &Millman, R. B. (1984). Prevention of alcohol misuse through the development of personal and social competence: a pilot study. *Journal of studies on alcohol*, 45(6), 550-552.
- Botvin, G. J. (1990). Substance Abuse Prevention: Theory, Practice, and Effectiveness. In M.Tonry and J. Q. Wilson (eds.), *Drugs and Crime*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bhutta, M. H. (2010). Community based Rehabilitation of Offenders; An Overview of Probation and Parole System in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 2(3), 51-67.
- Clarke, R. (1997). *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*, New York: Harrow and Heston.
- Clarke, R.V. (1997). Introduction. In R.V. Clarke (ed.), *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*. Guilderland, NY: Harrow and Heston.
- Carrabine, E., Cox, P., South, N., Lee, M., Plummer, K., &Turton, J. (2009). *Criminology: A Sociological Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Chatterjee, S. (2005). Children's Friendship with Place: A Conceptual Inquiry. *Children Youth and Environments*, 15(1), 1-26.

- Coie, J. D., & Jacobs, M. R. (1993). The Role of Social Context in the Prevention of Conduct Disorder. *Development and Psychopathology*, 5(2), 263-275.
- Denham, S. A., & Burton, R. (2003). *Social and Emotional Prevention and Intervention Programming for Preschoolers*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Eklblom, P., & Pease, K. (1995). Evaluating crime prevention. *Crime and Justice*, 19, 585-662
- Farrington, D. P., & Welsh, B. (Eds.). (2006). *Preventing crime: what works for children, offenders, victims, and places*. Nova York: Springer.
- Wortley, R. (2002). *Situational Prison Control: Crime Prevention in Correctional Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Farrington, D. P., & Welsh, B. C. (2003). Family-based Prevention of Offending: A Meta-Analysis. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 36(2), 127-151.
- Griffiths, C. T., Dandurand, Y. & Murdoch, D. (2007). *The Social Reintegration of Offenders and Crime Prevention* (Vol. 4). Canada: National Crime Prevention Centre.
- Fitch, B. D., Normore, A. H., & Werner, D. R. (2011). Chapter 9 Theories of Criminal Justice: The Influence of Value Attributions on Correctional Education'. *Leadership in Education, Corrections and Law Enforcement: A Commitment to Ethics, Equity and Excellence* (*Advances in Educational Administration, Volume 12*). Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 161-184.
- Macionis, J. J. & Plummer, K. (2005). *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. New York: Pearson Education Limited.
- Grusec, J. E. (1994). Social learning theory and developmental psychology: The legacies of Robert R. Sears and Albert Bandura. In R. D. Parke, P. A. Ornstein, J. J. Rieser, & C. Zahn-Waxler (Eds.), *A century of developmental psychology* (p. 473-497).
- Guerette, R. T., & Bowers, K. J. (2009). Assessing the Extent of Crime Displacement and Diffusion of Benefits: A Review of Situational Crime Prevention Evaluations. *Criminology*, 47(4), 1331-1368.
- Girling, E., Loader, I., & Sparks, R. (2005). *Crime and Social Change in Middle England: Questions of order in an English town*. London: Routledge.
- Henslin, J. M., Possamai, A. M., Inesedy, A. L., Marjoribanks, T., & Elder, K. (2015). *Sociology: A down to Earth Approach*. New York: Pearson.
- Hughes, G. (1998). *Understanding Crime Prevention*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Kennedy, D. M. (2009). *Deterrence and Crime Prevention: Reconsidering the prospect of sanction* (Vol. 2). London and New York: Routledge.

- Laub, J. H., & Lauritsen, J. L. (1998). *The interdependence of school violence with neighborhood and family conditions*. In D. S. Elliott, B. A. Hamburg, & K. R. Williams (Eds.), *Violence in American schools: A new perspective* (p. 127–155). Cambridge University Press.
- Lipsey, M. W. (2000). *Effective intervention for serious juvenile offenders*. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
- Levitt, S. D. (2004). Understanding why Crime fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that explain the decline and six that do not. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(1), 163-190.
- Lindsey, L. L. (2015). *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Matsueda, R. L. (2006). Differential Social Organization, Collective Action and Crime. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 46(2), 3-33.
- Morris, P., & Heal, K. (1981). *Crime control and the police: A review of research* (Report no. 70). London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Oswell, D. (2013). *The agency of children: From family to global human rights*. Cambridge University Press.
- Prevention. Yoshikawa, H. (1994). Prevention as Cumulative Protection: Effects of early Family Support and Education on Chronic Delinquency and its Risks. *Psychological bulletin*, 115(1), 28.
- Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D. C., MacKenzie, D. L., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1997). *Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising: A report to the United States Congress*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.
- Sociales, P. (2001). Crime as a Social Cost of Poverty and Inequality: A Review Focusing on Developing Countries. *Facets of Globalization*, 171.
- Stanko, E. A. (2000). Victims R us: The life history of “fear of crime” and the Politicization of violence. In T. Hope & R. Sparks (Eds.), *Crime, Risk and Insecurity: “Law and Order” in Everyday Life and Political Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Warr, M. (2002). *Companions in crime: The social aspects of criminal conduct*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.