

*Muhammad Mushtaq* \*

*Khalil Ahmad* \*\*

*Ayesha Farooq* \*\*\*

*Amir Saeed* \*\*\*\*

## **Relative Deprivation and Robbery: A Study of Convicted Inmates in Southern Punjab, Pakistan**

### **Abstract**

*The main focus of the present research was to examine the link between relative deprivation and crime of robbery. Data have been extracted from the first author's research. A survey was carried out from a sample of 172 convicted robbers from three Jails (Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan) of the Southern Punjab, Pakistan. Semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect information from the study population. Age, family system, monthly household income and marital status of the inmates were significantly related with robbery perpetration. The results indicated an association between relative deprivation and crime of robbery. Relative deprivation approach to poverty was linked with robbery. Lack of material resources to satisfy daily consumer basket, health care needs, housing and utility facilities were significantly associated with robbery.*

**Key words:** Basic needs, Convicted inmates, Relative deprivation, Robbery, Southern Punjab

### **Introduction**

Relative deprivation is widely used construct across social sciences. Relative deprivation can result from one's feeling of satisfaction and position when compared with others (Webber, 2008) or it may emerge due to economic comparisons and income inequality (Wu, 2009; Wu and Li, 2013; Christopher, 2001). Lack of material resources and income are said to have ramifications for one's living conditions. Relative deprivation in terms of poverty covers both material and social aspects of living standard.

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\* Muhammad Mushtaq is serving as Assistant Professor of Sociology, Government Walayat Hussain Islamia Degree College, Multan.

\*\* Dr. Khalil Ahmad is currently working as Associate Professor in the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

\*\*\* Dr. Ayesha Farooq is Assistant Professor of Sociology, Government College University Lahore.

\*\*\*\* Dr. Amir Saeed is working as Assistant Professor in the Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Townsend (1979) viewed poverty as the major source of relative deprivation.

“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong” (Townsend, 1979: 31).

The condition of poverty means lack of enough financial resources to meet needs and deprivation could refer back to unmet needs. But unmet needs could be caused by lack of all kinds of resources, not just financial (Noble, et al., 2006). Sometimes social and psychological indices such as alienation (Durant and Christian 1990: 210) and discrimination, feelings of injustice and subjective ill-being (Olson et al, 1986) are used to measure relative deprivation. Relative deprivation may also result from neighborhood and poverty concentration (Eitle, D’Alessio and Stolzenberg, 2006). Despite the concerns over measurement of relative deprivation, income inequality and income comparisons remain cardinal in measuring relative deprivation (Yitzhaki, 1979). Income disparities may be exacerbated by race (Blau and Blau, 1982). Individuals feel relatively deprived when their resources are below those of average individuals or families and they feel excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities (Townsend, 1979). Relative deprivation in terms of income inequality is attributed to crime (Rufrancos, et.al, 2013; Bharadwaj, 2014; Webber, 2008; Eitle, D’Alessio, and Stolzenberg, 2006; Agnew, 1992 and 1999; Merton, 1949).

Income inequality increases feelings of dispossession and unfairness, which leaves poorer to reduce perceived economic injustice through crime (Runciman, 1966). Individuals with low income expect low economic returns from market than that through property crime (Becker, 1968; Block and Heineke, 1975; Ehrlich, 1973) and robbery is an important form of property crime. In other words, income inequality produces relative deprivation (Yitzhaki, 1979) and gives rise to property crimes (Bharadwaj, 2014; Rufrancos, et.al, 2013; Kelly, 2000; Chester, 1976 and 1977).

Relative deprivation in terms of poverty approach received little attention of the researchers in Pakistan. Given the importance of relative deprivation approach to poverty, the present study was an attempt to examine the link between material and social aspects of living conditions and crime of robbery.

### **Objectives of the study**

Main objectives of the present study were:

1. to examine relative deprivation, in terms of poverty approach, among convicted robbers;
2. to see the association, if any, between relative deprivation and crime of robbery.

## **Methodology**

A sample of 172 out of the total 344 robbery offenders was drawn from three Jails of Southern Punjab, Pakistan (see Table 1). List of total robbery offenders was attained from each of the three jails. Fifty percent respondents were randomly selected from each of the list. Semi-structured interview schedule was used to gather information from the sample population. The data of the present study were collected in 2013.

Table 1: Name of Jail, total number and sample of convicted robbers

| Name of District Jail | Total number of inmates charged in the crime of robbery | Number of inmates interviewed |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Multan                | 146                                                     | 73                            |
| Bahawalpur            | 116                                                     | 58                            |
| Dera Ghazi Khan       | 82                                                      | 41                            |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>344</b>                                              | <b>172</b>                    |

## ***Major Concepts***

### ***Relative Deprivation***

Relative deprivation can result from one's feeling of dissatisfaction or frustration from comparative process, in turn leading to one's propensity to crimes of acquisition or violent crime (Webber, 2008). Economic comparisons and income inequality can also account for feeling of deprivation among individuals. Relative deprivation is wider concept that entails economic, social and psychological dimensions. Although measures of relative deprivation and income are not same, relative deprivation to poverty approach takes into account one's living conditions that are largely influenced by one's income levels. Lack of income and material resources can cause relative deprivation.

Relative deprivation, in the present study, referred to a condition of not having something to cater to one's basic needs, which are then related back to income levels and resources. Basic needs require actions for their satisfaction as they are essential for the survival. Mann (1983: 259) categorized two basic human needs: a). material needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and health; b). non-material needs (i.e., education, fundamental human rights and employment).

Keeping in view the importance of social, economic and psychological dimensions, the relative deprivation in the current research was measured in terms of lack of material resources to satisfy daily consumer basket, lack of material resources to cater to housing and utility facilities, health care and educational needs and lack of material resources to maintain social networks and participate in relatives' or neighborhood functions.

### **Robbery**

Robbery refers to taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and or by putting the victim in fear (Siegel, 2010: 275). In the present study, information was attained from the inmates about crime and place of robbery whether armed or unarmed (See Table 3).

### **Major Findings**

Table 2 provides data on socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The data show that nearly two third of the respondents were younger (aged between 18-30 years). Only a tiny proportion (6.3 percent) was aged 41 years and above. It is necessary to mention here that age of the respondents ranged from a minimum 18 to maximum 49 years. Overall, the data showed that a large proportion of the robbers was in prime age group which clearly warrants policy intervention for the younger cohort. The data show that nearly two-third of the respondents had primary to matric level educational attainments and 15.7 percent respondents were illiterate. It is interesting to note that 7.0 percent respondents with master level educational attainment committed the crime of robbery. This is very alarming finding which warrants increased employment opportunities for the graduates. Overall, a large proportion of the respondents were literate with varying levels of educational attainments. The data suggest the need to increase technical/vocational educational opportunities for the young cohort so that they can participate in income generating activities.

Table 2: Socio-demographic profile of the inmates

| <b>Category</b>     | <b>Response Category</b> | <b>%</b>     |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Age in years</b> | ≤ 25 years#              | 34.8         |
|                     | 26-30 years              | 27.9         |
|                     | 31-35 years              | 18.4         |
|                     | 36-40 years              | 12.6         |
|                     | 41years and above##      | 6.3          |
|                     | <b>Total</b>             | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Education</b>    | Illiterate               | 15.7         |
|                     | Primary to matric        | 62.2         |
|                     | Inter to Graduation      | 15.1         |
|                     | Master and above         | 7.0          |

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|                       |                      |              |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|
|                       | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Family Type</b>    | Joint Family         | 72.1         |
|                       | Nuclear Family       | 27.9         |
|                       | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Marital status</b> | Married              | 62.2         |
|                       | Unmarried            | 33.1         |
|                       | Widower              | 4.7          |
|                       | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Occupation</b>     | Agriculture          | 9.9          |
|                       | Laborer              | 37.2         |
|                       | Own Business         | 12.8         |
|                       | Govt. Job            | 6.4          |
|                       | Private Job          | 9.3          |
|                       | Student              | 12.2         |
|                       | Unemployed           | 12.2         |
|                       | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Monthly Income</b> | ≤ Rs 20,000†         | 54.4         |
|                       | Rs 21,000 – 30,000   | 31.4         |
|                       | Rs 31,000 – 40,000   | 7.6          |
|                       | Rs 41,000 and above‡ | 6.4          |
|                       | <b>Total</b>         | <b>100.0</b> |

**N**  
**172**

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# (Minimum age)=18 years, ## (Maximum age) = 49 years

†(Minimum income) Rs=9000, ‡(Maximum Income) Rs=44000

Table 2 indicates that more than two third respondents were living in joint family system and nearly two-third (62.2 percent) respondents were currently married. Increased range of demands might have implication for the relative deprivation among respondents. However, another study is needed on the subject. One-third of the respondents (33.1 percent) were not currently married, while a tiny proportion (4.7 percent) of the respondents was widowers. The data in Table 2 show that a significant proportion (37.2percent) was engaged in blue color jobs. Nearly one-tenth (12.8 percent) respondents were self-employed (having their own small business).

It is important to note that 12.2 percent robbery offenders were students at the time of robbery perpetration. It can be argued that they might be unable to bear their educational expenses. Small proportions (6.4 percent and 9.3 percent) of robbery offenders were engaged in low paid government and private sector jobs respectively. They reported that they were unable to satisfy their basic needs from their job earnings and subsequently perpetrated robbery. This finding is in agreement with Bharadwaj (2014) that individuals with employment and legitimate income tend to commit crimes due to deprivation of basic needs and general inequality in society.

The data in Table 2 show that slightly more than one-half (54.4 percent) of the respondents had  $\leq$  Rs 20,000 (USD 196) monthly household income (exchange rate: Rs. 102= 1 USD at the time of data collection). Rs. stands for Rupee which is currency unit of Pakistan. It is important to mention here that monthly household income ranged from minimum Rs. 9000 to maximum Rs. 44000. Only a tiny proportion of the respondents had Rs. 41000 and above monthly household income. Overall, the large proportion of the respondents had very low income levels. It is understandable that significant proportions of the respondents were either students/ unemployed or engaged in low paid occupations.

### **Robbery Location**

The data in Table 3 show that significant proportion of the robberies were committed at street. Nearly equal proportion (one-fifth) of the respondents perpetrated robbery in either shopping stores or residential places. Tiny proportions of the robbers committed robbery in other places like banks or convenience stores. It is understandable that banks or commercial places have adequate security system which could minimize the chances of robbery. Overall, most of the robberies occurred at streets. This finding is in agreement with other studies (Normandeau, 1972; Morrison and O'Donnell, 1990; Smart, 2003) and implies the need of increased police patrolling across the streets and adequate neighborhood security measures.

Table 3 Occurrence of robbery

| Location/Place of Robbery | N= 172<br>% |
|---------------------------|-------------|
|---------------------------|-------------|

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|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Street         | 45.6         |
| Shopping store | 21.5         |
| Bank           | 2.3          |
| Car/Bus/Taxi   | 6.7          |
| Residence      | 21.3         |
| Other*         | 2.6          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100.0</b> |

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\*Petrol pumps (gas stations)/convenience stores

### **Repeat Offenders**

Information was attained about recidivism among offenders. Table 4 shows that a significant number of inmates (39.5 percent) were repeat offenders. Most of these repeat offenders were unemployed or engaged in low paid jobs. It implies that unemployment and low level of skill to earn livelihood could largely be attributed to recidivism. This is an important finding which warrants policy level intervention to provide technical/vocational training to the inmates convicted in robbery offense so that they can earn their livelihood and become productive citizens after their release.

Table 4 Distribution of respondents by their repeat robbery offense

| Repeat Robbery Offense | N= 172<br>%  |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Yes                    | 39.5         |
| No                     | 60.5         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>100.0</b> |

Data were also gleaned about future plans of the offenders after the release from prison. Table 5 shows that one-third (33 percent) of the respondents intended to start their own small business, while one-fifth (20 percent) inmates responded to find some labor work to earn their livelihood. 12.6 percent of the respondents expressed that they would find some job after release from prison. Same proportion of the respondents (12 percent) intended to engage in agriculture work to satisfy their needs. 7 percent of the respondents wanted to continue their education. Most of these offenders were students. It is important to note that only a tiny proportion of the respondents (6.4 percent) said that their future plan was to live better life, while 9 percent of the offenders did not know about their future plans after release from the prison.

Table 5 Distribution of respondents by their future plans after release from prison

| Response Category  | N=172<br>%   |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Agriculture work   | 12.0         |
| Laborer            | 20.0         |
| Own business       | 33.0         |
| Find some Job      | 12.6         |
| Continue education | 7.0          |
| Live better life   | 6.4          |
| Do not Know        | 9.0          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>100.0</b> |

## **Results**

### ***Socio-demographic factors and robbery***

Table 6 provides information about association between socio-demographic factors and perpetration of robbery. The result of multivariate logistic regression indicates young age (AOR, 2.21; 95% confidence interval (CI) and reference value, 1.51-3.83) is significantly associated with perpetration of



robbery. Odd ratio shows that individuals aged  $\leq 35$  years are more prone to commit the crime of robbery than individuals aged 36 years and above. In agreement with Borzycki (2006) most convicted armed robbers are younger and usually less than 30 years of age. The data of the present study also show that a large proportion (two-third) of the respondents was younger i.e., aged 18-30 years (see-Table 2). Regression result shows that joint family system (AOR,1.45, 95% CI, reference value, 0.87-2.27) was significantly related with crime of robbery. Likelihood of robbery crime may increase in the face of large family size and poverty.

Table 6 Association between socio-demographic characteristics and crime of robbery

| Socio-demographic Variable | Perpetration of Robbery<br>AOR (95% CI) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>Age in years</b>        |                                         |
| $\geq 36$ years            | 1                                       |
| $\leq 35$ years            | 2.21 (1.51-3.83)***                     |
| <b>Education</b>           |                                         |
| Literate                   | 1                                       |
| Illiterate                 | 0.92 (0.51-0.87)                        |
| <b>Family System</b>       |                                         |
| Nuclear Family             | 1                                       |
| Joint Family               | 1.45 (0.87-2.27)*                       |
| <b>Marital Status</b>      |                                         |
| Unmarried                  | 1                                       |
| Married                    | 1.97 (0.71-1.67)**                      |
| <b>Occupation</b>          |                                         |
| Public sector employment   | 1                                       |

|                                 |                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Low paid work/job               | 2.51 (1.39-2.96)*** |
| Unemployed                      | 2.12 (1.13-2.87)*** |
| <b>Monthly Household Income</b> |                     |
| ≥ Rs 26000                      | 1                   |
| ≤ Rs 25000                      | 2.83 (1.67-3.84)*** |

P-value significance: \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\* $P \leq 0.5$ , \* $p \leq 0.1$

AOR: Adjusted odds ratio

CI: Confidence interval

Odd ratio for marital status indicates that married individuals are more likely to commit the crime of robbery. Occupation in terms of low paid work/job, unemployment and monthly household income of  $\leq$  Rs 25000 had two fold odds for propensity to crime of robbery.

#### ***Deprivation of basic needs and robbery***

Relative deprivation was measured in term of lack of material resources for health care and educational needs, lack of economic resources needed for daily consumer basket, lack of material resources for housing and utility facilities, lack of material resources to maintain social contacts.

The data in Table 7 substantiate the results indicated in Table 6. The data in Table 7 shows that lack of material resources to satisfy daily consumer basket, housing and utility facilities were significantly related with perpetration of robbery followed by lack of material resources to satisfy health and educational needs respectively. These findings clearly suggest that the crime of robbery may significantly be attributed to deprivation of basic needs. Those who lacked material resources to satisfy their daily consumer basket (food items), cater to housing needs and pay utility bills were more likely to commit the crime of robbery.

The data show that robbery was not significantly related with material resources needed to maintain social contacts or command respect in relatives or neighborhood. It implies that intragroup comparison was not significant in the current research compared to satisfaction of the most basic needs (consumer basket, housing needs and paying utility bills).

Table 7 Deprivation of basic needs and robbery perpetration

| Relative Deprivation | Robbery perpetration |    |
|----------------------|----------------------|----|
|                      | Chi                  | P- |

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|                                                                                        | square | value |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Lack of material resources needed for health care                                      | 10.767 | 0.029 |
| Lack of material resources needed for educational needs of any of family member        | 7.065  | 0.133 |
| Lack of material resources needed for daily consumer basket                            | 11.484 | 0.012 |
| Lack material resources needed for housing and utility facilities                      | 10.839 | 0.028 |
| Lack of material resources needed to participate in family/relatives/friends functions | 2.300  | 0.681 |
| Low respect in relatives and neighborhood due to lack of material resources.           | 5.051  | 0.282 |

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$P \leq 0.05$

### **Discussion**

Relative deprivation is related with crime (Rufrancos, et.al, 2013; Hooghe, et.al., 2011; Christopher, et al., 2001; Webber, 2008; Eitle, D'Alessio, and Stolzenberg, 2006; Agnew, 1992 and 1999; Merton, 1949). Disparities in income level are linked with propensity to property crime (Bhardawaj 2014; Kelley 2000; Baron, 2006 and 2008). Alternatively, financial resources which determine the living conditions and activities of people influence the relative deprivation (Noble et al., 2006). Lack of material resources may exacerbate economic insecurity among individuals, who are unemployed or those with low income levels, in turn increased risk of committing robbery to satisfy their basic needs. The current study indicated significant association between lack of material resources to satisfy basic needs and perpetration of robbery. In concomitant with researchers (Gill 2001; Matthews 2002; Mouzou & Borzycki 2003) offenders are motivated more by life's needs to commit robberies.

The current study indicated that nearly two third of the respondents were younger (aged 18-30 years). The results of multivariate logistic regression indicated that younger age was significantly related with robbery. This finding is in agreement with researches (for example, Borzycki, 2006) that most convicted armed robbers are less than 30 years of age. Overall, the data showed that a large proportion of the robbers was in prime age group which clearly warrants policy intervention for the younger cohort. In agreement with previous studies (for

example, Kapardis, 1988) a little more than one-third of the convicted robbers were laborers and a substantial number of convicted inmates possessed no employment skills. The results of multivariate logistic regression showed that low paid work/job, unemployment, and household income were significantly related with the crime of robbery.

The current study indicated that relative deprivation in meeting basic minimal needs of food, shelter and health care is predictive of crime of robbery. Although economic comparisons and income inequality can account for feeling of deprivation among individuals, relative deprivation can be the outcome of comparative process leading to crimes of acquisition or violent crime (Webber, 2008). The current study showed material resources needed to maintain social contacts (participation in family/relative/friends' functions) and command respect in family or neighborhood were not significantly related with crime of robbery. Perpetration of robbery was linked with material resources needed for daily consumer basket, housing and utility facilities followed by material resources to cater to health and educational needs respectively. It implies that intragroup comparison was not significant in the current research compared to satisfaction of the most basic needs (consumer basket, housing needs and paying utility bills). These findings imply two things: first, southern Punjab may relatively be poorer and more people could be living below poverty line; second, poorer segment of people in southern Punjab might be unable to afford housing and utility costs. Controlling price-hike and making utility facilities affordable could help prevent inclination to robbery.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

It may safely be concluded from the findings of the present research that relative deprivation in terms of poverty approach is predictor of crime of robbery. Living conditions affected by financial resources may largely be attributed to the crime of robbery. Lack of financial resources to satisfy basic needs may result in robbery offense. It may be concluded from the findings that unemployment and low level of skill to earn livelihood results in repeat robbery offense.

Policy is needed to launch community based institutions to provide technical education/vocational training to the unemployed youth of the society. Entrepreneurship education should be focused by imparting set of skills to the prime age working population across the country with a focus upon disadvantageous areas/regions/populations. Vocational training should also be imparted to convicted inmates to prevent recidivism.

### **Limitation**

Without falling into the polemical debate of actual or perceived relative deprivation, the current study analyzed deprivation in terms of lack of material resources to satisfy health care, educational, nutritional, and housing needs as well as material resources needed to maintain social networks or participate in relatives' or neighborhood functions. Further researches are needed to clarify

economic, social and psychological dimensions of actual and perceived deprivation. The present study is confined to the views of convicted inmates. Another study may be conducted to ascertain views of family members, relatives and neighbors. Data may be collected from the jails of central and northern Punjab to analyze the subject.

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