Crime Propensity Indices of the Urban Dwellers
in Dapitan and Dipolog Cities

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the crimes of urban offenders in the Cities of Dipolog and Dapitan that may be attributed to poverty during the year 2005-2010. The subjects of this study were two hundred eighty nine inmates in Dipolog City Rehabilitation Center and one hundred twenty three inmates in Dapitan City Rehabilitation Center.Results of the study revealed that the most common crimes committed which were related to poverty were: violation of RA 9165, sec.5,11, and 12 (drugs related), robbery, murder/frustrated murder, theft, violation of RA 6539 (anti-carnapping), estafa, and homicide/frustrated homicide in the order of decreasing propensity. It was further revealed that crimes were committed to make life better, sustain family needs and support drug habits.

Introduction

Poverty is often cited as a major reason by criminals for committing various illegal activities notably those that involve high monetary rewards. Crime and poverty are two social phenomena that are closely linked and certainly deserve careful study (Chedar, 2007). In a 2110 study, Naik (2010) found higher crime ratios in areas where poverty incidence are high in India and England that poverty cab lead to high levels of stress that in turn lead individuals to steal, engage in illegal trades and other forms of crimes. Apparently, the disposition that goes with poverty eventually gives rise to anger (stress) and this anger makes the poor prone to criminal behavior. An individual who is deprived of the basic amenities, such as food and shelter, is more likely to resort to crime to end his deprivation, (Ludwig, 2003).

While the association between crime and poverty had been exhaustively studied (Ludwig, (2003) Brill, (2000), Chedar, (2007) and Naik, (2010), none of these studies addressed the issue of determining the propensity of the poor to resort to specific types of crimes. It has always been assumed that poverty breeds crime so that the stigma of the poor being potential criminals floats around in the collective consciousness of the society. The poorer sector of the society is further marginalized by this belief leading to their inability to gain access to basic social services.

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The urban poor are particularly vulnerable to the level of stereotyping earlier described. In the Philippines, for instance, informal settlers in slum areas are carefully monitored by police authorities precisely because of the belief that they are more to criminal acts. Snatchers and petty thieves are believed to inhabit slum areas so that people tend to avoid these places in the course of this daily routines. In response, the government relocates these informal settlers in remote places in the guise of providing better living conditions for them but without correspondingly providing for a means for them to survive in these areas (Philippine Institute for Investigative Journalism, (2005).

This study aims to develop an analytical framework for determining the "type of crime" propensity index for the urban poor by examining the profiles of the inmates in the twin cities of Dipolog and Dapitan. A study of this type is useful for policy makers and policy implementers in crafting strategies to minimize the incidence of crimes attributed to the poorer sector of the society.

Research Design and Methodology

The study involves the use of a descriptive survey with in-depth interview of a few cases (inmates) in the city jails of Dapitan and Dipolog for the purpose of establishing an analytic framework for the computation of a type-of-crime propensity index for the urban poor (henceforth, abbreviated as propensity index).

The profiling component of the study involved 289 inmates from Dipolog City and 123 inmates from Dapitan City for a total of 412 inmate-cases, deemed sufficiently larger tosome form of standard profiles. Records of the inmates were derived as far back as 2005 to 2010 with permission from the jail wardens.

Proposal Analytical Framework

From the records of the inmates, we obtained information on the type of crime committed by the inmate which can then be used to estimate the probability of committing a crime C :

(1) … $P(C)$ = probability of committing a crime C .

For each crime type C , we next estimated the probability that is committed by a person-in- poverty. The jail records did not indicate the socio-economic profile of the inmates and so, the researchers conducted random interview of the convicted felons per crime type. Thus, we arrive at an estimate of the conditional probability that a felon is poor given that he committed crime C.

(2) … $P(PIP/C)$ = probability of a person-in-poverty committing type C crime.

Finally, the Bayes' multiplication formula was used to estimate the probabilitythat C person-in-poverty (PIP) will commit crime C:

(3) … $P(PIP \cap C) = P(PIP/C) . P(C)$
$\qquad$ = probability that a person –in-poverty will commit crime C.

Equation (3) defines the crime propensity index for the poor.

Formula (3) will depend upon the accuracy with which we estimate P (PIP/C). The larger the poor of felons interviewed, the more accurate becomes Equation (3).

For each crime type C, we interviewed 10% of the felons in that category. The random face-to-face interviews elicited the following information from them:

- rough estimate of the socio-economic states of the form felons;
- the circumstances that led to the commission of the crimes;
- the general impression of the felons about poverty and crime that they committed.

For security reasons, the researchers were allowed only access to at most 10% of the felons and then, only those inmates deemed "safe" by the jail warded were allowed to participate. We recognize the severe limitations on the data reliability and validity imposed by these constraints.

Results and Discussions

Profile. Tables 1 to 6 show the profile of the inmates in the two city jails. In both cities, the gender distribution of the inmates was lopsided in favor of the male due perhaps to the greater adventurism usually attributed to the males in Filipino society. These inmates were found to be largely below 41 years old accordingly for about 90% of the inmates in both cities, and were equally distributed in terms of their civil status (single or married).

The characteristics that appear to differentiate the profile of the inmates in the two jails were education and occupation. Inmates in the DipologCity jail were better schooled (73% of them had high schooled or high education than the Dapitan) inmates (where only 50% had high school or college level education). Consequently, more of the inmates in Dipolog City hold jobs that require "cognitive " skills while the other inmates in Dapitan made their living out of manual or non-cognitive labor. Hence, most of the inmates were jobless.

What appears disturbing in the emerging profile of the inmates is the fact that the greater bulk of them were young (below 41 years old) and could have been in their most economically productive years. This is particularly significant in the case of Dipolog where the inmates were better schooled and could have searched for jobs which are not illegal. In either case, education or the lack thereof defines and individual's predisposition to criminal behavior. In modern society, education remains a potent humanizing and civilizing factor that curbs man's natural instinct to satisfy his needs without regard for the rights of others.

A typical inmate in the rehabilitation centers of Dipolog and Dapitan may, thus, be described as being male, relatively young (below 41), with secondary education and jobless. The latter characteristics of a typical inmate, joblessness, may be the direct result of his low educational attainment. Being in their economically-productive prime years

(60 below) yet finding themselves in a situation where they have no jobs, the inmates were lured to a life of crime.

Since 90% of the typical male inmates were below 41 years old and around 50% married, we deduced that approximately 45% or a little less than half of them were in fact married and relatively young. The pressure to earn and feed for their families in the context of very competitive job market and having no technical skills, provides a fertile ground for criminal behavior.

Table 1   Respondents' Profile in terms of Gender

Gender	Dipolog City		Dapitan City	
	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)
Male	237	82	119	96.75
Female	52	18	4	3.25
Total	**289**	**100**	**123**	**100**

Table 2   Respondents' Profile in terms of Age

Age	Dipolog City		Dapitan City	
	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)	Respondents (N)	Percentage(%)
18-23 yrs old	67	23.18	6	4.88
24-29 yrs old	76	26.30	29	23.58
30-35 yrs old	54	22.15	21	17.07
36-41 yrs old	42	14.53	23	18.70
42-47 yrs old	24	8.3	14	11.38
48-53 yrs old	9	3.11	15	12.20
54 yrs and above	7	2.42	15	12.20
Total	**289**	**100%**	**123**	**100%**

Table 3   Respondents' Profile in terms of Civil Status

Civil Status	Dipolog City		Dapitan City	
	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)
Single	152	52.60	55	44.72
Married	134	46.37	63	51.22
Separated	2	0.69	3	2.44
Widower	1	0.35	2	1.63
Total	**289**	**100%**	**123**	**I00%**

Table 4   Respondents' Profile in terms of Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Dipolog City		Dapitan City	
	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)
Illiterate	3	1.04	3	2.44

Table 4 cont'd				
Elementary Level	54	18.69	35	28.46
Elementary Graduate	21	7.27	23	18.70
High School Level	94	32.53	38	30.89
High School Graduate	40	13.84	10	8.13
College Level	46	15.92	8	6.50
College Graduate	31	10.72	6	4.88
Total	**289**	**100%**	**123**	**100%**

Table 5   Profile of Male Respondents in terms of Occupation

	Dipolog City		Dapitan City	
Occupation	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)	Respondents(N)	Percentage(%)
Farming	18	7.59	16	13.46
Laborer	31	13.08	29	24.37
Fishing	8	3.38	14	11.76
Gov't Employee	10	4.22	3	2.52
Driving	11	4.64	7	2.52
Self-employed	55	23.21	6	5.04
Business	14	5.91	3	2.52
Students	4	1.69	2	1.68
Jobless	86	36.29	39	32.77
Total	**237**	**100%**	**119**	**100%**

Table 6   Profile of Female Respondents in terms of Occupation

	Dipolog City		Dapitan City	
Occupation	Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)	Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)
Business	5	9.62		
Housekeeping/Jobless	33	63	1	25
Vendor	3	5.77	2	0
House Helper	2	3.85		
Dancer/GRO	4	7.69		
Student	2	3.85		
Gov't Employee	2	3.85	1	25
Casher	1	1.92		
Total	**52**	**100%**	**4**	**100%**

Crimes of the Urban Poor. Table 8 shows that the poor are most likely to commit drug-related crimes (violation of RA 9165) than any of the other poverty-related offenses. Trading in prohibited drugs bring instant relief from poverty, albeit,temporary in nature

for the poor. Likewise, all the poverty-index and offenses identified, drug-related offenders have the smallest probability of being detected immediately. These two conditions: high monetary rewards coupled with a small chance of being caught, make the drug business a fairly attractive option for the poor and jobless individuals.

These conditions are not jointly present in the next two crimes with high propensity indices for the poor : robbery and murder. In the case of robbery, monetary rewards may be high but the chances of getting caught increases with increasing monetary values of the objects robbed, viz. robbing bank will almost always result to capture and incarceration. This being the case, robbery is only about 8.98% likely to be resorted by the poor. Put in another way, the poor were far times more likely to resort to prohibited drug trade then to robbery.

Finally, murder (with a propensity index of 8.80%) was associated with the poor farmers and was most likely the result of squabbles over land or produce. With a justice system that remained inaccessible to the poorly educated farmers, the convicted felons resorted to putting the law into their own hands to settle conflicts.

Are the poor really more prone to criminal acts? The data obtained did not support this contention. In fact, what the analysis had shown was that certain types of crimes, namely those that involved high monetary returns, were most often committed by the poor.

The fact that illegal drug trade has a fairly attractive monetary returns with minimal chances of being caught offers the poor and less educated individuals a tangible way to break away from the cycle of poverty.

Policy-wise to curtail the preponderance of drug-related crimes among the poorer sector of society, police and drug enforcement agencies will need to improve their crime detection strategies. Tell-tale signs of drug trade engagement may include, for instance: (a) sudden and accounted lifestyle change, (b) erratic behavior, (c) sudden social popularity, and (d) appearance of strangers in the community on a more frequent basis. Early detection of illegal drug-trades will make engagement in this criminal activity less attractive.

An ounce of prevention is always better than a pound of cure. More economically productive or recreational projects need to be established in slum areas or in areas with huge members of informal settlers to lure them away from the temptation of illegal drug trades. This, of course, implies capacitating and empowering these communities through technical and development trainings.

Table 7   Poverty Related Crimes Index

Index Crimes	Total Respondents		Poverty Related	
	N	%	Actual	Propensity index
1.Viol. of RA 9165, Sec 5, 11 & 12	184	44.6	15/18	37.22
2.Estafa	8	1.94	8/8	1.94
3.Murder/Frustrated Murder	8	14.08	5/8	8.80

Table 7 cont'd				
4. Homicide/Frustrated Homecide	20	4.85	2/4	2.42
5. Malicious Mischief	2	0.49		
6. Rape/Statutory Rape	38	9.22		
7. Theft	29	7.04	3/3	7.04
8. Violation of RA 7610	3	0.73		
9. Viol. of RA 9662 sec. 5 Para (A)	2	0.49		
10. Viol. of RA 6539 (anti-carnapping)	14	3.40	2/2	3.40
11. Arson	2	0.49		
12. Adultery	2	0.49		
13. Grave Oral Deformation	2	0.49		
14. Illegal Possession of Fire Arms	5	1.21		
15. Robbery	37	8.98	4/4	8.98
16. Acts of Lasciviousness	2	0.49		
17. Parricide	2	0.49		
18. Concealment of Deadly Weapon	1	0.24		
19. Reckless Imprudence Resulting to homicide	1	0.24		
Total	**412**	**100%**		**69.8%**

Table 8   Poverty Related Crimes Index

Index Crimes	Poor Propensity Index	Modal Education	Age	Occupation
1.Vio.of RA 9165, sec. 5,11 & 12	37.22	High Sch. Level	31.75	Jobless
2.Estafa	1.94	High Sch. Graduate	35.25	Business
3. Murder/Frustrated Murder	8.80	Elem. Level	42.50	Farming
4.Homicide/Frustrated Homicide	2.42	High Sch. Level	37.55	Farming
5. Malicious Mischief		High Sch. Level	29.25	Vendor
6. Rape/Statutory Rape		Elem. Level	28.83	Jobless
7. Theft	7.04	Elem. Grad	32.77	Jobless
8. viol. Of RA 7610		High Sch. Level	51.25	Farming
9. Viol. Of RA 9262 sec. 5 PARA (A)		Elem. Level	38.75	Vendor
10. Viol. of RA 6539	3.40	College Level	46.35	Self-Employed
11. Arson		Illiterate	53.00	Laborer
12. Adultery		Elem. Level	34.00	Fishing
13. Grave Oral Defamation		Elem. Level	37.36	House-keeping

Table 8 cont'd				
14. Illegal Possession of Fire Arms		College Level	48.75	Business
15. Robbery	8.98	College Level	48.75	Business
16. Acts of Lasciviousness		Elem. Level	23.83	Laborer
17. Parricide		Elem. Level	80.00	House-Keeping
18. Concealment of Deadly Weapon		High Sch. Level	41.75	Driving
19. Reckless Imprudence Resulting to Homicide		Elem. Level	37.25	Laborer
	69.80% - Poor Propensity Crime Index of Dipolog and Dapitan			

Conclusions:

The urban jails were populated by male inmates who were relatively young with low educational attainment and jobless, a profile combination that appear to predispose criminal behavior. In particular an overwhelming number of the jailed urban poor engaged in the illegal drug trade was perceived to be low risk (small probability of detection) and high returns (high monetary rewards) illegal activity.

Low risk but high return characteristics crimes with the largest number of offenders is illegal drug trade. Minimizing the number of offenders for a specific crime, that crime detection strategies of persons-in-authority be will be enhanced. Early and quick detection is far more effective strategy for curbing criminality rather than the imposition of stiffer penalties e.g. reclusion perpetua for the illegal drug trade.

Literature Cited

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