

Education's Impact on Crime: Analysis, Implication & Solutions

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Abstract: *Rising crime, rates are imminent in modern societies. In this, policymakers across the globe tend to focus only on the enforcement and punishment aspects. However, recent studies suggest that there are other policy mechanisms that can be effective in reducing the crime rate. For instance, boosting the educational attainment can significantly reduce crime. While the complete eradication of crime is not feasible, incorporating education in the policy reforms revolving around crime can be an ideal way to boost this fight. In this paper, the impact of education on crime has been analyzed with varying perspectives being incorporated. Several ways that education can reduce crime rates have been identified and by enhancing these, better societies can be fostered. As such, the implications of this study have been documented as well as the solutions that the policymakers ought to implement.*

Keywords: Crime, Education, implication and Impact

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, crime and murder rates have been on the rise. As a result, more resources are being directed into correctional facilities and other measures that aim at reducing crime rates. Since many governments work on the assumption that complete eradication of crime is not a feasible option, they have focused on techniques through which the prevalence of crime can be minimized (Budsey, 2019). Regions such as the United States of America have even put in place mandatory sentencing laws in the quest to effectively deal with crime. In contrast, funding towards educational projects has been declining steadily. This is the same case with many governments across the globe, which has continue to have budget cuts on educational facilities with the dominant thoughts being prioritizing on deterring crime. This way, many fail to recognize the positive impact that education has on crime both in short and long term perspective. For this reason, this paper focuses on the impact of education on crime by conducting a thorough analysis on various studies while still highlighting implications which education has on crime.

Education and Crime: Analyzing How Education Reduces Crime

According to Crews (2014), established research study findings indicate that education lowers the crime rate. The crime-education literature has these findings being dominant in contexts where the school dropout rates are increased due to school leaving laws. While this strand of findings exhibits an incapacitation effect that ends up keeping children to an older age hence not committing crime, another focuses on the individual transformation achieved from learning institutions. An economic perspective on how education impacts crime has also been put forward. The next section focuses on the analysis of these strands.

Economists' Perspective

Economists have their theory on education's impact on crime based on opportunity costs. In this, Behrend (2014) state that an increase in educational attainment leads to a decline in the crime rate due to its influence on the wages. As such, education serves as a human capital investment that can boost future job opportunities hence discouraging participation in crime. Osler & Starkey (2018) support this by noting that an expected rise in income can boost the opportunity cost of illicit activity. The opportunity cost gets boosted in the sense that an individual tends to compare risking jail time and time lost in crime to the wages that could be earned in legitimate work. The result is that as one's wages increase, the time that is lost as one commits crime increases with regards to the cost. This way, the likelihood of committing crime decreases over time as no one would want to risk losing more than they can gain. The assumption, in this case, is that with each higher

education level achieved, one's wages rise and consequently deterring crime. Moreover, the higher wage attainment has the potential to boost the educational attainment. However, arguments against this suggest that boosting the education attainment level might not work for all types of crimes. For instance, white-collar crime characterized by fraud and embezzlement could increase with the educational level especially if they adequately reward the school skills (Behrend, 2014).

Other Ways Education Reduces Crime

Numerous studies have also pointed out to the fact that education can affect an individual's personality traits that are link to crime. This is discussed below:

Incapacitation Effect of Schooling: Each day, schools across the globe incapacitate millions of youths hence preventing them from getting involved in crime. Bell, Costa & Machin (2016) state that incapacitation, in this case, is the restriction of the students' freedom in the streets hence deterring crime. In this, Bell, Costa & Machin (2016) set out to investigate whether the crime level would increase across 29 United States cities if students were allowed to be anywhere as they pleased. As such, they did a comparison on the level of crime by youth during normal days, and when the learning institutions were closed during teacher-in-service days. The results indicated that property crimes reduced by up to 14% on regular days as compared to when the schools were closed.

Consuming Time: According to Bell, Costa & Machin (2016), education can take an individual's time before they graduate in high school. For instance, most students will have hit 17-18 years as they graduate in high school. It translates to spending approximately 15-16 years in school. Some studies by Dubois (2016) add to this by stating that a child has an increased likelihood of engaging in crime if they were not in school as early as three years. It narrows down to the cultivation of patience and aversion. While the crime age increases among school-goers, kids will always have full schedules with their teachers. On the other hand, older students find themselves handling different projects, homework, educational tours or even symposiums. With all these activities, a student is left with minimal idle time to engage in crime. Besides, the learning institutions always promote a culture full of honesty, diligence, and tolerance. Students end up realizing the benefits of hard work in school in the short and long term.

Stimulating Critical Thinking: Anderson (2014) states that education can be defined as an enlightening experience or the process in which systematic instruction is given to learners. In this light, learners can understand through the education concepts that the world exists as a system. It is within this system that a student will learn how to better himself or herself without causing much disturbance. As such, they end up creating their path in the society through education. This way, they end up making the community a better place. For instance, a student may comprehend that peace is a key ingredient in successful societies. Through law and order, every individual can move freely hence partaking in the daily endeavors. A valid argument on this note is that educated demonstrators will be unlikely to create an economic sabotage to unintended parties as compared to uneducated demonstrators that are engaging in violent activities. The educated are bound to think through before engaging in a criminal act.

Providing Options: This aspect tends to complement that of the opportunity cost of crime. In this, a student compares the rewards of both education and crime. While the former might not be rewarding in the short run, its long-term benefits eclipse those of crime. Swisher & Dennison (2016) state that modern learning institutions always strive to foster talent development. This way, talents can be tapped and therefore students end up capitalizing on their abilities in football, singing, jumping, swimming, or even drawing. With these talents, they have value that can go a long way in their lives. Moreover, people, especially in the hood, tend to engage in retaliatory crime when they do not understand legal options in handling varying disputes. In most cases, young teenagers participate in such crimes and end up being incarcerated. It is only through education that they can learn about the legal non-violent mechanisms of handling disputes.

Hope and Interaction: In many global societies, hopelessness is also a huge cause of crime in the young generation. This is the case especially when students come from poor backgrounds, lack basic education, and have bills to attend to. The only solution is to get some quick cash in the field of crime. However, by sticking to school, a hope for a brighter future always exists. For instance, most employers are more likely to hire part-time school students than those that are not nursing any career. The employers might trust the student more as they typically feel that the latter is seeking a better future. On the other hand, education also boosts the daily interactions of young people. At the end of the day, students have a sense of belonging to the society and they are presented with numerous opportunities. They could join bands with students from all types of lifestyles. It boosts their cross-cultural competence as well as the levels of tolerance leading to the reduction of hate crimes.

Role Models: Crime in the society can root from the lack of moral compass. In most cases, morals are passed down from parents to kids during the early stages of life. It is therefore clear that parents ought to have an active role in their children's lives. However, modern contexts have parents striving to work for a living hence cannot dedicate much time to the kids. To avoid these children from having morals in society, parents

typically take them to daycare programs or preschool. It is critical to identify an ideal center where the child is taught about the importance of morality. From an early age, teachers become the role models of the child and hence they cannot engage in crime.

Implications and Solutions

From the above, it is clear that boosting educational attainment can end up having numerous social benefits. In this, Siegel & Welsh (2014) supports this by stating that in the United Kingdom, there is social savings of approximately 10,000 pounds per additional student qualification from the reductions in property crime. It is also clear that the opportunity cost of crime is boosted by higher wages linked to educational attainment. Besides, the analysis also identified that education can curb crime through the incapacitation effect, stimulating critical thinking among the learners, establishing numerous options in the long-term, and even through hope/interactions. In the learning environment, students can find role models in their teachers and hence can shape their lives towards becoming responsible society members.

In this case, policies that are specifically designed to encourage students' schooling should be designed. For instance, regarding the opportunity cost for crime, the labor-market skills can be boosted leading to good wages. Policies to encourage schooling in the crime-prone groups can also assist significantly. Finally, reforms in the education sector to boost the quality of learning can also encourage school attendance hence getting rid of crime. This is especially in the early stages of a child when morals are supposed to be instilled. With the right reforms, teachers can always form rigid role models for students to emulate.

II. CONCLUSION

It is clear that education has a positive impact on crime. As such, rather than stiffening crime laws, it would be ideal to encourage students to become productive society members through education and training. This is because poverty plays a huge role in enhancing crime. However, through education to the highest level, adversities can be limited as an individual is equipped with more options and tools to deal with life challenges in the long term. In the short term, crime is also gotten rid of due to the incapacitation effect, time consumption of activities in school, the stimulation of critical thinking, and at the same time teachers become morally upright role models. Therefore, policymakers ought to fuel more resources into educational programs rather than focusing on the preventive measures of crime. Besides, through adequate reforms in the education sector, the quality of education can always be bolstered hence getting rid of crime further.

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