INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED LEGAL RESEARCH

SOCIAL DISPARITIES AND CRIME: BRIDGING THE GAP FOR A MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETY

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Abstract:

This article delves into the relationship between social disparities and their rule in increasing criminal activities, providing a clear definition of social inequality from a global perspective. It emphasizes the complexities surrounding inter-relations in various sections of society in various countries and their impact on social divisions and acceptance. Furthermore, the article delves into the contributing factors of social inequality that affect crime rates. The multifaceted nature of addressing social inequality is explored through regional examples, with a particular focus on Bangladesh. The article underscores the need to diminish social disparities, which in turn will mitigate criminality, and it presents potential strategies for achieving greater social equity and harmony in society.

Introduction:

Nowadays social disparities are generating alarming phenomena for criminal activities. And the social disparities are creating social gaps among individuals, groups, different classes, races, and regions.Social gap refers to the difference between people or groups based on their social standings, economic status, degree of education, or other characteristics. Social gap co-relates with crime which is generated from the social gap. Day by day social distance is creating tremendous gaps in society and this gap is enhancing more opportunities for criminals to commit crimes. As a result,the social gap is generating a significant impact on the crime rate. A particularconcern is how social distance affects crime. According to studies, the social distance between various socioeconomic levels can increase the likelihood of crime. Those who are

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socially isolated from one another may develop feelings of distrust and animosity, which might enhance the risk of criminal activities. When there is a considerable gap between classes, groups, and more, the effect of a higher level of inequality might be noticeable.

This article will discuss the connection between social gap and crime, with a particular emphasis on how it impacts various socioeconomic strata in a culture or nation. We'll look at the possible causes of this connection and how policy and social initiatives might be affected.

Defining Social gap:

Social gap refers to the degree of inconsistency in a society that people feel towards those who are different from them in terms of their identity characteristics such as color, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or nationality. Social gap has various forms and has a significant impact on social inequalities and social inequalities include income gap, educational gap, gender inequalities, health care issues, and class inequalities[2]. Research conducted worldwide has shown that social gaps between different groups in a society can contribute to discrimination, prejudice, and marginalization of certain groups, which can, in turn, contribute to higher levels of crime. Social distance may take many various forms and has a big impact on social inequality, according to research from throughout the world. For instance,

- In Europe, social distance between majority and minority groups was linked to greater levels of prejudice and lower levels of support for laws that advanced inequality[3]
- In Asia, social distance has been identified as a major factor in the perpetuation of caste-based discrimination in India. Caste-based inequality is generating a major gap in that particular society as well and religious and cultural norms in a particular society are accelerating the gap in society. The upper caste and lower caste individuals are affiliated with prejudice and discrimination.[4]

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[2] In this case, the author is Longdom Publishing SL, the date of publication is March 8, 2023, the title of the work is "Social Inequality," the publication information is "Peer Reviewed Journals," and the URL is https://www.longdom.org/peer-reviewed-journals/social-inequality-6863.html.

[3] Quinlan, E., Preacher, K. J., & Stoker, G. (2019). The impact of intergroup social distance on support for policies that promote intergroup equality. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22(3), 414-431.

[4] Desai, S., & Kulkarni, V. (2008). Changing educational inequalities in India in the context of affirmative action. *Demography*, 45(2), 245-270.

- In South Asian countries, the social gap between males and females generates lower levels of institutional instruction and employment opportunities for women. On the other side, this gap generates higher levels of domestic violence and other form of abuse[5].

- In East Asian countries, the social gap between ethnic Koreans and ethnic Chinese in South Koreawas associated with lower levels of social support and higher levels of prejudice, often reinforced by nationalist ideologies[6].

Global Perspective:

The relationship between Hindus and Muslims has been complicated in different areas of India. In North India, the connection between these religions has a history of superiority and domination which creates the social gap.

A study shows that a large number of people in Germany would not accept Jewish and Muslim family members[7]. In Italy and Britain, Muslim family members are intolerable to them. Here is the percentage of the people who are not accepted by the people of the three countries.

Country	Jewish	Muslim
Italy	25%	43%
UK	23%	36%
Austria	21%	34%

Multifaceted ChallengesBetween Social Gap and Crime:

Social gap has a significant impact on crime in societies, particularly when different social groups are socially distant from each other. When people or groups are socially isolated, they may develop feelings of distrust and animosity towards one another, which can contribute to

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[5] Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & Society*, 2(3), 274-290.

[6] M Kang & M Kim, 'Social distance between ethnic Koreans and ethnic Chinese in South Korea: The role of nationalist ideologies' (2015) 15 Ethnicities 701-720.

[7] "Study shows a large majority of Germany would not accept Jewish or Muslim family members" (DW, 2018) <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/9598/study-shows-a-large-majority-of-germany-would-not-accept-jewish-or-muslim-familymembers?fbclid=IwAR1VzccLDVsxIHRKV2f_afAWXvClNZKuPdw81PJ8RNSYNe6AkFUe1KsbTT>.

higher levels of crime. Some contributing factors tothe social gap are given below which influence crime in a society.

I)Income inequality: Inequality concerning income refers to the concept of dissimilarities in income with others in proportion. Though some degree of inequalityis expected because of differences in talent, educational qualification, effort, or other simple chances much income inequality can corrode social harmony. As such, a higher income individual gets more benefits in society than a lower income individual even in some cases they cannot afford their daily necessities. As a result, it grows criminality into their mind to meet their basic needs[8].

II)Lack of Education: Persons who do not have enough institutional knowledge are more likely to connect with criminal activities. A gap between an educated and an uneducated person generates a different mindset and conscience. Moreover, one who has not got sufficient opportunities for institutional knowledge can feel an inferiority complex tothose who have more institutional knowledge and this complexion can create a path for various criminal activities. It is generally believed that one who is more intenton criminality decreases his or her ability to complete a higher level of education, for instance, dropping out of school at an early stage of education, or getting expelled from school. Whereas, a more educated community has less criminality[9]. A person who does not have proper institutional knowledge can't realize his or her duties and responsibilities in society. This is one of the main causes of increasing juvenile delinquency in society. In Bangladesh, research relating to juvenile delinquency found that around 49% of delinquents are illiterate, 14% of delinquents went to school but didn't complete the primary level and only 17% of them went to school and completed their primary education which indicates that illiterate have more likely become engaged in criminal activities[10]

III)Gender inequality: Gender inequality between men and women brings a huge social gap which creates a lower level of institutional facilities for women and raises a higher level of domestic violence[11]. From the perspective of Bangladesh, it is historically proved that male gets more priority over female person and in many cases, it is seen that female person tends to hide

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[8] Carol M. Kopp, 'Income Inequality Definition: Examples and How It's Measured' (Investopedia, Updated May 29, 2023)

[9] 'Education and Crime' https://criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com/correlates-of-crime/education-and-crime

[10] Rizvi Ahmed, Theory and Practice of Criminology: Bangladesh Perspective (University Publications, 3rd edn, 2021).

[11]DenizKandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' (1988) 2 Gender & Society 274-290.

domestic violence(i.e. harassment for dowry) because of fear or any other reason, for which men are cherished with more criminal tendencies.

IV)Difference between racial and ethnic groups: Social gap can also contribute to higher levels of hate crimes that are motivated by prejudice or discrimination against a particular group based on their identity as in many cases, it is seen that fear and insecurity grow in them because they feel that they are not recognized by the group of higher level. The racial and ethnic group have their different customs, race, religion, and other beliefs which create a gap between these groups. As a result, it generates an understanding gap between them which is in favor of social distance and influences hate crime. Where there is more social gap between different groups, there is more chance of growing hate crime among themselves[12].

Improper socialization of a person also generates a social gap in a particular society which can influence criminal tendencies. Lack of family guidance, broken family, poverty, lack of religious education, rejection by neighborhood, and other barriers create social gaps as a result it raises criminal behavior in a person who doesn't have proper socialization.

Perceptions in South Asia and Beyond:

In India, the social gap between different castes has been shown to contribute to higher levels of caste-based violence and discrimination, 'Kneaded', who belong to the lowest caste in India's caste system, are particularly vulnerable to violence and discrimination due to the social gap between them and higher castes. The social gap between Kneaded and non-Kneaded can emerge caste-based violence which results in deviant behavior by the kneaded[13]. Similarly, the social gap between different ethnic and religious groups can lead to higher levels of intergroup violence in many parts of Asia. For instance, the social distance between Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist majority in Myanmar has led to the persecution of the Rohingya. A study relating to this issue found that the social gap between these groups generates violence against Rohingya in Myanmar[14].

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[12] J McDevitt, J Levin, and J Nolan, Hate Crimes: The Rising Tide of Bigotry and Violence (Oxford University Press 2002).
[13] International Dalit Solidarity Network, "Caste and Gender-Based Violence Addressed at IDSN's First UN Side-Event"
[14] 'Myanmar: Crimes against humanity terrorize and drive Rohingya out' (18 October 2017)

In addition, the social gap between different socio-economic groups can contribute to higher levels of property crime in Asia and South Asia. Moreover, the poor section of society resorts to crime to meet their basic needs. Where there is more income inequality between rich and poor, there is more property crime. Well,a lack of opportunities and unemployment increase property crime in a community. China has more income inequality for which there is a higher level of property crime[15].

Bangladesh perspective: In Bangladesh, social gaps can contribute an impact on criminal activities, particularly in terms of violence against women, religious minorities, and marginalized communities. The social distance between men and women can enhance gender-based violence and discrimination, including sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence as well as murder also. Most of the cases show that there is a tendency for male dominance in domestic issues. In case of domestic violence against women, torture by husband, rape, sexual violence, dowry-related issues are very common. In other cases, physical as well as mental harassment against women, rape, forceful pornography, eve-teasing, etc. is getting common as many women keep silent about their social and cultural issues. The silence against torture contributes to more opportunities for the wrongdoer to be involved in criminal activities. Lack of interactions with others createsa social gap which can also contribute to more criminality. Where there is different kinds of difficulties arise for victims to access support which creates an environment of silence and a climate of impunity for wrongdoers.

Bangladesh is a combination of various religions but the state religion is Islam and a large number of people follow Islam as their religion. As Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country it can make a sense of superiority to the Muslims whereas grows a sense of inferiority on the other side to the non-Muslims, such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians[16]. Both senses can create a social gap and turn toward criminality. In recent years, there have been numerous incidents of violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, including attacks on Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries. Sometimes the minority religious groups face discrimination as well as

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[15] Jiangli Zhu and Zilian Li, 'Inequality and Crime in China' (2017) 12(2) Front Econ China 309–339.
[16] United States Embassy in Bangladesh. (2022). 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh. [online] Available at: <https://bd.usembassy.gov/29722/

violence at the hands of the Muslim majority which results in burning houses, property attacks, temple attacks, forceful displacement, and other violent situations[17].

Moreover, the social gap between mainstream and marginalized populations such as the sub-caste, the kneaded, and the Rohingya refugees can also contribute to discrimination and violence. The Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh are suffering from limited access to education, proper health care facilities, living facilities, and other basic services that are needed to live a human life. Lack of differentfacilities relating to their basic needs can create violence and to meet their necessities they involve themselves in various criminal activities.

Importance of reducing social disparities:

From the above discussion, we can come to the point that social gaps between groups, classes of people, and regions can contribute to a great level of criminality. Now it is the question of sensation that, society needs to reduce the great level of social gap and contribute itself towards harmonization in society. If there is no harmony in a society, it will become a place of disorder for living a humanitarian life. The development of a society depends on the structure of expectations of the people living in the society and these expectations are based on some different substructures as such different religions, familycultures, values, educational institutions, and economic conditions. Development brings with the changing society whether the structure of the society changes or not. Sometimes these changes in different structures and substructures can generate conflict or harmony in that particular society[18]. The conflicting or harmonious minds of different persons can create different groups of people and these groups differentiate themselves and others by using the words 'us' and 'them'. Different races, castes, religions, and nationalities are categorizing people which become alarming for the present and upcoming generations and are most likely to have genocide[19]. So, for the betterment of human beings, it is essential to reduce the social gap among individuals, and different groups of people.

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[17] Afsana Amin, Muhammad Al Amin, and Zakir Hossain, 'BANGLADESH STATE OF MINORITIES REPORT-2016: Paving the Way to Liberation' (Nagorik Uddyog, November 2016).

[18] RJ Rummel, 'Societies, Politics, And Conflict' in Understanding Conflict and War: Vol. 2: The Conflict Helix (Chapter 32).

[19] Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, 'Ten Stages of Genocide' (n.d.) Genocide Watch https://tolerance.tavaana.org/en/content/ten-stages-genocide

Strategies to address the social gap:

Addressing the social gap is a complex and multifaceted issue. The reduction of this is much more difficult as well anda society can't abolishthe social gap between individuals or groups. It also depends on some psychological matters. However, some potential strategies are given below to address the social gap in society:

1. Education and awareness: One can become aware of something when he imagines himself in the same situation as the other one. By increasing institutional knowledge as well as by creating compassion for other groups, prejudice and discrimination can be reduced. Through reducing prejudice and discrimination, the social gap between individuals or groups may be reduced easily.

2. Inter-group contact: Communication is a powerful tool to reduce the social gap. When one gets connected with another one, the communication develops between them, one can interact with others and the social gap can be reduced. Encouraging inter-group contact, such as through community events or workplaces, community-based cultural programs, and other different initiatives can help to promote social cohesion and reduce the social gap.

3. Policy intervention: Where there are proper rules and regulations and the application of these rules and regulations are generalized, the people of the society can live a civilized life. So government should take adequate steps to make policies for the state. Government policies shall include various kinds of affirmative actions or anti-discrimination laws and more to reduce structural inequalities. Everyone from the state must be included and regulated by the application of these policies.

4. Media representation: To promote greater understanding and acceptance of different groups society should represent various cultures, ethnicities, religions, and values of different groups through media. In this way, people from one group can come to know the culture, traditions, ethnicity, and values of another group.

5. Grassroots initiatives: Society is always changing with or without changing the social structure. Diversity among individuals can create different ideologies and different ideologies generate something new for a community. Some community-based initiatives can bring people together. Initiatives may include community-building events, social clubs,

conferenceson different current issues, and more which can help to promote greater social connection and perception.

Conclusion:

Multiplicities in a society can generate harmony by the side and can also generate divisions like 'us' and 'them'. This kind of divisioncreates different sections in a community and from these sections, criminal tendencies emerge which sometimes turn into a higher level of criminality like genocide. Criminality brings distractions among individuals and groups and creates unrest situations for themselves as well as for the community sometimes also affecting the whole of mankind. So, by reducing the social gap between individuals, groups, ethnic and nationalcommunities, different nations, and others, it can be possible to reduce criminality among themselves.

Social gaps can contribute to higher levels of crime in Bangladesh by perpetuating prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization against certain groups, may it be religious, ethnic, or any other backward section of the society. By promoting greater social inclusion and reducing the social gap between different groups, it may be possible to reduce higher levels of crime and create a more equitable and just society in Bangladesh.