



## A Cross sectional study on Demographic and Socioeconomic Determinants of Crime among the Prisoners of Chengalpattu Prison, Tamil Nadu

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### Abstract

**Background:** Crime is an evil that affects everybody in a society. Therefore, it is important to study what incite people to commit a crime. From time immortal, it has plagued every society in human history. The history of crime is as old as the history of mankind. Analyzing the crime statistics, which helps in learning about regional differences in the incidence of crime and about the socio-demographic structures of the offenders leads to a better understanding of the factors that may prevent or foster crime <sup>(1)</sup>.

**Objectives:** 1. To assess the demographic and socioeconomic determinants of crime among the prisoners of Chengalpattu prison. 2. To explore the causes behind the crime.

**Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 60 Prisoners of Chengalpattu Prison. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, Chengalpattu Medical College, Chengalpattu. A semi-structured self-administered questionnaire was offered to all the participants. The details regarding socio demographic and causes behind the crime were collected. The data was entered in MS Excel and the appropriate statistical analysis were done using SPSS Software Version 25.

**Results:** In this study, the mean age among the study participants was 35 ± 8.98 years. 43.33% of the prisoners were in the age group 31- 40 years. 73.33% were urban residents. Only 6.67% of the prisoners had completed higher secondary school education. There were no degree holders. 63.33% of the study participants were married. 43.33% of the prisoners were from broken family. 58.34% of the prisoners belong to the lower middle socio economic status. Majority of the crime were due to social cause 61.67% when compared to other causes like economic (31.67%) and Psychological (6.66%).

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that majority of the crime were related to the lower educational, lower socio economical status, broken family and urban settlement. Also social factors culminate in economic inequities and psychological imbalances and finally leading to crime.

**Keywords:** Crime, Prisoner, Socio-economic determinants, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu

### Introduction

Crime is an evil that affects everybody in a society. Therefore, it is important to study what incite people to commit a crime. From time immortal, it has plagued every society in human history. The history

of crime is as old as the history of mankind. Analyzing the crime statistics, which helps in learning about regional differences in the incidence of crime and about the socio-demographic structures of the

offenders leads to a better understanding of the factors that may prevent or foster crime<sup>[1]</sup>.

Further, not many studies have been done related to crime among prison inmates in Tamil Nadu . Taking all these into consideration, this study has been planned to determine the demographic and socioeconomic determinants of crime among the prisoners of Chengalpattu prison of Tamil Nadu.

**Objectives:** 1. To assess the demographic and socioeconomic determinants of crime among the prisoners of Chengalpattu prison 2. To explore the causes behind the crime.

**Materials And Methods:**

A cross-sectional study was conducted among the prisoners of Chengalpattu Prison. 82 prisoners were present during the study period .Among them 60 inmates who had given consent were included in the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, Chengalpattu Medical College,Chengalpattu . A semi-structured self administered questionnaire was offered to all the participants. The questionnaire had two sections.

**Results:**

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Prisoners**

Variables		Frequency (n=60)	Percentage
<b>AGE GROUP</b>	21-30 YEARS	17	28.33%
	31-40 YEARS	26	43.33%
	41-50 YEARS	13	21.67%
	>50 YEARS	4	6.67%
<b>PLACE</b>	URBAN	44	73.33%
	RURAL	16	26.67%
	<b>Pucca</b>	8	13.33%

Section A deals with Socio-demographic details like age, place of settlement , educational status, occupational status , income of the family members and environmental factors. Section B deals with Causes behind the crime . Broken homes, Child abuse, Family quarrels, Negligence of parents, Dowry deaths, Polygamy, Alcoholism/drug abuse, Casteism, Prostitution and Peer influence were taken under social factors. Poverty , lower socioeconomic status and Unemployment were considered economical factors while Psychoses, Anti social behaviour and Mental illness were included under psychological factors.

The data was collected and entered in MS Excel and the appropriate statistical analysis were done using SPSS Software Version 25.

**Operational Definition:**

**Prisoner**<sup>[2]</sup>: Any person duly committed to custody under the writ, warrant or order of any court or competent authority exercising criminal or civil or revenue jurisdiction including any of the houses of Parliament or State Legislature

<b>TYPE OF HOUSE</b>	<b>Semi-pucca</b>	22	36.67%
	<b>Kutchra</b>	30	50%
<b>TYPE OF FAMILY</b>	<b>Nuclear Family</b>	21	35%
	<b>Joint and Three Generation Family</b>	13	21.67%
	<b>Broken Family</b>	26	43.33%
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	<b>Married</b>	38	63.33%
	<b>Unmarried</b>	22	36.67%

As shown in Table 1, majority of the prisoners were in the age group 31-40years (43.33%). The mean age among the study participants was  $35 \pm 8.98$  years . Nearly 73.33% of the prisoners were from urban area.50% of prisoners live in Kucha houses. Majority of the prisoners were belong to Broken family (43.33%). Among of the prisoners 63.33% were married. This prison accommodates only male , so there is no female study participants in this study.

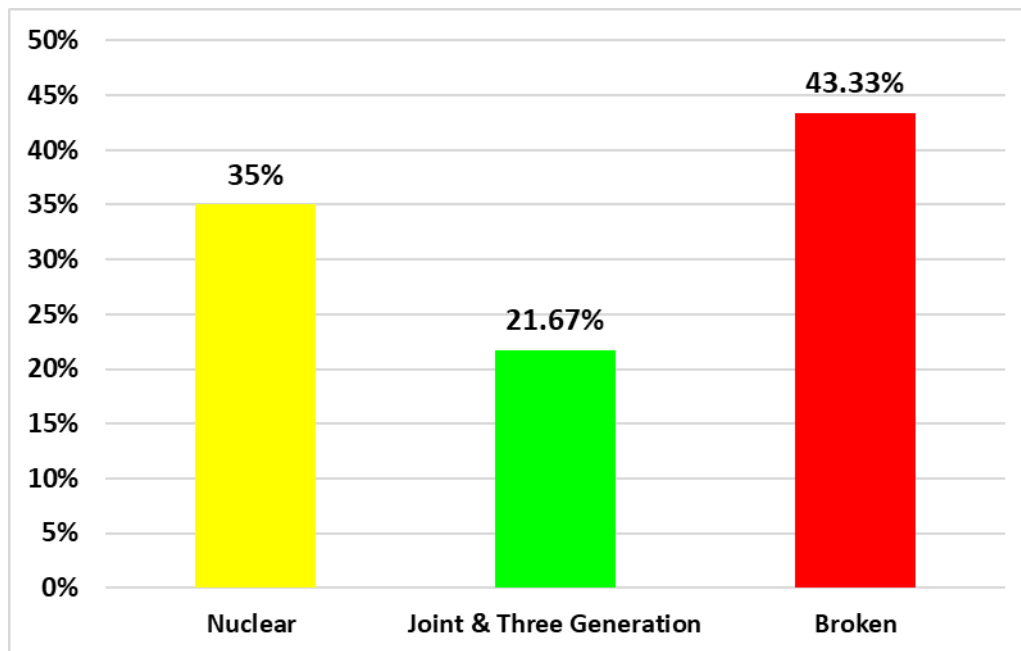
**Table 2 : Socio Economic Profile of the Prisoners**

<b>Variables</b>		<b>FREQUENCY (n=60)</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL STATUS</b>	<b>Illiterate</b>	8	13.33%
	<b>Primary School</b>	13	21.67%
	<b>Middle School</b>	17	28.33%
	<b>High School</b>	18	30%
	<b>Higher Secondary</b>	04	6.67%
	<b>Degree</b>	0	0%
<b>OCCUPATIONAL</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	3	5%
	<b>Unskilled</b>	31	51.67%
	<b>Semi-skilled</b>	22	36.66%

<b>STATUS</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	4	6.67%
	<b>Professional</b>	0	0%
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS</b>			
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS</b>	<b>Upper</b>	0	0%
	<b>Upper middle</b>	2	3.33%
	<b>Middle</b>	17	28.33%
	<b>Lower middle</b>	35	58.34%
	<b>Lower</b>	6	10%

As shown in Table 2 , None of the prisoners were Degree Holders. Only 6.67% of the prisoners were completed Higher secondary school education. Among the prisoners most of them were unskilled workers (51.67%) . Majority of the study participants belong to Lower Middle Socio economic Status (58.34%).

**Figure 1 : Type of Family of the Prisoners**



As shown in Figure 1, Most of the prisoners belong to Broken Family (43.33%)

**Figure 2: Causes behind the Crime among the Prisoners**

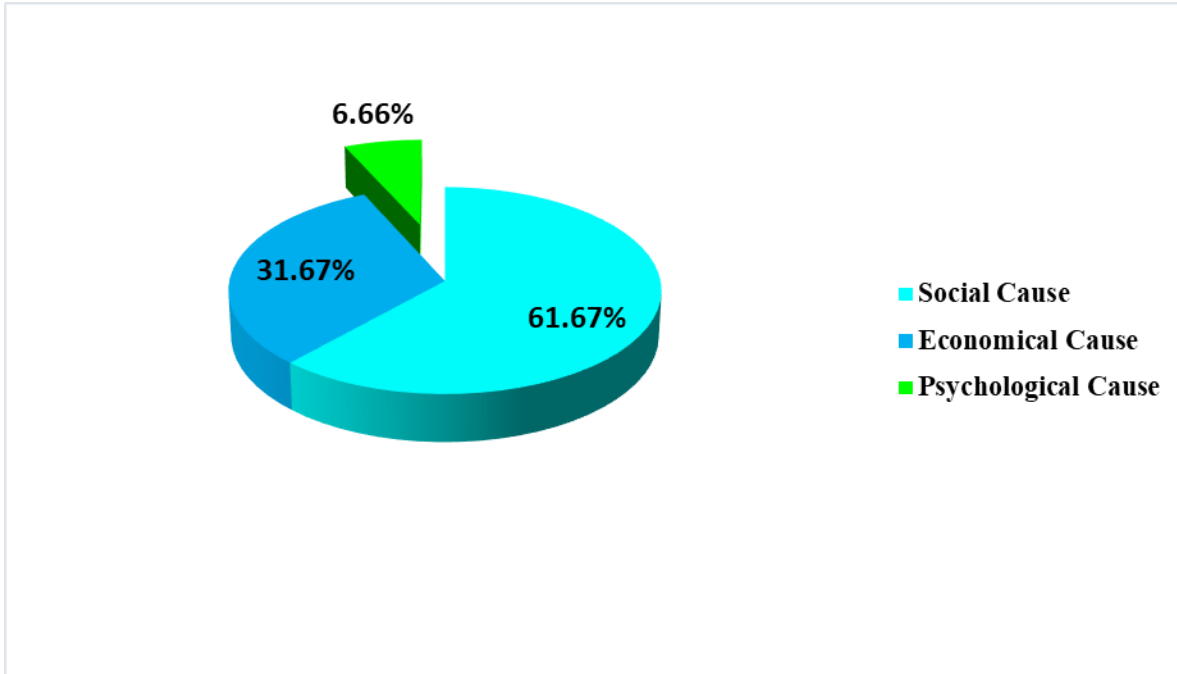


Figure 2 depicts , social cause contributing to the crime event was 61.67% , economical cause 31.67% and psychological cause was found to be 6.66%.

**Discussion**

In this study, majority of the prisoners were in the age group 31-40years (43.33%). Similar findings were seen in the studies done by Kumar et al<sup>[3]</sup> where majority of the study participants belong to the age group 30-39 years (38%), Halimatus Sakdiah Minhat et al<sup>[4]</sup> (45.2%). Sabitha et al<sup>[5]</sup> (40.9%).In contrast to this present study the findings of the study done by Gupta et al<sup>[6]</sup> shows, 44.8% of the prisoners were in the age group 21-30 years and 26.8% were in the age group 31-40 years.

In current study , nearly 73.33% of the prisoners were from urban area.This was in contrast to the studies done by Sabitha et al<sup>[5]</sup> where 75% of the prisoners were from Rural area , Syed Yasir Mahmood Gillani et al<sup>[7]</sup> ,73% from rural area , Gupta et al<sup>[6]</sup> ,53% of the prisoners were from Rural areas and in the findings of the study done by Kumar et al<sup>[3]</sup> 94% of the prisoners are from Rural areas.

As this is evident from the study most of them belonged to urban setting, and it can be argued that more the number of people living in an area, higher are the chances that people will commit a crime. It is because, in a highly dense area, people fight for the

limited resources and when they can't get hold of them, they choose the wrong ways to acquire<sup>[8]</sup>

In this study Majority of the prisoners were belong to Broken family(43.33%). The cause behind the crime among the study population may be due to lack family support and care.In a study done by Gupta et al<sup>[6]</sup> ,73.9% of the prisoners belong to joint family and Kumar et al<sup>[3]</sup> , 64% of the prisoners belong to joint family.

The findings of this study shows 63.33% of the prisoners were married. Similar findings were seen in the studies done by Kumar et al<sup>[3]</sup> where 75.3% were married and in a study done by Sabitha et al<sup>[5]</sup> found that 67.4% were married among the study participants. In contrast , 57% were unmarried among the prisoners in the studies done by Syed Yasir Mahmood Gillani et al <sup>[7]</sup>and Halimatus Sakdiah Minhat et al<sup>[4]</sup> where majority of the prisoners were unmarried(50.2%).

In this present study ,only 6.67% of the prisoners had completed higher secondary school education .There were no degree holders and 30% had completed their High School Education. In the study done by Gupta et al<sup>[6]</sup> , 24.6% were completed middle school and 24.6% were illiterates. In a study done by Kumar et

al<sup>[3]</sup>, majority (52.7%) were illiterates. In Pakistan study done by Syed Yasir Mahmood Gillani *et al*<sup>[7]</sup> 64% of the prisoners were illiterates. In a study done by Sabitha *et al* most of the prisoners were illiterates 34.1%. In Malaysia study done by Halimatus Sakdiah Minhat *et al*<sup>[4]</sup>, majority of the prisoners had completed Secondary school education. It is expected that more the literacy rate of a state, the less the crime would be. This is so because as the literacy rate of state increases, there will be less unemployed people and therefore they will not opt for illegal ways to get money. Though this may not be the case always because crime has more to do with psychological factors but a negative relationship can be expected in literacy rate and crime rate<sup>[8]</sup>.

In present study, 51.67% of the prisoners were unskilled labourers. Similar findings were seen in the studies done by Gupta *et al*<sup>[6]</sup> (51.5%) and Sabitha *et al*<sup>[5]</sup> (54.5%). Most of the unskilled workers were from poor socio economic background which may be the cause behind their crimes in order to fulfil their requirements.

In this study, 58.34% of the prisoners belong to the lower middle socio economic status. This finding were similar to the study findings of Gupta *et al*<sup>[6]</sup> where majority of the prisoners (36.6%) belong to Lower and 29.9% belong to Lower middle class Socio economic status. Also in a study done by Sabitha *et al*<sup>[5]</sup>, majority of the prisoners (84%) belong to lower and upper lower class of socio economic status. In this study, majority of the crime were due to social cause 61.67% when compared to other causes like economic (31.67%) and Psychological (6.66%). The economics of crime is closely related and interacts with different and heterogeneous fields (i.e. sociology, criminology, psychiatry and geography). In particular, we focus our attention on social and socioeconomic determinants such as unemployment, education, inequality, social networks, socioeconomic background and age, presenting both empirical and theoretical recent contributions. This allows us to conclude that the criminal phenomenon is a complex phenomenon that is strongly related and affected by several socioeconomic determinants whose relationships with crime have to be known in order to design and to implement effective and adequate policies in reducing crime<sup>[9]</sup>.

Although various crime preventive strategies and programs continue to be developed, they may only reduce crime rate on a small scale, basically they will not have a clear influence on the increase or decrease in a criminal activity in a particular country or in a global dimension as too many social and economic factors should be taken into account. Planned recovery activities should be focused on finding the causes that force people to commit crimes in a local or regional dimension and finding ways to improve a given situation or cause it bring other than criminal effects. Societies should learn from other societies and nations from other nations. Authorities should cooperate to find best way to weaken the desire or necessity of an individual to be involved in a criminal activity<sup>[10]</sup>.

**Limitations:** This study was done in a single prison in Chengalpattu during COVID 19 pandemic.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Suggesting larger multi centric study involving several prisons of different areas at state level as well as at national level would bring a better insight on the factors determining the occurrence of crime and criminal behaviours of the prisoners.
2. Counselling Centres has to be created in all districts for the Prisoners. So that the prisoners can be counselled to lead a better life in physical, mental and social aspects.
3. Special focus has to be done on Vocational Rehabilitation for the prisoners in order to improve their socio economic status.

**Statement Of Ethics:** Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, Chengalpattu Medical College, Chengalpattu. IEC Number IEC-CMC/Approval/5945/2020

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