

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI SHORT
ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Though crime simply defined relates to some harmful acts which violate individual's body and the property and deny respect to people and institutions, there are wide divergences amongst the social scientists. However, common and widely accepted definition of crimes by most of the modern states refers to an act or omission that is defined by the validly passed laws of the nation state in which it occurred so that punishment should follow from the behaviour. Without the state and the criminal law there is no crime, and without criminal justice system sanctioned by law, there are no criminals. Analysis of factors responsible for criminals' behaviour has been the subject matter of sociologists, criminologists and in recent times the economists. The recent entry by the economists using the understanding and logic of economics along with the utilisation of sophisticated tools of econometrics and statistics has attracted the attention of policy makers. Becker (1968) specified an economic model of crime, stating crime as any other economic activity based on rational choice so that the criminal would base his/her decision on a cost-benefit analysis and then decide to commit crime if the benefit is bigger than the cost.

It is important to note that the state of Assam which is situated in the North Eastern part of India has experienced a long period of agitations in the beginning of the 1980's, with spikes of violence at times, against the illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and later onset of insurgency related violence which have had adverse impact on crime scenario in the state.

As in the entire country crimes have been showing an increasing trend in Assam along with noticeable changes in the compositions of crimes. There is a need for comprehensive study on the criminal behaviour in the state of Assam to understand the long term trend, pattern and shifts in the composition of crimes. Accordingly the present study has been taken up to make an assessment of nature and magnitude of the crimes, to explore the causes and determinants of criminal behaviour with attempts to examine how different crimes are distributed spatially, disaggregated up to district level. The study also has aimed at examining how deterrence variables like presence of police, logistic supports for policing, charge sheet rates and prison population along with some select socio economic variables like economic prosperity, inflation and dropout rates in education influence criminal behaviour.

While conducting this study quantitative and qualitative approaches with relevant statistical and econometric tools have been utilized in analysing, data which have been drawn from secondary sources through different publications by the governments at the Centre and the State.

The present study has empirically established an assessment of nature and magnitude of the crimes in the state of Assam and its districts, along with the long term behaviour of different classes of crimes. Though the long term trends of total crimes have been more or less of similar nature in both at the national and at the state levels, Assam has been occupying top ranking almost consistently in recent times as one of the most violent states. There are wide variations in incidents of recorded crimes amongst the districts. Even in terms of rate of crime per 100,000 population districts differ. While analysing the deterrence factors one finds that the state has been showing a very low performance level in terms of filing charge sheets and securing convictions which reflect poor quality of investigative efforts. In cases of all classes of crimes the state's rates of charge sheets and convictions have been far less than that of all India averages. A matter of concern is that recidivism has been higher in Assam than that of national average. It is observed that the pattern and composition of the various crime categories have undergone perceptible changes over time. These changes involve shifts not only among the various categories but also within the categories themselves. The share of some crimes have fallen drastically while a few others, like crimes against women and economic crimes, have come into prominence.

The increases in different types of crimes against women have been a cause of shame and agony for the people. Incidents like rape, molestation and sexual assault have very led to public protest and cause of law and order disruption by irate mobs through indulgence in arson and rioting and thereby damaging public property and peace. It is seen that the importance of property crimes in relation to total crimes has been showing a remarkable declining trend in the years.

During the course of the study the possible association of crimes and other important parameters like backwardness, education status, and urbanization were also looked at.

The empirical exercise has been carried out with respect to the determinants of criminal behaviour in the state of Assam to examine the roles of these factors by following two approaches of study viz. Time series analysis and Panel data analysis. Both the approaches have identified a set of a socio economic and deterrence variables which would impact the crime scenario in the state and district level. Economic growth is seen to have a long term association with crime rates, while inflation is positively related as expected since the rise in prices reduces the real legible earning for the people thereby making illegitimate earning through criminal activity more lucrative. Logistic supports to the law enforcement agencies play important role in ensuring deterrence to criminal activities. Similarly, the work load on civil police in a police station is an important factor in prevention and detection of crimes. All these empirical results in the study would point to appropriate policy guidelines for better crime management in the state of Assam and its districts.

The present study can be viewed as a unique contribution in the field of comprehensive research work on criminal behaviour in the state of Assam and its districts, as no such research is known to have been conducted focusing on the determinants of crimes in the state . It has addressed the issues concerning the long term trend, patterns and shifts in the composition of crimes so as to make an assessment of nature and magnitude of the crimes, to explore the causes and determinants of criminal behaviour while framing out appropriate policy guidelines for better crime management in the state for achieving better quality of life.

