

Post COVID-19 and Crime Rate: A Case Study of KP (Pakistan)

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Abstract

Throughout history, human beings have seen a society that did not face the issues of crime and poverty. Poverty is one of the most significant causes of corruption in a community. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted established societal patterns, including the dynamics of crime. This study focused on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and adopted a descriptive, questionnaire-based research approach, collecting responses from a sample size 6,341. The study results show that the crime rate has increased in post-COVID-19, compared to pre-COVID-19 situation. The crime rate did not increase in the specific region (KP) but rose in almost every part of Pakistan. The study suggests that if the KP government and institutions control inflation, drug supply, and other illegal activities, the crime rate will inevitably decline.

Keywords: Crime Rate, Post-COVID-19, KP Situation

Introduction

The relationship between crime rates and a pandemic is complex and multifaceted. Various factors, including local socio-economic conditions, government responses, and cultural factors, can influence crime rates during a pandemic. The deadliest pandemic, COVID-19, originated in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Ashby, 2020), rapidly spreading globally. Throughout human history, pandemics have been intertwined with crime. The first recorded human pandemic occurred during the Peloponnesian War in 430 B.C. in Athens, where about two-thirds of the population succumbed to the disease (Gul et al., 2022; Stickle & Felson, 2020). Crime, a ubiquitous element of human existence, transcends age, eras, and geographical boundaries, making it a complex and culturally varying phenomenon. Humanity has grappled with both major pandemics and criminal activities since its inception. However, a single pandemic can dramatically reshape human history. COVID-19 serves as a poignant example, simultaneously affecting every facet of human life. This global pandemic has adversely affected the economy, employment, production, tourism, and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the specific measures taken to address the pandemic, such as increased police presence and shifts in law enforcement priorities, can yield varying impacts on crime rates across different regions (Gul et al., 2020).

COVID-19 profoundly impacted the world, resulting in millions of job losses and a global reduction in production. Consequently, over half of the developing economies experienced stagflation and recession. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a global

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pandemic on March 11, 2020. Unemployment and poverty have a known positive correlation with higher crime rates. The pandemic introduced various threats to the global population, including unemployment, financial crises, and poverty, which, in turn, led to an increase in crimes such as robbery, blackmail, cyberbullying, and even homicide. During the Qianlong dynasty, it was recognized that poverty, exacerbated by unemployment, was a driving force behind banditry. Pursuing financial security is a fundamental human need (Buoye, 2019). As a result, individuals facing dire economic circumstances may resort to criminal activities, while those with wealth may become targets of criminal acts. Markets and other essential businesses operating during COVID-19 also became a significant concern. With rising unemployment and reduced demand for goods and services, poverty began to take hold, further intensifying the overall crime rate (Gul et al., 2020).

The pandemic placed governments under immense financial pressure, limiting their ability to support all citizens, and as a result, some turned to crime to provide for their families. The increasing unemployment rates, death toll, and the global financial crisis became pronounced globally. Many countries implemented stay-at-home policies, leading to industries closing and reducing carbon emissions. While certain types of crimes, such as burglary, robbery, battery, and shoplifting, decreased in many advanced countries (Andresen & Hodgkinson, 2020), others, including domestic violence, homicide, and vehicle theft, remained unchanged. The widespread use of the Internet during leisure time contributed to an increase in cybercrime rates (Noor & Haneef, 2021). Social life was disrupted, and many parts of the world saw an immediate rise in poverty, inflation, and unemployment. The nature of crime also transformed. In Los Angeles, there was a 24% decrease in crimes like shoplifting, theft, and looting (Campedelli et al., 2020; Mohler et al., 2020). Similarly, pickpocketing and loot from vehicles declined by 61% in Stockholm.

Figure 1 Burglary Cases in Punjab during COVID-19

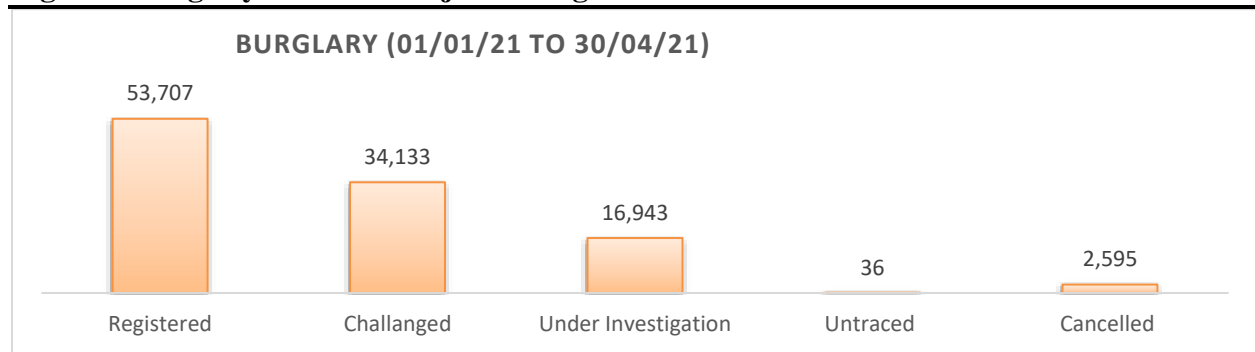


Figure 1 reveals that from January 1st, 2021, to April 30th, 2021, the Punjab province of Pakistan experienced a burglary crime rate, with a total of 4,331 cases reported. Among these cases, 1,812 have been challenged, 2,289 are currently under investigation, 103 remain untraced, and 127 have been cancelled.

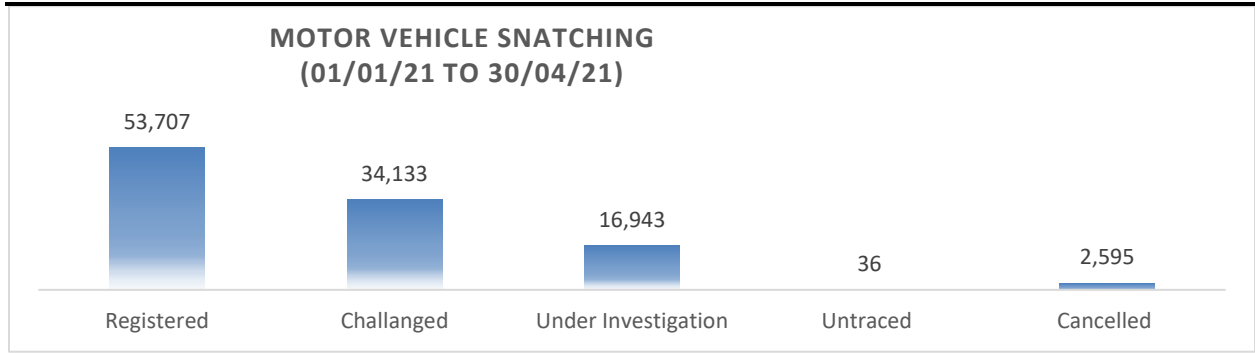
Figure 2 Motor Vehicle Snatching in Punjab

Figure 2 provides information regarding the motor vehicle snatching crime rate in the Punjab province of Pakistan during COVID-19, covering the period from January 1st, 2021, to April 30th, 2021. During this time, a total of 1,725 cases were reported. Among these cases, 1,725 have been challenged, 725 are currently under investigation, 1 remains untraced, and 18 have been cancelled.

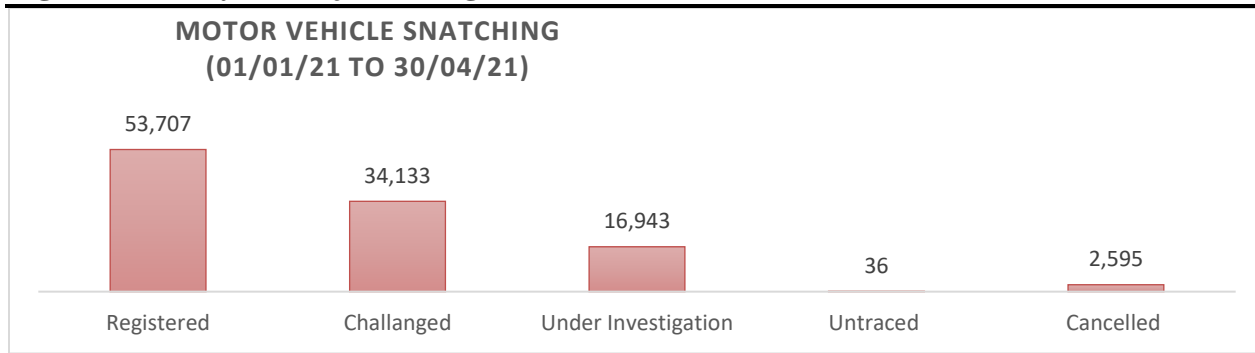
Figure 3 Dacoity in Punjab during Covid-19

Figure 3 illustrates that during COVID-19, from January 1st, 2021, to April 30th, 2021, the Dacoity crime rate in the Punjab province of Pakistan reported a total of 267 cases. Among these cases, 146 have been challenged, 99 are currently under investigation, 2 remain untraced, and 20 have been cancelled.

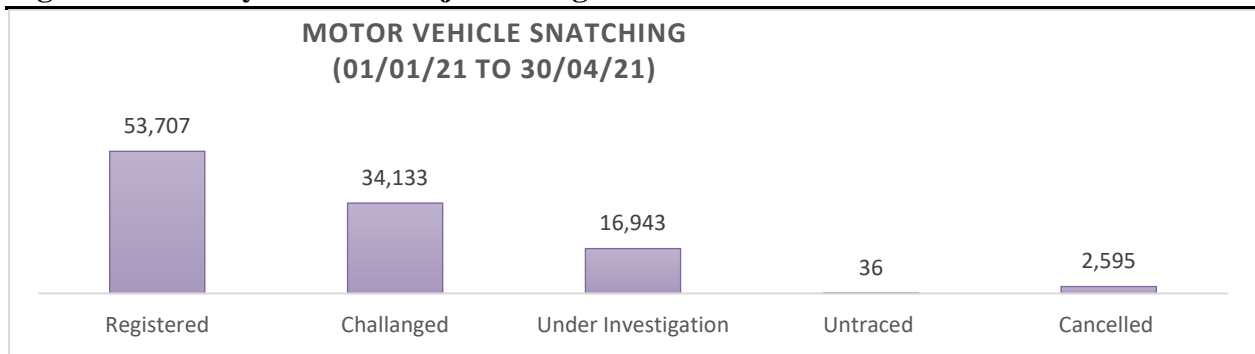
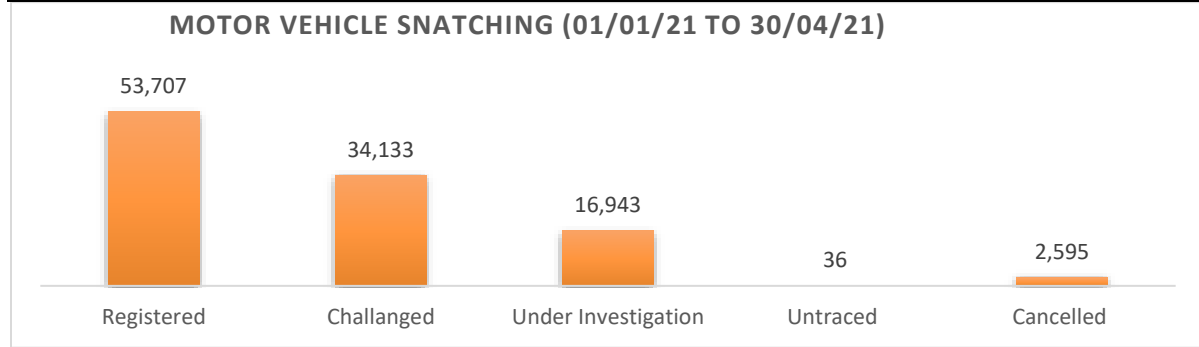
Figure 4 Robbery Cases in Punjab during Covid-19

Figure 4 indicates that during COVID-19, from January 1st, 2021, to April 30th, 2021, the robbery crime rate in the Punjab province of Pakistan recorded a total of 6,875 reported cases. Among these cases, 3,696 have been challenged, 2,851 are currently under investigation, 42 remain untraced, and 286 have been cancelled.

Figure 5 Motor Vehicle Theft Cases in Punjab during Covid-19



The figure illustrates motor vehicle theft cases occurring from January 1st, 2021 to April 30th, 2021, in the Punjab province of Pakistan. During this period, there were 11,406 reported cases of motor vehicle theft. Among these cases, 5,408 have been challenged, 5,586 are currently under investigation, 72 remain untraced, and 340 have been cancelled.

Figure 6 Miscellaneous Cases in Punjab during Covid-19

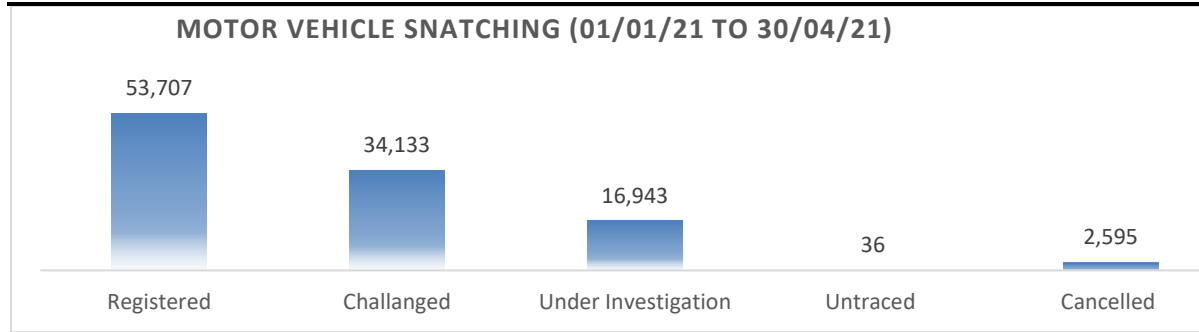


Figure 6 provides information on the miscellaneous crime rate in the Punjab province of Pakistan during COVID-19, covering the period from January 1st, 2021, to April 30th, 2021. During this time, there were a total of 53,707 reported cases of miscellaneous crimes. Among these cases, 34,133 have been challenged, 16,943 are currently under investigation, 36 remain untraced, and 2,595 have been cancelled.

Figure 7 COVID-19 and Crime Rate in Sindh

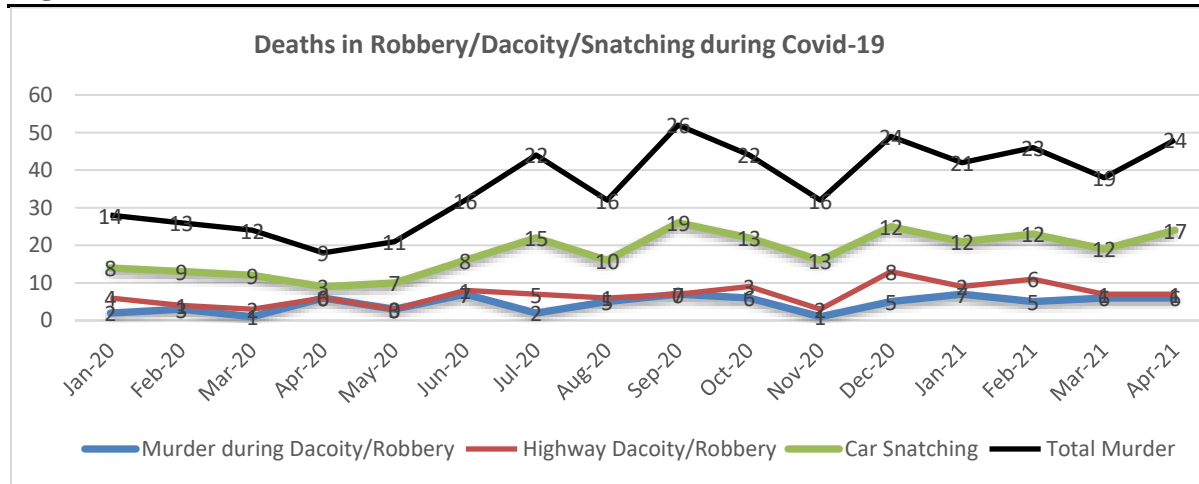


Figure 7 provides a graphic representation of the correlation between COVID-19 and the crime rate in Sindh from January 2020 to April 2021. The data reveals a notable increase in crimes during the pandemic. In January 2020, 14 murders occurred with car snatching, highway dacoity or robbery, and murders during dacoity or robbery. However, in April 2020, this number decreased to just two cases. From January 2021 to April 2021, there was a noticeable rise in the total number of murders, accompanied by an increase in incidents related to car snatching, highway dacoity and robbery, and murders during dacoity and robbery.

Literature Review

Andresen and Hodgkinson (2020) examined the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on socio-economic activities. As the virus rapidly spread, nearly every state implemented small and large socio-economic restrictions, including the closure of businesses, social distancing measures, stay-at-home orders, and remote work arrangements. These social restrictions had a worldwide effect on crime rates. The study investigated how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the incidence of criminal activities in Queensland, Australia, encompassing property crimes, violent offenses, and mischief. This research employed structural break tests, revealing a significant decrease in criminal offenses during the initial months of lockdown.

Felson et al. (2020) observed that the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the implementation of restraint policies in numerous locations, resulting in significant alterations in daily routines. During the early period of social restrictions, there was a considerable decrease in crime rates. Their research focused on burglaries in Detroit, Michigan, throughout March 2020, a time marked by substantial changes in everyday activities. They conducted their analysis on 879 block groups, which included both residential and mixed-use areas. The month was segmented into three phases: the pre-containment phase, the transition phase, and the post-containment phase. Their findings revealed that in areas with mixed land use, there was an increase in burglaries compared to residential land use areas, particularly in blocks with weaker security measures.

Noor and Haneef, (2021) found in the study that the pandemic spread globally within months. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic and a single country is not yet protected from this pandemic. According to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) 2020 report, "this global pandemic can cause different threats to the population like hunger, unemployment, and financial crises." These crises may cause an increase in crimes like robbery." They explained the severe threats of crime, like robbery. Therefore, other digital and technological defensive measures like central command and control centers, artificially intelligent drones, and intelligent CCTV cameras were adopted to reduce and stop robberies during COVID-19.

Wahid (2020) explained that according to the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, COVID-19 has slowed down criminal activities globally, in contrast to Pakistan, which experienced an increase in crime rate due to an increase in financial and psychological problems. Therefore, the National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) in Pakistan claimed that the crime rate went unabated during the pandemic. Some events of domestic violence, cyber-harassment, kidnaps, human trafficking, rapes, and extortion have also been accounted for in this research. Lots of criminals changed their pattern of crimes.

Sodani, (2020) examined that during the initial stage of the pandemic, the world faced many different threats like poverty, unemployment, hunger, security, stagflation, and financial crises. Unemployment is one of the major causes of poverty, security, peace, and financial crises. The International Labor Organization (ILO) warned that about 195 million people lost their jobs.

Scholars have conducted several studies to examine the relationship between COVID-19 and crime rates in different regions and contexts. However, there has yet to be a parallel study focusing specifically on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. This study aims to address this gap in the existing research by providing insights into how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced crime rates in KPK. By focusing on this specific region, we can better understand the unique dynamics at play and contribute valuable information to the broader body of knowledge on the subject.

Methodology

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether the post-COVID-19 increase in crime rate in KP.

Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The population of the study was the whole province of Pakistan. There are four provinces: Punjab, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh. The questionnaires conducted in all the provinces are among the hardest and longest processes. That was the reason we targeted one province. A sample represents the tests of various individuals (Bernstein et al., 2003). The study targeted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa rather than whole provinces. Therefore, the sampling framework consisted of 6,341 responses. The data was collected through a questionnaire in all the KP districts.

Research Instruments and Construction

According to Kaul (1993), questionnaires are a standard method for gathering various data types for study. It is frequently used in primary research to learn more about specific situations and customs and to look into people's or groups' beliefs and attitudes. A questionnaire and personal information sheet were created to get the respondents' information informally. Four fundamental categories of scales are used to assess opinion (Stevens, 1946). The Likert scale is the most adaptable of these scales and may be created more quickly than any other kind. The questionnaire for potential responses was created using the Likert scale.

Results and discussion

The below figures show the results of the estimated data. Each figure represents a separate outcome of a questionnaire.

Figure 8 Youth Crime Rate Due to COVID 19

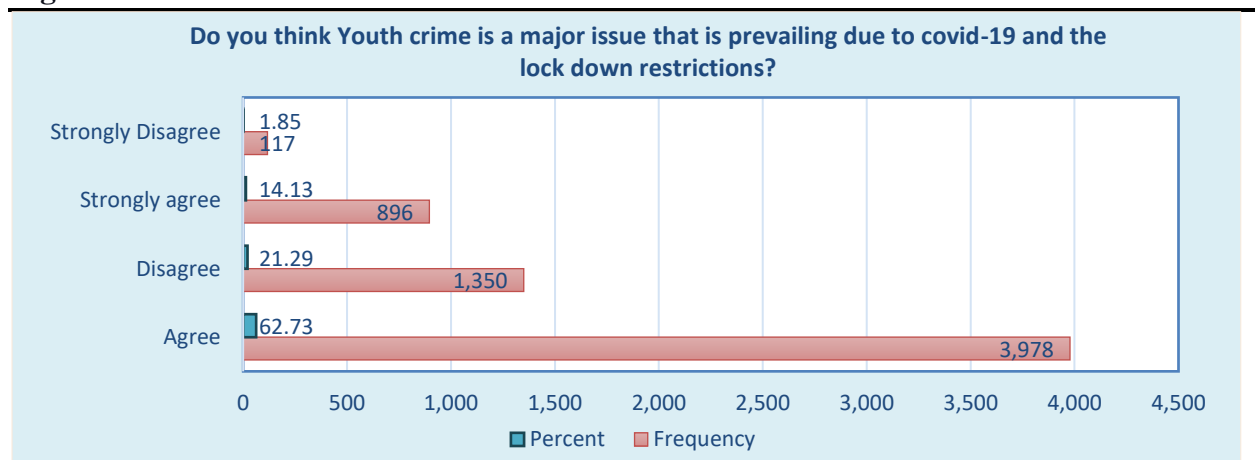


Figure 8 shows that youth crime has become a significant issue due to COVID-19 and the associated lockdown restrictions. The data shows that 62.73% of people agree with this statement, 21.29% disagree, and 14.13% strongly agree. Only 1.85% of people strongly disagree with the statement. Therefore, most people agree that youth crime is a significant issue resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures.

Figure 9 Youth prone to consuming drugs due to COVID 19

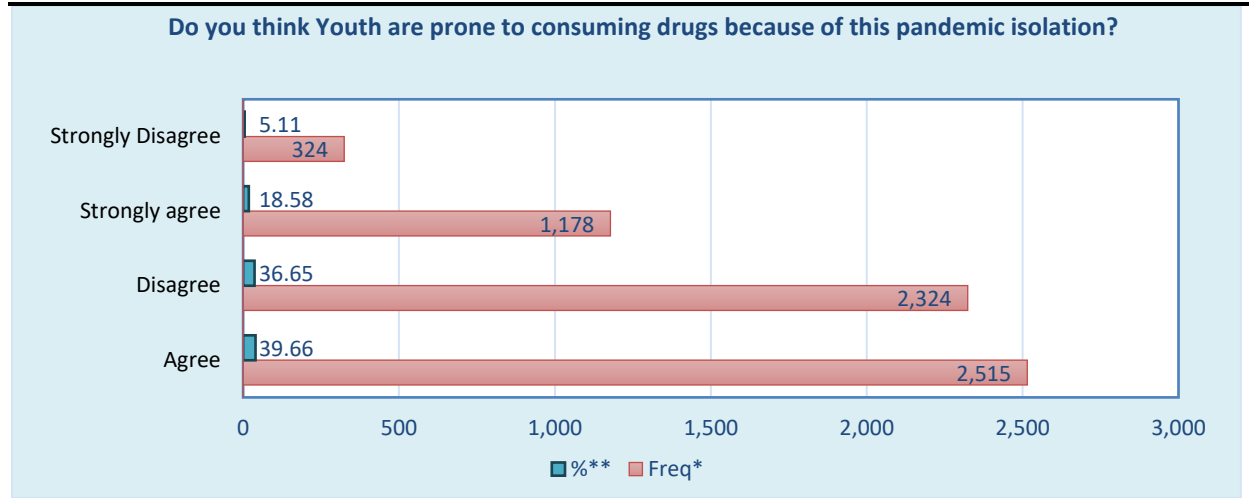
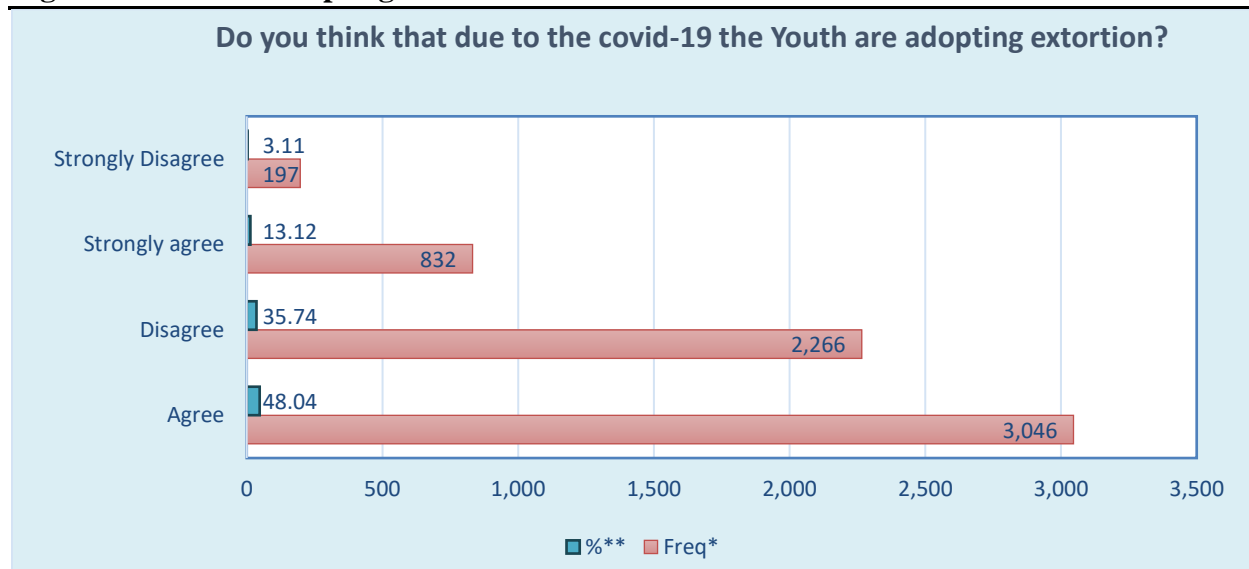


Figure 9 describes the potential impact of pandemic isolation on youth and their tendency to consume drugs. The data shows that 39.66% of respondents agree with this statement, 36.65% disagree, and 18.58% strongly agree. These results indicate that there needs to be a clear consensus among the respondents. While a significant portion agrees or strongly agrees that youth may be prone to consuming drugs due to pandemic isolation, a substantial number disagree or strongly disagree with this notion.

Figure 10 Youth is adopting extortion due to COVID 19



In Figure 10, 48.04% of respondents agree that youth are adopting extortion due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while 35.74% disagree. The majority of people agree with this assertion. The results indicate that a notable portion of respondents either agree or strongly agree that youth are involved

in extortion due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, a considerable number of respondents also hold a different viewpoint, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement.

Figure 11 Youth is indulged in crime due to COVID 19

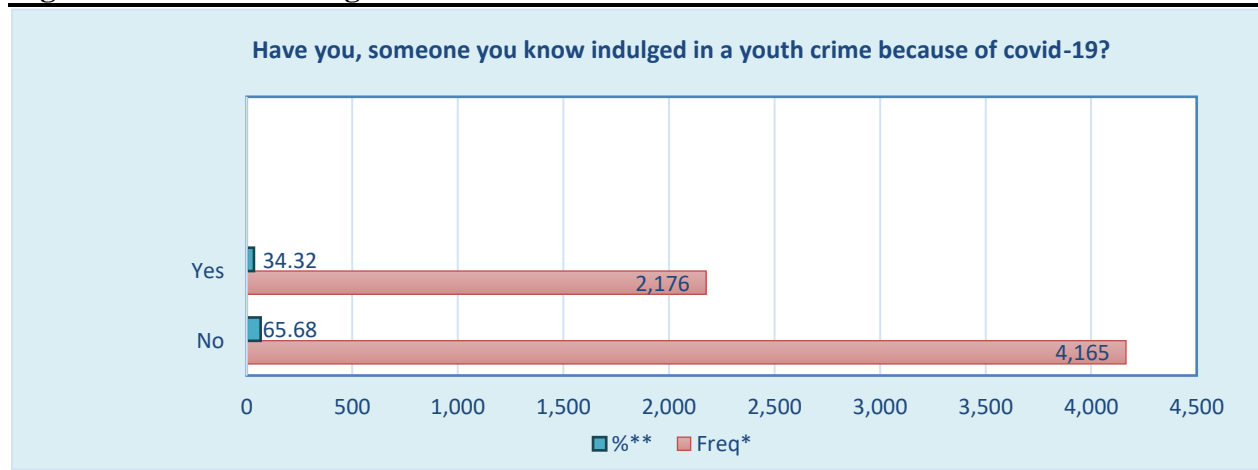


Figure 11 illustrates that 65.68% answered 'no,' while 34.32% answered 'yes.' The majority of people responded with 'no' to these statements. The results suggest that a significant portion of the respondents have either personally experienced or know someone who has been involved in youth crime during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 12 Receiving end of youth crime

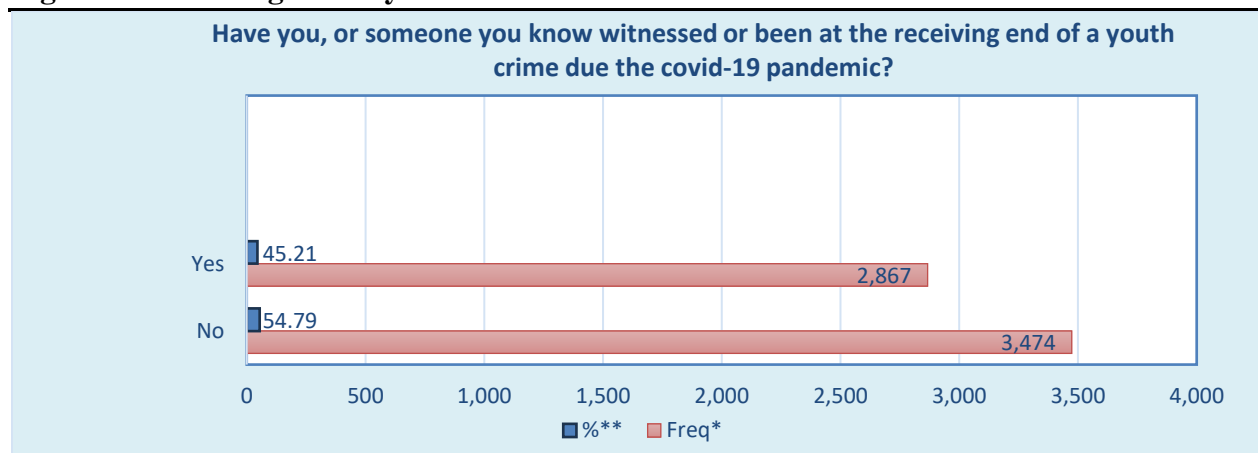
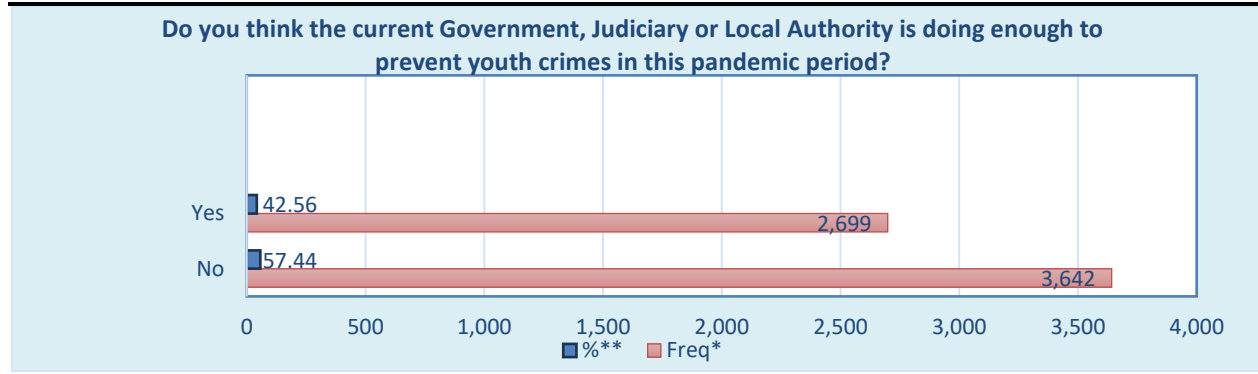


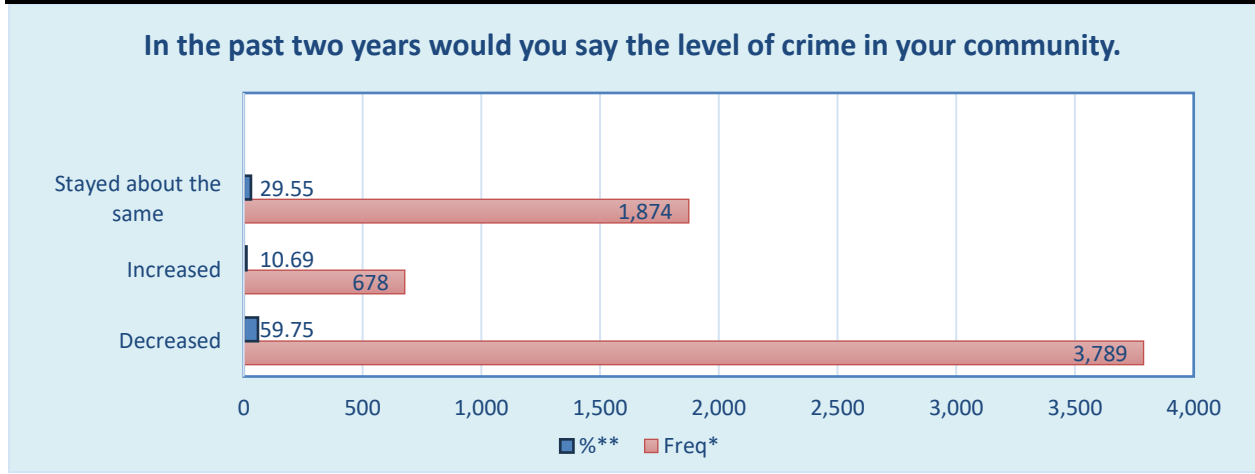
Figure 12, shows that 54.79% answered 'no,' indicating they have not witnessed or been at the receiving end of youth crime during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 45.21% answered 'yes.' Thus, more than half of the people provided a 'No' response."

Figure 13 Performance of judiciary and local authority to prevent youth crimes

This figure 13, shows whether the current government, judiciary, or local authorities are doing enough to prevent youth crimes during the pandemic. 57.44% of people answered 'NO,' while 42.56% answered 'yes.' During COVID-19, nearly every government struggled to address multiple issues simultaneously due to the severity of this pandemic. Consequently, the government and its institutions failed to control the crime rate.

Figure 14 Seriousness of increase in crime level

Figure 14 shows that 6.34% of people do not feel the level of crime has increased at all due to COVID-19 in their community, while 23.66% seriously face the crime issue due to COVID-19 in their community. Therefore, the frequency of those who do not feel too serious about the issue is 1,427, which represents 22.50%, while the frequency of those who take the issue very seriously is 1,148, accounting for 29.40%. The overall results indicate that, during COVID-19, the crime rate increased due to socio-economic conditions.

Figure 15 Level of crime in community due to COVID 19

The crime rate increased due to COVID-19, with a number of cases reported during and after the pandemic throughout the entire region. The table above reveals that 59.75% of the crime rate decreased in our society. On the other hand, 29.55% of the crime rate increased in our society, and 10.69% of respondents indicated that the crime level stayed about the same in our community.

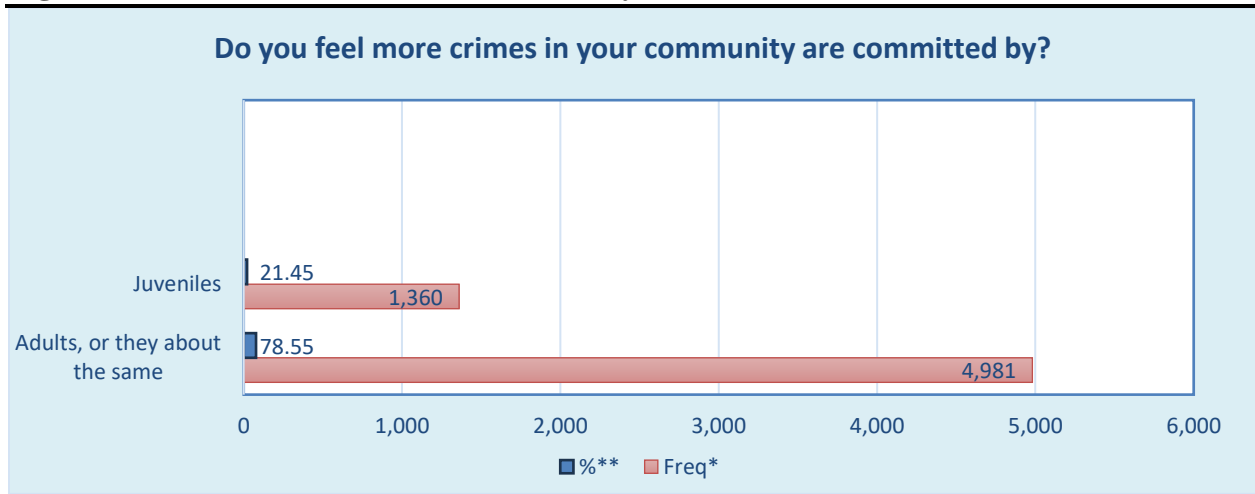
Figure 16 Occurrence of crimes in community due to COVID 19

Figure 16 shows that 78.55% of adults feel there is more crime in the community, while 21.45% of juveniles share the same sentiment. There are various reasons why both adults and juveniles have adopted these dangerous behaviors, and a lack of education is one of the major contributing factors.

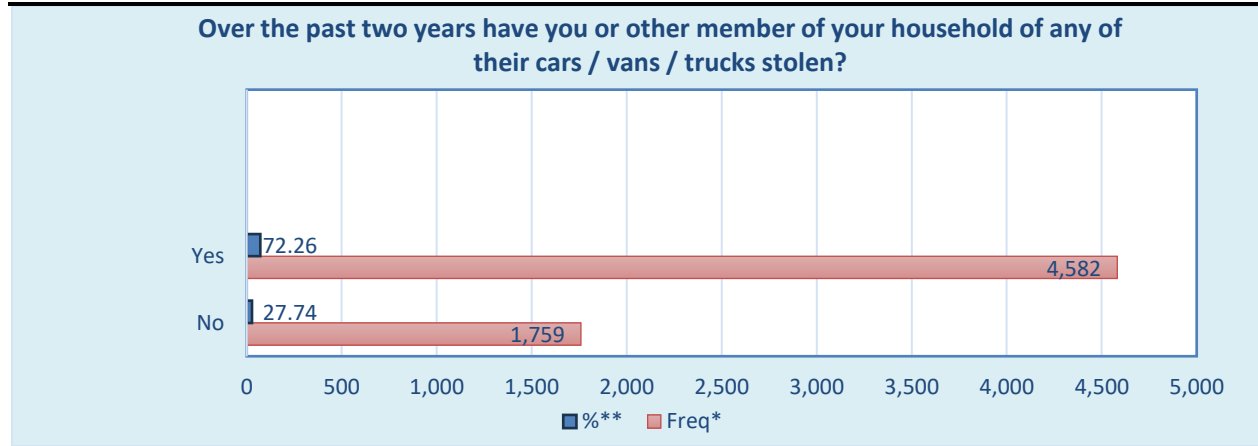
Figure 17 If automobiles are stolen in family over the past two years?

Figure 17 shows that 72.26% of the responses are 'NO' when it comes to the past two years of any of their cars, vans, or trucks being stolen, while 27.74% responded with 'Yes'.

Figure 18 If anyone entered your residence or steal something over past two years?

Figure 18 describes the statements regarding incidents over the past two years: Did anyone actually get into your house or flat without permission and steal or try to steal something? Thus, 80.05% responded 'NO' to unauthorized entry into their house or flat and theft, while 19.95% responded 'YES' to such incidents.

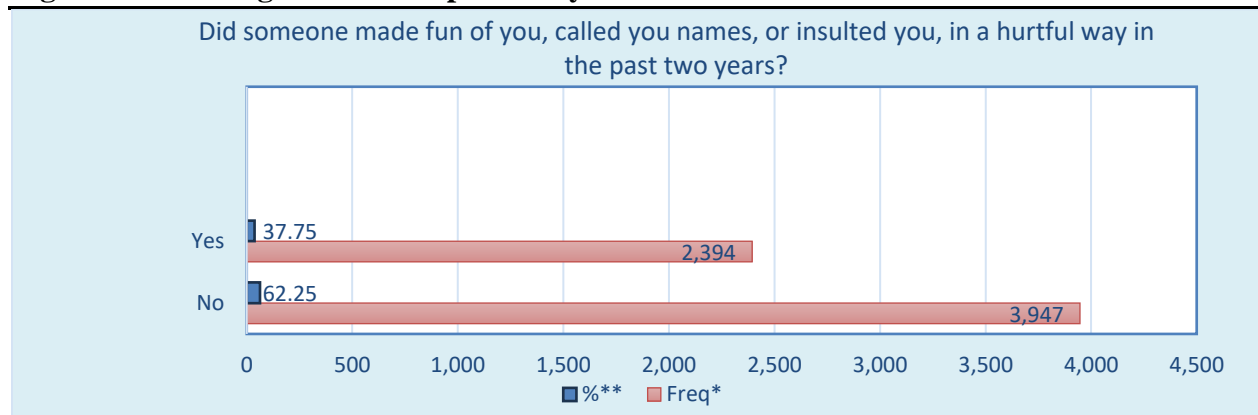
Figure 19 Insulting incidents in past two years

Figure 19 reveals that 62.25% answered 'NO,' indicating that they did not experience such incidents, while 37.75% answered 'YES.'

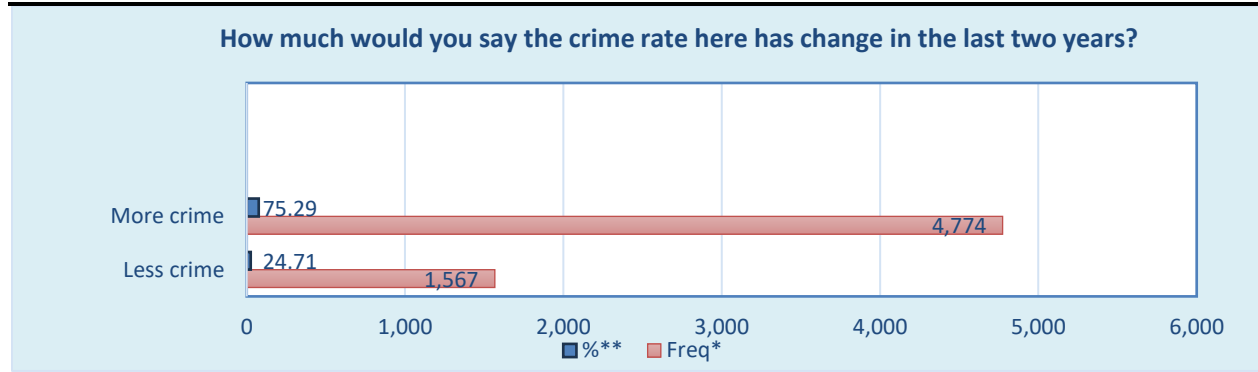
Figure 20 Change in crime rate in last two years

Figure 20 illustrates that 24.71% of people reported a lower crime rate change in the last two years, while 75.29% reported a higher crime rate change in the same period. In reality, the crime rate increased after COVID-19 compared to the pre-COVID-19 period.

Figure 21 Lockdown impact on domestic crime

Figure 21 describes a substantial change, with 73.46% of respondents reporting an increase in domestic crime in our society during the lockdown, while the remaining 26.54% did not face this type of problem. The majority of people experienced these issues. It is important to note that these significant perceptions are based on individual opinions and may be influenced by personal experiences, observations, or media reports.

Conclusion

This single pandemic has profoundly impacted every aspect of the world. While it is true that certain types of crimes exhibited fluctuations during the pandemic, the overall influence on crime rates varied across regions and categories of offenses. The dynamics of crime patterns shift during a pandemic, and it is crucial to recognize that crime trends are intricate and influenced by many factors. In the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments-imposed lockdowns and restrictions, which diminished opportunities for certain types of crimes like burglary and street-level offenses. Simultaneously, new challenges and crimes emerged, such as cybercrime and fraud related to COVID-19 scams. Therefore, most respondents agree that youth crime is prevalent due to COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions. However, many respondents disagree that youth are more inclined to consume drugs due to pandemic-induced isolation.

The data suggests that many respondents either agree or strongly agree that youth have turned to extortion due to the pandemic. The closure of businesses due to a lack of money emerged as a significant reason driving youth to commit crimes during the pandemic. Regrettably, the government and its institutions struggled to control the crime rate throughout and after COVID-

19. The findings underscore the seriousness of the crime rate during and post-COVID-19, significantly influenced by various socio-economic challenges. The study suggests that the government should focus on controlling higher inflation and adopt price control policies while establishing industrial zones where feasible. As well as government institutions effectively control illegal activities such as the supply of drugs, Hashish (Chars), Ice (Crystal methamphetamine), Etc., the KP government and institutions can play a vital role in reducing crime rates.

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