

Q Explain the concept of crime as a social problem. How does the perception of crime as a social problem vary across different societies?

Introduction:

Crime is not just breaking the law; it is also a problem for the whole society. It disturbs peace, damages trust, and stops progress.

As Durkheim, a famous sociologist, said, "crime is present in every society, but it becomes a problem when it harms social unity. That is why crime is studied as a social issue and not only as a legal matter."

structural
Roots of
Crime

crime as a
development
Barrier.

crime as
a threat
to social
order

Crime as
a
social
Problem

crime as a
public
Health
concern

crime as
a reflection
of value
conflicts

(a) Structural Roots of crime.

many crimes grow out of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. when people cannot meet basic needs, they may turn to theft or illegal work.

Example:

UNDP (2024) report shows jobless youth in South Asia are more likely to join crime groups.

(b) Crime as a Threat to Social order:

crime creates fear in society, people feel unsafe everywhere especially in public places, and trust among citizens is lost.

Street crimes in Karachi disturb daily life and spread fear.

(c) Crime as a reflection of value conflicts:

Crime is not always the same for every society. what people call a crime depends on their beliefs, culture, and traditions. Sometimes, one group thinks an act is wrong and criminal, while other group considers it normal or acceptable. This

happens because their values clash.

As Honor killing is condemned by law but still practiced in some cultures.

(d) Crime as a public Health Concern:

Crime does not only harm property but also hurts health. As violence causes injuries, death, and even stress.

For example: (WHO 2023) declared violence a public health crisis worldwide.

(e) Crime as a Development Barrier:

High crime not only harms individuals but also slows down the progress of a country. When crimes like corruption, theft, or terrorism increase, people lose trust in the system. Investors avoid putting money in such places, and businesses fail to grow.

For example: World Bank (2024) noted that

Insecurity investment reduces Foreign in South Asia

(3) Perception of crime across Different Societies:

Global South vs Global North

Cultural Relativism in crime

Developed vs Developing Societies

Traditional vs Modern Societies

Media and Perception of crime

(a) Cultural Relativism in crime

one is considered a crime in one culture may not be seen as a crime in another. This idea is called cultural relativism. Societies have different traditions, values and moral rules, so their definition of crime changes.

As Alcohol is banned in Islamic countries but legal in Western state.

(b) Developed vs Developing Societies

In rich countries, crime is often seen as individual's bad choice, so focus is on rehabilitation. In poor countries, it is seen as a system problem, caused by poverty and weak governance.

As UNODC (2024) highlights that developing countries face higher street crime rates, while developed ones struggle more with digital and corporate crimes.

(c) Traditional Vs Modern

Societies: Traditional societies look at crime with religion and morality, while modern societies treat it as matter of law and human rights.

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

"In 2023, the UNODC world drug report highlighted that global cocaine production surged to a record 3,708 tonnes, with using numbers reaching 25 million."

(d) Media And Perception of crime:

media shapes how people see crime. Some crimes are shown more (like terrorism), while others are hidden (like corruption). This changes public opinion.

(e) Global South vs Global North:

In developing countries (Global South), crime is often about survival (theft, street crime). In developed countries (Global North), focus is on advanced crimes like cybercrime and corporate fraud.

Conclusion:

Crime as a social problem is shaped by poverty, inequality, culture, and values. Its meaning changes from one society to another. In Pakistan, crime must be seen as not only as a legal issue but also as a social issue that blocks progress. To solve it, governments need to reduce poverty, make laws fair, and build awareness. Only then can societies live with peace, trust and stability.