

Women in Crime: Socio-economic Background of the Women Criminals of Jorhat District of Assam

Ayousree Dowara¹
Dr. Karabi Konch²

Abstract

Women and crime has lately become a broad subject of study in the fields of social work, sociology, criminology, and law. Women's criminal conduct has been a neglected subject of inquiry for decades. The woman has always been the cornerstone of the family and of society in general, according to human history. Women have been viewed as keepers of societal standards, traditions, customs, morality, and family cohesion since the birth of civilization. In every faith, women have been elevated to a place of honour. The immediate concern of the researcher is why the woman, who is regarded as the cornerstone of every family and spiritual faith, and without whose blessings the work of infusing new life into humanity cannot be accomplished, has gone astray, leaving her mark on the crime scene. Therefore this article looks into the socio-economic backgrounds of the women criminal from the perspective of the law fraternity, to understand more about the concept of women criminality.

Keyword: *Women criminal, law, socioeconomic background, crime, criminal.*

Date of Submission: 02-05-2022

Date of Acceptance: 14-05-2022

I. Introduction

In today's culture, both crime and criminals has become the centre of attention. The rate of crime is rapidly growing. In India, criminal behaviour has always been associated with men. Today, however, the old hypothesis has been disproved. Tensions, anger, envy, hostility, and hatred inspire women, just as they do males, to commit crimes. They are involved in a wide range of criminal activities. This change is primarily due to shifting social norms and ideals, as well as the effect of other cultural trends, all of which contribute to life's complexity.

There is hardly any society with no problem of crime. Crime is rapidly increasing and crime and criminal both have become the focus of attention in the present society. Crime, in India, is considered a male behaviour. But today this notion is proved wrong. Women, like men, suffer from tensions, frustration, jealousy, enmity and hatred, which motivate them to indulge in all sorts of crimes (Thomas, A. William, 2004). The present study will focus on the views of the judiciary regarding women criminality. This study will be an attempt to understand the profile of female offenders in relation to their personal and social features. This is done in order to comprehend the reality of the offender's social life, as well as their cultural antecedents, social background, and personal information such as age, caste, education, religion, occupations, and other factors that influence their way of thinking. These antecedents are equally important in identifying and comprehending offenders' social attitudes and behaviour patterns, as well as other data gathered from inmate interviews. The following pattern is used to investigate the general features of female inmates.

Crimes related to Men and Women

Both men and women have low arrest rates for major crimes like homicide or robbery, but high arrest rates for small property crimes like larceny-theft or public order offences like drunk driving or disorderly conduct. In most of the same criminal categories where males have high arrest rates, women have somewhat high arrest rates as well. When compared to larceny theft, for example, murder rates are low for both sexes (Bhosle, Smriti A. 2009).

Women's criminality is disguised by the fact that their crimes are under-reported to a larger level than men's. Men and women committed roughly the same amount of crimes, but that women's offences like illegal abortion, prostitution, and theft were underreported (Otto Pollack, 1950). There are significant disparities

¹ PhD Research Scholar, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Nagaon, Assam, India.

² Associate Professor, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Nagaon, Assam, India

between women's and men's criminal behaviour. Statistical data are sure to show that women are more involved in abortion and infanticide crimes than males, not because they are more involved in such crimes, but because the crimes are more easily proven against women. Women have a key role in prostitution, whether as procurers or otherwise, although males are vastly outnumbered in virtually every situation. Women are heavily involved in various aspects, such as receiving stolen items. However, women are less than half as involved as males in this regard. Women are significantly more likely than males to participate in crimes in which they may play a relatively passive role. This is more than likely owing to their lack of physical power and capability, as well as the lack of opportunities provided by their position in the economic, industrial, and commercial sphere (Tyagi, D. 2006).

Farrington and Morris (1983) discovered that women were subjected to less harsh penalties. The majority of female offenders were first-time offenders who had committed a less serious version of the relevant offence, such as stealing smaller or fewer things, using less violence, and so on. Prior criminal history and the gravity of the offence are critical variables in deciding the harshness of a sentence for any offender.

Weak social bonds and parental controls, low risk perceptions, delinquent associations, opportunities to learn criminal motives, techniques, and other access to criminal opportunities all increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour for both men and women. In this sense, traditional criminological theories are useful in understanding female crime (Bhosle, Smriti, A 2009).

II. Review Of Literature

Women are frequently associated with criminal justice systems as victims, current trends show that an increasing number of women are now appearing as suspects, accused, and prisoners. Lombroso and Ferrero (1895) in their work, *The Female Offender*, states that female crime was closely tied to biology. They gave the theory of atavism which is based on the concept of 'born criminal'. Atavism confers criminality on the men having similarity with savage people. Fox, J. and Timothy F. Hartnagel (1979) conducted a study in Canada which observed that the increasing rate of participation in the female labour force and their role outside the home will provide them with more opportunities for committing crimes especially those related to white collar crime.

Anju Bajpai and P. K.(2000) attempted to investigate the topic of female criminality from a feminist standpoint. The goal of this study is to provide an assessment of the problem, its scope and aetiology, as well as personal characteristics of female offenders, their attitudes and behaviour patterns, aspiration, and values. The study's quantitative conclusions are backed up by qualitative facts in the form of detailed case histories.

Objectives

The present study will analyse the views of judiciary personnel regarding women criminality. Lawyers' viewpoints are uncommon in scholarly literature and therefore, this study looks at the perspectives of an important population of criminal justice professionals.

- To study the socio-economic background of the women criminals.

III. Methodology

The methods used are both primary and secondary data for the purpose of this research paper. The primary data was collected through Structured Interview Schedule. The sources of secondary data are collected from books, journals, theses and concerned websites. The sample taken by the researcher for the study was 20 respondents, selected on the basis of convenient sampling. The respondents were the personnel's from the law and police departments. In this study the law fraternity of Jorhat District of Assam was selected as field.

Area of Study

Assam is a state in Northeast India, situated south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys and covers an area of 78,438 kms (30,285 sq. mi). The state is bordered by Bhutan and the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north; Nagaland and Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh to the south; and West Bengal to the west via the Siliguri Corridor, a 22 kilometres strip of land that connects the state to the rest of India. There are 33 districts in Assam and the present study was conducted Jorhat district of Assam.

Analysis

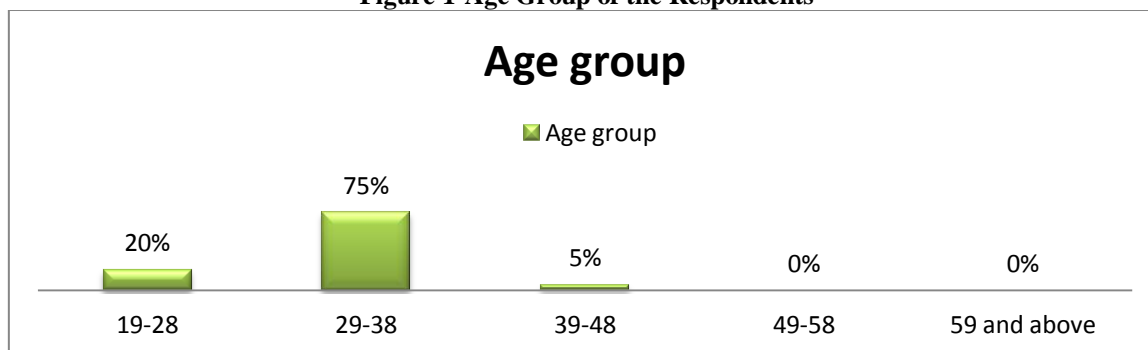
This article presents the profile of female offenders which is examined in relation to the personal and social features of women offenders. This is done in order to comprehend the reality of the offender's social life, as well as their cultural antecedents, social background, and personal information such as age, caste, education, religion, occupations, and other factors that influence their way of thinking. These antecedents are equally

important in identifying and comprehending offender's social attitudes and behaviour patterns, as well as other data gathered from interviews.

1. Age Group

Age has an impact on the socialization process. As a result, the study of age structure becomes crucial in understanding the social background of the women criminals. When the question related to the age of women offenders was asked from the law fraternity, 75 per cent believed that middle aged women of the age group 29-38 years commit more crimes. 20 per cent respondent had a view that the young women belonging to the age group of 19-28 years are more prone to commit crimes and rest 5 per cent stated that they are between the age group of 39-48 years. Different academic studies on crime and criminality show that young people, regardless of their gender, are more vulnerable to crime.

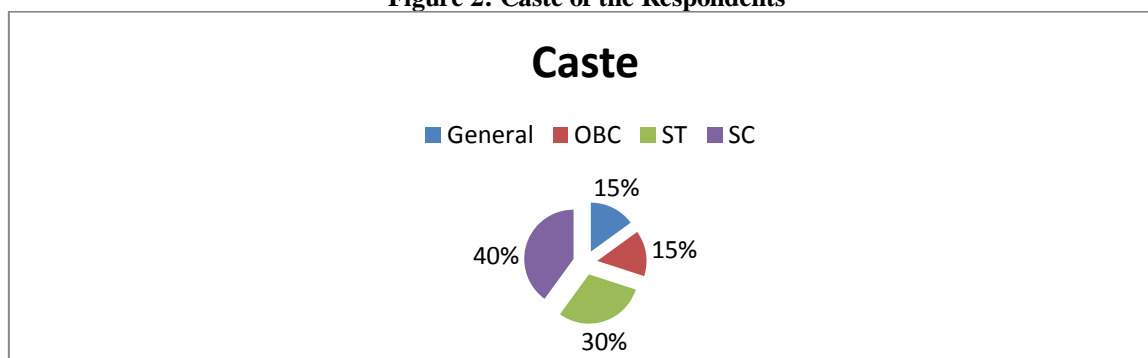
Figure 1-Age Group of the Respondents



2. Caste

In sociology, caste is defined as a socially stratified structure based on hereditary social and economic position. Caste groups are social identity categories that provide caste group members with the chance to establish strong social identities. A caste system is a social structure in which people are classified into distinct social groups, each of which determines the possibilities, constraints, and nature of relationships with people from other groups. The caste system imposes various rules and restrictions on women. These restrictions are still in place today. As a result of this system of religion and rituals, women continue to be treated differently by various castes. Women are also affected by religious biases, and as a result, they tend to commit crimes.

Figure 2: Caste of the Respondents

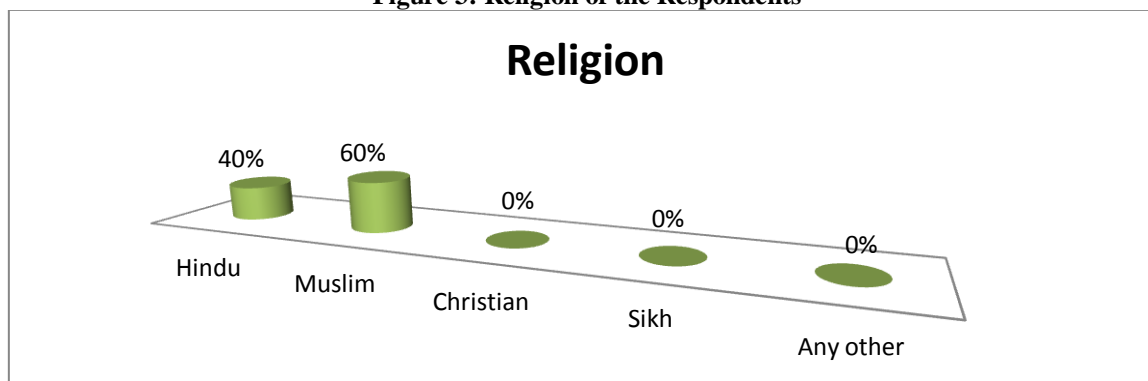


When asked regarding the caste of the women criminal, 40 per cent stated that Scheduled Caste followed by 30 per cent responses on Scheduled Tribe. Further, 15 per cent stated that women belonging to general caste and another 15 per cent belonging to other backward classes also commit crime.

3. Religion

Religious views influence societal limitations on women, as well as people's perceptions of home and outside duties in general. Women are subject to various rules and limitations in the all the religions. Even now, these limitations are still in effect. As a result, women continue to be treated differently by religion as a system of belief and rituals. Women's personality patterns are influenced by these operational restrictions throughout time. In light of these facts, women in a culturally diverse society like ours may find it difficult to adjust to shifting social trends. Women are also affected by religious biases, and as a result, they tend to commit crimes.

Figure 3: Religion of the Respondents

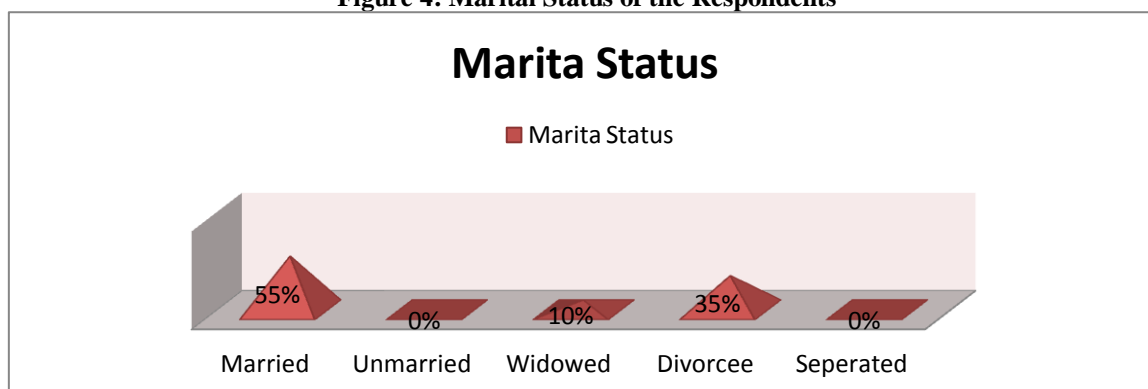


From this study it was found that 40 per cent from the law fraternity stated that most women criminals belongs to Hindu religion and the rest 60 per cent stated that most of the women offenders belong to Muslim religion. However it was interesting to see that none of the respondents stated about other religions such as Christians and Sikhs. Religion is thought to play an important influence in the development and maintenance of morality. Crime and immorality are, to some extent, synonyms. Individuals' behaviour has been impacted by it. Religious patterns and beliefs, on the whole, govern behavioural patterns in the family, then in the community, and finally in society.

4. Marital Status

The present study shows that 55 per cent respondents from law fraternity had a view that women criminals were married. 10 per cent believes that they are widowed and 35 per cent stated that divorced women commit more crime.

Figure 4: Marital Status of the Respondents

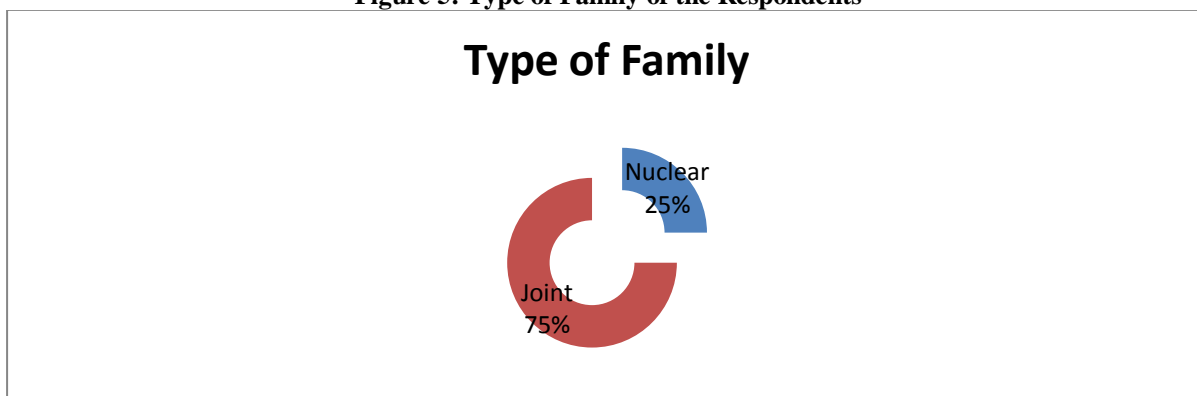


As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that married life, in particular, and family life in general, throughout the career of a female criminal, need special consideration when examining the causes of female crime. In culture like India, the majority of obligations are tied to marriage, and socio-cultural standards are always far higher for married people than for single people. When these expectations are not met within the confines of legal methods, women may resort to illegal activity.

5. Type of Family

The environment in which a person lives has a significant impact on his or her behaviour. The lifestyles, habitation, and amenities enjoyed by family members, as well as the hygienic conditions, have an impact on socialization, supervision, and control of family members. When larger families are living in small, insufficient housing, the situation in the family gets much worse. The size and structure of the family play a big role in the adjustment difficulty.

Figure 5: Type of Family of the Respondents

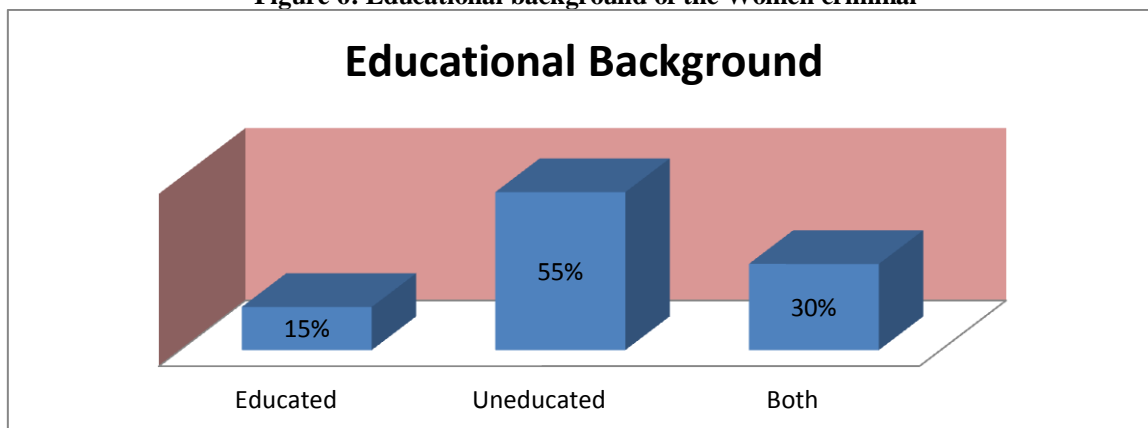


From this study it was found that 75 per cent of the respondents from the law fraternity stated that the women offenders generally belong to joint family structure and the rest 25 per cent stated that women from nuclear family tend to commit more crimes.

6. Education

The findings of this study, like many others, demonstrate a favourable relationship between education and crime. Only 15 per cent respondents viewed that educated women commits crime the rest 85 per cent stated that uneducated women have more criminal tendencies. It demonstrates that women's crime is inextricably connected to their lack of literacy. Offender's educational backgrounds suggest that education has a significant influence in criminal behaviour.

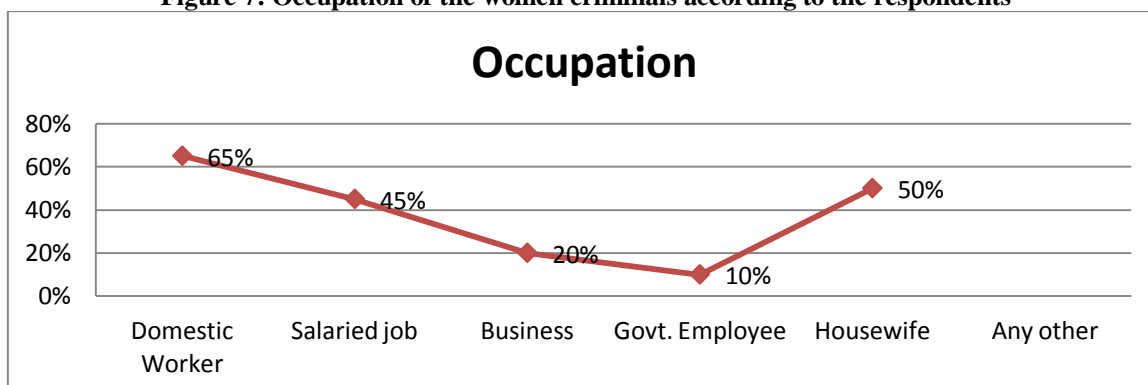
Figure 6: Educational background of the Women criminal



7. Occupation

There is no denying that most of the crimes are done for financial gain, and a person's financial situation is determined by his or her employment. The impact of offender's employment on the current study was considerable.

Figure 7: Occupation of the women criminals according to the respondents

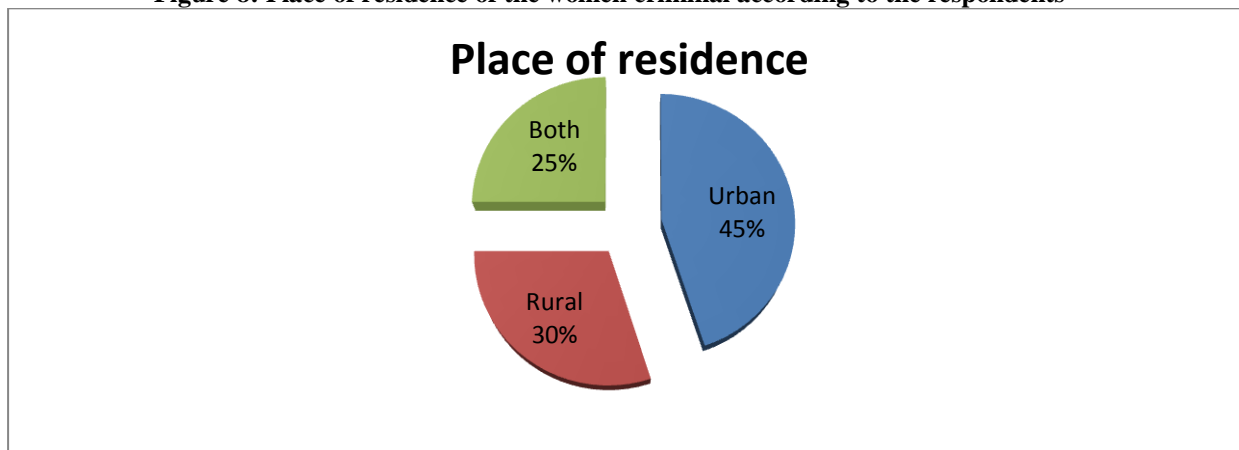


From this study it was found that that majority i.e., 65 per cent of the respondents from the law fraternity stated that domestic workers who work as domestic help commit more crime. It represents that women who are economically weaker tends to commit more crimes. This is followed by housewives i.e., 50 per cent and salaried women 45 per cent. The respondents further stated that 20 per cent women from business background and 10 per cent from government job also tends to commit more crime.

8. Place of Residence

Despite the fact that crime and criminals are not confined by any geographical borders, yet the place of residences the criminals is extremely important in sociology to understanding the correlation between crime and criminals.

Figure 8: Place of residence of the women criminal according to the respondents

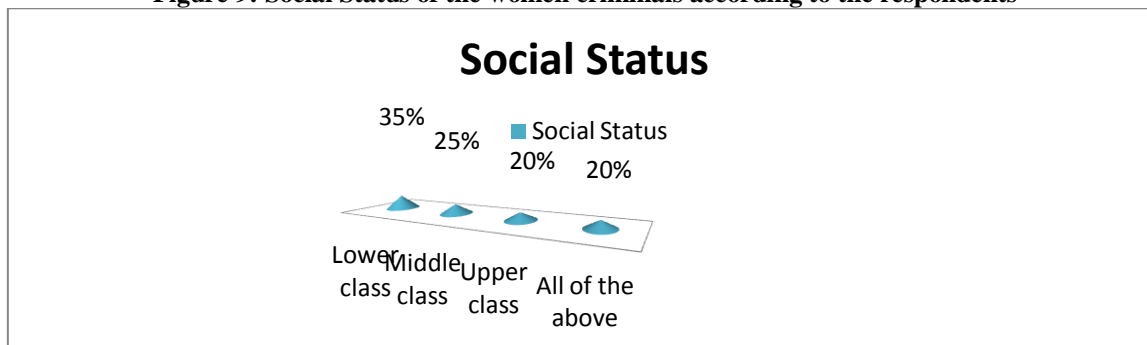


When the question was asked about the place of residence to the law fraternity, 30 per cent stated that they belong to urban area and 45 per cent stated that rural women tend to commit more crimes. However, 25 per cent of the respondents stated that geographical area does not play an important role in determining criminality of a person. They had the view that women belonging to both rural and urban areas can commit crime.

9. Social Status

In sociological study it is important to know the fact whether the society from which a person belongs have any relation with criminal activities. It was found that 35 per cent of the respondents from the law fraternity stated that lower class women committed more crime. 25 per cent respondents had a view that middle strata have a more tendency to commit crime. 20 per cent think that only people of upper strata commit crime. Whereas the rest 20 per cent view that a person belonging to any of the social status can commit crimes.

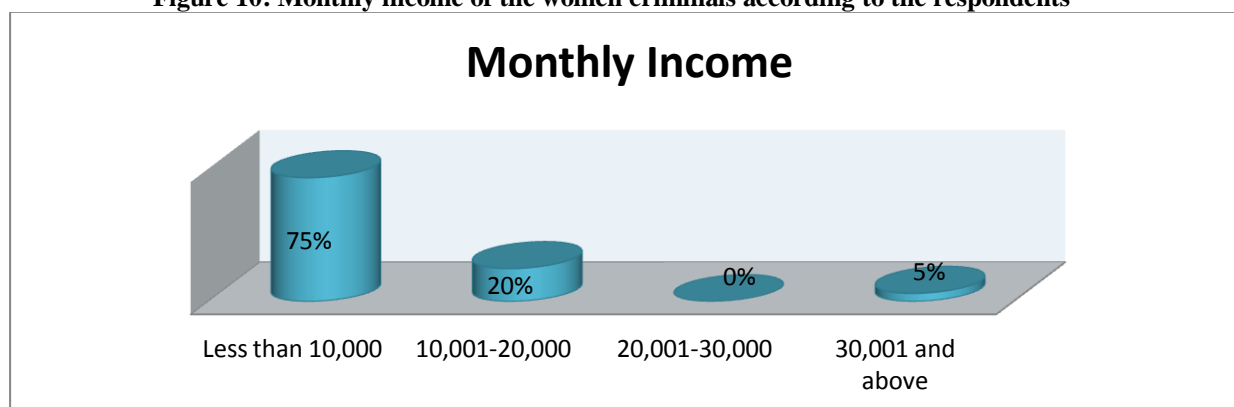
Figure 9: Social Status of the women criminals according to the respondents



10. Economic status

There is some inevitable relation between economic status and crimes. There is no doubting that the majority of crimes are committed for monetary gain or property and a person's financial status is mostly influenced by his or her work.

Figure 10: Monthly income of the women criminals according to the respondents



From this study it was found that 75 per cent of the respondents stated that the women offender's family income is less than Rs. 10,000 per month. 20 per cent viewed that women criminals family income rests somewhere between Rs. 10,000- 20,000 per month. Only 5 per cent have stated that women earning 30,000 and above per month commits more crime.

IV. Conclusion

The above discussion along with the graphical representation focuses on a general overview of the women criminals from the perspectives of the judiciary personnel's from Jorhat district of Assam. In this study, attempt has been made to study some important factors related to the personal characteristics of the women criminals such as age, caste, religion, marital status, income, etc.

The current study looks on many socio economic elements of female crime. However, given the study used a limited sample size, the findings should be viewed with care. Women's criminality is a significant issue; it may be classified as a major issue since it has serious consequences for the household, children's education, and society as a whole. As the world becomes more urbanised, women are becoming more involved in city crimes. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that economic instability is the most important factor in determining criminal inclinations in Indian women. The result from this study shows that women are becoming more prone to crime because of economic insecurity and also the social norms associated with the definition of Indian women.

Women's crime is progressively rising all around the world, with India being no exception. Our mental image of a criminal is that of a masculine lawbreaker and various criminological studies has appeared to be primarily influenced by this cultural stereotype. In terms of growth and societal transformation, the idea of female crime is a relatively new issue in both developed and developing nations, including India. Women's criminality is a result of a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental variables that have resulted from fast industrialization, westernisation, and urbanisation. It has recently attracted the attention of psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists on both an international and national level due to its rising rate.

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Ayousree Dowara, et. al. "Women in Crime: Socio-economic Background of the Women Criminals of Jorhat District of Assam." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 27(05), 2022, pp. 01-08.