

*Impact Analysis on Crime, Poverty, and  
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
(TANF – Cash Assistance Program):  
Focused on Six Largest Counties in Arizona*

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**Abstract**

*This paper examines the various impact of TANF as a cash assistance program in Arizona. We pay attention to the relationship among political economy indicators related to employment, poverty, crime, and cash assistance programs at the level of political subdivision (Six counties in Arizona). This study uses the data related to unemployment, cash assistance (TANF), crime, household income, and poverty from 2000 to 2007. We find out the moral hazard problem of cash assistance through the comparison between poverty rate and the number of TANF caseloads. The result shows that there is a negative relation between TANF caseloads and crime rate; on the other hand, crime rate is a positive relationship with both poverty and unemployment rate.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is not the entitlement program like AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). TANF emphasizes on economic self-support through work while it offers income supports to welfare recipients. The federal government reduced direct cash assistance; instead, the governments help poor families' self-support through incentives and mandates related to work. The federal government and states seek to balance between work and security. Federal government introduces strong work requirements and time limit for TANF recipients and applicants as sticks; also, the government provides recipients and applicants with various incentives such as negative tax transfer or tax exempt for working activities as carrots.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) is responsible for the administration of state-operated TANF program. Currently, Arizona's TANF program is managed by state and provides services in all political subdivisions (counties) within the state. In 1996, Congress created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)<sup>1</sup>. This act leads to the big change in the public assistance program. PRWORA combines the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as a federal funding (categorical entitlement program), Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) and other related welfare programs under the TANF. TANF forces states to satisfy minimum level of work participation and offers incentives for high performance. States acquired significant flexibility in managing welfare program because TANF is a block grant program. The AZ DES now provides state residents with various incentives such as cash assistance services and job education and requires them to participate in work activities.

This paper examines the various impact of TANF as a cash assistance program in Arizona. There are three major cash assistance programs in the United States: TANF for low-income families and their children; Supplement Security Income (SSI) for the aged, blind, and disabled; and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for supporting low-income families. This research pays attention to "how the socio-economic factors including TANF cash assistance affect recipients and other citizen's lives including moral hazard, poverty, and crime within the state". This paper mainly focuses on the relationship among political economy indicators related to employment, poverty, crime, and cash assistance programs at the level of political subdivision (Six counties in Arizona).

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<sup>1</sup> The TANF under PRWORA was reauthorized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 in February 2006.

## 2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF TANF

Poverty is a condition which out of insufficient money to buy something that is wanted and needed (Kornblum and Julian, 2007). Many people expand this understanding by putting it into a "culture of poverty" that is not only an economic deficiency, but one is called for lack of it, expectations of life are low, lack of hope and despair of the future (Mooney, Knox and Schacht, 2009). Revenue is the amount of money a family member gets in a year. Prosperity is the accumulation of the amount of money and other valuable assets of a person. The US government measures the poverty rate by using the benchmark of income, since total prosperity is hard to measure. From this comes the term "poverty line" which aims to specify the minimum required to support the average family of compositions given at the lowest level by living standards in a country (Orshanky, 1965). In 2007, around 37 million people living in the US lived in poverty—mostly white people. However, recent data from the US Census Bureau mention that more blacks people are poor.

In 1996 a congress of personal responsibility and the Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) was set up for a new grant program for poor families (TANF). This "is taken on federal funds granted to states in America" greater wisdom in the distribution of benefits (Abramovits, 1997). As a previous note, TANF is replacing AFDC. TANF provides funds for the country. The funds are in the form of a block of the amount of grant money provided by the government which allows a significant policy to be taken in regulating how the money should be spent. This grant replaces "AFDC, food stamps, childcare, child protection programs, school meals, and nutrition programs for low-income pregnant women and children" (Dickinson, 1997).

The TANF is a block grant in social security by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), as part of federal government's effort to 'application of New Federalism'. The TANF block grant means the end of federal entitlement to welfare and gives states and local governments a great deal of autonomy and flexibility. The TANF converted welfare program of federal governments from an endless entitlement to a capped block grant. Conan (1998: 273-274) said,

*It altered the terms of eligibility for recipients, establishing a lifetime limit on benefits of five years, and a limit of two years at any one time; and it cut dramatically the welfare benefits available to legal immigrants and their families.*

Basically, state governments receive financial assistance as a type of block grant from federal government and can use their funding to operate their own program under the TANF systems. However, discretionary power of state governments is restricted by the four statutory purposes of the TANF program (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

1. *Assisting needy families with children so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.*
2. *Reducing dependency on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.*
3. *Reducing and preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and*
4. *Encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.*

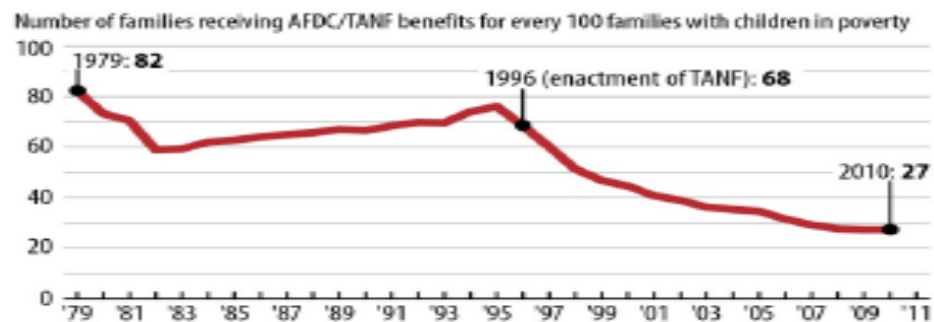


Figure I. Declining Role of TANF as a Safety Net

Source: Trisi and Pavetti (2012: 1).

Some public administrators and policy makers claim that TANF as a block grant structure is successful change (Trisi and Pavetti 2012). The application of TANF contribute to reducing the financial burden of federal government; however, TANF' record showed that it is not successful in the guarantee of the life of quality for poor families. Figure 1 presents that TANF's role as a safety net for needy families has weakening rapidly over time.

### 3. ARIZONA'S TANF AS CASH ASSISTANCE

After the change of block grant funding system, states strongly requires welfare recipients or applicants to carry out their work requirements. If a state fails to achieve the standard of work requirements, this state would take the financial penalty. Under the TANF, parents in two-parent families and single parents whose children are in school are main object for work requirements. The federal government requires states to gradually improve the rate of working participation to all TANF families. For example, in 1997, the standard of working participation rate was 25 percent of TANF recipients, and this figure increased by 5 percent each year so that by 2002, 50 percent had to be working. Coercive and uniform work mandates made visible results; that is, the welfare caseloads greatly decreased after the application of the TANF.

As mentioned above, the Department of Economic Security (DES) is the authority in charge for the TANF operation and management in Arizona. The following 8 programs are impacted by TANF directly or indirectly: Benefits and Medical Eligibility (BME); Employment and Rehabilitation Services (ERS); Child Support Enforcement (CSE); Children, Youth and Families (CYF); Aging and Adult Services (AAS); Community Partnership and Innovative Practices (CPIP); and Division of Development Disabilities' (DDD) Services. Among the Arizona's programs related to TANF, this research is chiefly concerned about role, function and impacts of cash assistance as a part of the BME.

People who reside in Arizona are eligible for cash assistance when they have dependent children under 18 years old and applicant(s) cares about dependent children as a legal permanent guardian to receive cash assistance. If gross monthly income exceeds 185 percent of the 1992 Federal Poverty level, individuals cannot get the cash assistance. There are 37,616 cash assistance cases and length of time on cash assistance is about 12.6 months in 2007 (Arizona Department of Economic Security – AZDES, 2008).

The Arizona DES sanctions all families who do not reach certain program requirements without good cause<sup>2</sup>. Parents or caretakers who do not comply with program requirements encounter the reduction or termination of cash assistance<sup>3</sup> irrespective of benefit time limits (60 months). Program requirements generally include the following things: the work program requirements; keeping dependent children in school; maintaining dependent children immunization; and effort for establishing paternity. In the state fiscal year 2007, 2,969 cash assistance cases are closed due to more than the third incidence of non-compliance (AZDES, 2008).

### 4. IS WELFARE POLICY GOOD OR BAD?

There are sharp debates about the effects of welfare policy and how much governments provide low-income people with welfare benefits. The moral hazard costs of cash assistance and in-kind programs are a negative appearance of welfare policy program. On the other hand, benevolence and positive effects from the income redistribution or tax credit to the poor are the strong supporter for keeping or strengthening welfare policy programs.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, sanctions will not be imposed for 1) two-parent families for whom deprivation is based on the unemployment of the primary wage-earning parent; 2) any single residential parent who refuses to comply with the work program requirements.

<sup>3</sup> The cash assistance will be reduced by 25 percent for the first month of non-compliance. For the second month, recipients will lose the half of the cash assistance grant. The assistance will be terminated for the third or more months of non-compliance (State of Arizona, 2009).

The redistributive benefits to the poor can be potentially associated with the large amount of moral hazard costs. Arthur Okun (1975), the famous economists, compares income redistribution to the poor to a “leaky bucket”. According to Okun, there are three sources of leakage in the process of money transfer from high-income class to low-income groups.

The first moral hazard is from the administrative costs in the process of transfer. Roughly 10 percent of TANF spending can be considered as administrative costs (Gruber, 2005). The second leakage is the down of high-income individuals’ will to work due to income transfers. Taxation from high-income individuals to low-income groups leads to the problem of deadweight loss. The third leakage is closely connected to the increase of welfare recipients. As the government guarantees subsidizing the poor, it raises the incentive for individuals to be poor to qualify for welfare transfers. Additionally, such individual behavior might increase the cost of mean-tested transfers.

On the other side, income inequality and poverty give us the reason why we need welfare policy program. Generally, poverty level is measured by the Federal Poverty Threshold (FTP). Income inequality is specified by “the shared of aggregate household income received by quintiles and the Gini Index” (Census Bureau, 2008). Approximately half of individual income is concentrated on the top 20 percent of individuals at the federal level (see Table I.). Even though the Gini index decreased by about 1.5 percent between 2006 and 2007 from .470 to .463, this index has gradually increased since mid-1960s.

Table I. Income Distribution Measures by Quintile

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Income (2006)</i>	<i>Income (2007)</i>
<b><i>Lowest Quintile</i></b>	3.4	3.4
<b><i>Second Quintile</i></b>	8.6	8.7
<b><i>Middle Quintile</i></b>	14.5	14.8
<b><i>Fourth Quintile</i></b>	22.9	23.4
<b><i>Highest Quintile</i></b>	50.5	49.7
<b><i>Top 5 Percent</i></b>	22.3	21.2

Source: US Census Bureau; 2007 Population Survey.

Poverty rate has slightly decreased from 14.2 percent (1967) to 12.3 percent (2008) since government declared “War on Poverty” in the Johnson administration although economic recessions or booms have a positive or negative effect on poverty level in the short-term view. The FTP as a criterion of qualifying for redistribution is viewed as outdated by many scholars because it is based on economic data from the 1950s and food consumption being one-third of individual’s annual expenses (Furdell, Perry, and Udem, 2008). Nonetheless, the FTP as an absolute indicator has strongly influenced the welfare policy compared to income inequality as a relative indicator.

Although there are sharp debates for welfare policy, eight in ten city officials believe that government has a responsibility for managing or addressing poverty (Furdell, Perry, and Udem, 2008). The support of the low-income has some positive effects besides mitigating the problem of poverty. Welfare policy program can contribute to reducing crime or drug use and helping children. According to the National League of Cities (NLS) survey data (2008), the most important reasons to address poverty are to help children (65 percent) and to reduce crime and drug use (49 percent) among elected city government officials. However, many city officials refer to insufficient city government resources (83 percent) and competing policy priorities (68 percent) as barriers to taking action on poverty.

## 5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis of this research is “County” as a political subdivision; the analysis is done at the Arizona’s largest six counties including Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Yavapai, Mohave, and Yuma counties. These counties are selected based on the number of population and employment and the size of federal expenditure. According to table II, the size of population and employment, and federal expenditures of Maricopa County is bigger than total sum of that of other five largest counties.

Table II. Six Counties in Arizona

<b>County</b>	<b>Population (2008)</b>	<b>Employment (2005)</b>	<b>Federal Expenditure (FY2005)</b>
<b>Maricopa</b>	3,954,598	2,188,301	\$22,712,363
<b>Mohave</b>	196,281	69,927	\$1,114,369
<b>Pima</b>	1,012,018	486,165	\$9,560,115
<b>Pinal</b>	327,301	59,809	\$1,233,667
<b>Yavapai</b>	215,503	84,973	\$1,170,520
<b>Yuma</b>	194,322	82,870	\$1,180,065

Source: US Census Bureau; Arizona Indicator; Bureau of Economic Analysis

This research collects the data related to unemployment, cash assistance (TANF), crime, household income, and poverty from 2000 to 2007 at the six counties in Arizona<sup>4</sup>. The comparison between change of the cash assistance caseloads or total payment and the change of poverty rate are seen as an indicator whether the Arizona (six counties) has moral hazard problem. That is, if the number of TANF caseloads or total payment increases even though poverty rate decreases, we assume that there are some moral hazard problems in the Arizona’s six counties.

This study conducts the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) for understanding the causal relationship among political economy indicators such as income, poverty, crime, cash assistance, and unemployment. “Crime Rate” is used for a dependent variable (ratio of the number of crime to total population). There are six independent variables in this research: TANF caseloads; unemployment rate; total TANF payment; median household income; poverty rate; and population.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND RESULT

### 6.1. Descriptive Analysis

In every month, about six thousands of individual recipients or families receive the cash assistance at the Arizona’s six counties from 2000 to 2007. That is, seven in one hundred get the benefit from TANF (Monthly TANF ratio). Six counties use about \$ 1.46 million for helping low-income groups between 2000 and 2007<sup>5</sup>. Per capita TANF payment in the six counties is approximately 1.8 dollar in the every month.

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<sup>4</sup> Specifically, unemployment rate, all poverty rate, poverty rate under age 18, poverty rate for age 5 to 17 families, median household income, caseloads of TANF, total payment of TANF, the number of violent crime including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault are gathered at the county level.

<sup>5</sup> For minimizing distortion by the difference of dollar value, this paper uses 2000 dollar value for median household income and monthly average TANF payment. The dollar value between 2001 and 2007 is converted through Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation Calculator provided by the BLS (<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>)

Table III. Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
<b>Monthly TANF Caseload</b>	48	575	28,644	5,801.21	7,787.559
<b>Monthly TANF Payment (2000 Dollar)</b>	48	135,503	7,351,738	1,462,689.51	1,976,479.605
<b>Monthly TANF Ratio</b>	48	.00312	.01150	.0072247	.00207569
<b>Total TANF Payment Ratio (2,000 Dollar)</b>	48	.639	3.031	1.80868	.573530
<b>Poverty Rate (All Population)</b>	48	10.2	21.6	14.831	2.5834
<b>Poverty rate for families that have age 5 to 17 children</b>	48	15.0	33.0	20.84	4.325
<b>Median Household Income (2,000 Dollar)</b>	48	29,573	47,024	35,539.26	4,784.586
<b>Violent Crime</b>	48	469	19,336	4,449.96	6,379.817
<b>Violent Crime Rate</b>	48	.00239	.00677	.0045894	.00120341

From 2000 to 2007, average poverty rate for families that have age 5 to 17 children is about six percent higher than that of all population poverty level. Yearly, six counties in Arizona averagely have more than 4,400 violent crime cases and average crime rate is about 4.6 percent<sup>6</sup>.

## 6.2. Cash Assistance and Moral Hazard

Moral hazard problem is closely associated with information asymmetry. Moral hazard is “adverse actions taken by individuals or producers in response to insurance against adverse outcomes” (Gruber, 2005: 321). Generally, there is a positive relationship between poverty rate and the size of cash assistance. We can make the following a hypothesis:

*As the poverty rate goes down, the number of caseloads and payment for cash assistance will decrease in the Arizona’s six counties.*

This paper finds out that there are an inconsistency between the hypothesis and the reality in Arizona. Figure II shows the change of both the TANF caseloads and poverty rate from 2000 to 2007 in Arizona. The number of caseloads rapidly increased from 25,861 (2000) to 44,027 (2004); on the other hand, there are rise and fall of poverty rate in the same period. This paper finds out a negative relationship between TANF caseloads and poverty rate between 2001 and 2003. The caseloads of cash assistance gradually increased from 27,410 (2001) to 39,505

<sup>6</sup> Violent crime rate is the ratio of the number of violent crime to total population.

(2003) although the poverty rate decreased from 11.46 percent (2001) to 10.80 percent (2003). That is, in spite of the improvement of an economic indicator which reflects on citizens' quality of life (poverty rate), the people who depend on the cash assistance program increase. However, since 2005, both caseloads and poverty rate have gradually decreased in Arizona's largest six counties.

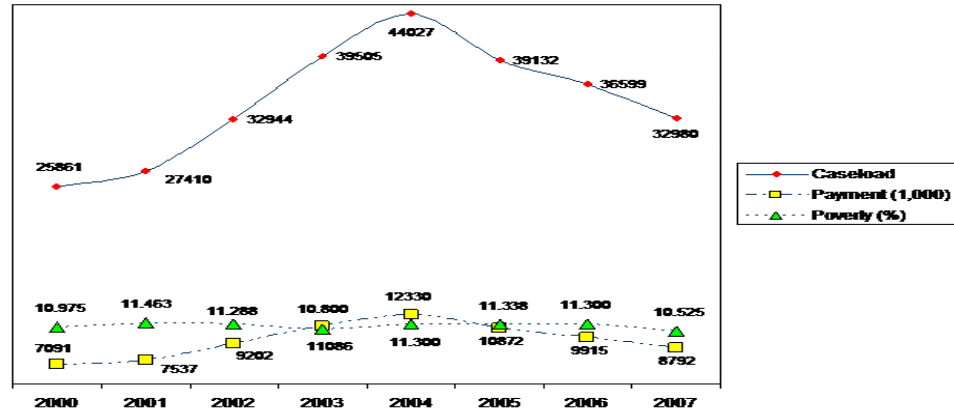


Figure II. Cash Assistance and Poverty Rate

### 6.3. Poverty, Cash Assistance, and Crime

There are socio-economic factors for affecting crime rate. In this section, this study explores the political economy of crime at the county level. Especially, the relationship among poverty, crime and welfare policy has been a debatable subjects over the years. Firstly, the relations or patterns between crime and poverty show diverse aspects according to country to county. Some scholars argue that there are no clear causal relationship between poverty and crime because crime rate is relatively low even though a country reveals rather high level of poverty rate. However, at least, poverty is direct correlated with crime rate in the United States (Taylor, 2009; Dekeseredy et al., 2003; James, 1997). The evidence of this research also supports this argument.

Does cash assistance program (TANF) contribute to reducing poverty? Many scholars agree that TANF is successful in reducing the welfare rolls (Lurie, 2006; Hays, 2003 et al.); however, it is a questionable whether the TANF helps reduce the poverty rate. In addition, this paper reveals the strong causal relationship between TANF cash assistance (number of caseload) and crime rate. Figure III presents the relationship among poverty rate, cash assistance, and crime rate.

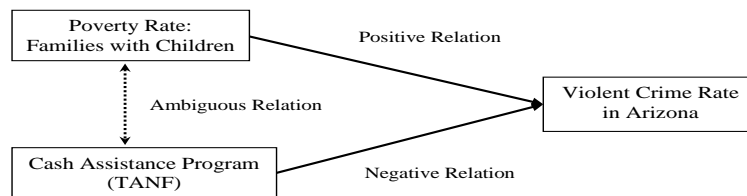


Figure III. Poverty, TANF, and Crime



The ambiguous relationship between cash assistance program and poverty rate at the six counties in Arizona partially results from the characteristic of block grant. Under the block grant, state government receives the fixed funds from federal government irrespective of the number of caseload or the state poverty level. State governments have considerable flexibility when they operate grant money – e.g., Arizona can adjust the amount of payment or requirement for qualifying the cash assistance program. In this context, unlike the AFDC as a matching grant program, the increase of poverty rate is not likely to directly link with the increase of payments or caseloads under the current TANF system as a block grant system.

Table IV presents the correlative relationship among independent variables and dependent variable. For example, poverty rate is positively correlated with unemployment rate ( $r = .794$ ); on the other hand, the amount of median household income is negatively correlated with poverty rate ( $r = -.747$ ).

Table IV. Correlations among Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Population</b>	1.000						
<b>2. Median Household Income (\$ 2000)</b>	***.882	1.000					
<b>3. Unemployment Rate</b>	**-.299	***-.459	1.000				
<b>4. Poverty Rate for Age 5 to 17 Families</b>	***-.535	***-.747	***.794	1.000			
<b>5. Ave. TANF Caseload Ratio</b>	-.162	*-.226	.155	***.398	1.000		
<b>6. Total TANF Payment Ratio (\$ 2000)</b>	-.131	*-.207	.167	***.395	***.980	1.000	
<b>7. Crime Rate</b>	***.357	***.350	.042	*-.192	*.211	*.281	1.000

Note: \* Significant at .1 level; \*\*Significant at .05 level; \*\*\*Significant at .01 level

This model can explain approximately 40 percent of crime rate at the Arizona’s six counties (adjusted  $R^2 = .373$ ;  $F = 5.657$ ,  $p < .01$ ). TANF caseload ( $Beta = -1.187$ ,  $p < .1$ ), and poverty rate for families which have age 5 to 17 child ( $Beta = -.855$ ,  $p < .05$ .) are more likely to have lower crime rate. In this analysis the poverty rate for families is more meaningful rather than poverty rate for all population because cash assistance is generally concentrated on the parent(s) with dependent children. Such result strongly supports the belief of city elected government officials by NLS survey that the decrease of poverty can reduce the crime. It is a positive causality between unemployment rate and crime rate ( $Beta = .640$ ,  $p < .01$ ). That is, high level of unemployment rate is more likely to have higher crime rate. Both population and median household income are not statistically significant in this research.

Table V. Result of Regression Analysis for Crime Rate

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Unstd. Coeff.</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>
<b>Average TANF Caseload Ratio</b>	*-.688	.349	-1.187
<b>TANF Total Payment Ratio (2000 Dollar)</b>	***.004	.001	1.683
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	***.00017	.000	.640
<b>Population</b>	2.02E-010	.000	.204
<b>Poverty Rate for Age 5 to 17 Families</b>	**-.00023	.000	-.855
<b>Median Household Income (2000 Dollar)</b>	-2.39E-008	.000	-.095

Note:  $R^2 = .453$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = .373$ ;  $F$  Value = 5.657\*\*\*; Sample size = 48.

\* Significant at .1 level; \*\*Significant at .05 level; \*\*\*Significant at .01 level.

According to Table V, TANF Total Payment Ratio is considered as strong predictor which affects the change of crime rate in the Arizona's six counties statistically and practically. However, this result reveals a critical problem in that an analysis shows a positive relationship between TANF payment and crime rate. That is, the increase of cash assistance payment is more likely to have high crime rate in Arizona.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

This research has the two major findings related to moral hazard problem and crime rate at the county level. This paper observes the moral hazard problem of cash assistance through the comparison between poverty rate and the number of TANF caseloads. This paper asserts that Arizona's six counties are likely to have some moral hazard costs because the number of cash assistance caseloads still increases in spite of the decrease of poverty rate. Secondly, poverty, TANF caseloads, and unemployment rate can be considered as strong predictor for influencing crime rate in Arizona. There is a negative relation between TANF caseloads and crime rate; on the other hand, crime rate is a positive relationship with both poverty and unemployment rate. In the similar context, Liebertz and Bunch (2017) suggest that there is a strong and positive relationship between levels of welfare restrictiveness and rates of violent crime among states.

However, this research reveals some limitations and the necessity of future study. Firstly, this research cannot find out the reason why TANF total payment is positively correlated with crime rate. I think that the reason is related to the problem of research design; however, I cannot find the right and specific reasons why such result happens. Secondly, both the shortage of sample ( $N = 48$ ) and the small range of study (only six counties in Arizona) will lead to the problem related to external validity. That is, it is not easy for the results or findings of this research to be generalized to other populations and conditions. Thirdly, next research should consider more variables such as political power, capacity of public safety, and other economic factors which can affect political economy of crime and moral hazard in order for refining and enriching the study.

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