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THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON CRIMINALITY

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Although there are a number of guidelines that differently explain the causes of criminality (biological, psychological, social), however contemporary criminology gives preference to social determinism. Its essence is reduced to the fact that all interactions in society between people appear under different forms of relationships, which influence their direct involvement in the development of those relations. For these reasons, to identify the most widespread causes of criminality, it is necessary to pay special attention to the interaction of social environment with the individual, through the identification of the multitude of existing complex relationships. The most frequent, criminal phenomenon is influenced by economic and socio-cultural relationships (factors), in other words, a series of negative effects generated by the contradictory nature of these relationships: unemployment, economic crises, low level of living, social inequity, family and school abandonment, media violence, alcoholism, drug addiction etc.

Keywords: causes, criminality, economic factors, socio-cultural factors, family, school etc.

INFLUENȚA FACTORILOR ECONOMICI ȘI SOCIO-CULTURALI ASUPRA CRIMINALITĂȚII

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Deși există un șir de orientări care explică în mod diferit cauzele criminalității (biologice, psihologice, sociale), totuși criminologia contemporană acordă preferință determinismului social. Esența acestuia se reduce la faptul că în societate toate interacțiunile dintre oameni apar sub diferite forme de relații, care condiționează implicarea nemijlocită a lor în desfășurarea respectivelor raporturi. Din aceste considerente, pentru relevarea celor mai răspândite cauze ale criminalității este necesar să se acorde o atenție deosebită problemelor legate de interacțiunea mediului social cu individul, prin prisma identificării multitudinii de relații complexe existente. Cel mai frecvent, fenomenul infracțional este influențat de relațiile (factorii) economice și cele socio-culturale, fiind vorba despre o serie de efecte negative generate de contradictorialitatea acestor relații: șomajul, crizele economice, nivelul scăzut de trai, inechitatea socială, abandonul familial și cel școlar, violența în mass-media, alcoolismul, narcomania etc.

Cuvinte-cheie: cauze, criminalitate, factori economici, factori socio-culturali, familie, școală etc.

Introduction. One of the generally accepted theories is that the economic basis determines the social, political, cultural and institutional superstructure. Consequently it is expected that economic situation of a state or a smaller area is able to determine certain human behaviors, including criminal behavior. Without denying a causal relationship

between economic status and criminality, studies have shown that criminal phenomenon is so complicated that it can be generated to the same extent but with different times by prosperity as well as poverty [1, p. 182].

Thus, above all, it is necessary to reveal the criminality causes at sociological level within economic relations, in their contra-

dictions, in imbalance of economic mechanism, gaps and shortcomings of the political economy, as well as in the distribution system.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the economic and socio-cultural factors insofar as they influence crime in general and certain types of crime, in particular.

Applied methods and materials used.

The research was based on methods of scientific investigation, such as: logical, systemic, comparative analysis, synthesis etc., being applied and combined according to the issues addressed in the article. The scientific support consists of works developed by specialists and scientists from the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Results and discussions. For a long time dominated the position that the economic relations of socialism were more perfect than the relationships existing in other forms of state organization and economic basis of socialism does not generate criminality.

Obviously it was a dogmatic theory, by the limits of which all scientists had to be kept, including criminologists, who often struggled with the fact that economic relations had priority in terms of determining criminality in all its complexity. Even if we analyze this issue from the point of view of Marxist-Leninist ideas, so it was Marx who showed the primacy of economic relations which generate other types of relationships – positive and negative.

Therefore, *any economic relations, their contradictory nature determine the appearance and development of the phenomenon of criminality.*

Market economy relations are based on competition and consequently the competitors are eradicated, programming of labor force surplus like unemployment takes place, as well as material and social stratifica-

tion of population etc. In this regard, I. Karpets justly mentioned, that market relations are driving criminality from the very beginning. From the point of view of production of goods and provision of services market economy has demonstrated its viability, although it was necessary to go through several centuries for this. But many of its negative consequences are real, in particular the high level of criminality, even in the most developed countries. And the chase for money has greatly impoverished the spiritual potential of society [6, p. 63].

There are no economic systems that would have no shortcoming and contradictions, that's why it is inadmissible to idealize any economic system [7, p. 144].

Existed in the former USSR *planned economic system*, which existed in our country too, also generated criminality. Let us start the analysis of stringent planning and hierarchic assignment. The plan often represented the desirable wishes, and the level of allocated resources represented the reality. Often it happened that for the achievement of the desirable plan for the level of 100% only 70-80% of raw materials had been allocated. The other 20-30% had to be “obtained” in different ways, which has led to abuses in service, corruption and other crimes aimed at achieving of strictly determined economic plan.

If market economy relations admit citizen enrichment, it was not allowed within the planned economic system in the USSR space. Besides this, a number of facts that in the past were considered crimes (speculation, entrepreneurship etc.), in the market economy system are legal.

The appearance of many market relationships requires the setting of new objectives in order to study the causes of criminality. These relationships are reflected in virtually every individual. For example, market economy relations represent not only the

market of goods and services, but also the labor market, that suffers from unemployment. As it is well known, the unemployment is the basic “reserve” of criminality. It seriously attacks the individual’s inner balance, making impossible the achievement of own aspirations by legal means. Some studies demonstrate a strong increase in the rate of thefts, robberies, and deceptions etc. during the periods of economic recessions.

This situation seriously affects family structure. The authority of the parent is deeply diminished, his role in the family being altered. Disturbance of family roles can cause confusion, internal imbalance, anxiety, alcoholism, desire for revenge against society etc. [2, p. 148].

For example, empirical researches had been established that the majority of offenders that commit acts of domestic violence in the proportion of 50.1% have the statute of unemployed [5, p. 233].

In the Republic of Moldova, the results of some surveys undertaken by the members of multidisciplinary teams that witnessed the families affected by violence [4] show the following situation regarding family aggressors: 73.63% did not have an occupation or rather they had not been officially employed, having the status of “unemployed”; 16.36% were employed; 3.63% were retired; 6.36% were on the maintenance.

According to the official statistics of the year 2017, we discovered that in the Republic of Moldova, from the total number of 2 604 510 of persons able to work, the *involved workforce* constituted only 1 169 900 of persons.

According to these grim realities the issue of jobs for our country needs to be resolved as soon as possible through well-designed economic policies and reforms in order to speed up the stability and economic growth of the state, and last but not least to increase the number of jobs and to raise the

amount of work remittance, which would allow the members of society to ensure a decent living without being tempted to engage in various illegal activities, including criminal ones, like excessive alcohol consumption, drugs etc. [3, p. 14].

Some authors also indicate the *standard of living and economic crisis* as economic factors that determine criminality, besides unemployment [1, p. 183-185].

Decrease in the standard of living of some people in many cases is an essential factor for the enrichment of others, but under other circumstances it provokes the commission of serious crimes, which can frighten the society, produce mistrust and political conflicts, banditry acts and other violent actions.

So besides alarming poverty which can cause many individuals to commit crimes there is also a desire for enrichment or a better living, which in its turn, leads to delinquency a large number of people. At the same time, the most serious crimes are committed by the representatives of the social strata with a good material and economic conditions. There are no material and financial problems for them. Not by chance, western criminologists have been concerned about studying the criminality of “white-collars”, of those who are at the top of the society. This kind of persons have the most possibilities for various manipulations with money and other goods, manage and conduct these values to greatly increase their capital. Thus getting used to such a way of life, cease to consider their actions illegal. In the end, they get such a “social status” that they can become political leaders (despite the fact that many know their criminal background) or suffer a defeat and turn into simple offenders.

Under certain conditions, economic criminality turns into patrimony-violent or simply violent [8, p. 184], and the violent nature of criminality is more dangerous than in

case of profitable one.

Decrease in living standards of disadvantaged social strata emphasizes wage levels and unemployment rate. Due to lack of adequate social protection the affected persons can be considered as being at the risk of committing of anti-social facts.

In comparison, countries from Central and Eastern Europe which attempt to adapt to market economy relations have a state of severe economic recession, having as main characteristics the reduction of the production capacity, the loss of foreign markets for the sale of goods, financial congestion, unemployment and rising inflation. The massive increase of criminality in these countries at a large extent can be explained by the impact of these criminogenic factors.

Social relationships, as well as economic one, are compound and diverse. In general, we can say that social relations in which personality feels unequal or restricted compared to other personalities always have protest reactions, and eventually criminal manifestations. Very few people are fully satisfied with their social situation. First of all, it's happening because every personality is prone to its overvaluation. Usually its multilateral social existence maintains the balance of arising contradictions that make possible for individual living in the society as its member, although he may be unsatisfied by the created situation, just obeying the laws and rules existing in the society.

Social relationships of the individual are reflected at the *macro* and *micro* levels. Macro level is the relation of a person with the society and the state in general; in particular these are production relations (education, profession, service, social activity etc.), personality situation in the society and the whole complex of relationships concerning the human rights. The society where these rights are violated will inevitably have a high level of criminality [7, p. 118].

The most vulnerable issues specific to social relations in the area are *national relations* (it is the relationship between different nationalities) and those related to *social equity*.

For a long time criminology stated that criminality is a purely social phenomenon, and the theme of national relations was practically not discussed as a cause of criminality. In western criminology this issue has been questioned for a long time. For example, american criminologists differentiate the criminality of white, black and colored people. Of course, this is not a biological separation of criminality by color, but by the social status of persons, which being of another color found themselves on the lowest levels of society, and in many cases they don't know other ways of fighting for their social rights apart the criminal ones. These reasons don't justify committing of crimes, but explain their causes.

The awakening of national disturbances by many people through political absurd calls and slogans have become causes of many serious crimes including massacres, terrorism acts etc. It has also influenced criminality as a whole, considerably aggravating its condition. The social life of the population becomes oppressive in such conditions. Such situations determine not only various offences as a reaction response, but of course, mistrust, constrained situations, fear and stress among population.

The existing contradictions between group interests within society constitute the undeniable reality. The majority of them radically influence people's behavior and generate criminality.

Social conflicts that generate crimes can occur due to the individual's dissatisfaction with his social status, obtaining or not obtaining of education, situation created within labor collective where various conflicts are stirred and lawlessness flourishes,

criminal or amoral activity of civil servants etc. In some cases the created social situation attracts the person into the criminal activity. Under conditions when social control is weakened or even destroyed money or material remuneration is optionally settled, with infringement of the principle of social equity. And social inequality is a source of conflict and criminality.

Often, the nature of the offences committed and their motivation depend on the person's belonging to a certain social group. A general criminological legality has been found in connection with this: the lower the level of education and culture of criminals, the more brutal by character and motivation are the crimes they commit. And the higher the level of education, the social status of the offender, the more refined are the methods of committing crimes, although in the end they may sometimes be even more dangerous than other types of criminal behavior.

Criminal statistics confirm the fact that violent crimes in many cases are committed as a result of hostile relationships that occur in the family and at the place of living of individuals.

The family is the basic cell of the society that has multiple valences. The prosperity and useful activity of the family depend to a large extent on its economic and material conditions. In the majority of cases family material security or vice versa determine its moral and social status. At the same time, the family climate is determined not only by material conditions, but also by the degree of social education of its members, and by the predominant moral directives. The majority of conflicts occurs and is committed where prosperity, calumny, careerism and other similar acts thrive, which greatly demonstrates the expression of the psychological incompatibility of the people.

It should not be forgotten that the family plays the socializing role, helps in

the achievement of intellectual, social and cultural maturity of a child. Any disruption within the family structure has important effects on the minor. The socializing role of the family is reduced more and more due to television, press, films and micro groups to which children join, and consequently they are often easily attracted to criminal activities, eventually increasing the level of juvenile criminality, which in the future complements the mature one.

Unfortunately, there are also a number of families involving their children in criminal activities, giving them moral precepts contrary to the ethics of society. There is a contradiction between the culture promoted by the delinquent family and that of the society as a whole in this case.

At the same time, both unmarried women and men were found to be more likely to commit sexual offences, while in cases of spouses were revealed a series of violent crimes due to misunderstandings between them [1, p. 190].

An important role in socializing of children has the *school*, by detecting of inappropriate children and by implementing of general prevention programs.

The strength of the socio-political organization depends on the degree of schooling of the population and on the level and state of culture. Offenders, the authors of violent crimes mostly have a low level of education and culture; they did not have any preoccupations for training and rising of their level of general culture and professional training [3, p. 23].

Frequently, the educational side is left by the teachers on the last plan, giving priority to constructive ones in order to achieve school success. It is working with students' good in learning, realizing true hierarchical fragmentary and largely uncooperative relationships. This causes frustration reactions from students concerning learning, which

are seeking compensation primarily for fraud and street groups which will inevitably produce future offenders [3, p. 24].

To a considerable extent, contradictions between nationalities are complemented and depend by *religious intolerance*. Religious contradictions can break the unity of people of any nationality (Yugoslavia, Ukraine etc.). Usually, world-wide religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism) do not cause criminal behavior, but, on the contrary, strengthen people, making them to abstain from amoral and delinquent deeds. But religious people can be easily manipulated and involved in making profitable plans, can be forced to die or kill others for the achievement of incomes and fulfillment of the ambitions of those who unduly exploit the religious feelings of crowd. History knows a lot of cases that demonstrate this fact. There are many “religious” sects practicing criminal activities in order to obtain material advantages. Their leaders increasingly turn to political power and are prone to stifle any resistance which does not correspond to the sect’s ideology.

Mass media has a negative impact on the population, especially on younger generation, in the majority of cases. Western criminologists have placed first *mass media violence* and especially *video-violence*. Violence on the small screen or large screen provides negative behavioral patterns. It is worth noting that these films are commercial, and has been produced to obtain big profits from their sale, and consequently, without any retention addresses the themes concerning the instinct, of human unconscious. In its turn, this leads to an increase of aggressive level of those watching such films or shows, changing the audience sensitivity regarding serious damage caused by violence. “Violent” programs cause a “stir” of the viewer and get him out of the real world, causing him to commit violent, spontaneous and unplanned

deeds through imitation [1, p. 191].

Pornography has become a current and unbarred commercial activity. And famous movie stars would like to be filmed in pornographic movies, although the criminologists have long ago demonstrated the link between pornography and criminality. In fact, pornography is a special type of criminality prohibited by international conventions. Like prostitution, it plays an important role in demoralizing of the whole society and especially of the young people.

The influence of *alcohol and drugs* in committing crimes is obvious, especially for violent ones. All the researches on their role in the genesis of committed crimes undertaken during a long period of time support by concrete facts the reality of this statement. Certain studies on violent crimes reveal that their authors have consumed alcohol or drugs in proportion of: 54% in case of murder offences; 41% in case of rape; 36% in case of robberies [3, p. 32].

Abusive alcohol consumption is also one of the determining factors of domestic violence. Selective surveys have provided us with evidence supporting the link between excessive alcohol consumption and domestic violence. Thus, it was found that about 21.92% of all causes and factors of domestic violence are abusive alcohol consumption.

Therefore, in the environment where alcoholic beverages are consumed increases the probability of committing acts of violence, which should be given greater attention in the implementation of general, special and individual measures to prevent violent crimes.

In **conclusion**, we find that the affirmation or ruin of the moral basis of society largely depends on the political leaders of the country and on its intellectual patch. Therefore, the moral state of society and predominance of principles (or anti-principles) represent the face of leaders and intelligent-

sia that first of all speaks about their great responsibility towards the population, including the state of criminality in society.

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