Environmental Effects on Crime: Developing the Labeling Theory Approach

Azadeh Dehghanfar and Ahmad Dehghanfar

Young Researchers and Elite Club, Dariun Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dariun, Iran

INTRODUCTION

The effect of the environment has just been one of the most important issues considered by the social sciences scientist over several recent decades.

The influence of the environment has been considered I the criminology literature. This impact can be investigated in many various aspects. So, it shows the importance of the environment in the criminology. The effect of the environment is significant both in the reducing of the crime fear [9].

Chicago theory is one of the criminology theories that have considered the discussion of the environment impact [17]. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPETED) has also been another significant discussion about this issue [8].

In Iran, one of the practical problems of the crime control in judicial system is that the legislator enacts penalty without investigating the influence of the environment on crime commission. Therefore, these penalties won't be effective about the reduction of the crime. Further, the influence of the environment on the crime commission should have been considered from the various aspects.

The original approaches of criminology as its paradigm have determinative role in the study of the crime phenomena. There were various divisions of criminology paradigms in previous researches. Sadeghifasaee and Parvin [22] have classified them in to three categories, that is, classic, positive, and critical. The critical paradigm is the newest of all.

Corresponding Author: Azadeh Dehghanfar, Young Researchers and Elite Club, Dariun Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dariun, Iran.
E-mail: a.dehghanfar@kau.ac.ir
In critical paradigm, criminal justice agencies themselves can cause to increase of the crime commission. The penalty not only cannot prevent the crime but also increase the crime commission [21]. In this paradigm, mostly the organs and their reaction to the people are considered [6].

The critical paradigm theory accentuates on three elements of subjectivity, power, and discourse. In addition, it criticizes the current status of the society [22].

**Labeling theory:**

Nowadays, criminologists have reconsidered the labeling approach after a decline period [5]. According to this theory, labels cause to increase the crime commission in two ways. First, the labeling of criminal on the individuals whose careers aren't crime commission may lead to classify them as offenders. Second, the labeling of criminal on the offenders can cause to enhance the delinquency rate among them [16].

Labeling theory is one of the most important critical paradigms. The focus of this theory is based on the individuals, and group's interaction. In this theory merely due to others' reaction to label their diversion, their conducts will divert. The proponents of this theory state that society control organizations try to change many behaviors in to diversion through negative labeling. After a while, these labeling change into the people's self. Concept and lead to secondary deviance [6].

According to the main labeling theory, the formal and social reactions toward the crime are the original essence of the criminal career [4]. The labeling theory emphasizes that criminal identity formation is influenced by the labeling power. The main feature of this approach especially is labeling of marginal and disadvantaged people in human community.

Unlike cognitive and psychological approach of determinism, naturally there is no crime at all and also no crime and criminal by the time when there isn't any labeling force [22]. In other words, most of the people try to maintain a non-criminal self –concept. It is very important for them to keep this self-concept.

However, when a person is arrested, tried, and finally sentenced; the community sends the signal of being guilty to him (or her) [26]. Further, it is probable that the person accepts the community images and forms the criminal self-concept.

Lemert believed that a criminal behavior occurring in the context of a criminal self-concept due to biological, psychological, and sociological causes is called primary deviance. Yet, a criminal behavior happening in the context of a criminal one is a secondary deviance. Labeling theory is a process theory [1].

According to Lemert secondary deviance is as following [13]:

1. Primary deviance
2. Social punishment
3. More primary deviance
4. Heavier punishment and rejection
5. More deviance is probably together with the outset of focused hostilities toward the people who conducted these punishments.
6. Crises go more than the tolerance limitation and will appear in the forma action frame toward the signaled person by the community
7. To reinforce the deviant's behavior as a reaction toward being labeled and punishment
8. Final acceptance of social status of the deviate person and some efforts to formulate them based on relevant role.

**The influence of the environment:**

As the rate of crime is high in the slums and unsuitable urban structure [3], people in this areas must act themselves and without the interference of criminal systems in order to protect themselves against the criminals and to punish them. As the law's point of view, this behavior is illegal.

According to labeling theory, the justice criminal organ labels individuals as the criminal through creating the legislative files and results in secondary deviance [20]. Thus, the place structures of an individual's life cause to increase the crime commission.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The method of this research is interview, since to gather the data and to investigate the basic theory; it is essential to use the methods of interview, observation, documents, or a combination of them [11]. Interview is one of the most common methods together the data for qualitative research. It gives an opportunity to participants to present enriched information and to describe the incidents [7].

The interview of the study was deep and unstructured. In order to analyze the data, coding and constant comparison method were used [23]. The researchers got data by interview. Then, they encoded and classified them in order to unify their analysis.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews could be divided into five categories:

(A) The people believed that low enforcement was weaker in this area than the other places.

A woman proposes that:

"In this neighbourhood, the police present at the crime location too late. For example, the police come here after the first altercation."

In another interview a man stated that: "while, we call up with the police, they come here too late than the central places of the city."

(B) Some people believed that the architecture structure and urbanism cortexes of these areas are the reasons of crime commission.

A woman who was living in an old neighborhood stated that "the police can't come here even if it wants to go because the lanes are too narrow and two persons can hardly pass from them. You should not wait for the police because these place's structures isn't suitable."

A woman stated that: "the slums are dark and crime ridden places. The police numbers is the same as the other places; however, the numbers of criminals are more than the police's. If the police intervene, they may hurt people even about the murder. It, in turn, causes more lawlessness."

Another woman told that: "In downtown neighborhood, because of the low area of the houses, poor urban facilities, and etc.; unlike the uptown neighborhood; individuals mostly present in the space of neighborhood than their homes. Many criminal conducts occur on the street. Therefore, the struggles happen there."

(C) A group also believed that the demographic structure of these regions was the reason of criminal action.

A man said that: "in some regions, people act in an ethnic manner. The police don't intervene too much even about the murder. It, in turn, causes more lawlessness."

(D) It appears that the peripheral structure of these areas will lead people in to illegal activities. In fact, people are forced to protect themselves based on their own judgment and law enforcement. Because the law availability in these regions are very expensive and at times impossible.

A middle-aged man stated that: "when the police came late, I asked why they came late. They told that the structure isn't suitable."

A gentleman expressed that:"if you expect the police to solve the problem, it will be wrong. You must act by yourself."

It seems that environment affects the crime commission through criminal labeling, due to poor infrastructure of the slums such as the small lanes, the small area of the houses, the crowds, the dark place for pedestrians, police's unwillingness to participate in these areas and their illegal behavior, criminal justice agencies labels people as criminals and cause to secondary deviance.

Conclusion:

The theoretical research has been used about criminology in Iran. The applied research hasn't been considered a lot by legalists because it has after a few relationships with the society structure.

One of the most important aspects of applied researches is the discussion of the environment influence on the human activities. Criminologists mostly paid attention to the environment impact on the people's tendency to crime commission. However, it seems that environment affects the crime commission through criminal labeling.

According to the research findings, due to poor infrastructure of the slums such as the small lanes next to police's unwillingness to participate in these areas criminal justice agencies labels people as criminals and cause to secondary deviance.

REFERENCES


