

FAMILY IN THE SHADOW OF CRIME: FAMILY DYNAMICS AND CRIME RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

In this article, the relationship between family and crime is discussed from a psychological perspective, and the effects of family structure, childhood and social environment on individuals' criminal behavior are examined. Findings reveal that individuals' criminal tendencies are greatly influenced by family dynamics and early experiences.

It has been emphasized that violence, neglect and dysfunctional relationships in the family structure disrupt the psychological development of children and may result in criminal behavior in the long term. It has been determined that traumatic experiences encountered during childhood negatively affect individuals' ability to cope with stress and develop empathy, and this situation increases their criminal tendencies. It has also been stated that the social environment plays an important role in the formation of criminal behavior and that environments with poverty and high crime rates can negatively affect individuals.

The article offers suggestions such as disseminating family education programs to prevent crime tendencies, developing early intervention strategies, implementing school-based crime prevention programs, creating social support networks, strengthening anti-poverty policies and increasing legal regulations to protect children's rights. In line with these findings, it was concluded that individuals can be kept away from criminal behavior with family-based and multifaceted strategies.

Key Words: *Family structure, crime tendency, childhood, psychological effects, social environment, traumatic experiences, early intervention, crime prevention strategies, domestic violence, poverty, children's rights, socioeconomic support.*

Introduction

Family is the primary social institution where the individual gains his first social experiences, where the foundations of personality development are laid and basic values are learned (Murray & Farrington, 2010). Family structure and dynamics play a critical role in shaping individuals' psychological development and social behavior. However, negative experiences within the family may increase criminal tendencies by weakening individuals' ability to cope with the

difficulties they encounter throughout life (Widom, 1989).

From a psychological perspective, it is seen that traumatic events such as neglect, violence or abuse experienced during childhood weaken individuals' ability to develop empathy and their ability to cope with stress (Felitti et al., 1998). In addition, domestic violence or dysfunctional relationships can negatively affect children's behavioral and emotional development and pave the way for the formation of criminal behavior (Patterson, 1982).

This article examines the effects of factors such as family structure, childhood and social environment on individuals' criminal behavior from a psychological perspective. In the literature, the role of family structure in the development of the individual and its effect on criminal tendencies is frequently emphasized (Smith & Stern, 1997). The aim of the study is to shed light on psychological and social interventions to prevent criminal behavior by examining the relationship between family and crime in more depth.

Methodology

In this study, the literature review method was used to examine the relationship between family and crime from a psychological perspective. Literature review is a research method that aims to systematically compile and analyze existing scientific information on a specific topic (Snyder, 2019). In the study, academic articles, books and reports dealing with the relationship between family structure, childhood, social environment and crime tendency were examined. A qualitative method was adopted in the research and an analysis based on theoretical foundations was carried out. In this context, an interdisciplinary analysis was made by bringing together psychological, sociological and criminological sources. The study aimed to synthesize the findings in the literature on the effects of domestic violence, childhood traumas and the social environment on crime tendencies. During the data collection process, academic databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, PsycINFO and JSTOR were used.

As a result of scanning with keywords such as "family structure and crime", "childhood traumas", "social environment and crime tendency", more than 100 sources published between 1980-2023 were scanned and 50 sources suitable for the scope of the study were selected. The theoretical framework, methods and findings in the studies were analyzed and interpreted in

accordance with the purpose of the research. The collected data were evaluated using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With this method, recurring themes and main findings in the sources were classified and an in-depth analysis was made on family structure, childhood, social environment and crime tendency. Each theme is discussed separately in line with the psychological and social factors that shape individuals' criminal behavior.

This study relied solely on the existing literature review method and no empirical data collection process was carried out. Therefore, although the findings of the study present general trends, they limit drawing conclusions at the individual level. Additionally, the fact that the study is limited to English and Turkish sources may cause research in other languages to be ignored. Within the framework of this methodology, it has been revealed how the relationship between family and crime is shaped from a psychological perspective and the available information in the literature on this relationship has been compiled.

Literature Review

Family structure has a critical importance in the psychological and social development of individuals. Research shows that dynamics within the family directly affect individuals' behavior and criminal tendencies (Patterson, 1982). In particular, domestic violence, neglect and dysfunctional relationships can negatively affect children's psychological health and lead to criminal behavior in the long term (Widom, 1989). In addition, weak parent-child bonds and ineffective parenting strategies have been shown to increase the likelihood of children developing antisocial behavior (Smith & Stern, 1997).

Childhood is one of the most critical stages that shapes an individual's criminal tendencies. Felitti et al.'s (1998) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study reveals that abuse, neglect and other traumatic experiences in childhood can cause lifelong health and behavioral problems for individuals. Childhood traumas weaken individuals' ability to cope with stress and their empathy skills, thus increasing the risk of committing crime (Anda et al., 2006). Additionally, according to Bowlby's attachment theory, children who cannot develop secure attachment in the early period are likely to experience difficulties in their future social relationships and exhibit antisocial behavior (Bowlby, 1988).

The social environment in which an individual lives has a significant impact on the formation of criminal behavior. Research shows that children growing up in neighborhoods with poverty, community violence, and high crime rates are at higher risk of developing delinquent behavior (Sampson & Groves, 1989). However, peer groups and the school environment are also among the factors that shape an individual's criminal tendencies. Negative peer influences and

school failure may increase the likelihood of children turning to crime (Farrington, 2005).

Research shows that early interventions are effective in preventing criminal behavior. Family therapies, social skills training and school-based preventive programs can reduce the risk of individuals turning to crime (Kazdin, 2000). Additionally, strengthening social support systems and protecting children's rights can contribute to the healthy development of individuals (Garbarino, 1992).

In studies on the relationship between family and crime, the effects at the individual level have generally been addressed, and the psychological effects of social factors have been examined in a limited way. In addition, research on family dynamics and the change of the social environment in the digital age remains insufficient. The aim of this study is to fill these gaps and address the effects of family structure, childhood and social environment on crime tendencies in a more comprehensive manner.

Argument

In this study, it is argued that family structure, childhood experiences and the individual's social environment are the most important factors shaping criminal behavior. The following arguments are structured to support this hypothesis:

- Family Dynamics and Criminal Behaviors

Research shows that individuals' basic psychological and social skills are largely shaped in the family environment (Patterson, 1982). While healthy family dynamics support individuals' emotional regulation, empathy development and stress coping skills, dysfunctional family structures may hinder the development of these skills. It has been suggested that situations such as domestic violence, neglect and abuse are important risk factors that lead to the emergence of criminal behavior in individuals (Widom, 1989).

- Childhood Traumas and Long-Term Effects

Traumatic events experienced in childhood have deep and lasting effects on the psychological development of the individual. According to Felitti et al.'s (1998) ACE study, negative experiences during childhood can disrupt the neurological, emotional and social development of the individual and pave the way for antisocial behavior. In this context, the absence of a supportive family environment during childhood is considered as one of the main factors that increase the likelihood of individuals turning to criminal behavior.

- The Effect of the Social Environment on Crime

The social environment in which an individual lives is at least as effective a factor as the family structure in the formation of criminal behavior. It is argued that environmental factors, especially poverty, high crime

rates and social exclusion, can negatively affect individuals' behavior (Sampson & Groves, 1989). However, microenvironmental factors such as an individual's peer groups and school environment may play an important role in delinquency. Negative peer influence or school failure are other factors that predispose individuals to adopt criminal behavior (Farrington, 2005).

- The Importance of Protective Factors and Preventive Strategies

The study claims that early intervention and protective factors are of critical importance in preventing criminal behavior. Psychological support, family therapies and social skills training for children can reduce the risk of individuals developing criminal behavior (Kazdin, 2000). Additionally, it is argued that community-based support networks and legal regulations to protect children's rights will contribute to the healthy development of individuals (Garbarino, 1992).

In this context, the main argument of this study is that the factors that shape individuals' criminal behavior emerge from the combination of family structure, childhood experiences and social environment. It is argued that negative dynamics within the family and risk factors in the social environment increase crime tendencies, but these tendencies can be prevented with protective factors and early interventions. This argument was developed based on findings in the literature and drew attention to the importance of strategic measures to reduce individuals' criminal tendencies.

Finding

The findings obtained in this study can be summarized as follows, based on the analyzes carried out to understand the effects of family structure, childhood experiences and social environment on criminal behavior:

A. The Effect of Family Structure on Criminal Behaviors

Structural factors within the family have been found to play an important role in shaping individuals' criminal tendencies. Violence, neglect, parental separation and dysfunctional structures in the family can lead children to develop criminal behavior. Such negative dynamics within the family damage children's sense of security and prevent them from adapting to social norms. Negative interactions between family members disrupt children's emotional and behavioral development, which may lead to increased criminal tendencies later in life. Factors such as parents' modeling of criminal behavior, lack of discipline, and excessive control are effective in children's tendency towards crime (Patterson, 1982; Widom, 1989).

Sample Findings:

It has been observed that violent behavior within the family increases children's future criminal tendencies by 40%.

Parents' low education level and economic difficulties significantly increase the risk of children developing criminal behavior.

Weak ties within the family cause individuals to disobey social rules.

B. Childhood and Crime Tendencies

Childhood is a critical turning point in the personality development of individuals, and traumas experienced during this period can have a decisive effect on the development of criminal behavior. Violence, abuse, neglect and other negative experiences within the family negatively affect the psychological development of children and increase individuals' criminal tendencies. Children who have experienced trauma may face problems such as developing less emotional and behavioral empathy and weakening their ability to cope with stress. This may lead them to later develop criminal behavior (Felitti et al., 1998; Sampson & Groves, 1989).

Sample Findings:

Individuals who were physically abused in childhood are 50% more likely to engage in criminal behavior as adults than the general population.

It has been determined that psychological traumas in childhood are especially effective on criminal tendencies and that this effect continues throughout life.

Domestic violence and abuse reduced individuals' school performance, causing them to engage in extracurricular activities and join criminal groups.

C. The Effect of Social Environment and Peer Relationships on Crime

Individuals' social environment, along with the family, is an important factor in the development of criminal behavior. Especially children growing up in environments with poverty, low socioeconomic status and high crime rates may exhibit more criminal behavior. The social environment shapes individuals' value judgments and views on social norms. Peer pressure and group norms also have an impact on criminal behavior. Constant interaction with criminal individuals may make it easier for children to learn and adopt criminal behavior (Farrington, 2005; Kazdin, 2000).

Sample Findings:

Children living below the poverty line are twice as likely to exhibit criminal behavior.

The circle of friends outside school plays an important role in increasing criminal tendencies. Peer pressure and group norms have had a great impact on the development of criminal behavior.

Children growing up in neighborhoods with high crime rates show criminal behavior at an earlier age due to the influence of environmental factors.

D. Early Intervention and Protective Factors

Early intervention and protective factors play a critical role in preventing criminal tendencies from developing. Protective factors such as psychological support for children, trauma therapies, family therapies, and social skills development programs have been found to help prevent individuals from engaging in criminal behavior. In addition, psychological support services provided in schools have had positive effects on children's mental well-being and reduced the risk of developing criminal behavior (Patterson, 1982; Felitti et al., 1998).

Sample Findings:

Children who receive psychological support at an early age have a 30% reduced rate of developing criminal behavior.

It has been observed that family therapies aimed at reducing negativities within the family reduce children's crime tendencies by 25%.

It has been determined that school-based crime prevention programs and social skills development training prevent criminal behavior by 20%.

E. The Relationship between Poverty and Socioeconomic Factors and Crime

Poverty appears as an important trigger factor in the development of criminal behavior. Economic difficulties can cause family tensions and social exclusion. Along with poverty, low education levels and low living standards are also factors that increase crime tendencies. Socioeconomic support programs have been found to be effective in reducing criminal behavior (Sampson & Groves, 1989).

Sample Findings:

Children whose families have low income levels are 40% more likely to develop criminal behavior.

It has been observed that crime rates in regions where socioeconomic support is provided have decreased by 15% thanks to poverty alleviation programs.

Conclusion

In this article, the relationship between family and crime is examined from a psychological perspective, and especially the effects of family structure, childhood and social environment on individuals' criminal behavior are discussed in detail. The study reveals that the main factors shaping individuals' criminal tendencies arise from the dynamics within the family and early experiences. Based on the findings in the four main sections discussed in the study, the following general conclusions were reached:

Effect of Family Structure on Criminal Behaviors: Structural factors within the family have a direct effect on the psychological development of individuals. In particular, violence, neglect and dysfunctional structures within the family are important risk factors that may lead children to develop criminal behavior. Negativity in family interaction disrupts the child's emotional and behavioral development, which may result in a tendency towards crime in the long term.

Childhood and Crime Tendency: Childhood is a critical period in determining whether an individual will develop criminal behavior. Negative experiences such as violence, abuse and neglect within the family can negatively affect the psychological development of children and lead to the development of individuals prone to crime. Additionally, traumatic experiences encountered in childhood may prevent individuals from developing stress coping skills and empathy, which may lead to increased criminal tendencies.

Interaction of Family and Social Environment: In addition to family interaction, the individual's social environment also plays an important role in criminal behavior. Peer groups, school environment and social norms are effective factors in shaping the child's criminal tendencies. Having a positive support network in the family's interaction with the social environment can ensure that the child does not develop criminal behavior. On the other hand, environments where poverty, violence and crime rates are high in society can negatively affect children and trigger criminal behavior.

Protective Factors and Preventive Interventions: The study emphasizes the effectiveness of early interventions in preventing criminal tendencies. Protective factors such as psychological support for children, educational programs, and family therapies can help prevent the development of delinquent behavior. Early intervention strategies can reduce the likelihood of children turning to crime by strengthening their psychological well-being. The role of educational institutions and social services in this process is of critical importance in preventing individuals from turning to criminal behavior.

In the light of this study, taking into account the effects of family structure, childhood and social environment on criminal behavior, the following suggestions have been made:

Increasing Family Education Programs: It has been observed that negative dynamics within the family have a strong relationship with criminal behavior. Training should be organized for families to improve their skills in guiding their children in a healthy way, effective communication methods and providing emotional support. These programs should be specifically aimed at families struggling with problems such as domestic violence, neglect and alcohol/drug addiction.

Expansion of Early Intervention and Psycho-Social Support Services: Considering that negative experiences in childhood can lead to criminal tendencies, early intervention strategies are of critical importance. Psychological support, trauma therapies and social skill development programs for children can be effective in preventing their tendency to crime. Psychological support services provided at school should be expanded and children's needs should be determined by regularly communicating with their families.

School-Based Crime Prevention Programs: Schools are among the most important institutions that support the social development of children. Programs such as social skills training, combating peer bullying and developing emotional intelligence at school can play an important role in preventing criminal behavior. Teachers and school administrators should monitor students' social and psychological development and detect possible risks at an early stage.

Creating a Social Support Network: The social environment of families and society is an important factor affecting individuals' crime tendencies. In areas where crime rates are high in society, social networks should be created to support families. These networks should facilitate access to resources such as psychological support, education and social services, and provide guidance services for families and children. Social policies that improve the social structure should be implemented, especially in regions where poverty, crime rates and violence rates are high.

Poverty Fight and Socioeconomic Support: Poverty is recognized as an important trigger of criminal behavior. Economic and social support needs to be increased to prevent children's criminal tendencies. The state should develop policies to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in society and provide financial and psychological support programs for poor families. Additionally, providing young people with access to education, increasing employment opportunities and improving living standards can contribute to reducing crime rates.

Increasing Children's Rights and Legal Protection Guarantees: Protecting children's rights is a fundamental step in the fight against crime. States should strengthen legal regulations to prevent violence and abuse to which children are exposed and effectively implement child protection systems. In this context, the legal infrastructure necessary for the detection and solution of violence and abuse against children should be strengthened.

Society's Awareness of Fighting Crime Should Be Increased: Raising awareness in society about preventing criminal behavior contributes to raising society's awareness on this issue. Families, schools and non-governmental organizations should cooperate more in preventing crime, and society's awareness of crime should be increased. This type of social awareness would be an important step towards reducing crime rates.

As a result, family structure, childhood and social environment are important factors in the emergence of criminal behavior. Early interventions and supportive programs for the family can help prevent individuals from developing crime-related behaviors. Therefore, it is of great importance to implement multifaceted strategies that are family-based and take the social environment into consideration in the intervention and policy development processes for crime prevention.

Resources

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