

Determining Role of Social and Geographical Region in Childhood Criminality

Yavuz Selvi¹, Adem Aydın¹,
Sultan Kılıç²,
Pinar Güzel Özdemir²

¹Assist. Prof. Dr., ²Resident,
Yüzüncü Yıl University Medical School,
Department of Psychiatry, Van - Turkey

Address reprint requests to: Assist. Prof. Dr. Yavuz Selvi, Yüzüncü Yıl University Medical School, Department of Psychiatry, 65200, Van - Türkiye

Phone: +90-432-215-0470

Fax: +90-432-216-7519

E-mail address: dryavuzselvi@yahoo.com

Date of receipt: February 07, 2010

Date of acceptance: February 26, 2011

Presented as poster presentation in 15th Spring Symposium (April 12-16, 2011, Antalya).

Dear editor;

Micro level factors related to child and his/her family and macro level factors such as social and economic policies, cultural structure of the country, immigration and justice system cause childhood criminality which increased in recent years both worldwide and in Turkey. It is clear that primary targets of governments and specialists working in this field and planning future studies oriented to eliminate factors causing children to commit crime are to detect problems and set their solutions. In this letter, we will present our study which contains clear evidence about economic and cultural factors affecting childhood criminality.

In this study, 289 cases who were sent to Yüzüncü Yıl University Medical School, Department of Psychiatry by legal authorities between 2005 and 2010 and were required legal reports about their perception of legal meanings and consequences of their acts and managing their behaviors related to this act were evaluated according to gender, age, place of birth, examination-report dates, type and characteristics of crime. Two hundred and eighty-eight cases were male and 1 was female. Thirty-eight percent of them were 14, 25% were 13 years old, 20% were 15 years old and 17% were 12 years old. Distribution to years were 26 cases in 2005, 62 cases in 2006, 55 cases in 2007, 49 cases in

2008, 51 cases in 2009 and 46 cases in 2010. Eight of them were admitted twice, one of them was admitted three times and remainders were admitted once. The most common type of crime (187 cases; 65%) was opposition to Petroleum Act #5015-5607 and Act against Smuggling. After these, come intended harm in 10% (29 cases), theft in 9% (25 cases), damaging public property in 5% (15 cases), suspected membership of illegal terrorist organization in 2% (8 cases) and other crimes in 9% (25 cases). Most of the cases were from towns near Iranian border. Ten out of 289 cases did not have ability to perceive the meaning and consequences of their acts (3 cases had border IQ, 1 case had mild mental retardation, 2 cases had moderate mental retardation, 4 cases had other causes).

The most important finding of this study was the highest prevalence of "gasoline smuggling". Most part of the Turco-Iranian border pass through towns of Van geographically. Cheaper prices of gasoline used in motor vehicles in the neighbor country cause smuggling of these products illegally and by saddle horses and seeing this a way of living. Most of the individuals evaluated in our study came from border towns and 65% of crimes were about gasoline smuggling. In others studies done in our country, it was reported that the most prevalent type of crime was theft (1). In our study, theft was at the third rank with the ratio of 9%. Van is

a regional center due to its wide area, population over 1 million and public and administrative services being conducted. Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran and Iraq are located in a semi-circle drawn from North-to-south. Presence of border gates and railway connections increase its geo-political importance (2). However, it has a very low rank in socio-economic development with an annual income per capita below the average of Turkey and towns with an average of 8 and 9 people per household (3). These figures support that children take part in gasoline smuggling to raise their low incomes due to poor economic conditions and crimes committed in childhood may vary according to regional conditions.

According to Children's Rights Convention, except coming to discretion at a younger age by national laws, every human being under 18 years of age is considered as child. There is international legislation such as Children's Rights Convention and United Nations rules (Beijing rules, Riyadh principles). In our country, Social Services and Children Protection Association (SHÇEK)

law and Children's Protection Law (ÇKK) regulate these rules. Modern approach brought by ÇKK is that children do not commit crime but dragged into crime by others. Basic aim of this approach is to protect the child dragged into crime and take him/her away from the environment which dragged him/her to crime (4,5).

Dear editor, In our study summarized above, although data from only one region were presented and economic status of the families were not detailed, it was aimed to keep some very important issues in the agenda. Learning to earn money by illegal methods due to poor economic conditions at an early age and meeting with legal processes at an early age due to these methods make it absolutely necessary to create solutions on the issue. Furthermore, when producing solutions, the result that geographical, economic and social environment in addition to psychological causes have a determining role in childhood criminality, should be taken into consideration among factors making up the characteristics of crimes committed by these children.

REFERENCES

1. Cantürk G. Çocuk suçluluğunda adli psikiyatrik değerlendirme. STED; 2005; 2:31-35 (Article in Turkish).
2. Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu: Van iline ait nüfus bilgileri. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr> (Erişim tarihi: 25.01.2010) (Article in Turkish).
3. Yıldız EB, Sivri U, Berber M. Türkiye'de illerin sosyo-ekonomik gelişmişlik sıralaması. Uluslararası Bölgesel Kalkınma Sempozyumu, Yozgat, 2010 (Article in Turkish).
4. Aydın H, Gündüz V. Çocuk güvenliğinin sağlanmasında yerel yönetimlerin rolü: "taş atan çocuklar" sorunu. Türk İdare Dergisi 2010; 468: 9-32 (Article in Turkish).
5. Aydın H, Ergenç S. "Yerel Yönetimlerin çocuk suçluluğunu önlemedeki rolü". Denetim Dergisi 2009; 3: 73-78 (Article in Turkish).