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SOME ASPECTS OF THE DETERMINANTS OF CRIME IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

Crime, its determinants, the management of combating crime, the control of consequences and the prevention of criminal behavior, both at the individual and social levels, constitute the object of study of criminology. In this context, a special place is reserved for criminological management, which can only be conceived in the context of social control of the determinants of crime. Or, namely, the specificity of the causes and conditions of crime, shapes criminological management, to ensure public order and security.

Both the activity of public authorities and civil society contribute directly or tangentially to the annihilation of the determinants of crime. This is due to the fact that both the causes and conditions of criminal behavior are different, but can be conventionally grouped into individual and general.

The specificity of crime in the Republic of Moldova is determined by a multitude of factors, among which the following can be mentioned at the macro level - the war in Ukraine, migration from the war, the crisis in the Middle East and others. The latter generate changes in managerial methods and public policies, including in the field of criminological management, capable of providing adequate solutions to security threats and attacks on public order.

In this paper, is proposed a conceptual analysis of the determinants of crime, as well as a description of their specifics at the current time in the Republic of Moldova.

Keywords: prevention, determinants, causes, conditions, level of crime.

UNELE ASPECTE ALE DETERMINANTELOR CRIMINALITĂȚII ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Abstract

Criminalitatea, determinantelor sale, managementul combaterii criminalității, controlul consecințelor și prevenirea comportamentului infracțional, atât la nivel individual cât și social, constituie obiectul de studiu al criminologiei. În acest context, un loc aparte este rezervat managementului criminologic, care nu poate fi conceput, decât în contextul controlului social al determinantelor criminalității. Ori, anume specificul cauzelor și condițiilor criminalității, modelează managementul criminologic, pentru asigurarea ordinii și securității publice.

Atât, activitatea autorităților publice, cât și a societății civile contribuie direct sau tangențial la anihila-

rea determinantelor criminalității. Această se datorează faptului că atât cauzele, cât și condițiile comportamentului infracțional sunt diferite, dar pot fi convențional grupate în individuale și generale.

Specificul criminalității din Republica Moldova este determinant de o mulțime de factori, printre care se pot menționa la nivel național – războiul din Ucraina, migrația din calea războiului, criza din Orientul Mijlociu și altele. Ultimele, generează modificarea metodelor manageriale și politicilor publice inclusiv în domeniul managementului criminologic, apt să ofere soluții adecvate pericolelor securității și atentatelor la ordinea publică.

Propunem analiza conceptuală a determinantelor criminalității, precum și descrierea specificului acestora la momentul actual din Republica Moldova.

Cuvinte-cheie: prevenirea, determinantele, cauzele, condițiile, nivelul criminalității.

Introduction. The mass-media space of the Republic of Moldova is full of reports about the conflict in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, crimes of various kinds and their consequences, including for the Republic of Moldova. The discourses widely present reports about serious and particularly serious crimes, including murder, rape, domestic violence, fraud, smuggling and road accidents with serious consequences. The context in which, an objective assessment of the crime situation requires substantiation not only on the basis of media discourses, but also a systematic analysis of official statistics.

Official statistics from the Republic of Moldova confirm the annual registration of approximately twenty thousand crimes. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 26,300 crimes were registered in 2020, which corresponds to a rate of 100 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants [1]. In 2021, this figure increased to 27,200 crimes (an increase of 3.1% from the previous year) [2].

The number of people convicted by the courts of first instance in 2022 was 8,400 (an average of about 23 people per day), a decrease of 27.1% compared to 2021. The main types of punishments were: imprisonment, unpaid community service and conditional suspension. In the same year (2022), 6,079 people were detained in penitentiary institutions, of whom 17.1% were in pretrial detention and 82.9% were serving a final sentence. Women constituted 5.4% of the prison population.

Crime mapping indicates that most crimes are committed in urban areas (60.8%), with approximately every third crime being recorded in Chisinau municipality. Significant crime rates are also recorded in Balti municipality (5.8%), as well as in Cahul (2.9%), Orhei (2.8%) and Ialoveni (2.5%). A direct connection and interdependence is identified between the level of urbanization, population density and criminal activity. However, lower crime rates in other regions may be partly due to both low population levels and a higher crime latency rate.

The juvenile crime rate in 2022 constituted 2.6% (705 cases) of the total number of recorded crimes, the vast majority of which were committed by men [3].

In 2023, the total number of registered crimes decreased to 24,000 (-10.4% compared to the previous year). The crime rate was 96 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants. The proportion of men among criminals was 90.9%, and women – 9.1%. The number of convicted persons increased to 9,100 (+8.2% compared to 2022) [4].

In 2024, 24,600 crimes were registered (an increase of 2.5% compared to the previous year). The crime rate was 102 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants. Property crimes (35.4%) and transport crimes (16.9%) dominated the crime structure. The number of convicted persons reached 10,900 (an increase of 19.6% compared to 2023) [5].

In 2025, the number of crimes decreased by 23,100 (a 6.0% decrease compared to the previous year). The crime rate was 97 crimes per 10,000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, the number of convicted persons continued to increase, reaching 11,800 (+8.4%). The structure of crime remained relatively stable: property crimes accounted for 35.1% and trans-

port crimes accounted for 17.0% [6].

According to data in January 2026, were recorded 1,761 crimes, which is 0.46% more than in the same period of the previous year [7].

The analysis of the dynamics of registered crimes for the period 2020-2025 reveals a moderate downward trend in the overall crime rate. While in 2020, 26,300 crimes were registered, in 2021 this figure already constitutes 27,200 (an increase of 3.1%). A gradual decrease in crime has been observed starting with 2022: 26,800 (2022); 24,000 (2023); 24,600 (2024); and 23,100 (2025). Thus, a long-term decrease in crime is observed, despite certain fluctuations.

A similar trend is also evident in the crime rate per 10,000 inhabitants: from 100 in 2020 to 97 in 2025, with intermediate fluctuations (103 in 2022; 96 in 2023; and 102 in 2024). Statistical data confirm a gradual stabilization of the crime situation, although it is premature to speak of a sustainable improvement due to the continued volatility of the indicators.

Structural analysis of crime revealed a persistent predominance of property crimes (approximately 35% annually), indicating that a significant part of criminal activity is influenced by economic relations. Transport crimes also account for a significant share (approximately 16-17%), reflecting systemic problems in road safety and law enforcement.

The gender structure of crime remains practically constant: the vast majority of crimes are committed by men (approx. 90%). This is consistent with global criminological patterns and indicates the need for gender-focused prevention programs. However, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of women among female offenders (from 7.9% in 2022 to 9.1% in 2023), which may indicate gradual changes in women's social roles and their involvement in criminal activity.

The increase in the number of people convicted by the courts of first instance deserves special attention: from 8,400 in 2022 to 11,800 in 2025. This trend is manifested against the background of a general decrease in the number of registered crimes, which can be interpreted as follows. On the one hand, this may indicate an increased efficiency of magistrates and the entire judicial system, which leads to an increase in the number of cases detected and resolved. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that criminal policy has become harsher, and the proportion of criminal cases closed or resolved with the application of alternatives to sentencing is decreasing.

Studying the statistical data of the penitentiary system in the Republic of Moldova indicates a slight decrease in the total population in prison (from 6,079 people in 2022 to 5,690 people in 2023), which confirms the trend of humanization of penal policy and an increase in alternative punishments to detention. The share of men among prisoners (approximately 95%) confirms the gender asymmetry in crime.

It should be noted that official statistics do not fully reflect the real crime rate. Latent crime plays a significant role, resulting from both the inability to detect and the tendency to hide some crimes from statistical data. This factor must be taken into account when interpreting statistical data and in the trends of public crime prevention policies.

The criminogenic situation in the Republic of Moldova is characterized by a combination of relative stabilization of quantitative indicators and persistent structural problems that require a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. An effective criminal policy against crime must take into account not only law enforcement, but also the determinants of crime.

The answer to the eternal question "... for what reasons does crime exist and what factors influence it?", is offered by thinkers and scholars, depending on the level of devel-

opment of society at the specific stage of its evaluation.

The problem of the causality of crime is one of the central ones in criminology.

Thomas More, a thinker from the early 16th century, argued that the main causes of crime lay in the existence of a wealthy class and the so-called nobility, surrounded by numerous servants and living in comfort alongside the poverty of the masses. "Until the wealthy class disappears", more said, "crime will not disappear", and he painted a picture of a non-existent state, where gold and silver are priceless, where a life of ordinary work is led, where there are no lazy people, and where crime is a rare exception [8, p. 105].

In criminology, causality is the basis for explaining everything related to the existence and transformation of crime; it represents the inherent content of determination, that is, the causal definition of crime. Interest in such a causal definition can be found in the philosophical works of ancient thinkers: Plato, Aristotle, Democritus, Diogenes and others. Later, within the framework of criminological theories of crime and criminals, schools of thought emerged that explore the causes of crime: for example, the Italian school (C. Lombroso, E. Ferri, R. Garofalo) and others. However, the first relatively complete concepts about the causes of crime appeared in the second half of the 19th century and are associated with the birth of criminology as a science [9, p. 115].

Currently, the causes of crime should be recognized as a combination of objective and subjective circumstances, rooted in existing real social relations and giving rise to crime as a natural social consequence of it [10, p. 20].

Criminology, which studies social phenomena, cannot be limited to examining the causes of individual criminal behavior. Its goal is to identify the causes of crime as a whole, in order to consistently reduce and eliminate it [11, p. 70].

To explore this issue in more detail, it is necessary to make some clarifications. First of all, causality is an objectively existing connection, a relationship between two or more phenomena, in which one (the cause) gives rise to the others (the effects). Causality is not a figment of our imagination, but a truly existing pattern of nature and society [12, p. 123].

The determinants of crime constitute the set of causes and conditions of crime, representing a system of negative social phenomena that affect the prevailing social relations, phenomena and processes. Moreover, these causes and conditions are not a random, mechanical set of determinants of crime, but rather a criminogenic system, which represents the unity and integrity of interacting subsystems and elements, which are interconnected and arranged in a specific hierarchy and level of subordination.

The system of determinants in criminology uses several types of relationships, but the main ones are cause-effect relationships, conditioning relationships or state relationships and functional relationships. As a type of objective, legal relationship, causality possesses such characteristics as: universality, irreversibility and spatial and temporal continuity. Causes and conditions are united by the generic concept of "criminogenic determinants". The identification of these determinants is arbitrary; they exist in close interconnection.

A cause is a phenomenon whose presence provokes, determines, changes, produces, or implies another phenomenon, called an effect. It ensures a specific course of an event, necessary for the occurrence of a certain effect.

Conditions are phenomena that cannot, in themselves, produce a consequence, but by accompanying and influencing the causes, ensure a certain development necessary for the emergence of the consequence. Without conditions, without their interaction with the cause, the latter will either not appear or will not act. In the exclusive presence of conditions, the possibility of a consequence does not become a reality [13, p. 19]. A condi-

tion is something that, in itself, does not generate crime or criminality, but influences the processes of generating it and participates in determining the crime [14, p. 38].

Spatial connection expresses the distribution of crime and its causes depending on the administrative-territorial division of the space in which the studied phenomenon exists. As V.D. Malkov rightly noted, "spatial connection expresses the distribution of crime within a territory, the prevalence of various types of crime depending on social, economic, geographical, demographic, ethnographic and other differences in individual regions of the country" [15, p. 59].

Thus, the determinants of crime lie in the multiplicity of interconnections and interactive phenomena of social reality that underlie its existence. Unfortunately, it is already becoming clear that crime will exist as long as humanity exists.

The study of crime requires a classification of causes and conditions. Classification is, in essence, a scientific analysis of the connections and dependencies between similar factors that influence crime. The main task is to select, from a wide variety of causal relationships within crime, those that have common points [16, p. 20].

Criminogenic conditions can be divided into the following groups: conditions that favor the commission of crimes (the so-called situational conditions) and conditions that shape criminogenic motivation. These conditions, of course, interact at the informational level. A situational condition, for example, is the lack of security in an enterprise, which contributes to the development of a selfish and irresponsible attitude towards the safety of manufactured products. Conditions that shape criminogenic motivation are those environmental phenomena that contribute to the emergence of motives for criminal behavior. These include accompanying conditions – those that form the general background of events and phenomena, the circumstances of place and time; necessary conditions – without which an event could not occur; and sufficient conditions – the combination of all necessary conditions.

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N.S. Artemiev emphasizes that the conditions of crime can be divided into:

- ✓ Accompanying: form the general context of events and phenomena, the circumstances of place and time;
- ✓ Necessary: without such conditions, the event might not have occurred;
- ✓ Sufficient: the set of necessary conditions [18, p. 90].

Criminological literature usually classifies the causes and conditions of crime according to the following criteria: mechanism of action, level of functioning, content, nature of production, proximity to the event, sources, etc. Thus, based on the criterion of their mechanism of action, the negative social processes that determine crime are divided into causes, conditions and criminogenic factors. According to their level of operation, criminogenic factors are classified into causes and conditions: of crime in general (general causes); of types (categories, groups) of crimes; and of specific crimes.

These three main levels of the causes of crime are interdependent. The process of interconnection starts both from the first (more general) level to the last (specific) level, and vice versa – from the causes and conditions of a particular crime to the unique characteristics and features of types and groups of crimes, to the general characteristics of the causal complex of crime as a whole.

Depending on their content, criminogenic determinants are subdivided into socio-economic, political, socio-psychological, ideological, educational, legal, organizational and managerial, etc. The immediate causes of crime and offenses are phenomena of a socio-psychological nature, namely a criminogenically deformed social and individual psychology, which contradicts the generally accepted principles of international, constitutional and criminal law.

According to the criterion of their origin, the determining factors of crime are usually divided into objective, objective-subjective and subjective. The first two categories, at this stage of history, are independent of human will and, therefore, cannot be eliminated immediately. They can only be neutralized, blocked, reduced, and their development and criminogenic impact can be prevented. Objective determining factors include, for example, the gap between consciousness and reality, between individual consciousness and social consciousness, and so on. Most determining factors, however, are of an objective-subjective nature, with either the objective or the subjective prevailing.

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Depending on their proximity to the criminal event or to a specific set of them, the causes and conditions are divided into immediate and remote, direct and indirect.

The causes and conditions of crime are also differentiated by source, into internal and external. The internal determinants of crime are linked to the internal contradictions of our society, while the external determinants are connected with those of an international nature [18, p. 4].

The conditions and causes of crime, types of crimes and specific crimes are not identical. They are interconnected. If there were no causes that generate crime as a social phenomenon, then there would be no causes for specific crimes.

According to the author I. Ciobanu, the causes and conditions of recidivism, as one

of the most dangerous types of crimes in the Republic of Moldova, are the following:

- ✓ Circumstances preceding the first conviction that persist after serving the sentence:
 - 1) Return to a negative, vicious environment (mainly, to a dysfunctional family);
 - 2) Reestablishment of old ties with people leading a parasitic lifestyle;
 - 3) Establishment of contacts with convicts in places of detention (and their influence after serving the sentence);
- ✓ Deficiencies in law enforcement: low crime detection rates;
- ✓ Low effectiveness of punishments for repeat offenders; Numerous violations of the law regarding a comprehensive, complete and objective investigation of the circumstances of the crime;
- ✓ Corruption and favoritism;
- ✓ Difficulties in social reintegration after serving a prison sentence: loss of previous positive social ties;
- ✓ Emergence of antisocial ties (with repeat offenders in penitentiary institutions);
- ✓ Mental disorders caused by prolonged imprisonment; Formation of stereotypes and ideals of criminal behavior based on the traditions and customs of the underworld;
- ✓ Deficiencies in the process of studying and re-education of convicts in places of detention;
- ✓ Unsatisfactory organization of educational and professional training of convicts, etc. [19, p. 298].

M. Bârgău identifies the following determinants of violent crimes:

- ✓ Negative influence of the microenvironment;
- ✓ Abuse of alcohol/soft drugs;
- ✓ Hostile interpersonal relationships;
- ✓ Conflict situations between the offender and the victim;
- ✓ Deficiencies in solving violent crimes;
- ✓ Increase in the number of people with criminal records, unemployed people and minors who do not attend school;
- ✓ Increase in the number of offenders sentenced with suspended sentences and released on parole;
- ✓ Increase in the number of people declared mentally incompetent for committing socially dangerous acts against the life and health of people;
- ✓ Insufficient monitoring of convicts in places of detention;
- ✓ Deficiencies in the prevention of violent crimes, etc. [20, p. 270].

According to G. Mateuț, the general causes of crime have their roots in the precarious economic state of society, the lack of culture among people, frequent consumption of alcoholic beverages, unemployment, deficiencies in socio-political organization, the malfunctioning of the criminal justice system, the system of lenient punishments, heredity, the environment, etc. [21, p. 11].

According to the activity report of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Moldova, regarding crime indicators for the years 2024-2025, it was established that the dynamics of crime was determined by a series of reasons and conditions, the main ones being:

– The low standard of living of certain categories of people, the lack of permanent sources of income, including for their maintenance and that of their family members, the insufficient level of salaries, the high level of unemployment, the state of social crisis, the massive migration of the population within the country and abroad – circumstances that

particularly determined the share of crimes against property [22];

- Disintegration of the family environment of children who, in the absence of means of subsistence and adequate supervision, resort, in particular, to committing thefts and petty thefts;

- Low levels of civic awareness, lack of legal culture and trust in law enforcement agencies and their representatives, as well as an irresponsible attitude of certain categories of citizens towards criminal and administrative liability;

- Inefficiency of the state system in this area and in its efforts to combat crime, re-educate and reintegrate into society convicted and imprisoned persons, combined with the partial inefficiency of the state's punitive policy, which in many cases is based on the use of non-imprisonment penalties;

- Continuation of criminal activity by persons against whom criminal prosecution has been terminated due to reconciliation of the parties, as well as recidivism of persons who have served prison sentences [23].

Therefore, we share the idea that crime prevention represents a complex multi-level system of public administration bodies, which exerts an anti-criminogenic influence on social objects, in order to prevent violations of legal and criminal norms and neutralize their determining factors, constituted by the subjects, objects and measures of prevention activity [24].

Regardless of the specific type of crime or the specific genre of crimes, it can be stated with certainty that the development of modern crime is facilitated by a variety of causes and conditions. The context in which, among the main determining factors of current crime in the Republic of Moldova are:

a) The spiritual crisis of society, the manifestation of which is the growth of alcoholism and drug addiction among the population, the decline of traditional moral values. An eloquent example in this regard could serve the following case from judicial practice: "R.N., unemployed, was found guilty and convicted of the offense under Article 145 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova, paragraph (2), letter e/1), j). Thus, on January 15, 2025, at around 2:00, R.N. was with his son in the common home, where, following the consumption of alcoholic beverages, a conflict broke out between them, during which the latter hit his father in the face. Finally, R.N., in a state of alcoholic intoxication, acting out of revenge and with the intention of killing, waited for his son, also in a state of advanced alcoholic intoxication, to lie down on the bed to avoid resistance, ensuring that he fell asleep, after which he hit him several times in the head with a blade and the tip of a hammer, causing bodily injuries, as a result of which his son died" [25]. Another similar example from judicial practice: "G.A., unemployed, being registered with the narcologist as a drug addict, with a previous criminal conviction, was found guilty of committing a crime provided for in paragraph (1) of Article 171 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova. Thus, G.A., on 02.11.2024, while he was in the house of citizen T.G. between 17:00 and 18:00, in a state of intoxication, foreseeing the harmful consequences of his actions, consciously wanting and recognizing the occurrence of these consequences, used psychological coercion and physical force, manifested by a blow to the face with a palm, to satisfy his sexual desire and, at the same time, taking advantage of the incapacity of the victim L.N. to defend himself, he had sexual intercourse with the latter in the form of vaginal and anal penetration against her will, thus satisfying her sexual desire" [26];

b) Sharp exacerbation of social contradictions in a period of political, ideological, economic and legal reforms;

c) Comprehensive systemic crisis of society, including a crisis of power, economy,

social sphere, ideology and law, the most significant manifestation of which from a criminological point of view is the significant increase in inequality between rich and poor;

d) Unemployment and poverty, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, the number of unemployed in the III quarter of 2023 was approximately 39.2 thousand people, which is approximately 16.9 thousand more than in the III quarter of 2022 (22.3 thousand people) [27];

e) Legal nihilism, which has spread to all layers of our society and is expressed in ignoring both the rules of conduct in society and safety at work and in transport, as well as the norms of criminal law, and in the loss of trust in law enforcement agencies and corrupt government structures;

f) A widespread feeling of insecurity among the general population regarding security (personal, financial, property) and future prospects for themselves and their loved ones;

g) Lack of confidence in the ability and desire of those in power to manage and reform the state in the interests of the population;

h) High levels of anxiety, irritation, conflict and aggression in society;

i) Loss of ethical principles that allow an objective assessment of the acceptability and inadmissibility of certain actions in solving life problems;

j) Consumerism, i.e. the continuous growth and change of needs, has a negative impact on the mentality and psyche of a person, narrowing thoughts and desires towards the acquisition of instant gratification and material goods by any means necessary. Consumer sentiments become dominant in society, determining deviant behavior;

k) The corrupting influence of mass media and communications, etc.

Conclusions. The examined statistical data, the analysis of quantitative and qualitative indicators of crime in the Republic of Moldova over the last five years, allows us to formulate the following conclusions:

1. A moderately downward trend in crime rates is recorded, with persistent short-term fluctuations;

2. Crime is dominated by property crimes, which indicates its socio-economic orientation;

3. The role of law enforcement institutions and judicial courts is increasing;

4. Crime has pronounced gender and urban specificities;

6. The high level of latent crime remains a significant limitation in studying the real level of crime.

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