

Examining the Role of Social Factors Affecting the Tendency to Commit Crime among Youth (Case Study: Students of University of Kashan)

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Crime, as a social phenomenon occurring within the community, represents an actualized behavior. In this regard, “tendency toward crime” refers to a potential form of behavior that has not yet manifested or been actualized. This study aims to identify which social factors influence youth’s tendency towards committing crimes. To this end, it moves beyond mere descriptions and engages in a conceptual analysis to formulate possible explanations. Accordingly, “tendency” is defined as a system of the individual’s inclinations and beliefs in regard to environmental phenomena; this tendency which develops over time as a result of social influences and experiences can predict and explain social behavior. One such social behavior is committing crime by individuals across different age groups. Given that criminal behavior like any other behavior, requires a will or inclination to be actualized, this study specifically examines crimes and the factors influencing criminal tendencies among young students in the University of Kashan.

Materials and Methods

An examination of the contexts of social order vulnerability and official judicial statistics indicates the necessity for serious interventions. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the overarching question: which social factors affect the tendency of young students to commit crimes? The main objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between the social cohesion of the state and nation, social security, national identity, social belonging, adherence to law, political participation, social cohesion, institutional trust, and the tendency to commit crimes among students. Methodologically, this research falls within the positivist paradigm, adopts a deductive strategy, and deploys a quantitative approach. It employs a descriptive-correlational method with a cross-sectional design and practical objectives, utilizing a survey-based approach. The statistical population consisted of students of the University of Kashan, with a sample size of 520 in 1401 (2022–2023). Data were collected through fieldwork using questionnaires. For both descriptive and inferential data analyses, SPSS 23 software was used.

Results

The research findings and the results of the corresponding statistical analyses confirmed the existence of significant relations and correlations among the variables. Moreover, Spearman's correlation coefficient regarding the relationship between adherence to law and the tendency to commit crime indicated a negative and inverse relation between these two variables; that is, the greater the respondents' adherence to the law, the lower their inclination to violate social rules and to commit crimes. Spearman's correlation coefficient regarding the relationship between social security and the tendency to commit crime also showed that as students' perception of social security was higher and more positive, their tendency to commit crime decreased. Similarly, the results regarding the relationship between national identity and the tendency to commit crime revealed that the higher the sense of national identity, the lower the respondents' tendency to commit crimes. Additionally, Spearman's correlation coefficient concerning the relationship between social belonging and the tendency to commit crime demonstrated that as respondents' levels of social attachment to their neighborhood and willingness to participate increased, their tendency to commit crime decreased. In contrast, the relations between political participation and the tendency to commit crime showed no significant relation, contrary to the assumptions of political efficacy theory. The correlation between institutional trust and the tendency to commit crime indicated a negative and inverse relationship; that is, the higher the respondents' trust in institutions—such as educational organizations, service organizations, hospitals, law enforcement, media, and other national institutions—the lower their tendency to commit crimes. Similarly, the relationship between state–society social understanding and the tendency to commit crime demonstrated that as social understanding between the government and the citizens increased and mutual understanding prevailed, the tendency to commit crime decreased.

Conclusion

Path analyses of factors affecting the tendency toward crime revealed that while state–society social understanding does not have a direct significant effect on criminal tendency, it exerts an indirect effect of 31% on crime inclination. In other words, through social understanding between the government and the citizens, social security in the community is enhanced, the sense of national identity and social belonging among citizens increases; their social participation rises, and social cohesion and trust are strengthened. At the same time, a greater government–citizen understanding fosters adherence to the law within society. Consequently, this provides a foundation for reducing youth's criminal tendencies and negative attitudes toward lawlessness and anomie. Overall, the negative and inverse relationships between the variables of state–society social understanding, social security, national identity, social belonging, adherence to the law, political participation, social cohesion, and institutional trust with the tendency to commit crime were quantified as follows: $r = -0.162$, $r = -0.436$, $r = -0.220$, $r = -0.487$, $r = -0.006$, $r = -0.136$, $r = -0.196$, and $r = -0.247$, respectively. Accordingly, attention to these components can help reduce the tendency toward crime among youth.

Keywords: crimes, social Factors, tendency to commit crimes, youth.