



A Criminological Approach to the COVID-19 Pandemic with a Comparative Perspective Based on Iran's and the World's Data

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Abstract

The present research explores some of the most significant aspects of the COVID-19 outbreak from the perspective of criminology through carrying out a comparative analysis of Iran's and the world's Data. Describing the current pandemic as deviance is one aspect of this approach upon which an argument can be made for explaining the COVID-19 outbreak as deviance from a criminological perspective. The criminal effects of COVID-19 is another part of the discussion through which relationships between the pandemic and crime rates, including economic crime and domestic violence, are examined. The findings show that overall, crime rates have fluctuated throughout the advent of COVID-19, and while the current pandemic has caused an increase in the rates of certain types of crimes, a decline in many other types of crime has also been observed. Finally, the article concludes that the current pandemic exerts varying impacts on criminality, corroborating the assumption that 'disease' alongside 'crime' endangers human health on the whole. Therefore, the main question is how humans can maintain their physical health upon exposure to the dangers of COVID, and look after their mental health from the risks and the unpleasant effects of criminality, particularly fear of crime and moral panic?

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Crime, Crime Rates, Criminality, Criminology, Deviance

1. Introduction

Named COVID-19 by reason of the new SARS-CoV-2 outbreak in 2019, the coronavirus disease has entailed many impacts and consequences within a span of a few months. The COVID-19 has drawn scientists' and scholars' attention to studying and conducting research on its social, cultural, economic, and psychological effects. Social distancing, quarantine, and isolation have affected interpersonal relations and social communications. They may also entail psychological effects like stress, depression, anxiety, and panic. For example, the anxiety induced by mass media coverage and the mental stress caused by having to stay away from other people during the COVID-19 outbreak have been documented in some reports (Stawicki, et al., 2020, p. 47; Ao, 2020).

Meanwhile, an interdisciplinary approach to these reports brings us to a criminological enterprise through which we can explore various aspects of the COVID-19 outbreak. As an interdisciplinary field of study, criminology uses concepts, theories, and data of several scientific spheres including biology, psychology, and sociology in its analysis and methodology. Thus, each of these spheres' approaches to the various dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic can be redefined from the perspective of criminology.

Drawing on a descriptive-analytical methodology, this study addresses some of the most significant topics pertaining to the criminological aspects of the current pandemic from a comparative viewpoint. Considering the global/international scope of the present journal, the paper enjoys reports and data from several different countries around the world. At the same time, and in view of the journal's affiliation, it particularly addresses the case of Iran.

The focal point of research focuses on answering the following questions: How could the nature of a criminal phenomenon be

explained in relation to a natural phenomenon like COVID-19? Also, how does such a natural phenomenon impact criminality, which is the core subject of criminology, as a predominant social sciences discipline?¹ For this purpose, the arguments made in the paper consist of two main parts.

One main part of the discussion describes the COVID-19 outbreak as 'deviance'. In order to answer the first question, it should be noted that deviance is regarded as a key term in the multidimensional concept of criminology. Here, a possibly challengeable argument arises to explain the relationship between the current pandemic and deviance as a form of criminal phenomenon in the context of criminology.

The second part of the present study, which seeks to answer the second question, explores the criminal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon which the key concept of 'criminality' is examined based on a case study method. Reviewing the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of criminal sociology (as a specific orientation in criminology) would be the starting point to answer this question. Hence, as will be seen later, the relationships between the pandemic and economic crimes as well as domestic violence in the context of crime typology in criminology constitute the sub-titles of this part.

1. Other topics could be considered in the light of a criminological enterprise, including issues of criminal justice policy. While this topic encompasses the impacts of the current pandemic on criminal polices particularly in area of the prison system and on crime prevention/reduction, the subject matter of the paper is focused on a strict sense of the criminological approach by addressing criminality. It is obvious that discusses about criminal justice policy may be elaborated on in another research.

2. The Argument of COVID-19 Outbreak as Deviance from a Criminological Approach

As a sociological concept, the notion of ‘deviance’ emerged in the middle of the twentieth century and has ever since attracted criminologists’ attention as a primary form of the multidimensional concept of crime. According to a binary conceptualization, the term ‘deviance’ is used for behaviors, practices, attitudes, beliefs, or styles that tend to deviate from the cultural elements of a given society, such as its norms, standards, and ethics (McLaughlin & Muncie, 2019, p. 269). Deviance should be distinguished from the legal definition of crime, that is, the actions or behaviors sanctioned by legal criminal sanctions, particularly through punishments.

Based upon a diverse conceptualization called ‘pyramid/prism of crime’ (Henry & Lanier, 1998, p. 609; Henry, 2012, p. 10), the definition of crime in criminology extends to several phenomena such as abnormality, anti-social behavior, social harms, and social problems/issues (Rayejian Asli, 1397 [2019 A.D.], pp. 21-24). Each concept reflects a dimension of the criminological definition of crime, and they all demonstrate the interdisciplinary features of criminology, namely its biological, psychological, and sociological aspects.

Considering these various conceptualizations, in this article, we take an intermediate approach that defines deviance in the face of crime on the one hand, and explains the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and deviance on the other. To this intent, and to demonstrate how deviance may be applied to the COVID-19 outbreak, differentiating between two forms of deviance seems necessary.

2. 1. A Conceptual Debate

At first glance, the concept of deviance may appear as if it belongs to an individual level of behavior or action that is not recognized as a social phenomenon. Indeed, as was mentioned before, such behaviors or actions tend to be described as abnormal behavior (abnormality) by the multidimensional definition of crime in criminology and criminal sociology.¹ It is evident that this type of deviance cannot explain the COVID-19 outbreak because its pandemic effect requires a communal dimension, referred to as 'collective deviance' in this article.

This type of deviance corresponds with the sociological definition of the concept. It is a range of social phenomena that are not only in conflict with society's dominant culture, but are also defined as social harms or social problems/issues either at a domestic or a global level. Many instances could be drawn on to illustrate such behaviors, and some of them, may be linked to a pandemic such as COVID-19. Open defecation and public urination are major traditional examples that are still prevalent in some societies.² This type of collective deviance is a serious problem caused by cultural poverty and social dynamics.³ Although

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1. As a documented example, exhibitionism is a major instance of abnormality as an individual deviance. According to Britannica (1998), exhibitionism is defined as "derivation of sexual gratification through compulsive display of one's genitals", and describes it as "deviant behavior when it takes place outside the context of intimate sexual relations".
 2. India and some of developing countries in Africa are among societies with large numbers of people practicing open defecation and public urination (The World Bank, 2017).
 3. See, for example, the following report that describes open defecation as a serious problem in India, and relates it to social and cultural conditions and factors: UNICEF. (n.d.). See, also, another reference that reports public urination as one of the unpleasant and offensive aspects of India for tourists, esp. for women (Public Urination, 2020).

the social phenomena may be rooted in traditions and cultural practices, they are in contradiction with accepted standards and norms of the contemporary world, which is the reason why they are considered social or collective deviance.

Another prominent example that could be used for this form of deviance in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic is dietary or eating habits that can be called ‘unconventional omnivorous diet’ or ‘eating everything’. An omnivorous diet, indeed, attributes the biological term ‘omnivore’ to an animal or a person that eats a variety of foods of both plant and animal origin (Omnivore, n.d.). While a conventional omnivorous diet, as a natural eating habit, has been acknowledged by scientists and physicians (Schuna, n.d.), the unconventional practices in such a diet may have some disadvantages and thus, entail harmful consequences for humans.

With respect to the COVID-19 outbreak or pandemic, numerous scientific publications assert that a zoonotic origin for the pandemic is a matter of fact or near-certainty. Therefore, there is no evidence, not even one scientific paper, that mentions a lab escape or a lab origin for the COVID-19 (Latham, 2020).¹ If an unconventional omnivorous diet is to be supported by evidence, then that would seem to be a proper explanation for the criminological description of the COVID-19 outbreak as social/collective deviance.

2. 2. Critique and Evaluation

The argument of the COVID-19 outbreak as deviance would inevitably have some opponents and proponents. Opponents may regard the argument as a rumor or a negative stereotype that

1. See, also, the report of euro-news that seeks to answer the question about the natural or artificial character of COVID-19: ‘natural or engineered?’ (Wilks, 2021).

concerns Chinese dietary habits and hygiene practices, i.e., the proposition that “the Chinese eat everything”.¹ Conversely, proponents of the argument acknowledge hypotheses or reports about the pandemic’s origin or causes. According to some reports, a leading cause of the pandemic is attributed to the dietary habits of the Chinese (Kanwal, 2020). Despite China’s response to allegations about the pandemic (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Serbia, 2020), certain matters, including the natural origin of COVID-19 and contracting Chinese by eating bats, have been documented. In addition to the natural origin of the pandemic previously mentioned, eating bats has been hypothesized as a possible cause of COVID-19 (Lange, 2020). Although China has responded to the allegation of eating bats (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Serbia, 2020), the research carried out before the COVID-19 outbreak suggests that dietary habits in China depend on variables such as region or number of meals. For example, people in urban and rural areas have different dietary habits, and one quarter of the residents living in the poor rural areas have two meals a day compared to three meals in other places (Ma, 2015, p. 195). This may drive people to pick up unconventional eating habits.

Suchlike research shows that nutrition and diet are not necessarily similar in different places or areas in a definite society or country. Therefore, on the assumption that bats are never part of the Chinese diet (Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Serbia, 2020), this dietary habit could be perceived as a deviation from the norms and standards of the Chinese society as

1. See, for example: Rumor, Chinese Diets, and COVID-19: Questions and Answers about Chinese Food and Eating Habits, 2020.

one of the largest countries in the world and thus, could be described as collective deviance, at least within a part of a domestic community of a kind Chinese in East Asia.

Notwithstanding the reasons above, accepting the argument of collective deviance as an explanation for the COVID-19 pandemic may contain potential risks and threats. From a criminological perspective, one of its most severe consequences is hatred or hate crime stemmed in prejudices like xenophobia and racism. In spite of the reports arguing that Chinese dietary habits involve many dangers such as spreading infectious diseases (Kanwal, 2020), the collective deviance argument must not be contracted with dehumanizing effects and consequences, including the stigmatization of Chinese people as uncivilized or barbaric ‘others’ (Zhang, 2020).

A moderate approach to this challenge is to prevent the moral panic caused by the overrepresentation of mass media and the promotion of pessimistic views and comments by the governmental authorities. Meanwhile, China’s government should take the responsibility of protecting its people, regardless of whether they live inside or outside of the domestic territory. Also, China should diligently and truthfully cooperate with the international community to effectively combat the COVID-19 outbreak as a public health emergency raising global concern¹.

1. It should be pointed out that, on 30 January 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and thereafter, the phrase has become a significant abbreviation and acronym (‘PHEIC’) in the United Nations’ literature and discourse (See: Houssin, 2020).

3. Criminal Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study on Criminality

In addition to the criminological explanations of the COVID-19 outbreak in terms of deviance, another aspect of such an approach to criminology pertains to the criminal effects of the current pandemic. This aspect brings to mind the multidimensional definition of crime in criminology in its strict sense, namely 'criminality'. In the present paper, the term "criminality" denotes a specific definition used by some criminologists (Gassin, Cimamonti & Bonfils, 2011, p. 94), namely the body of offences and crimes that occurred in a definite society during a particular period. It is clear that "a particular period of time", for the purpose of this research, refers to the COVID-19 pandemic. While criminologists adhere to the conventional definition of crime as "an action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law" (Bernard, n. d.), redefining a fundamental concept such as 'criminality' demonstrates the micro and macro dimensions of criminology.¹ In the light of these binary dimensions, at least three topics with respect to criminal effects of the current pandemic arise as follows.

3. 1. The COVID-19 Pandemic from the Perspective of Criminal Sociology: A Crime Rate Issue

One of the earliest theories that is still referred to in criminology textbooks is the law of criminal saturation and supersaturation. This theory was introduced by *Enrico Ferri*, the father of criminal

1. It should be noted that dividing criminology into micro and macro branches has been recognized as a conventional notion in the contemporary criminology. While micro criminology defines crime as an individual behavior, macro criminology, in contrast, considers crime as a social/collective phenomenon that is re-conceptualized as criminality (Rayejian Asli, 1397 [2019 A.D.]), p. 221; Gassin et al., 2011, p. 94).

sociology, in the positivist school of the nineteenth century. The theory is organized based on the analogy of the law of saturation in chemistry. *Ferri* argues that:

As a given volume of water at a definite temperature will dissolve a fixed quantity of chemical substance ..., so in a given social environment with definite individual and physical conditions, a fixed number of delicts ... can be committed". "Further as in chemistry, an exceptional supersaturation may occur through an increase of temperature of the solvent liquid, so, also, in criminal sociology, beyond the regular and constant saturation, there is observation at times an actual criminal supersaturation due to extraordinary conditions of the social environment (Fattah, 1997, p. 218).

The second part of this law is what *Ferri* called 'supersaturation'. An example of supersaturation could be an agricultural or financial crisis, a political revolution, or the like. If a relativist approach is to be taken, instead of its deterministic feature, it seems that the theory can explain the correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic and criminality based upon the hypothesis that natural and/or social phenomena such as disease outbreaks or lockdowns may impact the rate of crime in every society. In the criminological research that was carried out during the current crisis, COVID-19 was introduced as a public health pandemic inducing anomic-criminal conditions that impact routine activities, and even, lifestyles (Miller & Blumstein, 2020, p. 515). All these data could be examined at two comparative levels: the world level and the domestic one.

3. 1. 1. World's Data Relating to Crime Rates

The hypothesis of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on rates of criminality has been proven by some research carried out during the current outbreak. For instance, an analysis based on Scottish statistics has shown both a decrease and an increase in various

types of crime during the COVID-19 lockdown. The study reports a drop in sexual crimes (e.g., sexual assault and rape) and non-sexual crimes of violence, and a rise in some property crimes (like fraud) between Mar. to Apr. 2020 (Scottish Government, 2020). The Europol's reports during the same time period show that the COVID-19-related criminality, especially cybercrime, fraud, and counterfeiting, have followed the spread of the pandemic throughout Europe (EUROPOL, 2020). However, other studies in 2020 indicate a contrasted ratio in crime rates based on the area of criminality. Types of criminality, as these studies suggest, differ from country to country, so that conventional crimes (e.g., theft, rape, and murder) have declined in Europe, whereas crimes such as domestic violence, marital rape, and cybercrime have risen in some countries like India (Gupta, 2020, pp. 1-11). Recent studies in 2021 have examined the effects of stay-at-home restrictions on many types of crime in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Nivette et al. 2021, p. 868). While early studies indicated a drop in violent and non-violent crime rates during the restrictions, the recent research's findings show that the COVID-19 impacts on criminality have not been the same in all countries, and at the same time, in all types of crime (Nivette et al. 2021, p. 869).¹

1. In addition to the impact of COVID-19 on crime rate, measures and policies which have been adopted due to the pandemic may have similar effects and consequences. Based on a study regarding social distancing during COVID-19, the measure has impact on the volume and distribution of crime. Property crimes such as burglary could be reduced due to increased vigilance over personal space and property. Conversely, interpersonal crimes including domestic violence have increased because of intensive contact between family members (Mohler et al., 2020). Altogether as *Stickle* and *Felson* (2020) say, "Several researchers have made initial examinations into how crime rates have fluctuated in the advent of COVID-19", and in the meanwhile, the COVID-19, it could be summed up, has caused a decline in many types of crime around the world (Lederer, 2020).

3. 1. 2. Domestic Data: The Case of Iran

Alongside the world's data, reports relating to Iran, as a domestic provider of data, are remarkable. In the absence of considerable research, a few miscellaneous reports are merely available. Meanwhile, in a conference held by the Iranian Sociological Association in early 2021, a shallow view concerning the issue was noticed. In terms of contents, a few reports have addressed criminality and the various aspects of COVID-19 in Iran, covering topics ranging from the impact of the epidemic on the central institutions of the society such as family, religion, education, and culture, to the effects of the outbreak on social problems. These pieces attributed the COVID-19 pandemic to an increase in economic crimes such as hoarding, domestic violence, and cybercrime. According to the reports, crime rates have increased in Iranian society. Even in some areas such as enterprise crimes, a wave of crime has emerged and has consequently become a socio-judicial challenge (Roshanfekar, 2021).

One of the reports that affirms the above data is the statement of a senior police official in the capital Tehran, according to which in the last quarter of 2020, over 50 percent of detained thieves had committed their crimes for the first time. These crimes have many causes, inter alia, economic problems are highly significant in this regard. As stated by the senior police official, such problems are the inevitable consequences of many years of crisis, such as economic pressure and sanctions, which have been exacerbated by the months-long outbreak of the COVID-19. Such issues have also led to widespread unemployment among the middle and the lower classes. As a result of this unemployment, social problems, particularly violence and various types of crime, have emerged and/or increased (*SALAMENO*, 2020).

3. 2. Focusing on Two Major Types of Crime

Due to the importance of certain types of crime, particularly in terms of an increase in their rates, here are two instances of such crime data that are explored to delineate the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and criminality.

3. 2. 1. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Economic Crime

Among the criminal statistics relating to COVID-19, the economic crime rates are one of the significant cases. Similar to the previous part of the research, the reports and data on the economic crime rates could be examined at two distinct levels.

World's Data:

The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) reports the continuation of influencing and shaping organized crime and illicit markets by affecting the formal economy for the foreseeable future in the pandemic era (Global Initiative, 2020). According to the report, COVID-19 and organized crime have contradictory consequences because of some obstacles for certain organized criminal activities in contrast to providing opportunities for others. On the one hand, restrictions during the pandemic may impact migrants and refugees through surveillance and monitoring measures. On the other hand, social problems, including poverty and unemployment, may render people vulnerable to human trafficking (Global Initiative, 2020).

In particular, UNODC has studied the impact of COVID-19 on trafficking in persons and affirms the effect of enforcement measures such as quarantine and travel restrictions on decreasing human trafficking due to the increasing presence and monitoring of

the police, acknowledging they may also drive it further underground at the same time (UNODC, n.d.).

Furthermore, in a webinar organized by Interpol and the Council of Europe in May 2020, the relationship between cybercrime and financial crimes was addressed, arguing that during the pandemic and its subsequent lockdown, people rely more than ever on virtual/cyberspace for work, communication, shopping, and so on (Council of Europe, 2020). This change in their lifestyle and routine activities provides opportunities for cybercriminals to exploit vulnerable targets to their own advantage. Consequently, some types of financial crimes like fraud may be committed in cyberspace. Other form of cybercrime, including ransomware attacks, carried out by a type of malicious software designed to block access to a computer system for paying a sum of money, may also occur (Council of Europe, 2020).

Interpol assesses the pandemic's impacts on organized crime in another report. Accordingly, measures being taken by countries to control the outbreak are impacting migrant smuggling and human trafficking around the world. These types of organized crime are particularly affected by different factors, including geopolitical and socio-economic ones. The report anticipates the continuing impacts of COVID-19 on this situation, concluding that a rise in the desire and the ability to migrate, and thus, an increase in illegal profits from illegal migration, is bound to occur (INTERPOL, 2020).

Iran's Data:

During the COVID-19 crisis, Iran has experienced its own difficulties concerning the economic impacts of the pandemic. In addition to some types of property crimes like theft in this period,

as was mentioned before¹, certain economic cases pertaining to the outbreak deserve consideration. The trial of twenty-one people who were accused of being foreign exchange market disruptors in 2020 is a significant example. According to a report by the Special Court for Economic Disruptors, they took advantage of the COVID-19 outbreak to disrupt the foreign exchange market, causing a shocking increase in the exchange rate (*Khabar Online*, 2020). Another instance deals with cases of COVID-19-related health products. In this regard, the spokesman of the Suspending Organization of Iran has reported 2500 cases that were tried in Mar. 2020, and at the same time, were referred to the Judiciary for sentencing appropriate fines and other legal sanctions (*ISNA*, 1398 [2020 A.D.]). Moreover, the Chief of NAJA Economic Security Police has acknowledged the measures taken by this unit to combat the the COVID-19 outbreak's black market (*PANA*, 1399 [2020 A.D.]). Accordingly, in the aftermath of the outbreak, the opportunist criminals have instrumentally taken advantage of the situation to smuggle and hoard health goods, including medical masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, etc., consequently causing psychological inflammation in the society. Thus, the NAJA Economic Security Police set up an operational base to fight against hoarding health goods. These activities have been assessed as effective in preventing and combating various types of economic crimes (*PANA*, 1399 [2020 A.D.]).

3. 2. 2. The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Domestic Violence

Along with the economic crime rates, a large part of the crime statistics of the COVID-19 outbreak belongs to domestic violence.

1. See: no. 3.1.2 Domestic Data: The Case of Iran.

Some research suggests significant increases in domestic violence, including in Asia, particularly in the Middle East, as well as in North Africa, South Africa, Latin America, Australia, the United States, and even in Europe (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020). The reports and data on the domestic violence rates are presented as follows.

World's Data:

According to the reports of the World Health Organization (WHO), levels of domestic violence have globally increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, n.d.). In fact, domestic violence as a severe type of violence against women tends to increase in emergencies and crises such as the current pandemic. Violence against women by reason of restrictions, including stay-at-home measures, accounts for an acute impact of the pandemic on women in the form of domestic violence. Domestic violence during lockdowns has been precipitated by factors such as the intensification of stress and depression caused by spending more time in close contact with family members at home. The WHO recognizes women living with disabilities, as well as displaced and refugee women, as particularly vulnerable groups who might fall victim to domestic violence during the pandemic (World Health Organization, n.d.).

The fact that such restrictions would have such drastic effects is affirmed by those sociologists who argue that domestic violence escalates whenever families spend more time together (Taub, 2020), be it in good times or bad times. The significance of the rise in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic is to the extent that it is called 'a double pandemic' (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020). The focal point of the argument is that imposing lockdowns in the pandemic period plays contradictory roles.

Although such restrictions have been taken for ensuring people's safety in the face of the pandemic's dangers, they increase the risks associated with domestic violence, specifically for those groups that are more vulnerable to this type of violence (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020). These groups of victims are usually women, children, the disabled, the elderly, and members of the LGBTQs.

Alongside the WHO, other entities of the UN have attended to the issue of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN Women, as an entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women around the world, has made recommendations for all formal and informal sectors of society to protect the victims of violence against women, including the victims of domestic violence (UN WOMEN 2020a). The UN Women describes the current issue as the unprecedented increase in domestic violence since the onset of the pandemic (UN WOMEN, 2020b). Based on a brief report, the UN Women explores the role of private sectors to respond to the issue and to protect women who are at the risk of domestic violence. One of the recommended measures is for employers to provide a 'duty of care' to the employees who may be affected by domestic violence (UN WOMEN, 2020b). Such a provision could be defined as an omission (a form of *actus reus*) under some criminal law systems, such as that of Britain (*Criminal Law*, 2004, p. 11).

Iran's Data:

Reports and statements relating to domestic violence in Iran amid the COVID-19 outbreak are remarkable, and at the same time, paradoxical. The first report came out in Apr. 2020, according to which the Director General of Counseling and Psychological Affairs of State Welfare Organization (SWO) declared that under the lockdown and restrictions (e.g., quarantine) the number of calls

made by people who reached out to the Organization due to family disputes, particularly between couples, shows a triple growth (Hosseinihah, 1399 [2020 A.D.]). Nevertheless, the Deputy of Social Affairs of SWO denied the report, arguing that the domestic violence rates do not demonstrate a significant difference between pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods. However, he acknowledged the fact that cases of domestic violence may increase when people are stressed or under pressure, either caused by humanitarian or natural crises (Sazandegi News, 2020). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health and Medical Education attempted to send nationwide text messages to Iranians, stating that *“If you observe or encounter cases of child abuse or spousal abuse in the days of the pandemic, to receive the social and psychological services for free and around the clock, call the Social Emergency of SWO at 123”* (Shargh Newspaper, 1399 [2020 A.D.]

Based upon the reports received in May 2020, the previous data were confirmed by the SWO officials in several cities and provinces (55Online, 2020). In Isfahan, Alborz, Golestan, Ilam, and North Khorasan, statistical officials have reported a 50 percent to 10-fold increase in Social Emergency calls since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. For example, an expert in charge of Social Emergency at Isfahan’s SWO stated a 50% in the calls received by the institution since the beginning of the outbreak. He noted that the main topics of these contacts revolved around child abuse, spousal abuse, and, to a lesser extent, disability abuse. At the same time, the Director General of SWO in Ilam and the Social Deputy of this organization in North Khorasan Province have additionally confirmed the increase in calls and requests to use the services of Social Emergency. The Director General of SWO in Alborz Province is another official who announced a 10-fold increase in calls to Social Emergency. According to him, child abuse was the most frequent reason for these calls. In the north of Iran, the Head

of SWO in Golestan reported 3,000 calls made to Social Emergency, 275 of which were registered as acute family disputes (*Shargh Newspaper*, 1399 [2020 A.D.]).¹

Among all these reports, one of the significant parts of evidence relating to domestic violence constitutes the narratives recounted by those women who have experienced such a hostile degree of victimization during the outbreak. According to the findings, these specific cases may demonstrate men's dominance over women in family relationships throughout the quarantine. Moreover, in terms of providing these victims with access to justice, their concerns about the negative consequences of any contact with the police, and distrusting the police or the courts' ability to deal with the complaint in respect of domestic violence are significant factors (Rayejian Asli, 2021, pp. 173-174).

4. Conclusion

The criminological dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic, as an interdisciplinary approach, enable us to address many social, cultural, economic, and psychological impacts and the consequences of the phenomenon in the catastrophe of the Third Millennium. Among several aspects, the author sought to analyze two significant issues that seemed to correlate closely with the current pandemic. One of these points, namely the argument of the COVID-19 outbreak as deviance, may be challenged because of its critical associations. That said, the author set out to respond to any

1. Notwithstanding all these reports, the Head of the Preventive Police in Tehran did not accept the news of the increase in crime, especially family conflicts, and conversely, argued a 10 percent drop in family conflicts during the outbreak (Bagheri Rad, 1399 [2020 A.D.]), without any comparison of the data and the official statistics.

potential counterarguments by adopting a moderate approach. This approach was based upon the prevention of moral panic caused by mass media's overrepresentation and the promotion of pessimistic views and comments by the governmental authorities.

Another aspect of such an approach addressed in this paper was the criminal effects of the pandemic. The study showed a clear distinction between two categories of crime rates (financial/economic and interpersonal crimes). The factual finding is that in spite of the reports and statistical data that explain a fluctuated rate towards decreasing in overall, and in accordance with traditional theories in criminology (specifically criminal saturation and supersaturation), more serious economic crimes (e.g., fraud or cybercrime) and less dangerous interpersonal crimes (like domestic abuses or family conflicts) rank high in crime rates and criminal statistics.

When linked to the world's data, all these facts and statistics bring us to the conclusion that pandemics have inevitable adverse effects on both personal and communal aspects of human life. From a criminological perspective, they have direct impacts on criminality, and even on criminal justice policies. Consequently, the *Shawshank Redemption*¹ for humans is to maintain their physical health when exposed to infectious diseases such as COVID-19, and to look after their mental health when faced with the risks of criminality. Particularly, people need to look for strategies to prevent or erode the deleterious effects of criminality, including fear of crime and moral panic; an enterprise that is ordeal and travail, if not impossible.

1. *Shawshank Redemption* is a metaphor inspired by a drama film in the same name that the author uses for explaining the future of the world after the COVID-19, as regards the meaning of English word 'redemption', including freedom, rescue, and recovery.

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