




Society in the Pandemic Period: Criminal Background of Development

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Abstract: The article presents the results of a study of the impact of COVID-19 coronavirus infection pandemic and its strains on the criminal and victimological situation in the Russian Federation. The criminological analysis of the predicted development of crime and its main directions is provided. The socio-psychological and gender-age characteristics of persons with a high risk of victimization are given. It is noted that social tension, social dysadaptation of the population caused by a high risk of infection, economic recession, introduction of strict restrictive measures and self-isolation, increase the victimization of the population. The results of the study based on the analysis of the causes, dynamics and direction of crime showed: the criminological forecast of the development of crime in general was confirmed, but not for all types of crime: there was a decrease in violent and street crime; crimes committed by labor migrants and foreign citizens. There is an increase in: organized crime; economic and corruption crimes; extremism and terrorism; the greatest increase in crimes committed with the use of information and telecommunication technologies and in the field of computer information. Comparative analysis shows the similarity of crime trends in Russia and foreign countries caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus infection pandemic and its strains. It is necessary to conduct deeper criminological and victimological study in order to develop more effective crime prevention and victimological prevention measures, as well as an international exchange of good practices in this area during a general pandemic.


1 INTRODUCTION

The rapid spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection has affected all aspects of life and public relations in all countries of the world. With a lack of comprehensive and scientifically grounded information, at the state level, quick and balanced decisions were required to eliminate problems that were growing like a "snowball". On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized that the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection and its consequences have reached the level of a pandemic, in many countries of the world a self-isolation regime has been introduced for the population, and international transport links have been reduced. For the first time, the world has faced such large-scale cataclysms, the global crisis has become a test for all states.

The main problems faced by all countries of the world: regulatory and organizational and managerial and nature, maintaining economic security, social stability, preventing the growth of crime, chaos and confusion, aggravating the solution to the main problem – countering the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection, protection of health of people and provision of the necessary medical care. The resulting situation had no analogues of the previous experience and was distinguished by a number of features: globality, transnationality, dynamism, threat to national security, difficulty in predicting consequences, time uncertainty.

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2 METHODOLOGY

The study methodology consists of: 1) general scientific study methods in jurisprudence: dialectical, logical, functional; sociocultural (based on a systematic approach); 2) private scientific methods: statistical; 3) special study methods in jurisprudence: comparative legal, formal legal. In order to examine the determinants, dynamics and forecasting of development of the criminal situation in Russia, against the background of a pandemic, the study analyzed official statistics, the results of Russian and foreign studies on this topic, and publications in the media.

3 STUDY RESULTS

The high level of complexity of the problem contributed to the mobilization and search for a comprehensive solution, the state authorities of the Russian Federation began to introduce a number of legislative, economic, political and other measures to localize the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection and minimize its consequences. Under the new conditions, the most tangible changes the criminal and administrative legislations have undergone; migration legislation, which until that moment was considered clearly regulated, encountered a number of difficulties (see: E.N. Mayorova).

At the end of March, a self-isolation regime was introduced in the Russian Federation, most of the working population was forced to switch to a remote form of work, education in educational institutions was also transferred to a remote format. Long-term self-isolation negatively affects the psyche of people, since there is a sharp decrease in mobility, a violation of the usual way and rhythm of life, the need for a long time in the room and no ability to leave it, constant contacts with a narrow circle of people, and the inability to occupy children with various and useful activities for many became a serious test.

At the individual psychological level, monotony cause a high level of anxiety, emotional lability, apathy, melancholy. The lack of habitual employment and the desire to reduce emotional stress quickly enough leads to alcoholism, especially in men, which provokes conflicts, increases verbal and physical aggression. Already existing family problems are aggravated, which require their resolution or "relaxation". According to Ombudsman Tatyana Moskalkova, in the spring of 2020 the number of

cases of domestic violence in Russia increased 2.5 times (RIA Novosti, 2020). The World Health Organization has confirmed that domestic violence during the pandemic in the countries of the world increased by 25-30 % (Interfax, 2021).

After the end of the period of self-isolation, most of the Russians were with anxiety. Due to introduction of new restrictive measures, many enterprises were forced to temporarily cease their activities, and the fear of losing their jobs and livelihoods intensified among people. During 2020, incomes decreased by 3.5 %, the poor amounted to 19.4 million people (Tass.ru, 2021). The number of unemployment increased, if in the previous year it was 4.6 %, then in 2020 it is already 6.4 %, while the average age of the unemployed is 35 years (Rosstat.gov.ru, 2021). Economic problems, a high probability of being infected, fear of becoming seriously ill, of losing the ability to work, the collapse of personal plans, a change in goals, or their "postponement for an indefinite period", anxiety for family and children, elderly relatives, all these facts increased social tension, which increased the level of victimization of the population.

Social dysadaptation of the population was expressed in a decrease in the adaptive ability to adapt to constantly changing circumstances in high-risk conditions and in an uncertain time horizon. Considering the individual psychological characteristics, prolonged stress, a depressed state of the psyche, in some people it increases depression and suggestibility, reduces the criticality of thinking, in others, on the contrary, they increase irritation, an aggressive desire to "destroy" obstacles, immediately take some action to restore "personal control" in a situation of complete uncertainty. Along with objective unfavorable socio-economic conditions, negative psychological factors negatively affect a person, including provoking illegal behavior.

Against the background of the psychological frustration of the population caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 coronavirus infection, the number of various fraudulent schemes and falsifications has sharply increased in the country, criminals have taken advantage of poor awareness and heightened suggestibility of citizens, reduced mobility, limited social contacts, as well as sharply increased demand for certain types of medical products (Urazaliev, 2020). For example, the scammers approached citizens, through spam mailing, to transfer funds to fight COVID-19, to a financial account allegedly opened by the Government of the Russian Federation or even the World Health Organization. There are cases when, taking advantage of the temporarily

increased shortage of mechanical ventilation devices, fraudsters either sold them at inflated prices, or simply disappeared with money (Matskevich, Bochkarev, 2020). The legislator took the necessary measures in the field of information space Federal Law No. 100-FZ "On Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Articles 31 and 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation"; Articles 207.1 and 207.2 have been added to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation), which are aimed at ensuring the information security of society and increasing responsibility for the dissemination of deliberately false information about events and facts posing a threat to the life and health, safety of citizens (Feder. Law of July 31, 2020, No. 260-FZ. Access from the reference legal system ConsultantPlus).

The level of crime and its most relevant types, is an indicator not only of public safety, but an indicator of social, economic, national problems, even more they are manifested during periods of crises (T.V. Shipunova). Understanding that the crisis caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 coronavirus infection is a long-term phenomenon that negatively affects all spheres of life, most criminologists, including Russian scientists, were confident in the statistical increase in crime.

According to S.V. Milyukov: "In the sphere of social pathologies, among which crime takes the central place, and in modern conditions the growth in the number of crimes can take on an explosive character" (Milyukov, 2020). Based on the analysis of the dynamics of crime over the previous five-year period, as well as on the basis of a general analysis of the existing socio-economic and political situation in the context of a pandemic, several attempts were made to predict the development of criminogenic and victimological trends.

First, in a pandemic, the following types of crime will increase: 1) selfish, 2) selfish and violent; 3) political; 4) caused by interpersonal conflicts of a different nature; 4) committed by labor migrants; 5) in the field of computer information and using information and telecommunication technologies (see: Mayorov, Velikiy).

Second, in the gender and age aspect, a significant increase in the number of people who first "crossed the line" of criminal behavior was predicted: 1) at the expense of men who have lost their jobs or have the opportunity to legally obtain financial income; 2) women who have lost a stable source of income; 3) graduates of educational institutions who have not found employment; 4) young people who do not

agree to low-paid jobs; 5) involvement of minors and children in criminal schemes (Matskevich, Bochkarev, 2020).

Third, an increase in domestic violence was expected for various reasons: deterioration of the family's material condition; caused by a woman's more workload than usual with household chores, serving other family members (for example, in self-isolation, when the whole family is constantly in the living room for a long time, without the ability to leave it); increased verbal conflict and physical aggressiveness; alcoholization; mutual claims and the impossibility of their resolution in the current conditions (Akulenko, 2020).

Fourth, an increase in the amount of latent (unreported or undeclared) crime, since the victims will more "blame" the crisis situation, and not the culprit. Strengthening the activities of organized crime (OC). Slower and less successful investigation of crimes by the police (a decrease in the number of qualified employees and their required number, due to COVID-19 coronavirus infection); at the same time, use of the forces and means of the police, to a greater extent, to maintain public order (for example, in the case of riots caused by socio-economic tension, and etc.) (Gotchina, 2020).

Fifth, the determinants and the most active areas of criminal acts will affect the expansion of the range of subjects, the most vulnerable persons who have become their victims. Taking into account the reasons and conditions, it is possible to reasonably classify the most victimized groups according to a number of characteristics: 1) by age (pensioners, youth, adolescents and children); 2) by gender (women and young girls); 3) according to social status (persons without a permanent place of residence and income; migrants; convicts in places of deprivation of liberty); 4) for professional employment (medical workers, law enforcement officials); 5) in the zone of increased victimological risk, there are also "criminal elements" themselves (Kazakova, 2020).

Europol CEO Catherine de Baule names a number of reasons behind criminal attacks during the pandemic (EUROPOL, 2021). Her report indicates that the number of falsifications and fraudulent schemes has increased, the activity of organized criminal groups has increased, which quickly adapted their methods in the new conditions and profit from the global crisis, from the sale of counterfeits, "miraculous" drugs to tests and other "shadow" services. Crime very quickly "spilled over" from the offline environment to the online and shadow Internet, the number of sites providing "services" of online casinos and cyber sex, as well as the "veiled"

sale of drugs, is constantly growing (Pravo.ru, 2021). In some countries, the growth of crime committed with use of information and telecommunication technologies and the field of computer information increased by 103 %.

Fraud has increased dramatically. Fake coronavirus test kits were sold in Kenya. In Switzerland, criminals posing as civil servants asked for access to property in order to disinfect. In South Africa, the National Reserve Bank has warned of fraudsters who have come up with a creative way to rob the population by posing as bank employees "collecting" banknotes they claim are infected with the virus.

In a number of countries, during the pandemic, there were clear changes in the direction and type of crime, especially with the introduction of lockdown and tough measures limiting population mobility and access to public places. For example, introduction of restrictive measures in El Salvador led to a sharp decrease in violent crime, in the Balkan countries during the period of social isolation the number of murders decreased, in Bosnia, where car theft was one of the leading criminal characteristics, there are also decreasing trends (Kazakova, 2020).

In some countries in South America, where kidnapping, as well as forced labor (slavery), is a "traditional" type of crime, the number of crimes of this type has increased. This is largely due to the fact that the police focused on preventing looting and riots. Wherein, there were also forced measures that increase crime. In Indonesia, India and Afghanistan, in order to preserve the health of prisoners, some of them were free, for example, in India – 34 thousand people (Bhardwaj).

During the first wave of coronavirus infection, criminal markets changed significantly, sales of counterfeit medicines and fake business increased in a number of countries, including in East Asia (China, Mongolia, South Korea, the Philippines, Japan), which are characterized by strict discipline of citizens and a low level of crime (Zavtra.ru, 2021).

An important aspect of 2021 was the active vaccination of the population in all countries of the world, as this will allow stabilizing the situation in all spheres of public life at the state level. For example, vaccination coverage in China is 85 %, in South Korea – 79.5 %, in Japan – 75 %. In Russia, as of December 1, 2021, fully vaccinated (with a two-component vaccine preparation) is 39.9 % (Gogov.ru, 2021), and 67 % (vaccinated with the first component of the vaccine). In Russia, there is a large amount of unreliable and deliberately false information about vaccination in the Internet space, and the

requirements for its need, from a part of the population, are compensated by the purchase of falsified covid certificates (Pervichko et al., 2020). Therefore, on the one hand, this criminal sector is actively developing, on the other hand, the process of ending the pandemic caused by the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus infection and its strains in Russia is artificially "delayed", and this prolongs the economic downturn, increases social tension, and reduces mobilization opportunities both the population and the implementation of state measures to normalize all spheres of public life.

4 RESULT DISCUSSION

It seems important to compare the forecasts of the development of the criminological situation in the Russian Federation, the main types of crimes and their direction, based on official statistics for January - December 2020, in comparison with the same period of the previous year. Not all predictions came true, but most of them were presented by criminologists.

1. For the period January - December 2020, 2,044.2 thousand crimes were registered, which is 1.0 % more than in the same period last year. The total damage from crimes amounted to 512.8 billion rubles, which is 18.3 % less than in the previous year. More than half (55.3 %) of crimes is theft of other people's property: theft (Article 158 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) – 751.2 thousand (a decrease of 3.0 %); fraud (article 159 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) – 335.6 thousand (an increase of 30.5 %); robberies (Art. 161 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) – 38.4 thousand (a decrease of 16.2 %); robbery (Art. 162 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) – 5.3 thousand (decrease by 21.7 %) (data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2020). Therefore, there is a projected increase in fraud, including use of electronic means of payment.

2. The number of violent crimes, including murder – intentional infliction of death, decreased, 22.7 thousand people died (-5.2 %); 35.6 thousand people were seriously injured (-6.9 %). The so-called "street crime" demonstrates the dynamics of decline (robberies (- 24 %), thefts (- 18.5 %), robberies (- 23.3 %)), which will explain the introduction of a period of self-isolation and a number of restrictive measures affecting mobility of citizens.

3. Law enforcement agencies detected 105.5 thousand crimes of an economic nature, in general, this is a slight increase of 0.5 %. However,

alarming is the fact that serious crimes in the total number of economic crimes is 61 %, which means an increase in white-collar crime by 83.9 %. There is an increase in corruption schemes, and their total damage amounted to 45 billion rubles (Tass.ru, 2021). Financial and material damage from economic crime is estimated at 339.5 billion rubles, many crimes are associated with implementation of national projects (in the field of demography, affordable housing, health care, highways, and etc.) development of the country, destabilize the population, initiate an increase in crime and become a threat to national security.

4. Among persons who have committed crimes, the share of persons without a permanent source of income increased slightly by 0.1 % and previously convicted persons by 0.3 %. More than half (59.8 %) of investigated crimes were committed by persons who had already committed crimes. 1.5 % fewer crimes committed by foreign citizens and stateless persons. In this proportion of crimes, the forecasts were not confirmed.

5. It shall be noted that the largest number of crimes – 510.4 thousand, were committed using information and telecommunication technologies and in the field of computer information, an increase for the entire period for January - December of 2020 is 73.4 %. Forecasts for these areas and types of crimes were fully confirmed.

6. Based on the analysis of statistical data, it can be stated that in Russia in a pandemic situation, not only has there not been a significant increase in crime, moreover, in most areas of crime, there has been a clear decrease. Therefore, the vast majority of the population of Russia remained law-abiding and did not cross the threshold of crime, in many respects this was facilitated by economic programs to support the poor, large families, as well as support for enterprises and businesses, which, despite the transition to a remote mode of work, made it possible to save jobs, and not create a collapse of unemployment and poverty, although the income of citizens has undoubtedly decreased. The delay in the process of overcoming the pandemic causing the economic recession, the rise in unemployment and the further decline in incomes are an area of fragile balance that can become a mechanism for the growth of seizure rates and an increase in citizens' victimization.

7. The dynamics of criminalization by type of crime in the Russian Federation during COVID-19 pandemic of coronavirus infection and its strains, demonstrates coincidence with global trends in the development of areas of crime. First, a reduction in violent crime, including homicide. Second, the

intensification of the activities of organized criminal groups in all countries of the world, including Russia, as well as a high level of their adaptation to rapidly changing negative conditions, use of all "vulnerable" places created by the situation of the global pandemic. As noted by foreign and Russian criminologists, organized crime has adapted to the pandemic faster than law enforcement agencies and government agencies. Third, the high dynamics of the commission of crimes, practically of all types, is stated with use of information and telecommunication technologies and in the field of computer information. It is these areas that are the most relevant and "vulnerable", which require the attention of law enforcement agencies and the adoption of new, more effective methods of counteraction, the development of preventive measures, the protection of victims and the development of new legislative acts. Fourth, the health sector requires more attention, and everything related to counterfeit medical products and the shadow production of drugs.

8. Psychological and sociological studies confirm that a crisis and indefinitely long-term situation caused by the pandemic of the COVID-19 coronavirus infection and its strains causes chronic stress and increases the social and psychological stress of people. With the confluence of individual conditions caused at different stages of the development of a pandemic situation, anxiety, frustration, apathy, fear, anger increase, which reduces the level of individual adaptation, increases suggestibility and victimization, in other cases – aggressiveness and impulsivity. Negative external circumstances, refracting through the internal state, increase the risk of becoming a "victim" or "criminal". Therefore, reliable information in the mass media, the availability of professional psychological support, the stabilization of the socio-economic sphere, as well as the "containment" of crime, in the perception of citizens at the "usual level", make it possible to more effectively implement government measures aimed at overcoming the pandemic and the crises caused by it, almost all spheres of public life.

9. In the context of a pandemic, self-isolation, restrictive measures and a number of negative factors, more attention shall be paid to the predictable increase in domestic violence, which has increased in almost all countries of the world, according to various expert estimates by 25-30 %. It shall also be remembered that the facts of domestic violence have a high level of latency, and only cases of victims' treatment are recorded. In Russia, during the period of the pandemic, there was no recorded significant

increase in the facts of domestic violence, but in reality this is probably not the case. In this direction, it is necessary to develop a number of programs to provide counseling, psychological and legal support to potential and real victims of domestic violence, including taking into account the situation of the pandemic and similar crises.

10. The expected increase in juvenile delinquency did not occur, more in Russia there has been a decrease in this area over the past five years by 39 %, and in 2020 the decrease was 3.8 %. However, it is necessary to pay attention to a new and still poorly studied form of violence in the Internet space – cyberbullying. In a pandemic, most of the population went online. Any person can become a victim of a cyber-aggression, but adolescents are at greater risk of victimization, due to their psychological and age-related characteristics and are vulnerable. This can lead to trauma, breakdowns, suicide, and impulsive aggression. As the number of Internet users grows, so does the number of cyber attackers and their victims. The police must implement cyber filtering measures. The most effective preventive method is awareness of underage Internet users and other age groups, as well as their legal protection.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The pandemic caused by the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection and its strains differentially affects crime, for some types of crime it creates insurmountable obstacles or significant restrictions, for others there is a period of prosperity and activation, the criminal world is quickly adapting, using all the niches that have arisen, new types of criminal acts are emerging.

It is necessary to conduct targeted research on the problems of the criminalization of society during socio-biological crises, to minimize the consequences of a criminal orientation during a pandemic, to develop preventive measures aimed at reducing the victimization of the population, as well as adequate means of combating crime. The most vulnerable of the population turned out to be in the environment of the Internet space, which requires increased security in the field of telecommunication technologies and computer information.

Since the pandemic caused by the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus infection and its strains is global in nature, it is necessary to exchange positive experience in overcoming and building a constructive international dialogue.

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