



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Crime During The Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown: A Secondary Study

Amandeep Singh

Assistant Professor in Sociology

Department of Evening Studies- MDRC

Panjab University

Chandigarh

Abstract

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's lives and communities has been profound. Given the extraordinary times that the entire world is currently experiencing, it is especially critical to address concerns about crime, violence, and justice in general. Current studies have demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected crime in part due to alterations in people's daily routines and their exposure to stressful situations. The investigation has also connected a number of previously developed theories to the modifications in crime trends that occurred during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Keywords: Crime, COVID-19, and Lockdown.

Introduction

The Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) struck most of the world's nations in the spring of 2020, causing severe disruptions to society, especially to the healthcare system and economy.¹ On January 30, 2020, three locations in Kerala recorded the first instances of COVID-19 in India. The patients were three Indian medical students who had recently returned from Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic.²³ Many governments swiftly implemented (lockdown) measures, such as stay-at-home directives, travel bans, physical segregation,

¹ "India's first coronavirus patient discharged after being cured". *Hindustan Times*. 20 February 2020.

² Andrews, MA; Areekal, Binu; Rajesh, KR; Krishnan, Jijith; Suryakala, R; Krishnan, Biju; Muraly, CP; Santhosh, PV. (2020). 'First confirmed case of COVID-19 infection in India: A case report'. *Indian journal of Medical Research*. 151(5): 490-492.

³ Narasimhan, T. E. (2020). "India's first coronavirus case: Kerala student in Wuhan tested positive". *Business Standard India*.

shuttered schools, and restricted private and public meetings, in an effort to slow the virus's spread and lessen its impact on the healthcare system. In India, On March 23, lockdowns were declared in Kerala, and on March 25, lockdowns were declared throughout the nation.

Many people first assumed that since everyone was trapped indoors during the Covid-19 lockdown, there would be a dramatic decrease in crime. However, various researchers (e.g., Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; Ertan et al., 2020; Kaukinen, 2020) found that COVID-19 policies could raise the rates of some crimes, such as intimate relationship and domestic abuse. According to emerging empirical data, there may have been a decrease in some crimes (such as theft and robbery,) during the pandemic, but there may have also been an increase in some aggressive behaviors and cybercrime. We expand on how changes in people's daily routines and cumulative stressful situations have affected crime and violence in order to explain such trends, drawing on theories already in existence. In addition, we address the shortcomings of current research and offer suggestions for the creation of multidisciplinary and comparative studies on criminal and deviant behaviors that are impacted by humanitarian conditions of crisis.

Every culture struggles with crime as a serious societal issue. According to Durkheim (1947), crime exists not just in the majority of societies of a specific species but in all cultures in every kind. As stated by Borbora (2007), 'Criminality is a problem that every society faces.' And the hunt for the underlying causes of crime has continued ever since men realized how serious this issue was. However, systematic research on the burning issue just began a few hundred years ago. Although it is extremely difficult to identify a single author as the founder of the scientific study of crime, it is generally agreed that Ceaser Lombroso's (1835–1909) work was the first to inspire many intellectuals to approach the study of crime causation from a scientific perspective. According to his theory, criminals are born with particular physical characteristics that set them apart from non-criminals. It is a crime against society or the community at large. It leads to social disorder and puts social security at risk. According to the sociological viewpoint, crime has a broader definition than the legal definition. It includes antisocial behaviors that aren't always covered by the legal definition of crime. Although they are considered anti-social behaviors, gambling, and alcoholism are not always classified as crimes. Crime, in the words of Durkheim (1947), is "an act that violates some really powerful group sentiments."

According to Marshall and Clark (1962) Crime is commonly described in contemporary legal systems as "any act or omission prohibited by law for the protection of the public, and made punishable by the state in a judicial proceeding in its own name."

According to Barnes and Teeters (1959) "Crime is an antisocial behavior that has so severely offended the public that it is prohibited by law."

According to William (2004) "Crime can be defined as either committing an act that the law bans or failing to perform an act that the law requires the person to perform."

Review of literature

According to recent studies, during the pandemic, rates of several property crimes, robberies, and assaults have dropped, while rates of some violent behaviors and cybercrime have increased (Abrams, 2021; Buil-Gil et al., 2021; Langton et al., 2021; Schleimer et al., 2020). The pandemic increased the number of opportunities for online fraud. The public's usage of technology has increased to an unprecedented degree, which has allowed thieves to gain unauthorized access to personal data by repeatedly infiltrating security networks (INTERPOL, 2020). The pandemic has caused a significant shock to financial and economic situations, which are important factors that determine social wellbeing, leading to financial stress in communities (Rodríguez, 2020). Due to these conditions, nations all over the world have seen the loss of millions of employments as well as severe challenges with social safety and livelihood (Ceylan et al., 2020). Traditional crime patterns were altered by the Covid-19 pandemic (Ashby, 2020; Boserup et al., 2020). Older criminal behaviors resurfaced and new ones developed during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. In attempt to stop the disease from spreading, some communities in Latin America started to illegally block roadways. Healthcare personnel were attacked out of fear of infection, and looting and other crimes were committed, all of which were justified by the catastrophe that was developing. In addition to additional potential offenses including violating curfews, failing to wear masks in public, and other state or federal prohibitions, the coronavirus pandemic led to the development of new laws that restricted social interaction and mobility.

Understanding lockdown and crime through various theories

Crime theories investigate the causes of crime in society. There are unique features to each hypothesis. Since criminal behavior is not always clear-cut, criminologists can employ multiple theories to better understand a case or solve a crime. We shall be able to comprehend the criminological component by using these theories. These are a few popular theories that either directly or indirectly relate to criminal behavior.

- The Routine Activities Theory (RAT): The Routine Activities Theory (RAT), developed by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson, is mentioned in Cohen and Felson (1979). It posits that criminal events happen when three crucial elements come together in time and space: (1) a motivated offender; (2) a suitable target, such as a person or piece of property deemed appropriate for an offender; and (3) an absence of guardianship, such as having few or no people (such as police, school officials, etc.) witnessing and stopping these criminal events.
- Crime Pattern Theory: Crime pattern theory is easily linked to the emphasis on land uses and urban areas (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1999). While criminals frequently search outside of their neighborhoods for potential victims, they are also more likely to locate such victims nearby. As a result, there is typically a moderate distance to crime. Based on existing studies, areas with mixed land use make for easier targets for burglaries since commercial premises are more easily vulnerable to burglary because they are not always under the supervision of staff or consumers. Residential targets are also less open to attack since

they are more populated. Living in areas where there are a significant number of commercial targets mixed in with residential properties gives offenders more access to potential targets for break-ins.

- General Strain Theory: According to the general strain theory, people commit crimes to relieve tension and stress. According to this theory, COVID-19 and COVID-19 restrictions (such as lockdowns) should cause more stress, particularly when it comes to not being able to achieve goals, and less coping mechanisms (such as lack of social support because of the lockdown). This should lead to an increase in crime, particularly low-cost crimes like theft, non-residential burglaries, and domestic violence (Agnew, 1992).
- Socio-Economic Theory: Karl Marx, English, and Bonger contend that class conflict and the state of the economy are the primary causes of crime. Although there is some truth to this viewpoint, it is biased and does not apply to all crimes. For instance, Marx and Engels thought that the real root cause of crime was economic inequality. Society is split into many classes of wealthy and impoverished people as a result of these differences in economic standing. Tension between these classes is constantly growing. Consequently, this causes crime in a community. According to Bonger (1960), criminal behavior is caused by the capitalistic way of production. Thus, Criminal activity stems from financial problems. Poverty is what drives people to steal, deceive, and engage in other criminal activities. According to this method, which focuses on individual factors, people are under pressure to commit crimes, especially for financial gain, due to certain economic conditions including poverty, deprivation, and unemployment. It should be highlighted, therefore, that criminal behavior is influenced by a wide range of factors in addition to economic ones. In actuality, no analysis of the issue is complete until the socioeconomic component is mentioned.

Research gaps and significance of the study

Each study endeavor contributes to the body of existing knowledge. This viewpoint holds that each study has a distinct importance. Furthermore, the present study has important ramifications for sociological research, particularly with regard to understanding criminal behavior and crimes. There has been very little research on crime during COVID-19. Through theoretical comprehension, the current study seeks to comprehend the relationship between crime and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives

1. To comprehend how crime and the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown are related
2. To understand crime through theories during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown
3. To find out whether crime rates increase or decrease during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown
4. To determine which crimes increased or decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown

Research Methodology

Theoretical research based on secondary data. As secondary sources of knowledge, books, journals, policy documents, committee reports, papers, conference and seminar proceedings were explored.

Linking Theories with Crime

- Robberies: As in order to stop the virus from spreading, many non-essential locations, including parks, restaurants, shopping centers, and so on, temporarily closed for varied periods of time. Thus, the chance of persons participating in different deviant behaviors like assaults or vehicular accidents was affected by this decrease in social interaction (Calderon-Anyosa & Kaufman, 2021; Gerell et al., 2020). Since distancing measures have been in place, people have generally spent more time at home, which raises the probability that there are less "suitable targets" than what Routine Activities Theory discusses. Accordingly, at least temporarily following the lockdown orders, people living inside their homes has contributed to a decrease in domestic theft, theft of vehicle and other related crimes. (Felson et al., 2020).
- Drug crime: Andresen & Hodgkinson (2020) used data from 15 districts in Queensland, Australia, to report a rise in drug-related crimes, including drug trafficking and possession. This may have caused extreme stress in this area and behaviors like drug usage that are self-medicating. Since some studies reported a decline in drug trafficking but not in drug possession, differing findings may potentially be explained by the nature of drug crime. Furthermore, other research discovered that as soon as COVID-19 limits were put in place, there was a spike in drug offenses, which was quickly followed by a decline in drug crimes. The Routine Activities Theory (RAT) proves to decrease the drug crime rates as the motivated offender, a suitable target, such as a person were not easily available because of the lockdown and guardianship such as police were on duty to keep the public at their homes.
- Domestic violence: Since the pandemic began, many people have experienced a variety of severe stressors in their daily lives, such as job loss, the death of a loved one, social isolation, vaccine fears, and a host of other pandemic-related problems. In addition to the significant disruptions to everyday schedules brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been under more stress globally (Brown et al., 2020; Campbell, 2020). Havard & Lefevre (2020) mentions that women who participated in a qualitative study with survivors explained to researchers how their abusers restricted their phone use and access by limiting who they could talk to, when, and for how long. Due to their restricted virtual interactions, victims may become more vulnerable to abuse from offenders. According to Kim & Phillips (2021) there is a little question that the COVID-19 pandemic's circumstances have produced a variety of strains. The financial and economic limitations, which include few work options and restricted income, can be characterized as the inability to meet objectives and the elimination of positive stimuli as a result of being thrown off. Piquero et al. (2021) noted that during COVID-19, there was an overall rise in domestic violence. Kaukinen (2020) highlights that the longer time spent indoors might exacerbate relationship conditions by increasing disagreements and conflict due to stay-at-home rules and restricted physical encounters.

According to studies, the lockdown conditions and economic stress have both contributed to an upsurge in Domestic violence during the pandemic (Arenas-Arroyo et al., 2021). Both the theories prove to be true. As the strain increases, and the socio-economic conditions changed, the rise in crimes like domestic abuse also increases.

- Cybercrime: Following the implementation of severe lockdown measures during the initial wave of the pandemic, the Internet emerged as the primary means of communication and is still widely used for employment, education, consulting, shopping, and socializing. Furthermore, since the majority of people became more reliant on technology during the pandemic, worries about the weaker targets of cybercrime (such as elder population, children and illiterate) have grown. Increased digital activity has given motivated criminals new avenues for financial gain to target weaker populations and infrastructure, such as personal computers, health care networks, and video conferencing platforms (Chawki, 2021; Collier, 2020; Collier et al., 2020; Monteith et al., 2021; Pawlicka et al., 2021). According to Collier et al. (2020), there is a rise in fraud opportunities worldwide as well as a rise in some cybercrimes. It was noted that cybercriminals were primarily utilizing pre-existing attack tactics to take advantage of the psychological consequences of the epidemic, such as increased anxiety. Pre-COVID fraud research indicates that while cyber-enabled fraud types are on the rise, offline fraud variations seem to be decreased in the lockdown period (Kemp et al., 2020; Levi, 2017; Tcherni et al., 2016). Since, people became more reliant on technology during the pandemic, their vulnerability to cybercrime increases.

After analyzing the secondary data based on books, journals, policy documents, committee reports, papers, conference and seminar proceedings, it was found that all four theories, the general strain theory, the crime pattern theory, the routine activities theory, and the Socio-Economic theory fit the data. We do discover a connection between the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and criminality. While some crimes increased, other crimes decreased as well.

Since there was a lockdown and all public spaces, including stores, malls, and parks, were closed, the disruptions in daily routines brought on by the pandemic lead us to search for increases in burglaries, especially in areas where residential areas are not the prominent feature. Since there were fewer people living there, thefts were discovered to be more frequent. (Felson et al., 2020). We did find a shift within a similar category of crime (i.e., from residential to non-residential property offenses).

Divergent results could be explained by the nature of drug criminality, since some studies found a decrease in drug trafficking but not in drug possession. The Routine Activities Theory (RAT) has been shown to reduce drug crime rates because it provides an appropriate target, such as a motivated offender, who is difficult to find due to the lockdown and guardianship, such as police officers on duty to keep the people at home.

A rise in domestic violence during the pandemic has been linked to both economic stress and lockdown conditions, according to studies (Arenas-Arroyo et al., 2021). It turns out that both theories (General Strain

Theory, and Socio-Economic Theory) fits in. Crimes like domestic abuse are on the rise as stress levels rise and socioeconomic circumstances shift.

Since, people were restricted to their houses, their routines were upset, which made them stay home and use technology more, which increased the number of cybercrimes. The victim was easily tricked by the cybercriminals because they were far away from them. Cybercrime sometimes stems from stress because the perpetrators deceived victims. Because the victims were inexperienced about technology, the hackers deceived them and used their personal information.

Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to rigorously look over research on how COVID-19 and lockdown measures affected crime rates. However, as crime trends continue to be highly variable and dependent on a number of variables, we must reconsider current strategies and incorporate more multidisciplinary research on violent and criminal behavior. Future studies should concentrate on how and why crime and its causes differ in different social contexts, paying particular attention to vulnerable populations such as women, the elderly, and others. Robberies, property crimes, drug crimes, violent crimes, and traffic crimes are among the offenses that have clearly decreased as a result of COVID-19 guidelines. When COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the crime rate typically increased instead of decreasing. The data show that there has been a rise in domestic abuse and cybercrimes during COVID-19. Consistent evidence was discovered supporting the idea that COVID-19 restrictions led to a decrease in public domain crimes.

Bibliography

Abrams, D. S. (2021). COVID and crime: An early empirical look. *Journal of Public Economics*, 194. Retrieved on 21 January 2022 from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0047272720302085?via%3Dihub>

Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(1), 47–87. Retrieved on 21 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1992.tb01093.x>

Andresen, M. A., & Hodgkinson, T. (2020). Somehow, I always end up alone: COVID-19, social isolation and crime in Queensland Australia. *Crime Science*, 9(1), 1–20. Retrieved on 21 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40163-020-00135-4>

Arenas-Arroyo, E., Fernandez-Kranz, D., & Nollenberger, N. (2021). Intimate partner violence under forced cohabitation and economic stress: Evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Public Economics*, 194.

Ashby, M. P. (2020). Initial evidence on the relationship between the coronavirus pandemic and crime in the United States. *Crime Science*, 9(1), 6.

Barnes and Teeters. (1959). *New Horizon in Criminology*, Prentice Hall, pp.70.

Borbora. (2007). *The Thieves a Sociological Understanding in North east India*, DVS Publishers, H.B.Road, Panbazar, Guwahati, pp. 1-14.

Boserup, B., McKenney, M., & Elkbulli, A. (2020). Alarming trends in US domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The American journal of emergency medicine*, 38(12), 2753.

Bradbury-Jones, C., & Isham, L. (2020). The pandemic paradox: The consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 29(13–14), pp. 2047–2049. Retrieved on 21 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15296>

Brantingham PL, Brantingham PJ. A theoretical model of crime hot spot generation. *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention*. (1999) 8(1), pp. 7–26.

Brown, S. M., Doom, J. R., Lechuga-Peña, S., Watamura, S. E., & Koppels, T. (2020). Stress and parenting during the global COVID-19 pandemic. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 110. Retrieved on 21 January 2021 from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7440155/>

Buil-Gil, D., Miró-Llinares, F., Moneva, A., Kemp, S., & Díaz-Castaño, N. (2021). Cybercrime and shifts in opportunities during COVID-19: A preliminary analysis in the UK. *European Societies*, 23(1), pp. S47–S59. Retrieved on 21 January 2022 from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14616696.2020.1804973>

Calderon-Anyosa, R. J. C., & Kaufman, J. S. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 lockdown policy on homicide, suicide, and motor vehicle deaths in Peru. *Preventive Medicine*, 14. Retrieved on 21 January 2022 from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7680039/>

Campbell, A. M. (2020). An increasing risk of family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: Strengthening community collaborations to save lives. *Forensic Science International: Reports*, 2. Retrieved on 26 December 2021 from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2665910720300384?via%3Dihub>

Ceylan, R. F., Ozkan, B., & Mulazimogullari, E. (2020). Historical evidence for economic effects of COVID-19. *The European Journal of health economics*, 21, 817-823.

Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44, pp. 588–608.

Collier D. B., Horgan S., Jones R., Shepherd L. (2020). The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for cybercrime policing in Scotland: A rapid review of the evidence and future considerations. Scottish Institute for Policing Research.

Durkheim, E. (1947). *The Division of Labour in Society*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press.

Ertan, D., El-Hage, W., Thierree, S., Javelot, H., & Hingray, C. (2020). COVID-19: urgency for distancing from domestic violence. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 11(1). Retrieved on 21 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2020.1800245>

Felson, M., Jiang, S., & Xu, Y. (2020). Routine activity effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on burglary in Detroit, March, 2020. *Crime Science*, 9(1). Retrieved on 21 July 2021 from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7309695/>

Havard, T. E., & Lefevre, M. (2020). Beyond the power and control wheel: How abusive men manipulate mobile phone technologies to facilitate coercive control. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 4(2), pp. 223–239.

INTERPOL. (2020). INTERPOL report shows alarming rate of cyberattacks during COVID-19. Retrieved on 21 January 2021 from: <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/INTERPOL-report-shows-alarming-rate-of-cyberattacks-during-COVID-19>

Kaukinen, C. (2020). When stay-at-home orders leave victims unsafe at home: Exploring the risk and consequences of intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45(4), pp. 668–679. Retrieved on 22 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09533-5>

Kemp S., Miró-Llinares F., Moneva A. (2020). The dark figure and the cyber fraud rise in Europe: Evidence from Spain. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 26, pp. 293–312. Retrieved on 22 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10610-020-09439-2>

Kim, D., & Phillips, S. W. (2021). When COVID-19 and guns meet: A rise in shootings. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 73. Retrieved on 22 December 2021 from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7825997/>

Langton, S., Dixon, A., & Farrell, G. (2021). Six months in: Pandemic crime trends in England and Wales. *Crime Science*, 10(1). Retrieved on 22 January 2022 from: <https://crimesciencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40163-021-00142-z>

Levi M. (2017). Assessing the trends, scale and nature of economic cybercrimes: Overview and issues. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 67(1), pp. 3–20. Retrieved on 22 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-016-9645-3>

Marshall and W.L and Clark. (1962). The legal definition of Crime and Criminals in Wolfgang, E.M and others (ed.) the sociology crime and delinquency, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, pp.14.

Piquero, A. R., Jennings, W. G., & Barnes, J. C. (2012). Violence in criminal careers: A review of the literature from a developmental life-course perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 17(3), pp. 171–179. Retrieved on 20 January 2021 from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S004723522100026X?via%3Dihub>

Rodríguez-Hidalgo, A. J., Pantaleón, Y., Dios, I., & Falla, D. (2020). Fear of COVID-19, stress, and anxiety in university undergraduate students: a predictive model for depression. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 591797.

Schleimer, J. P., McCort, C. D., Pear, V. A., Shev, A., Tomsich, E., Asif-Sattar, R., Buggs, S., Laqueur, H. S., & Wintemute, G. J. (2020). Firearm purchasing and firearm violence in the first months of the coronavirus pandemic in the United States. Retrieved on 20 January 2021 from: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.07.02.20145508v2>

Tcherni M., Davies A., Lopes G., Lizotte A. (2016). The dark figure of online property crime: Is cyberspace hiding a crime wave? *Justice Quarterly*, 33(5), pp. 890–911. Retrieved on 20 January 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2014.994658>

