

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A SYSTEMIC CONTROL APPROACH TO THE PHENOMENON

Sosyal Düzensizlik Teorisi ve İnsan Ticareti: Sistemik Kontrol Yaklaşımı

Önder KARAKUŞ*
Oğuzhan BAŞIBÜYÜK**

Özet

Sosyal Düzensizlik Teorisi birçok araştırmacı tarafından sosyal çevre ve suç alanında ortaya atılmış en önemli teori olarak kabul edilmektedir. Teori, bireylerin kişisel özelliklerinin yanı sıra bu bireyleri kuşatan sosyal çevrenin suç ve suçluluğun oluşumu üzerindeki etkisine dikkat çekmektedir. Suç ekolojisi ve sosyal çevre konusunda daha önce yapılmış çalışmalar olmasına rağmen 20'nci yüzyılın başlarında Shaw ve McKay tarafından geliştirilen sosyal düzensizlik yaklaşımının birçok yönden modern kriminolojinin temellerini attığı kabul edilmektedir. Bu çalışmada sosyal düzensizlik yaklaşımı ile insan ticareti suçu anlaşılmasına çalışılmıştır. İnsan ticaretinin yaygınlığıyla ilgili olarak her yıl yayınlanan istatistikler dünya genelinde insan ticareti olaylarının arttığını göstermektedir. Ancak süregelen bu artışa rağmen insan ticaretini bir suç olarak ele alarak altında yatan nedenleri açıklayabilecek düzeyde yeterli teorik ve ampirik çalışmalar bulunmamaktadır. Sosyal düzensizlik teorisinin temel konseptlerinden esinlenerek hazırlanan bu çalışma insan ticareti literatüründeki bu boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla insan ticaretini sistemik kontrol yaklaşımı bağlamında incelemektedir. Bu yüzden bu çalışma ayrıca insan ticareti alanındaki nicel araştırma yapmak isteyen araştırmacılara da yol gösterecektir.

* Ph.D., Turkish National Police, karakusonder@yahoo.com

** Ph.D., Turkish National Police Academy, obasibuyuk@egm.gov.tr

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Abstract

Many researchers have accepted social disorganization theory as the most important theory which analyzes social environment and crime relationship. Without ignoring the importance of personal characteristics of the criminals, the theory highlights the impact of an individual’s social environment on crime and criminality. Although the ecology of crime and social environment of criminality were subjected to scientific scrutiny before, the Social Disorganization framework, which was developed by Shaw and McKay at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, has been accepted as one of the keystones of the modern criminology in many ways. In this study, social disorganization approach has been used to understand human trafficking as another type of crime. Annual statistics on the prevalence of human trafficking cases indicate that human trafficking incidents are increasing all around the world. Despite such increasing trend, however, there is a lack of theoretical explanations and of related empirical research that could explain crime-related aspects and driving forces of human trafficking. Inspired by the basic concepts drawn from social disorganization theory, this study seeks to assist in filling this void in human trafficking literature by investigating human trafficking from systemic control perspective. Thus, this study could also guide the researchers who are interested in quantitative research on human trafficking.

Key Words: Human Trafficking, Social Disorganization, Systemic Control, Neighborhood Control, Quantitative research, Crime in Turkey.

Introduction

Despite the rapid increase in the research on human trafficking within the last decade (Laczko, 2005:6), there are considerable weaknesses in the current research and methodology (Kelly, 2005:238). Empirical research on human trafficking is in its early stages and existing research mostly estimates the scale of the problem; maps routes and countries of origin, transit, and destinations; or reviews legal frameworks and policy responses (Godzhiak, 2005:103). As such, legal regulations and intervention policies based on such limited research and information may create unin-

tended side effects (Salt, 2000:35) and put the trafficked persons in a vicious cycle of exploitation.

In order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon, in the current study, we will review the problem of human trafficking as any other type of illegal behavior which emerges and continues as a result of the failure of the communities to regulate the behavior of their residents and visitors as assumed by the systemic control model of the social disorganization theory. To that end, we will heavily rely on an extended model of social disorganization theory that incorporates systemic control, neighborhood disorder, and criminal opportunity, as elaborated by Bursik and Grasmick (1993:87). Thus, we will also refer to the routine activities theory to the extent that it helps to clarify the role of opportunity within the framework of extended systemic control model.

1. Human Trafficking from Systemic Control Perspective

Due to their shared focus on systemic control/guardianship (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:87; Massey et al., 1989:385), to some extent, both social disorganization and routine activities theories consider the spatial distribution of crime and victimization as a function of broader structural changes, which could last over decades or even longer (Bursik, 1986:46; Cohen and Felson, 1979:592) and influence the neighborhood life and routines.

In more practical terms, a social disorganization framework would try to explain distribution of human trafficking cases as a result of the lack of formal and informal social controls which is in turn a function of the structural characteristics of a given community. In this regard, Bursik (1988:542) and Bursik and Grasmick's (1993:87) argument about the impact of structural forces, such as poverty, instability, and heterogeneity as well as political-economic shifts on the distribution of crime rates applicable to the distribution of human trafficking as well. Simply put, such macro-structural changes can account for the distribution of crime/victimization rates through their influence on social cohesion and control in the communities.

As for the implications of routine activities theory, increased female involvement in labor force (Cohen and Felson, 1979:592) decreased the level of guardianship back at home (including the guardianship for youth both back at home and in the neighborhood, and guardianship for home as property in the neighborhood) and increased criminal opportunity/victimization because of increased exposure and proximity to likely/motivated offenders (because of changed sustenance activities/routines and related national/international movements). But on the other hand, for the women and as well as the men who are hit by poverty, mobility, heterogeneity, family disruption and urbanization and thus were pushed out of their home, community, and country, there are relatively less social and economic resources left to invest on in order to increase guardianship and decrease criminal opportunity/victimization in their home, community, and country, for such structural disadvantages give rise to social disorganization (and demise of control) in their proximal and broader social environment.

Ideally, a (combined/extended) systemic control approach to distribution of crime/victimization/human trafficking considers not only the three levels of control (private-parochial-public: including the role of police and extraction of outside resources), but also the convergence of suitable targets and likely offenders in the absence of guardianship (i.e., informal and formal social controls) as well as the role of disorder and fear of crime within this process. That is:

- i) As assumed by social disorganization theory, ‘social disorganization’ /decrease in formal and informal social control –as a function of increased poverty, mobility, heterogeneity, family disruption, and urbanization–,
- ii) As suggested by routine activities theory, increased criminal opportunities/risks of victimization –as a function of changing sustenance activities and related lack of guardianship, increased exposure and proximity–,
- iii) Finally, as proposed by Bursik and Grasmick’s (1993:157) extended systemic control model, a combination of both social disorganization and increased criminal opportunity (routines) can account for the distribution of crime/victimization rates in general, and thus of human trafficking more specifically.

To sum up, based on preceding discussion, an extended systemic control model would suggest that *human trafficking is mainly emerges as a result of the inability of communities to regulate the behavior of their residents and visitors because of lack of formal and informal social controls (private-parochial-public) on the one hand, and increased criminal opportunities as a result of changed sustenance activities and related movements/routines of the persons on the other.* This overall process ultimately increases the exposure and proximity to likely offenders in the absence of adequate controls (guardianship) in a given community. In order to demonstrate the viability of suggested systemic control model of human trafficking and its partial implication at more homogenous (city) level, the next section will present the problem of trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Turkey as a case study.

2. Trafficking in Women for the Purposes of Sexual Exploitation in Turkey

The problem of trafficking in women in Turkey provides a unique opportunity to clarify the connection between human trafficking and a decline in a nation's or a community's ability to regulate her residents' and visitors' behaviors to attain the common goal of living in an environment free from the threat of crime. There are several indicators of such decline in Turkey's ability to exert informal and formal social control to be mentioned here. The crux of the following argument is that having exposed to increased national and international movement of goods and people especially coming from eastern part of the country and from neighboring countries in the region, Turkish society has experienced remarkable changes in terms of its structural characteristics across the cities with the advent of global transitions across the world. These structural changes, in turn, are expected to account for the distribution of crime/victimization rates through their impact on existing mechanisms of formal and informal social controls and sustenance activities and related daily routines in the cities especially since early 1980s.

There has been a sharp increase in the value of each of the structural antecedents of systemic control model following early 1980s in Turkey.

Comparison of 1980 and 2000 census data demonstrates that overall, structural characteristics such as population, population density, urban population rate, divorce rate, increased almost two fold or even more in 2000. Moreover, increased industrialization, production, imports and exports meant both intensified national and international movement of goods and people. While migration from city to city increased 10 percent, the number of foreign arrivals increased 17 fold in 2004. Even though there was a remarkable increase in GNP per capita (from 1500\$ in 1980 to 4000\$ in 2004), unemployment rate also increased three fold in 2000. However, while male labor participation decreased from 76.3 percent (in 1980) to 72.6 percent (in 2000), female labor participation increased from 14.9 percent to 27.3 percent in the same period (TURKSTAT/TUIK, 2005, 2005a, 2005b).

Although this simple descriptive information is not enough to make statistically significant inferences about their connection to law breaking in Turkey, there has been a corresponding increase in the number of incapacitations in the country within the same period of time (from 30,000 to 100,000). Thus, as premised by the (extended) systemic control model (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993:157), afore mentioned structural changes, modernization, mobility, and increased female labor participation and related changes in the levels of social control (private-parochial-public)/guardianship, sustenance activities/routines, and criminal opportunities might explain parallel changes in crime rates across 81 cities in Turkey in the last decade. As far as human trafficking is concerned, given that human trafficking cases exclusively involve sexual exploitation of foreigner women in Turkey, emergence and continuance of these cases in Turkey require further clarification. That is, similar to Wilcox et al.'s no bank-no robbery metaphor (2003:185), we cannot explain the problem of trafficking in Turkey without taking into account the dynamics those bring foreigner women to Turkey.

Although empirical research on human trafficking in Turkey is still sparse (IOM 2001), based on the individual testimonies of trafficking victims, Turkey is already characterized as both transit and destination country for women primarily trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), specifically from Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Belarus,

Uzbekistan, and Romania (US, 2005; IOM, 2001a; Olimova and Bosc, 2003; IOM, 2003; IOM, 2001b; Hughes, 2002; Kelly, 2005:235).

Trafficking in women from the FSU countries coincides with the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the demise of the communist regime (Haynes, 2004:221). This, together with the freedom of movement, produced new patterns of social conduct and mobility throughout the FSU (Erder and Kaska, 2003) and, following economic turmoil and de-regulation of market has resulted in the feminization of the poverty, for the women lost certain employment protections they enjoyed under the communist regime, and for they also lacked in educational and professional opportunities in their country of origin (Shelley, 2002:212; Shelley, 2003:121). Thus, even though trafficking in women for sexual exploitation was not a new phenomenon; the chaos in Russia was an important catalysis for human trafficking to spread to new parts of the world (Stoecker and Shelley, 2005; Hughes, 2000:628) as a result of changed social and economic structure and corresponding change in sustenance activities and routines of people in the FSU countries.

In this context, economic marginalization and subordination of the women within the transformation process (Demleitner, 2001:285; Schauer and Wheaton, 2006:151) was the major driving force for them to come to Turkey and get involved in prostitution and petty trade (which is called “suitcase trade” or “bavul ticareti” in Turkish). In addition to its geographic proximity to the FSU countries, Turkey has been following an official policy to attract tourism since 1960s. Hence, the movement of the FSU women to Turkey was also facilitated by a unique type of visa policy peculiar to Turkey called “sticker visa”, which was introduced by the Turkish government in early 1990s and is issued at the frontier in return for a certain fee¹. While there were only 1,619 arrivals from the USSR in 1985, it dramatically increased to 187,390 in 1990 and then reached a total number of 3,498,373 arrivals from all of the FSU countries in 2005 (TNP, 2006; also see TURKSTAT, 2005b). Thus, following the collapse of the USSR, Turkey’s liberal border policies led to influx of migrants

¹ Contributing to the valuable economic, political, social, and cultural relations in the region, sticker visa policy benefits Turkey and the FSU countries as a whole. The rationale behind this policy was to encourage the movement of the citizens of the countries in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Area (BSEC) following the end of the cold war.

from the FSU countries who were mainly irregular migrants, refugees, transit migrants and circular or shuttle migrants in the form of mostly suitcase traders (Erder and Kaska, 2003). As soon as they arrive in Turkey for shuttle trade or prostitution, however, the women also cross the borders of informal and formal social controls and thus lack either type of guardianship on their social and economic lives for several reasons:

First of all, even though their home-town is hit by prevailing poverty, family breakdown², unemployment, increased mobility and corruption across the FSU region (Kelly, 2005a), the women might still have significant others in their proximal social environment who could provide control and guardianship even in a disorganized community. Put differently, once the women are in Turkey, they are not constrained by any of the three levels of control back in their country. While this is an important concern in terms of guardianship, it is also a facilitator of being involved in prostitution in a foreign country as the person is free of especially private control. In fact, some women involved in prostitution do not even tell her relatives that she is going to Turkey but says that she is going to another place (i.e., to Russia) since Turkey is already known as a destination for prostitution (also see Polanía and Claasen 1998, cited in Agustin, 2006:34). However, the failure of their own society to regulate its residents' behavior might even be worse as existing studies on human trafficking indicates that the victims of trafficking are likely to be recruited by his/her relatives and friends as well (INCIDIN, 2002; IOM 2006). This can be considered as a possible impact of the lack of collective efficacy or parochial and public level control in the victim's own social environment. To illustrate, Browning (2002:847) found that neighborhood collective efficacy was negatively related with violence in intimate partnerships.

Second, when the women are in Turkey, logically, we would expect their behaviors to be subject to existing informal and formal social controls in Turkish society, especially where they frequent for the purposes of shuttle trade/prostitution or for the victims of trafficking, whatever reason they were told by their recruiters. In other words, regardless of the purpose of the FSU women's visit to Turkey, we would expect their victimization and/or offending experiences to differ as a function of the abil-

² One out of three women trafficked to Turkey are claimed to be a single mother. www.countertrafficking.org, 3/28/2007.

ity of a given (Turkish) city/district/neighborhood to regulate its residents' and visitors' behaviors to attain the common goal of living in an environment free from the threat of crime. As suggested by systemic control model, then, we would also expect the regulation capacity of the communities to vary in accordance with their structural characteristics and thus account for the spatial distribution of the FSU women's offending and victimization rates as well. Thus, even though the influx of the FSU women can be seen as a prerequisite for the women's offending and victimization experiences in a given community in Turkey, structural characteristics of that community should have significant impact on the spatial variation of the women's victimization and offending rates through their effect on the communities' ability to exert formal and informal social control and thus provide criminal opportunity and/or guardianship for those women. Simply put, the more the number of the FSU women in a Turkish community characterized by poverty, heterogeneity, mobility, family disruption, and urbanization, the more likely we are to come across the cases of human trafficking and migrant prostitution (as well as other types of crimes involving migrant women or men) in that specific community.

To be more specific, Yukseker's (2004:58) fieldwork on the informal organization of shuttle trade in Istanbul provides empirical evidence how structural characteristics of Aksaray and Laleli districts shape the dynamics of informal social control among the FSU shuttle traders and Turkish male shopkeepers. Aksaray and Laleli are known as one of the most visited tourist destinations and trade centers of Istanbul. Thus, the place itself (Aksaray and Laleli are adjoining districts) is characterized by mobility, heterogeneity, density and this central business district is also surrounded by zone of transition (Burgess, 1967:55) occupied by recent Turkish and foreigner immigrant communities. Simply put, it is already a world of strangers (Lofland, 1973). The shuttle trade between Turkey and the FSU countries was unregistered and unregulated by both Turkey and Russia because of both parts' political will to increase the inflow of foreign currency, which can be considered as a broader level of public level control affecting the structural characteristics of both countries and related cross national routines of the people in both countries. Therefore, as they lack the formal protection of law, the women had to rely on intimate relationships with male shop keepers to built trust and continue their

business in Turkey. Unfortunately, when the foreigner women lost their purchasing power and started to involve in lucrative tourism and entertainment business, they were lured or forced into prostitution (Hann and Hann, 1992:4), for they lacked legal working opportunities (Erder and Kaska, 2003) and protection of both formal and informal social control because of their illegal working conditions in Turkey. In fact, it was also common to hear about the women who preferred to involve in prostitution even though they had opportunity to involve in the suitcase industry or had other choices to make money but not as much as they could in the sex industry in Laleli (Gulcur and Ilkcaracan, 2002:415; also see Agustin, 2005:98).

It didn't take long for those women to be constructed as "Natashas" (Azcan, 2005) which simply resulted in the objectification of all (shuttle) immigrant women, especially those coming from the FSU republics as prostitutes. This brings us into the third reason of why the foreigner women involved in shuttle trade and prostitution lack in formal and informal social control/guardianship over their social and economic life in Turkey. Namely, the impact of structural characteristics on offending/victimization rates is calibrated by consensus in the community as to what constitutes criminal/deviant behavior, which in turn determines the public tolerance or resistance to a certain type of behavior in that community. Therefore, the construction of the immigrant women as Natashas/prostitutes undermines the threat of human trafficking against these women in the Turkish society.

Put differently, lack of concern on immigrant prostitution and its further rationalization just as a matter of prostitution of 'others'/visitors decrease the level of informal social control on both providers and customers of this illegal market in that community and this in turn increases the odds of being a victim of human trafficking (or of any other crime) especially for migrant prostitutes and/or for any other visitor or residents of that community. This also contrasts with the definition of human trafficking by the U.N.³ in that the U.N. also disregards the consent of the victim and puts more weight on the exploitation. In this case, an existing tolerance for prostitution in a given community is expected to increase the probability of human trafficking by decreasing the level of informal

³ Turkish Criminal Code also includes a similar definition of human trafficking.

social control on all parts of the illicit sex market including prostitutes, johns, and any of other service providers (i.e., hotels, disco owners, and also traffickers) who benefit from ongoing prostitution.

On the other hand, empirical evidence based on Skogan's (1990) research in a total of forty neighborhoods indicated that as a sign of both social and physical disorder, prostitution is likely to be linked to more serious crime in the community. In this regard, considering the strong link between prostitution and human trafficking in terms of involved risks (Ekberg, 2004:1192; Schauer and Wheaton, 2004:153; Hughes, 2003; Davis, 2000; Farley and Barkan, 1998:45; Thukral, 2005:2) the services both offer, and the people they benefit (males-johns, pimps, traffickers), an existing demand and tolerance for prostitution might be more likely to give rise to human trafficking in the city/community. Clustering of human trafficking cases in the provinces which also involve increased number of both prostitution and STD (sexually transmitted diseases) related reports from Turkey (TNP, 2006) might exemplify the link between disorder/prostitution and human trafficking in Turkey. In their analysis on the distribution of human trafficking and other serious crimes in Turkey, Karakus and McGarrell (2007) found that the cities with more migrant prostitution (which might also be regarded as tolerance for/lack of control on prostitution in that city) also had more cases of human trafficking and other serious crimes.

Current research on human trafficking by international migration scholars also indicate simultaneous emergence and continuance of migrant prostitution and human trafficking (for the purposes of sexual exploitation) in different parts of the world such as the US, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece, Norway, Korea (Schauer and Wheaton, 2004:156; Agustin 2005:105; Kelly, 2005; Fergus, 2005; Gulcur and Ilkcaracan, 2002:415; Erder and Kaska, 2003; Lazaridis, 2001:83; Brunovskis and Tyldum, 2004; Dong-Hoon, 2004:27). In this regard, previous discussion about community tolerance to migrant prostitution becomes more important and offers several implications as regard to the prevention of migrant prostitution and human trafficking given the premised link between migrant prostitution and human trafficking.

The final reason for why the FSU women cross the borders of informal and formal social controls and thus lack either type of guardianship

on their social and economic lives is that foreigners' involvement in prostitution is a reason for immediate deportation, and the women deported because of prostitution are not allowed to enter Turkey again according to Turkish Passport Act. Even though this and human trafficking related more severe sentences could be perceived as effective to prevent migrant prostitution⁴ and human trafficking, deterrence oriented situational crime prevention focused solely on certain places (bars, cafes, restaurants) and specific crimes or both (on hot spots) has limited impact because of the compounding impact of surrounding social environment (Block and Block, 1995:162; Rosenbaum, 1988:373). In particular, formal control of police on the hot spots where migrant prostitution and human trafficking are most likely to occur might displace the market to other neighborhoods (Cohen, 1980:5), though it might also deter the convergence of migrant prostitutes and traffickers to some extent. In fact, Weisburd, Wyckoff, Ready, Eck, Hinkle, and Gajewski (2006:581) found evidence for the diffusion of the benefits of increased police intervention rather than displacement of prostitution during their controlled experiment in Jersey City. Thus these somewhat contradictory findings call for a more combined policy intervention to be mentioned in the following section.

Overall, foregoing discussion has presented an extended systemic control model of human trafficking that could work at multilevel based on the assumptions of social disorganization and routine activities theories as well as of combination of both. In such a comprehensive model, an individual level focus on the characteristics of the victims turns out to be just a simple methodological concern which can be addressed using multilevel models that can identify even the impact of victim's own neighborhood's and destination point structural characteristics on his/her victimization (let alone other individual characteristics such as age, education assumed by routine activities and life styles perspective) simultaneously. However, given the practical limitations of such comprehensive data collection efforts aimed at a multilevel focus (individual characteristics of the victims, private, parochial, and public level controls at neighborhood, national, and cross-national level) on the correlates of human trafficking, existing macro level indicators and official crime statistics can be used to test a systemic control model of human trafficking.

⁴ According to Lazaridis (2001), once the immigrant women involved in prostitution are deported, the whole process starts again.

Conclusion

Empirical evidence provided so far demonstrated that a systemic control model of social disorganization theory is capable of addressing several processes embedded in the emergence, continuance, frequency, and prevalence of the contemporary problem of human trafficking at different levels of analysis. On the one hand, involvement of a wide range of nationals in this transnational criminal activity across the globe further supports Shaw and McKay's argument as regard to the influence of structural characteristics of the communities' on individual offending without regard to individual characteristics. On the other hand, emergence and geographic distribution of trafficking cases in accordance with certain structural characteristics of both origin and source countries underlines the ability of systemic control approach to address dynamics of human trafficking which emerge as a result of global transformations and disturb private, parochial, and public level of control, opportunity structure, and disorder in and across the nations. Thus, unlike current research on human trafficking, a systemic control approach can account for the processes that mediate the impact of global transformations on individual victimization without a dichotomous conceptualization of human trafficking with regard to sending vs. receiving or origin vs. destination countries.

Although the difficulty of measuring social disorganization (even in a single country across several neighborhoods) and restrictions of official data could limit the reliability and validity of suggested (partial) test of systemic control model of human trafficking, to the extent that it provides empirical evidence in the premised direction, the results can inform related policy interventions and reinforce further research on assumed associations.

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