



## **A sociological approach to crime between reality and locations: the crimes of harming persons and disturbing public order as an Example**

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### **Abstract:**

*This study addresses the topic of crime between reality and fixed and variable locations through an analytical and field approach aimed at understanding the transformations that have occurred in the criminal phenomenon in light of the transition from the physical to the digital space. The focus was on comparing two basic crimes:*

- 1. The crime of harming public order in its traditional form and online.*
- 2. And the crime of harming persons in the real and virtual space.*

*The study relied on a comparative and field approach that combined legal and social analysis, through statistics obtained from security agencies specialized in combating crime and cybercrime.*

*The results showed that cyberspace has reshaped the criminal phenomenon in terms of means, methods, and actors, as crime has become more hidden and cross-border, making detection and legal follow-up more difficult. The study also showed that the constant in crime remains the criminal motive (such as revenge, interest, or aggressive tendencies), while the variable is the tool and context in which the crime is practiced, as technology has replaced the direct physical act*

*The study concluded the need to develop mechanisms for legislation, monitoring, and digital awareness in line with the nature of new crimes, while*

*enhancing coordination between security and judicial authorities and intensifying social and educational prevention programs that take into account the privacy of cyberspace.*

**Keywords:** *Crime; Cybercrime; Digital Space; Violation of Public Order; Violation of Individuals; Digital Transformation; Information Security.*

## **Une approche sociologique du crime entre réalité et lieux : les infractions de violence envers les personnes et de trouble à l'ordre public comme exemple**

### **Résumé :**

*Cette étude aborde la question de la criminalité entre réalité et lieux fixes et mobiles, à travers une approche analytique et de terrain visant à comprendre les transformations du phénomène criminel liées au passage de l'espace physique à l'espace numérique. L'analyse s'est concentrée sur la comparaison de deux infractions fondamentales :*

- 1. L'atteinte à l'ordre public, sous sa forme traditionnelle et en ligne.*
- 2. L'atteinte aux personnes, dans l'espace physique et virtuel.*

*L'étude s'appuie sur une approche comparative et de terrain combinant analyse juridique et sociale, à partir de statistiques fournies par des services de sécurité spécialisés dans la lutte contre la criminalité et la cybercriminalité.*

*Les résultats montrent que le cyberspace a profondément modifié le phénomène criminel en termes de moyens, de méthodes et d'acteurs, la criminalité étant devenue plus dissimulée et transfrontalière, ce qui complexifie son identification et les poursuites judiciaires. L'étude a également montré que le mobile criminel (tel que la vengeance, l'appât du gain ou des tendances agressives) demeure la constante, tandis que l'outil et le contexte de commission du crime constituent la variable, la technologie ayant remplacé l'acte physique direct.*

*L'étude conclut à la nécessité de développer des mécanismes de législation, de surveillance et de sensibilisation numérique adaptés à la nature des nouvelles infractions, tout en renforçant la coordination entre les autorités de sécurité et judiciaires et en intensifiant les programmes de prévention sociale et éducative prenant en compte la protection de la vie privée dans le cyberspace.*

**Mots-clés :** *Criminalité ; Cybercriminalité ; Espace numérique ; Atteinte à l'ordre public ; Atteinte aux personnes ; Transformation numérique ; Sécurité de l'information.*



## **Introduction:**

Crime is a social phenomenon as old as Man, which accompanied the development of societies and the change of lifestyles and interaction in them, and with the emergence of the digital revolution and the expansion of the internet space, many patterns of criminal behavior moved from physical reality to virtual space to show new crimes in form and means, but in essence it is an extension of The criminal act is no longer limited to physical space and time, but has become transnational, rapidly spreading, hidden behind screens and fictitious names.

The crime of disturbing public order and the crime of harming people are among the most prominent crimes that have developed as a result of digital transformation, while in the past it was practiced by traditional means of limited scope, today it is being committed via the internet in more complex forms and affecting individuals and communities, hence the importance of this comparative study, which seeks to reveal the similarities and differences between crime in its traditional reality And its electronic counterpart, in terms of structure, motives, legal and social implications, in order to understand what is fixed in the phenomenon and what has changed due to the digital revolution.

### ***The problem***

Crime in modern societies is no longer understood as a mere violation of a law or transgression of a social rule. Rather, it has become a mirror that reflects the extent of the structural and value transformations that people are

experiencing in light of the rapid changes. With the emergence of the digital space as an essential part of daily life, the criminal phenomenon has moved from the real space to a new virtual space, which has left us facing different patterns of deviant behavior that are difficult to identify or control with traditional social and legal mechanisms.

Technological development has produced a new duality in the criminal act, between what is committed in the real world and what happens in cyberspace, where the means and tools have changed, while the goals and motives have often remained constant. This reality has created a kind of ambiguity in understanding crime. This study attempts to explore the limits of stability and change in the criminal phenomenon by comparing the crimes of violating public order and people in their traditional and electronic forms, to understand how digitalization has redefined the concepts of order, freedom, responsibility, and justice within and from society. We ask the following question :

**How can the shift in the criminal phenomenon between reality and locations be explained from a sociological perspective, and what are the aspects of stability and change in the crimes of attacking public order and people in the traditional and digital contexts ?**

### *Sub-questions*

1. How did the technological transformation affect the nature of social relations that form the background of the criminal act ?
2. To what extent has virtual space contributed to the creation of new patterns of criminal behavior affecting public order and people ?



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3. What are the similarities and differences in motives and social effects between traditional crime and cybercrime ?

### *Study objectives*

.Analyzing the technological, social and behavioral transformations that accompanied the transition of crime from reality to the digital space.

1. .Identify the similarities and differences between traditional crime and cybercrime in their structure, motives, and social effects.
2. Understanding the relationship between social values and technological change, and their impact on controlling or motivating criminal behavior.

### *Importance of the study*

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it sheds light on a modern and complex phenomenon that touches the essence of social security in the age of digital transformation, as it contributes to:

1. Enriching the academic sociological debate about the relationship between technology and criminal behavior.
2. Providing a balanced scientific understanding of crime as a product of interaction between the individual, society, and the digital environment.
3. Support decision-makers and justice institutions in developing preventive policies based on social and cultural awareness of digital transformations.

4. Emphasizing the role of sociology in analyzing legal and security phenomena, away from a purely technical approach.

## **1. The theoretical aspect of the study**

### **1.1. Conceptual introduction**

#### **1.1.1. Crime:**

**The definition of crime is the language of the crime:** cutting, so it is said that his crime is for his crime, a crime with the meaning of cutting it down, and a crime tree is: that is, cut down, and the crime of palm trees and dates is his crime, and his crime is his crime, and his crime is his crime, and the sheep's wool is a crime, meaning his carrots. We conclude from this definition that the crime is the transgression, guilt, and cutting, and they have meanings that are close to each other.

**The law defines crime** as behavior that is criminalized by law and responded to with a criminal penalty or measures.

It is also defined as an act or abstention from an act attributed to its perpetrator, stipulated by the law and for which it is punished with a criminal penalty. [1 p. 263]

#### **1.1.2. Cybercrime:**

Electronic or virtual crime (cyber crimes) consists of two parts: crime (crime) and electronic (cyber). The term electronic is used to describe the idea of part of the computer or information age, while crime is behavior and actions outside the law. Cyber crimes are "violations that are committed Against individuals or groups of individuals motivated by crime and with the intention of harming the victim's reputation or causing physical or mental harm to the victim, directly or indirectly, by using communications



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networks such as the Internet (such as chat rooms, e-mail, and mobile phones [2]

It is a crime of a material nature, represented by every illegal act or behavior related to any destination in the accounts, which causes the victim to incur or the possibility of incurring a loss, and the perpetrator obtaining or the possibility of the perpetrator obtaining any gain. It has names including computer and Internet crimes - cybercrime. Due to the development of cybercrimes and the multiplicity of their forms and types, all of them have become more and more extensive in the world in using the computer, which has led to the difficulty of identifying them and establishing a legal system to which the criminal is subject, as the crime can be committed with the push of a button and the difficulty of identifying the perpetrator or the impossibility of identifying the perpetrator. Its location has led to controversy over cybercrime .[3 p. 02]

### ***1.1.3. Crime of violating public order:***

These are acts that aim to destabilize public order in the state, compromise its internal or external security, or attack the integrity of its political, economic, or social institutions . [4 p. 215]

By the crime of violating public order via the Internet, we mean: producing, preparing, sending, or storing material that offends public order, religious values, public morals, or the sanctity of private life via the information network or computers. [5]

#### ***1.1.4. The crime of harming persons (individuals):***

Some jurists call this type of crime an attack on the sanctity of the private life of individuals, considering the right to protect one's private life to be one of the most important rights because of its close connection to the freedom of the individual (privacy). The criminalization of this type of act came as a protection against the real threat that information technologies pose to the right of individuals to have their private lives respected, especially with the spread of so-called information banks of various types (security, financial, political, medical, military...etc.).

Accordingly, the information system can be used to attack the sanctity of private life or the public freedoms of the individual in multiple ways, the most important of which are:

- Illegal data collection and storage.
- Misuse of data or nominal information.
- Unlawful disclosure of nominal data and information.
- Attacking the confidentiality of communications and correspondence. [6 p. 216]

Digital transformation : (transformation digital)

- ✓ It is the transition from traditional organizational structures focused on operations, to modern structures that use digital technologies and tools in all operations and activities of organizations and companies, including the following:
- ✓ Using applications, software, artificial intelligence, and data analysis.
- ✓ Relying on e-commerce and digital marketing.
- ✓ Adopting digital communication tools and channels with customers and employees.



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- ✓ Conducting operations and providing services through digital means instead of traditional methods .
- ✓ Use information management systems and digital databases .[7 p. 237]

### ***1.1.5. Information security:***

From a theoretical point of view: It is the science that investigates theories and ways to provide protection for information from the risks that threaten it and from activities that attack it.

From a technical point of view: it is the means, tools and procedures that must be provided to ensure the protection of information from internal and external dangers. [8 p. 03]

## **1.2. The theory of movement in space and its interpretation of crime:**

- ✓ Spatial Transition Theory, or what is sometimes known as the theory of transition from real space to virtual space, is a contemporary sociological proposition that studies how human behavior - including criminal behavior - moves from the physical (social, real) field to the digital field (cyberspace). This theory focuses on the fact that crime does not disappear with the change of space, but rather takes new forms that are compatible with the nature of the environment in which it is practiced. This theory is based on the hypothesis that:
- ✓ Change in social space leads to a change in behavior patterns, because social rules and standards differ

depending on the spatial context in which individuals practice their actions, and thus moving to the virtual space creates a new environment:

- ✓ There is less direct social control
- ✓ The opportunities for identity expression and rebellion increase
- ✓ Which opens the way for deviant or criminal behavior that is difficult to control by traditional means. [9 p. 470. 469]

Her explanation of the crime was as follows:

1. Changing the nature of social space: In the real world, criminal behavior is linked to a specific place (neighborhood, street, institution). However, in the digital world, space is immaterial, which makes crime cross place and geographical borders. This creates what is called “spatial looseness of crime.”

2. Weak direct social control: The absence of face-to-face interaction reduces the impact of traditional social values and control, which facilitates the emergence of deviant behaviors such as threats, bullying, or electronic defamation.

3. Social identity restructuring: Individuals in virtual space can hide their identities or adopt new identities, resulting in behavior that is more free from moral and social restrictions.

4. The concept of criminal opportunity has changed : With the development of technology, opportunities have become available to commit crime by simple means (phone, computer, application), without the need for direct confrontation.



## 2. The sociological dimension of the theory:

The theory views the digital space as a new social environment with different structures, values, and interaction patterns.

She argues that the spatial shift (from reality to locations) reflects a cultural shift in patterns of control and deviance.

It highlights that crime is not the product of the individual alone, but rather of interaction with a new social space that reshapes relationships, power, and standards. [10, p. 29]

When applied to the subject of the study (the crimes of harming persons and disturbing public order)

The crime of harming people in the digital space takes the form of defamation, insults, electronic blackmail...

Due to weak direct deterrence and ease of concealment.

The crime of disturbing public order may appear through incitement or spreading rumors through platforms.

Because cyberspace has become an arena for collective opinion and influence.

Through what was presented about the theory of movement in space, it appears that crime has not changed in its essence, but rather in its place, form, and mechanisms as a result of the person himself moving to new social spaces that require different patterns of control and understanding.

### 2.1. Field aspect of the study:

**Spatial framework of the study:** The current study was conducted in the state of Biskra.

**Time frame of the study:** This study was conducted from March 2024 to July 2024

**The method used:** In this study, we used the descriptive-analytical method, which is a set of study procedures that are integrated to describe the phenomenon or topic based on collecting facts and data, classifying them, processing them, and analyzing them sufficiently and accurately to extract their significance and reach results or generalizations about the phenomenon or topic under study .[11 p. 94]

**Study tool:** The study relied on statistics obtained from the General Directorate of National Security of Biskra Province and from the Regional Division of the National Gendarmerie of Biskra Province.

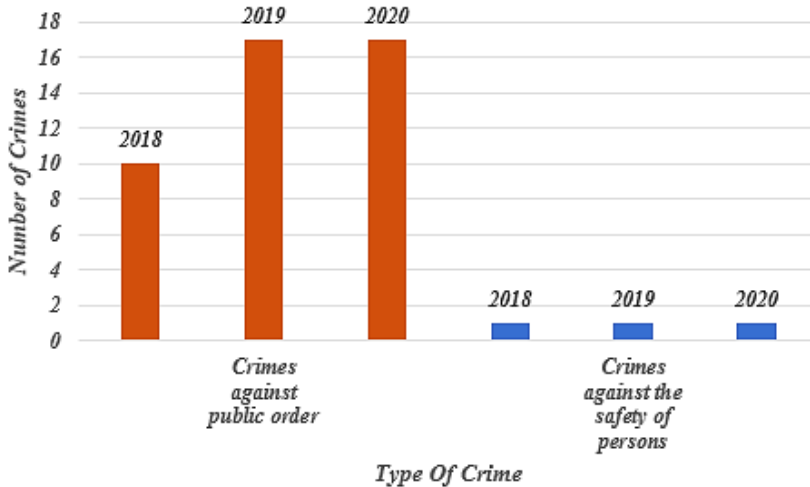
**Table No. (01):** Shows the development of the crimes of harming public order and harming persons between-2018) (2019

Number	Year	Type of crime
10	2018	
17	2019	Crimes against public order
17	2020	
1	2018	
1	2019	Crimes against the safety of persons
1	2020	

**Source :** Regional Group of the National Gendarmerie of Biskra



**Figure (01):** Evolution of the crimes of harming public order and harming persons



remained constant over the three years (only one crime per year) and this can be explained from a sociological point of view by:

➤ **The rise in crimes against public order**

This increase reflects shifts in the social structure and the increase in cases of tension or social protest, and perhaps the impact of the digital space in expressing rejection or incitement to disrupt public order (spreading rumors, calls for protest, or electronic civil disobedience), and can also be linked to:

- ✓ The rise of political and social awareness in society.
- ✓ Weak trust in traditional institutions.
- ✓ The Impact of Social Media in Creating an Alternative Public Space.

➤ **Crimes against the safety of persons**

This consistency suggests that direct physical attacks (physical violence) have remained limited, perhaps thanks to legal or social control, or that conflicts have moved from a physical to a symbolic or digital form (intimidation, defamation, online threats)

➤ **The relationship between the two types of crimes**

There is arguably a shift from physical violence to symbolic or social violence, that is, from physically targeting individuals to targeting values and the social order in general.

We can also explain this in terms of time during the period between (2018-2020) by:

- 2018 is a period of relative stability, weak criminal activity directed against public order
- 2019 A clear escalation in crimes, which can be linked to major political and social transformations (such as the popular movement in Algeria)
- 2020 The continuation of the same level despite the Corona pandemic, which means that the digital space has become an alternative to compensate for the absence of real public space.

Through what was presented, the data reveal that crime did not disappear but reproduced itself in new spaces, and that the shift from real-life crime to digital crime reflects the transition of social conflict from the street to the screen, and from physical violence to symbolic violence.

Through a socio-urban reading of the data in the above table, it is clear to us that the statistical data related to crimes against public order and the safety of persons during the period (2018-2020) are a set of important socio-urban indicators. The first observation is the marked increase in



crimes against public order from 10 in 2018 to 17 in 2019 and 2020, while crimes against the safety of persons have remained almost completely stable at a very low level (one per year). This disparity reflects that the urban sphere is witnessing a shift in patterns of criminal behavior, with crimes with a collective or symbolic dimension associated with public order increasing, while traditional individual crimes remain limited. This can be explained from a socio-urban perspective by the increasing social tensions in urban spaces as a result of overpopulation, unemployment, economic transformations, and living pressure, leading to more forms of protest or behaviour contrary to public order than individual criminal behaviour. The stability of crimes against the safety of persons also reflects the relative effectiveness of social and family control mechanisms in cities, in contrast to a decline in collective and political control that affects public order. Ultimately, these figures reflect that the city is no longer just a physical space for habitation, but also a space where the dynamics of conflict and social expression interact, with crime becoming a mirror of a dilapidated urban reality on the one hand, and an indicator of the imbalance between social control and civil freedom on the other.

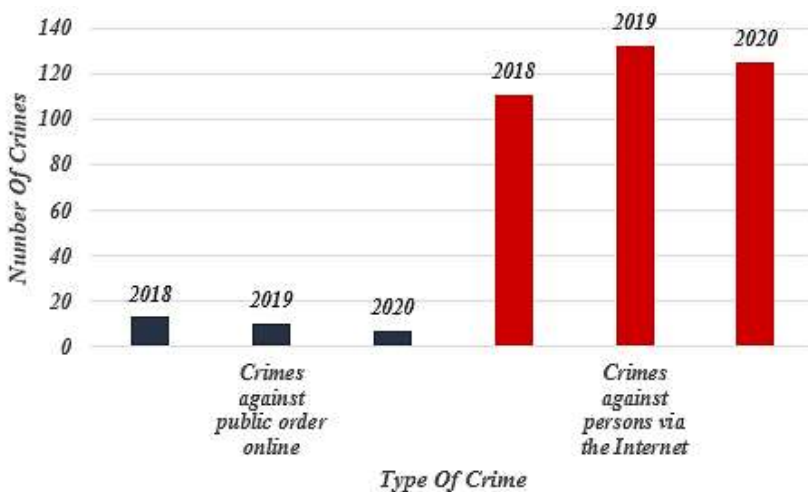
Therefore, it can be said that these statistical indicators reflect a new social dynamic characterized by the changing spaces of criminal behavior, where crime is no longer confined to the real space, but has become a reflection of a shift in the patterns of social conflict within modern society, and confirms the relevance of sociological approaches that see crime as a phenomenon that changes with the changing cultural and technological context.

**Table No. (02):** The development of the crimes of harming public order and harming persons between (2018-2019) via the Internet

Number	Year	Type of crime
13	2018	Crimes against public order online
10	2019	
07	2020	
111	2018	Crimes against persons via the Internet
132	2019	
125	2020	

**Source :** General Directorate of National Security of Biskra Province

**Figure No. (02):** The development of the crimes of harming public order and harming people via the Internet



**Source :** Prepared by the researcher based on Excel



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Reading and analyzing the data in Table No. (02): The table displays data on two types of cybercrimes in the period extending between 2018 and 2020, which are: Crimes against public order via the Internet, and crimes against people via the Internet, as it shows the development of the volume of each type of these crimes during three consecutive years. From a statistical standpoint, we find that crimes against public order (13, 10, 07) are on a decreasing trend, but with regard to crimes against persons (111, 132, 125), we note that they are on a fluctuating but generally high trend. We also notice a clear decrease in crimes against public order (from 13 to 7), while we see that, on the other hand, crimes against people are very high compared to the first type, and an increase appears between 2018 and 2019, followed by a slight decrease in 2020.

➤ **In terms of the nature of the crime:**

Crimes against people (such as defamation, insults, blackmail...) reflect the expansion of the digital social space and the entry of personal and societal relationships into the virtual world. This means that the digital space has become an extension of real relationships with all the tension and social conflict they carry. While crimes against public order (spreading rumours, harming institutions...) remain more linked to the political and media context, so they are fewer in number but more sensitive in terms of symbolic and institutional influence.

➤ **In terms of chronological development(2020–2018)**

The decrease in crimes against public order may be linked to the tightening of electronic monitoring and the

development of legal and administrative follow-up tools in Algeria, which has limited these acts.

- The relative increase in crimes against persons reflects ;
- The increased use of social media during this period.
- The expansion of access to the Internet among new groups (women, youth, teenagers) ;
- The weakness of the legal and digital culture among users, which makes aggressive behaviors more
- The slight decrease in 2020 can be explained by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as despite the increase in digital activity, social and familial conditions imposed a kind of control or isolation within the family, which partially reduced the number of recorded crimes.

From a socio-urban perspective, the statistical data on cybercrime show an important socio-urban dimension that reflects the transformations that the Algerian city is experiencing in its relationship with the digital space. The gradual decline in crimes against public order via the Internet between 2018 and 2020 is matched by a high stability in crimes against people, which indicates that the urban structure, with its population density, social diversity, and development in the use of technology, is producing new patterns of digital criminal behavior. In major cities, where virtual relationships intensify and direct face-to-face communication weakens, social media turns into an alternative space for discharging social and psychological tensions, making crimes against individuals more widespread. The decline in crimes against public order reflects a type of institutional control and digital censorship, in addition to an increase in urban awareness of the danger



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of political or inflammatory content. Accordingly, socio-urban analysis reveals that cybercrime has become an expression of the crisis of social interaction in the digital urban environment, where urbanization, the value vacuum, and the misuse of technology intersect to produce new patterns of symbolic and social violence via the Internet.

### 3. Results of the study

By analyzing the data of Tables No. (01) and (02), it is clear that the phenomenon of crime in the state of Biskra during the period (2018-2020) witnessed quantitative and qualitative transformations, whether in the real world or in the digital space, reflecting changing patterns of social behavior and ways of expressing conflict within society.

- ✚ Crimes against public order increased from 10 cases in 2018 to 17 cases in 2019 and 2020, which reflects the escalation of social and political tensions and the expansion of manifestations of protest and collective rejection.
- ✚ The stability of crimes against people's safety (one case per year), which indicates a decrease in direct physical violence, compared to the emergence of new patterns of symbolic and social violence.
- ✚ This shift from physical to symbolic violence indicates that society is experiencing a transition in the nature of social conflict. From field confrontation to symbolic and media confrontation.
- ✚ Crimes against public order via the Internet recorded a gradual decline (from 13 to 7 cases), which reflects the effectiveness of electronic monitoring and a rise in

awareness of the danger of harming institutions and public order.

- ✚ Crimes against people via the Internet remained very high (from 111 to 125 cases), which indicates the expansion of the digital social space and its transformation into a field of daily relationships and conflicts.
- ✚ The slight increase between 2018 and 2019 reflects the increasing access to the Internet and social media, especially among
- ✚ The digital urban space has become an extension of the real space, reflecting the tensions of living, unemployment, the pressure of relationships, and the weakness of direct social communication.
- ✚ Crimes against public order express a defect in collective and institutional control, while crimes against individuals express a defect in family and social control.
- ✚ The study reveals that crime in its real and digital dimensions has not decreased, but rather reproduced itself in new spaces, and that the technological and social transformations in Algerian society have produced new patterns of criminal behavior.
- ✚ This confirms that the sociological analysis of the criminal phenomenon must go beyond the legal dimension to understand the social, cultural, and urban contexts that generate and reshape crime within contemporary society.

### **Study recommendations:**

- Updating criminal legislation to suit the nature of modern cybercrimes, to ensure comprehensive legal deterrence and speedy application of justice.



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- Enhancing the technical capabilities of security and justice services by training specialists in analyzing digital crimes and tracking their electronic effects.
- Spreading digital awareness in society through educational curricula and the media, with the aim of establishing a culture of safe and responsible use of the Internet.
- Developing cooperation between institutions (security, judicial, academic, and civil society) to confront cybercrime in an integrated manner and Comprehensive.
- Encouraging scientific research and field studies on the relationship between traditional crime and its electronic counterpart, to understand the social and value transformations resulting from it.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the above, it is clear that crime, even if its means and tools have changed over time, remains in its essence an expression of an imbalance in the value, social and legal system within society. The digital age has not eliminated traditional crime, but rather reproduced it in a new, more hidden and complex form, and made the virtual space a fertile field for committing acts that affect public order and people alike. The comparison between traditional and electronic crimes has shown that the constant element It is the criminalized behavior and the violation of social values, while the variable is the means and environment in which the crime is committed.

This highlights the necessity of adapting the legal and social system to digital transformations, by updating legislation, intensifying awareness efforts, and enhancing cybersecurity, in order to reduce cybercrime and protect individuals and society. Scientific research should also continue to study this phenomenon from multiple angles, legal, sociological, and technological, to ensure a deeper understanding of the path of crime between reality and locations, and to achieve a balance between the freedom of the digital space and the security and stability of society.

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