The geographic analysis and interpretation of the dimensions of rural crime are generally limited. Real conceptual problems such as access to reliable crime data and more importantly spatial data have longed challenged and inhibited the study of rural crime. However, in recent years, there is a growing interest in the spatial analysis of rural crime. These interests are based on the fact that opportunity structures imperative for criminality are increasingly manifesting in rural areas of which Turkey and Isparta, in particular, are not in an exception. Compared to other parts of Turkey, the Province of Isparta is less economically vibrant and the majority of the inhabitants engage in farming activities. Compliance and conformity to social values are more entrenched and enforced in rural areas which may have an inverse relationship on the crime rate. Deterrence in rural areas which usually emerge in the context of population and societal homogeneity has been threatened by pronounced deprivation, poverty, and inequality.

This study examined the spatio-temporal patterns of rural crime in Isparta, Turkey. Crime data from 2001-2012 covering 13 rural areas was obtained from the Isparta Provincial Gendarmerie Command to help provide some explanation of the spatial distribution of rural crime and the socioeconomic and cultural context. Results from the analysis showed a steady rise in total crime between 2001 and 2012 with total crime increasing more than threefold in 2012. At the provincial level, crime against persons was much higher, increasing by almost 56% as against property crime 44% during the study period. With regards to property crime types, robbery constituted the majority of offenses rising by 44.5% during the study period whiles assault represented the majority of personal crime rising to as much as 90.7% during the same period. Crime consistently increased in all the rural areas in spite of the fact that certain communities such as Aksu, Atabey, Keçiborlu, Senirkent, Gönen, Y.Bademli and Sütçüler experienced disproportionately high crime rate than Yalvaç, Ş.Karaağaç, and Eğirdir. Robbery and assault incidents in 2012 were particularly high in rural communities in Eğirdir, a relative touristic area, Keçiborlu, Merkez, Gönen, Yalvaç, Gelendost, Senirkent, and Ş.Karaağaç. The study
also found a significant concentration of crime in the village center of quite a majority of the rural communities. The trajectories of crime are also consistent with the type of building material used to in the rural settlements. It also appears from the analysis that changes in rural population and farming related activities and family disputes account for the relatively high crime against persons in the majority of the rural communities of Isparta. This trend in crime presents a perfect opportunity for the re-evaluation of strategies used in rural crime management. The necessity for a coordinated effort by local authorities to tackle the rise in rural crime in Isparta has been discussed.

Keywords: Rural Crime, Crime Pattern, Spatial Changes, Isparta.