

What is the meaning of Anomie? Discuss Robert Merton theory of Anomie in detail.

Answer:

## Strain Theory:

Strain theory is one of the most important theories of sociological perspective. This theory is originated from the work of Emile-Durkheim advanced by Robert King Merton and Cohen. Strain theory refers to the frustration created in the society due to lack of unequal opportunities.

## Concept and Meaning of Anomie:

The word "Anomie" is derived from the greek word "Nomos" which means "normless" or "without norms". Anomie mostly occurs in societies which are moving from mechanical solidarity to

Organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity refers to social cohesion in traditional societies where people are sharing the same beliefs and values. On the other hand, organic solidarity refers to those societies where diversity is deepening its roots with different beliefs and values.

### Example of Anomic Society:

Modern day Russia could be the recent example of an anomic society which is moving from communist system to free-enterprise system.

### Robert Merton's Theory of Anomie: Main proponent:

Robert Merton - a pioneer sociologist is the main proponent of Anomie theory. Merton ~~got~~ borrowed the key term "Anomie" from "Emile Durkheim" - a French sociologist who had studied the French and American culture after industrial revolution.

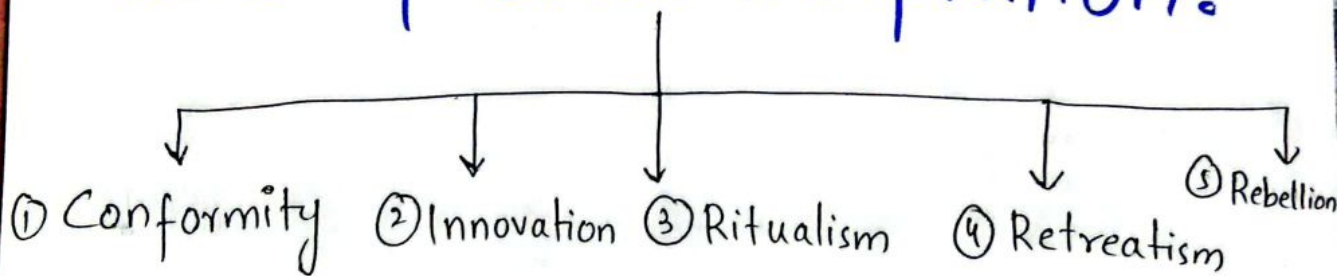
### Societies more prone to Anomie:

As per Merton, the societies that

experienced unequal opportunities, material success, financial success and less means, these societies are more prone to Anomie (Normless-ness). In every society there are some socially structured methods to achieve desired goals.

When goals are over-emphasized and legitimate means are vague and limited then in consequence, anomie happens that leads to several crimes.

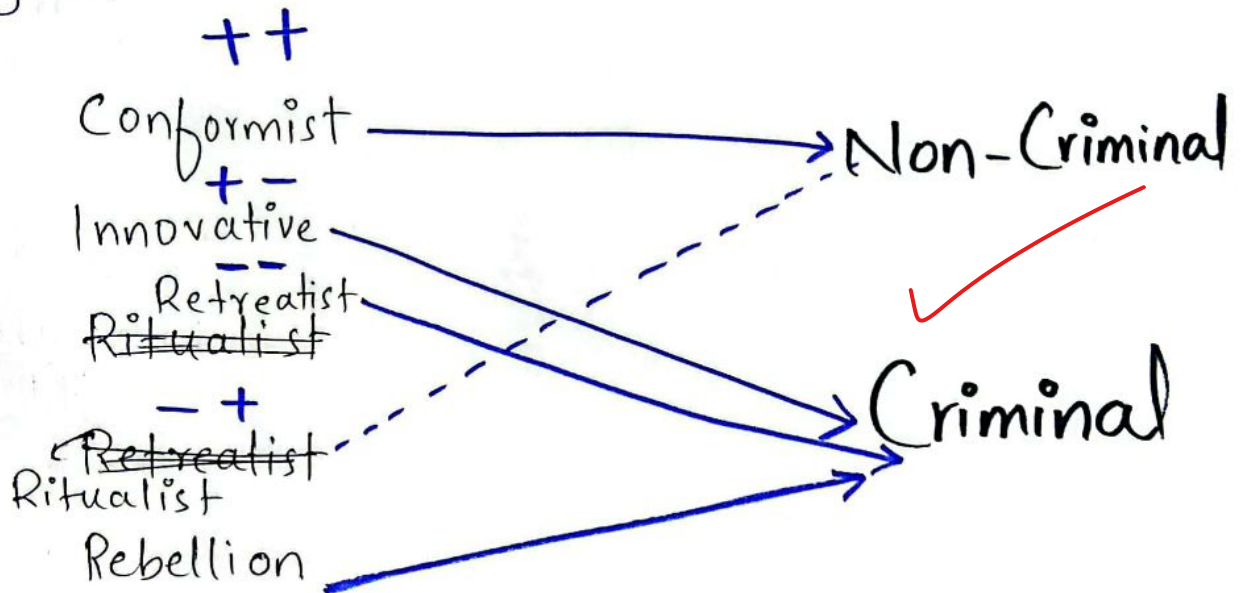
## Modes of Social Adaptation:



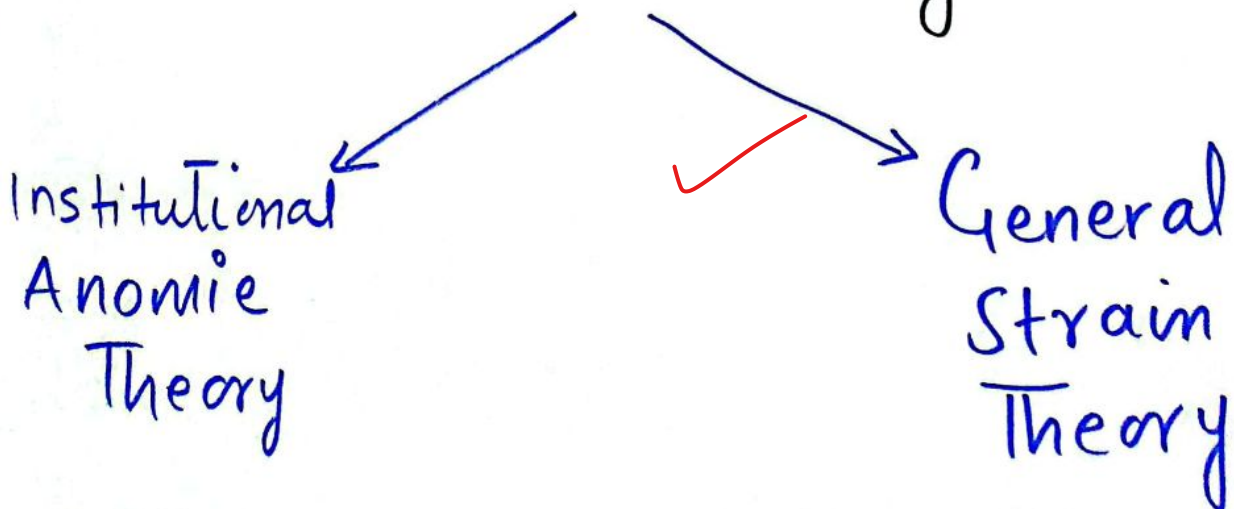
Modes of Adaptation	Cultural Goals	Institutionalized Means.
→ Conformity	+	+
→ Innovation	+	-
→ Ritualism	-	+
→ Retreatism	-	-
→ Rebellion	+	+

Explanation:

This hierarchy shows that the one who is conformist adopt legal means to acquire goals. Innovative adopt mean but reject goals. On contrary, Ritualist reject mean but adopt goal. The Retreatist reject both mean and goal. Last per not least, rebellion invent his own means and own goals.



### Anomie Theory



**Institutional Anomie Theory:** This theory is based on "American Dream".

**General Strain Theory:**

This theory is based on the individual influence of strain when he is unable to achieve his goals due to limited means.

**Concept of American Dream:**

American Dream refers to a belief when there is perception that hard work leads to the success without any discrimination.

This belief/ideal creates pressure when obstacles restrain the goals. As a result, anomie gets created and strain gets prevented.

**Criticism:** The concept of American dream gets criticism in a way that America is not the only

country where people are achieving goals and strain is getting prevailed. The ratio of crimes rate in America is relatively high as compared to other countries where means are limited but the crime ratio is relatively very low.

Switzerland and Japan are pioneer examples of these countries.

Merton's theory in context of Pakistan:

1- Gang violence in Karachi's Lyari Area:

Context: The Lyari area of Karachi is known to be the hot-spot of criminal activities and long history of gangs formation notably "The Lyari Gang".  
Application of Merton's theory:

The practical application of anomie theory can be viewed in this particular area because of lack of education, employment, awareness and education, people are compelled to achieve their basic goals by illegal means. As a result, the formation of chaos, and gangs take place that not only affect residential safety but also ~~create~~ hinders community development.

## 2. Highway Robberies in Balochistan:

Due to unavailability of proper education, resources and opportunities, people from low income areas indulge them in organized crimes like highway robberies not only in Balochistan but also in other provinces of Pakistan

as well. In these areas, people commit crimes to sustain their livelihood.

## Conclusion:

Merton's theory is one of the pivotal theories in sociological perspective of criminology. This theory underscores that due to excessive pressure of achieving goals and unavailability of legitimate means, people indulge themselves into different criminal means to attain their goals. As a result, strain and anomie is created in society that ultimately leads towards the crime and criminal activities.

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