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Explain the concept of crime as a social problem. How does the perception of crime as a social problem vary across different societies?

### Introduction:

Criminology has been evolved so much by time that it is understood that crime is a sociological problem of society. It disagree with psychological and biological perspective. Sociological perspective comes with various theories including, social structure theory, social disorganization theory and strain theory. Additionally, social process, learning and behaviour are also part of this perception. Addition to that, theories by Travis Hirschi and reaction theory also provides the clear position the perception. Furthermore, different components of these theories provides the insights regarding different societies that how crime and social influence are interlinked. Crime as a social problem is a best way to understand criminal system.

### Crime as a social problem:

The sociological perspective of crime began to develop in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This perspective emerged in response biological and sociological theory and argues that crime is normal response of biological and psychological person which is normal. It focuses on the social structure and process that

cause criminal behaviours. On early stage the theory is developed by sociologist Emile Durkheim. Later thinkers like Robert Merton and Edwin Sutherland further expanded the scope of sociological perspective.

### Social structure theory:

Social structure theory challenges the thoughts of rational theory that suggest that crime is associated with the traits of criminal. Social structure theory argues that crime is linked with socio-economic dilemma that prevails in lower class areas of society, which means poverty is one of the major cause of crime.

Additionally, it suggest that in lower class areas people from young age use crime to meet their essential needs. This part of society is used by social forces to involve in crime as a only source of development.

### Social disorganization theory:

Social disorganization theory focuses on a conditions with in urban environment that fosters crime. The theory argues that person's physical and social environment are primarily responsible regarding the behavioural choice.

To prove this theory two Chicago based sociologist Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D McKay observed that in diverse urban areas people are divided in social conflict, such environment led them to do criminal activity.

for survival. They also observed that neighbourhoods with highest crime rate have three common problems. Physical dilapidation means lack of infrastructure, poverty and diverse ethno-cultural population.

### Social strain theory :

This theory is developed in 1957 by Robert K. Merton. This theory suggest that crime is a function that is associated with people's goals and way to achieve them. Society pressurized people or individuals to achieve socially accepted goals. For example in south Asian countries people with secured job status are more respected and other faction of society comes under social pressure by parents, relatives and friends to achieve the same goal. This lead the individual in strain and the person will commit crime. According to strain theory there are multiple sources of crime such as, failure to achieve goal, disjunction of expectations, removal of positive stimuli and introduction of negative stimuli.

### Concept of Anomie :

This concept was developed by Emile Durkheim. According to the theory, crime is associated with absence of social norm. If norms, value and customs of society breakdown during the inappropriate time like during wars

and crimes, will develop social crises.

### Adaptations of Strain theory :

The strain theory comes with five major adaptations. Firstly, the phenomenon of conformity means the acceptance of majority's desire by individual. Second, innovations means introduction of new ideas to bypass the conventional system to achieve desirable goals. Third, ritualism means a person is committed with the conventional work which is now obsolete in market demand, which led to the failure and crime. Lastly, retreatism and rebellion, the social means would not accept the conventional ideas of person which led the person to rebel and develop own ideas.

However, this theory comes in criticism that it only targets the lower class of society because crime prevails in every class of society in different ways.

### Social Learning theory of Edwin H. Sutherland :

Social Learning theory believes that crime is a product of learning the norms, values and behaviours associated with criminal activity. It preails in every class of society. Sutherland believes that people participates in the process as they interact with other individuals and

influenced by their deviant behaviour and attitude. These influencers become mentors to teach them how to become successful criminal.

### Social bond theory by Travis Hirschi:

According to Travis, criminality is linked with weakening of ties that bind people to society. Furthermore, he argues that all individuals possess criminal tendency, but fear element controls them to commit crime because it can ruin their relationship.

### Labelling theory:

Labelling theory is also known as reaction theory. It explains that how criminal careers formed based on destructive social interaction.

Means people become criminals because they are labeled by a society. Such stigmas lead the person to commit crime and show the society that the individual can live as society wants to label. A common example of the theory is if a person caught for a minor crime, such as theft, then that person is labelled as criminal by parents, teachers and police. This symbol became identity of that person, which may lead to interact with those who are involved in the crime professionally.

## Crime as a social phenomenon in the USA:

In the USA the city of Chicago experienced the highest criminal activity. During the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the city was influenced with immigrants. Soon the city became very diverse, resultantly, the cultural organization of the city collapsed. Therefore, the children are now exposed to criminal environment. The experiment was carried out and city was divided in five zones. Which shows that in central area of city where mostly elite and educated people live the crime is low. In far areas of city where mostly poor and uneducated people live the crime rate is high. This shows that poverty is directly linked with the crime without any ethnic affiliation. Poverty disorganize the society which led to breakdown of moral values and criminal culture prevails there, and give rise to criminal careers.

## Experiment of Social strain theory in India's

In the city of Mumbai, there are significant disparity between rich and poor. This phenomenon give rise to youth gang violence which belongs to slums of city. These young individuals are keen to change the fate of their family. However, due to limited resources they use to start illegal ways. These young individuals started working with criminal gangs like "chota rajam" group and with "chota shakil" group

in gang wars many of them lost their life. In response their relatives join the same group to take revenge and the chain of criminality begins due to social strain.

## Social learning theory and criminal activity in Karachi:

During 1980's Karachi experienced the great ethnic division which led the different ethnicities to set political objectives. To achieve their goals they went for fight with each other and the winner leader gain respect in the area. Which attracts many individual and they started learning the criminal activity from their criminal ideals. This case study shows that crime is a learning process which prevails in society by idealizing the criminal elements.

## Experiment of labelling theory:

The central park fire case of New York is one of the prominent example of the theory. In 1989 five teenagers who are ethnically black and latinos charged for the false rape case of white women. The media and public immediately labelled teenagers with the label of "wilding". Furthermore, with this label given by society teenagers internalized it. However, after the drop of charges, the teenager never reentered in normal life. Throughout the life they became professional criminals and the label of society led them to do so.

## Conclusion: