

Discuss R.K. Merton's Strain theory? critically elaborate its effect on youth

Introduction

To explain the causes behind criminality, social cultural theories were developed. These theories ascribe social and cultural factors to explain criminal behavior. One major theory among these is strain theory. It describes socio-economic factors behind criminality. R.K. Merton in strain theory developed interaction of socially specified goals and means to achieve goals with criminal behavior.

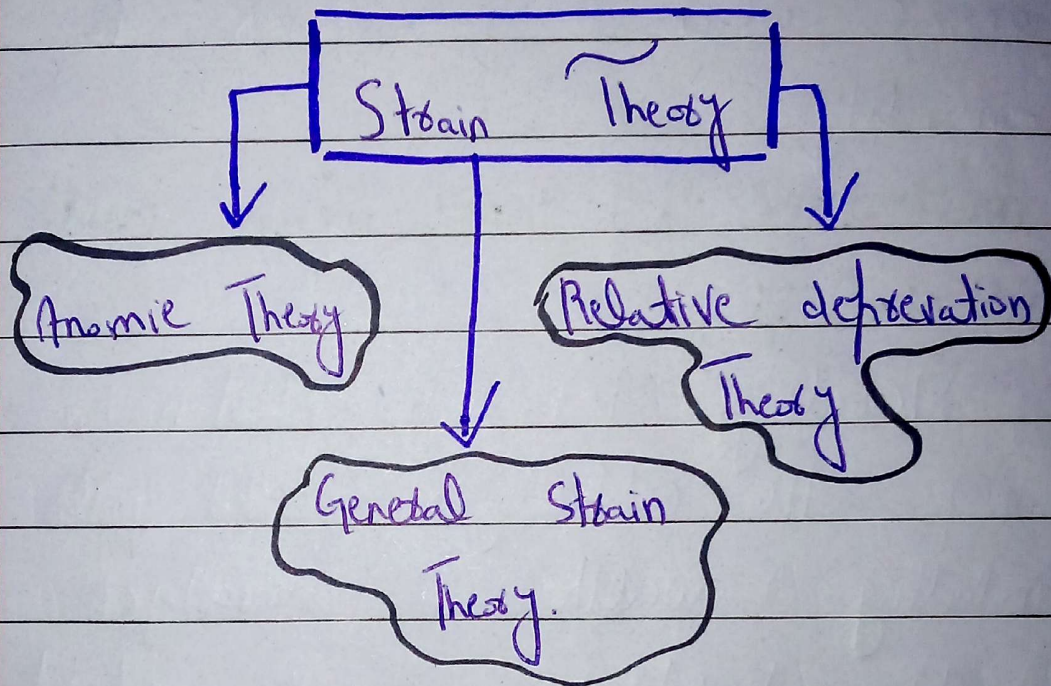
According to him, people having low socio-economic status are unable to achieve their goals via legitimate means turn toward illegitimate means to achieve goals or reject both legal goals and means and some individuals develop alternative set of goals and means.

Strain Theories

Strain theorists view that crime is result of anger and frustration occur among people with low socioeconomic class. Although all individuals share goals and values, but means to achieve them are stratified across socioeconomic groups. Feeling of strain is limited among people having affluent status while strain culminate

in those who have few means of success available.

Strain theories is further divided into three theories.



R. K. Merton Strain theory: Anomie Theory

The Strain theory developed by R. K. Merton is known as Anomie theory. He attribute social factors to criminality. He viewed that two cultural elements that lead to criminality.

These elements include.

- i- Culturally defined goals
- ii- Socially approved means

These goals ^{and means} interact and produce anomie which in turn leads to criminality.

Interaction of goals-means with criminality

According to R. K. Merton:
the culturally approved goals including wealth and prestige can be achieved by socially approved means including hard work, education but people if lack financial or educational resources to achieve wealth then they become frustrated and use illegal means to achieve them.

Impacts of Strain on youth

In goals means condition

youth show various behavior patterns.

Conformity:

In this category, people accept goals and also have legitimate means to achieve them. Such individuals use law abiding and show conformity.

Innovation:

Some individuals accept goals, but don't have legitimate means to achieve them. So, they develop new means which are illegals including theft, kidnapping to achieve wealth or other means. and show innovative behaviors.

Rejectionism

These individuals reject

traditional goals and means
and show escaping behaviours like
drinking and taking or selling
drugs

Rebellion:

These people reject goals
and means and develop alternative
goals. They show rebellion behaviours.
They are revolutionary and desire
social change. They want to
topple current regime.

Conclusion

Strain theory has
imperative role to determine various
socioeconomic factors behind
criminal behaviours. According to
strain theory economic inequality
is the main factor which

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from individuals toward criminality.
These inequalities lead to strain,
anger and discontent. People
distrust society, which nurtures
inequalities. It is responsibility of
government to improve and
bring inclusive opportunities to
rein increasing crime rate in
society. New policies should be
developed to bring youth into
social and politically just arena.