

Criminology

Explain R.K. Merton's Strain Theory
Critically elaborates its effects on ^{youth}
and suggest remedies to overcome.

—(Answer)—

1. Introduction

Strain theory explains that crime occurs when individuals, especially youth, experience a gap between socially approved goals and the limited means available to achieve them. This frustration or pressure creates strainⁿ, pushing some toward delinquency as an alternative way to attain success or relieve stress.

2. Strain Theory According to R.K. Merton's

Strain theory, proposed by American Sociologist Robert King Merton in year 1938. He argues "crime occurs when individual cannot achieved socially approved goals such as success through legitimate means." This gap creates pressure or strain, leading some

to adopt deviant paths.

3. Sociological Background and Emergence of the theory

Merton developed the theory in 1938 in response to urbanization, industrialization, and economic inequality in the United States. He argued that societal structures create pressure leading to deviant adaptation.

4. Effects of Strain Theory on Youth

There are different effects of strain theory on youth that define how youth pre^{ss}onized by the societal behavior and commit crimes.

(i) Increased likelihood of delinquency

Youth who face economic deprivation, unemployment, or lack of educational opportunities often resort to theft, drug selling, or gang s to

achieve socially valued success. Those commit crime due to socially strain or pressure.

(ii) Pressure of Unrealistic Societal expectations

Media drive ideals of success create psychological strain, pushing youth towards shortcut such as fraud, cheating, or substance abuse. Research and academic reports confirm that unrealistic societal expectations are a contributing factor to crime, primarily through mechanisms like economic strain and social pressure to achieve unrealistic goals.

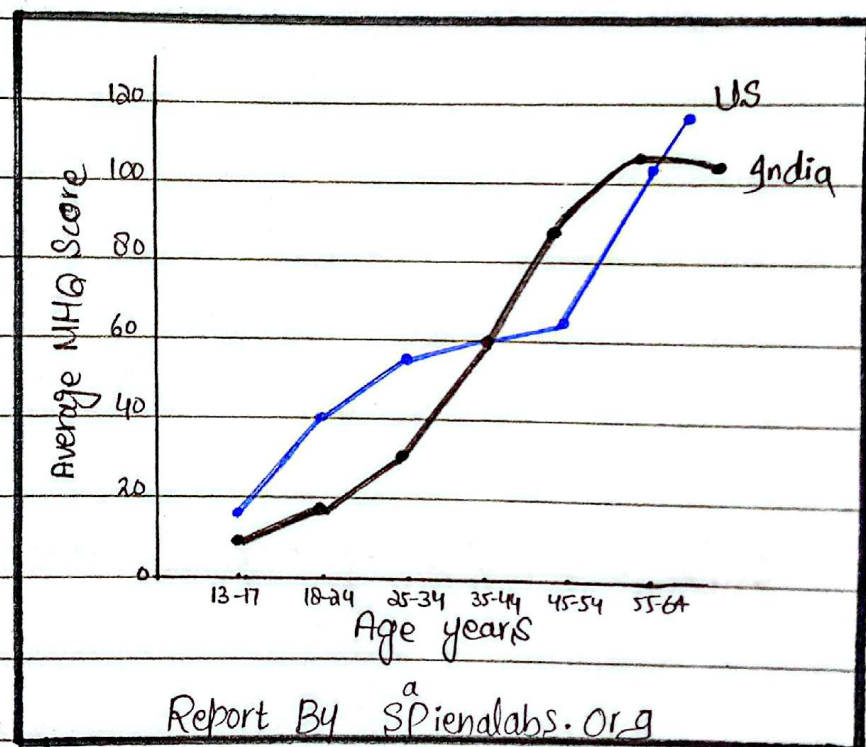
(iii) Weakening of Social bonds

Constant failure to achieve goals weakens attachment to school, family and institutions, increasing the risk of deviant behavior. Report published in 2024 suggest that between 15 and 35 people die by suicide

every day in Pakistan, which can be as high as one person every hour.

(iv) Rise in aggression and frustration

Unresolved Strain generates anger, low-self esteem, and emotional distress, which may manifest as violence, ^ybullying or self-harm.



(v) Attraction to deviant peer group

Youth seeing alternative suppo^s

system in gangs or delinquent circles that validate criminal ways of achieving goals. When youth attract towards criminal peer groups, than their way of living life attract to youngest minds, due to criminal rate high.

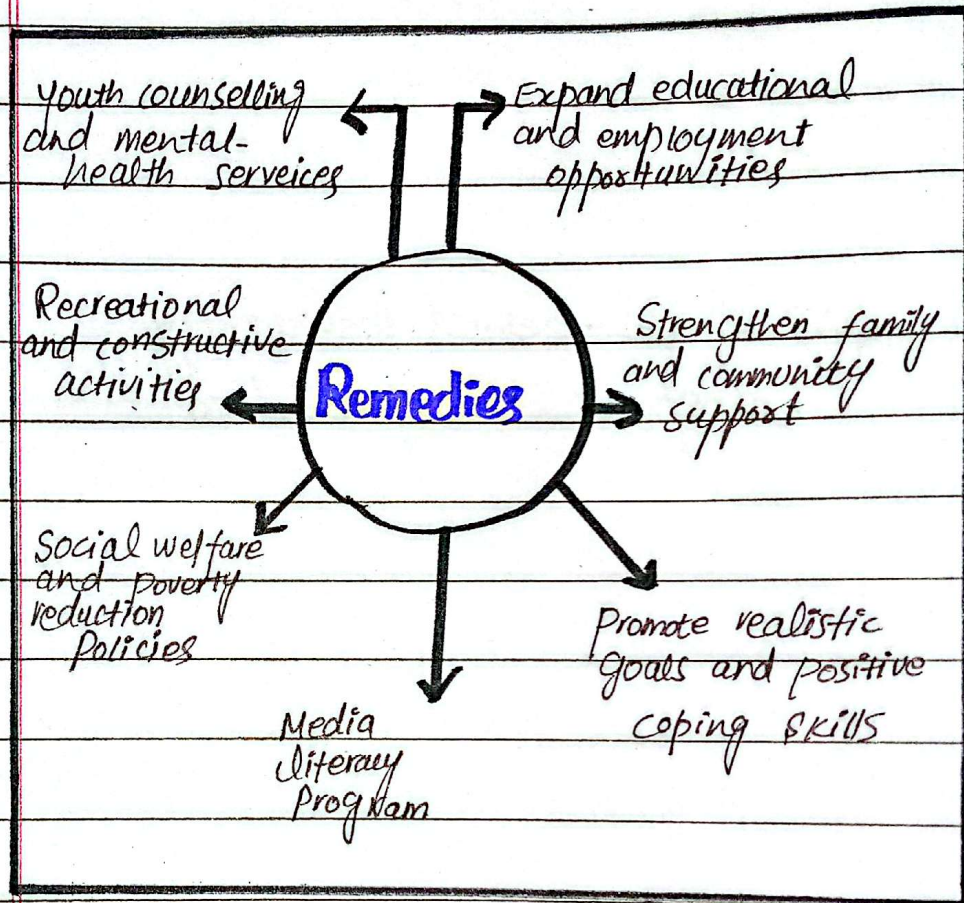
(vi) Class-based inequality deepens the problem

Merton's theory highlights that children from poor or marginalized backgrounds experience strain more intensely, making crime a structural outcome rather than an individual choice. No doubt, poor backgrounds youth always adopt that type of criminality behavior due to family stress and social strain.

5. Remedies to Overcome the Effects of Strain on Youth

There are different methods and remedies to overcome the

Effects of strain on youth to prevent the crime in society.



(i) Expand educational and employment opportunities

Expanding educational and employment opportunities can prevent the crime ratio in youth. There is no doubt when youth have the better facilities of education.

ion and employment opportunities, crime ratio will be reduced. Because, that type of opportunities reduce strain by providing legitimate means to success.

According to OECD (Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development) Iceland has the highest employment rate among the countries with a rate of 86.5% as of (Q2 2024)

(ii) Strengthen family and Community Support System

Secondly, to overcome the strain on youth need to strengthen the family and community support system. For example, mentorship programs, parental counselling, and community centers reduce frustration and offer emotional outlets.

(iii) Promote realistic goals and positive coping skills

Thirdly, promoting realistic goals and positive coping skills

from other can reduce the strain on youth. Schools should teach stress management, emotional resilience, and achievable life planning to counter unrealistic societal pressures.

(iv) Youth Counseling and mental-health services

Fourthly, youth counseling and mental-health services can prevent the crime ratio and strain minds from society. For example, professional counseling, psychological care, and anti-drug programs help youth manage frustration without turning to delinquency.

(v) Recreational and constructive activities

Fifthly, recreational and constructive activities can busy the minds of youth in good ambience rather than attracting toward peer groups of criminals. For example, sports

art volunteer work, and youth clubs channel energy positively and prevent involvement in criminals groups.

(vi) Social welfare and poverty reduction policies

Last but not the least, Government initiatives to reduce inequality, livelihood programs, Social protection, financial assistance, address the structural roots of strain. For example, China's targeted extreme poverty eradication program, Bangladesh's focus on education and microfinance and Ethiopia agriculture advancement initiatives.

(vii) Media literacy program

Teaching youth critical interpretation of media reduces pressure created by idealized images of wealth and success. For example, teaching through media program can prevent the ration of crimes and

youth minds toward strain.

6. Stephen S. Jones - Controlling Strain on youth

In criminology book Wiley-Blackwell, John stresses that reducing inequality in access to education, skills and employment is essential to control youth strain. He argues that community support system, counseling and mentoring, and positive peer networks, help youth manage pressure, enabling healthier coping mechanisms instead of delinquency.

7. James B. Hagan - Controlling Strain on youth

Hagan recommends in his book: *Criminology, crime and Disrepute* (Sage Publications) strengthening social institution such as school, families, welfare programs to minimize the structural strain, ensuring youth receive

guidance, security and opportunities for upward mobility.

8 Conclusion

Merton's strain theory shows that unequal opportunities and social pressures push many youths towards frustration and deviant paths. Addressing this strain requires strengthening education, employment, family support, and community institutions so young people find lawful and meaningful alternatives.

