

3 parts

Q3  
CSS 2025

Explain R.K. Merton's Strain Theory /  
Critically elaborate its effects on  
Youth and / suggest remedies to  
overcome.

### Introduction:

The theory was given by American sociologist Robert K Merton which describes how societal factors play role in shaping an individual as a deviant character. Theory suggests that societies prescribe certain goals and institutionalize legitimate means to achieve those. Those who cannot afford those means and ways to achieve success and prescribed goals end up into a deviant character. He adopts illegitimate ways to be successful in his life. The theory explains different modes on how a person adopts deviant behaviour.



## Core Concepts of Strain theory:

### 1. Culturally defined goals:

A number of goals are set by society for individuals. Those who achieve those goals are described as successful ones. These goals can vary from society to society, culture to culture and even on geographical basis.

For example goals of agrarian society will vary from that of science society. Agrarian society will describe success as increase in yield of their crops while science society will describe success as advancement in the fields of science and technology.

### 2. Institutional means to achieve those goals:

Along with goals societies also articulate legitimate ways to achieve those goals. For instance research and development



is a way to achieve success in the fields of science and technology. Similarly if a person want to initiate his ~~business~~ he must do some investment first in order to run the business.

### 3. Generation of strain in society:

The main part of the theory is how strain generates in the society when a person do not have legitimate means to ~~achieve~~ those goals he turns towards illegitimate ways. This can happen due to socio-economic inequality, ~~absence~~ of appropriate educational institutions, difficulty to get admission in proper educational institutions, ~~then~~ unemployment and so. Person when not able to achieve success in his life turn towards criminal activities to achieve his goals. This behaviour leads towards social



instability.

## 5 Modes of adaption of deviant behaviour.

1. **Conformity**: At this mode a person <sup>both,</sup> approves ~~all~~ the goals prescribed by society and set of institutional means to achieve those goals. He adopts those means to achieve those goals.

2. **Innovation**: At this mode person accept the set of goals ~~prescribed~~ by society but do not accept the means. He adopts illegitimate means to achieve success.

3. **Ritualism**: At this mode person rejects cultural goals but accepts means to achieve success. He sets his own goals and follow rules to achieve those goals.



4. Retreatism: At this ~~mode~~ person rejects both the goals prescribed by society and means to achieve those goals. He starts to lead a purposeless life. He either becomes a drug addict or commit suicide.

5. Rebellion: At this ~~mode~~ person rejects both the goals prescribed by society and means to achieve those goals. He starts to make his own goals and his own ways to achieve these.

## Effects on Youth:

### 1. Increase in Crime rate:

Youth when going through transitional part of their ~~life~~ become vulnerable to strain created by the society. Sense of deprivation generates among them. Because of



of absence of means to achieve the achieve success. This divide them into two categories. One who ~~we~~ choose conformity and rely on hard work to achieve success and the others who move towards innovation and ~~we~~ choose criminal activities to achieve their goals. Eg for example it can be seen in the areas of Kandh Kot, Kashmir and Katcha, there is absence of proper educational institutions. ~~there~~ ~~also~~ there are the areas also lack infrastructure which can increase employment rate. Resultantly crime rate is very high in these areas. Kidnapping for ransom and highway robbery have become common there. These areas are also infiltrated with tribal disputes.

2. Occurance of mental health problems:  
When sense of deprivation increase



among individuals it also increases mental health related issues. When a person goes into depression he adopts mode of ~~retreatism~~. He rejects both goals and means to achieve those goals. He either becomes a drug addict or commits suicide in order to ease his pain. For example by looking at South Korea it can be ~~seen~~ that rate of depression is high there. It is due to high level competitiveness at academic level. Failures <sup>either</sup> face depression or commit suicide there.

3. Rise in Juvenile delinquency:  
Children from deprived areas when ~~see~~ look at the lifestyle of elites or even upper ~~middle~~ class it become appealing for them. They get manipulated by thugs in their areas who teach them about how they can be exempted from punishment.



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ents due to their minor age.  
From 2005 to 2021 more than four  
lac cases of juvenile delinquency  
have been reported which took  
place because of socio-economic  
factors, family dynamics, peer  
pressure and so on.

#### 4. Rise in extremism and terrorism.

When a person is deprived  
from institutional means to achieve  
such success or his goals he  
rejects those means and goals  
as rebellion strain theory. He  
adopt mode of rebellion where  
make his own goals and ways  
to achieve those goal. As  
per report by federal investigation  
agency in 2023 those who are  
unemployed and face economic  
issues get recruited in militant  
groups in tribal areas.



Remedies to counter effects of strain in society:

### 1. Access to education for all:

Education must be right of all not a privilege. Affordable and inclusive schooling system must be formed where students can get admission regardless of their background, caste, colour or creed. A system which can teach legitimate ways to achieve success. For example Pradhan Mantri Skill Development Fund which is giving free vocational and technical training to people in areas of Bahawalpur and Rahimyar Khan.

### 2. Creation of job opportunities.

Government must introduce job related programs, internship and entrepreneurial projects in order to make people busy and uplift their lifestyle. Programs like Ehsaas



Programs must be introduced which can offer people scholarships, educational stipend and cash transfers ✓

### 3- Raising awareness among people to create a supportive environment:

Awareness must be raised to build train people on how they should treat their children. Children must not be pressurized to pursue a certain set of goals while abandoning their own dreams. ✓

### 4- Media's role in value restoration:

Media must play positive role in promotion of ethical values. It must promote teachings that applaud hard work over instant gratification. ✓



## Conclusion:

R.K. Merton's strain theory explain how society can turn an individual into a criminal. It tells about socio-economic factors that contribute in formation of a deviant character. It explains that a person who do not have any institutional means to achieve his goals either becomes a criminal or a drunkard. It explains that individual goes through different phases to adopt deviant behaviour when he feels deprived. As a result crime rate increases, sense of depression among also gets rise. However if people are these can effects can be mitigated if people are given access to education. If people are given opportunities crime rate can significantly decline.



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Similarly if a supportive environment is created where people can pursue their dreams and they are also given means to achieve those crime rate can become low significantly -

dear student content is fine and relevant  
but there is too much explanation reduce the  
commentary and conclude the answers on 9th page  
max need improvement 10/20