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PAPER: CRIMINOLOGY

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PART II

QUESTION 3: Social Disorganization Theory.

ANSWER:

A. INTRODUCTION:

Social Disorganization Theory is a criminological theory that studies crime as a social phenomenon. The theory explains the emergence and prevalence of crime as a result of disorganization of social norms and values, loss of social control and development of transitional neighbourhood is urban areas. Social Disorganization Theory is concerned with the concentration of crime in specific urban areas that are lack standard living, housing, education, health and livelihood opportunities.

B. SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY MODEL:

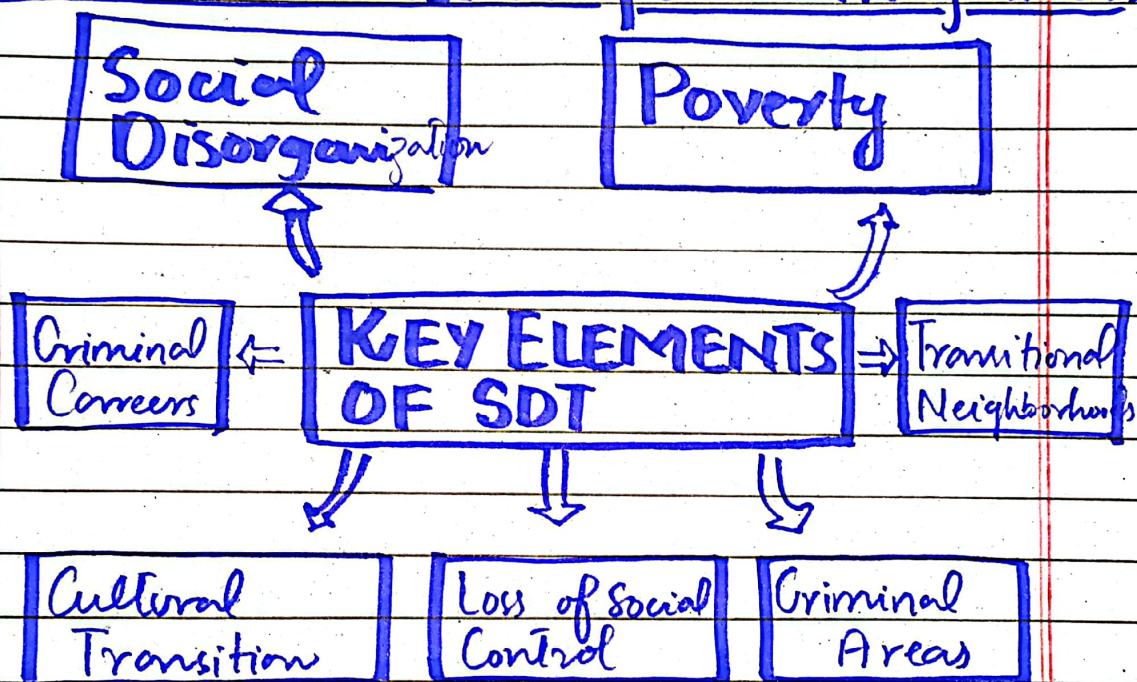
Social Disorganization Theory primarily uses the Social Ecology Model to study the existence of crime in urban areas. The model allows researchers to understand how crime prevails and mushrooms in broken neighbourhoods and becomes an endemic phenomenon. Under this model, criminologists examine the physical and social characteristics of crime-prone areas and how activities of residents such as working, living, dying, and playing etc. define their behaviour and social standings. Social Ecology Model has helped researchers to understand why crime is endemic in urban areas where development is lacking.

C. KEY ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY

According to the Social Disorganization Theory, crime ridden areas are those from where in which there is a huge rate of turnover.

and a regular transition of keeps going on. People want to leave the neighborhoods in the first place, and lose interest in community matters, rendering the informal social control dysfunctional. Moreover, people also lack health, education and employment opportunities.

Characteristics of Criminal Neighborhoods



i) Poverty

According to the social disorganization theory, crime-prone areas are poverty-stricken and lack conventional employment and living opportunities. The areas develop into lower-class slums with racial and ethnic discrimination.

ii) Social Disorganization

These areas lose social organization and civic citizens

get disinterested in enforcing social control. Institutes of social control such as families and schools fail to maintain order, eventually eroding informal social control.

iii) Loss of Social Control

Due to social disorganization, youth gets involved in criminal activities, develop gangs while peer groups replace families and social institutes.

iv) Criminal Areas

Owing to the loss of social control, underdeveloped areas transform into criminal zones.

v) Criminal Careers

In these criminal zones, youth and adults adopt crime as a career for living, rejecting conventional sources means owing to absence of opportunities.

vi) Cultural Transition.

In crime prone areas, culture rapid cultural transition takes place as non-criminal residents begin to move out while people with criminal backgrounds from diverse ethnicities, ~~have~~ begin to settle.

vij) Transitional Neighbourhood

According to SDT, crime zones witness mass transition in neighbourhoods as people try to escape these areas of crime. The first opportunity while people with criminal records converge to avoid isolation.

D. CONCENTRIC ZONES and SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY:

Social Disorganization Theory defines urban centres with rampant crime rates as concentric zones. These zones are situated at the center of cities and receive migrants from underdeveloped regions. Diverse ethnicities and cultures converge in concentric zones and crimes become endemic due to absence of employment opportunities for new settlers. The areas away from the city center record low crime rates due to less penetration of newcomers in the cities.

i) Shaw and Mckey's Concentric Zone Study of Chicago:

The work of two Chicago sociologists, At Henry Mckey and Clifford R. Shaw studied crime zones in Chicago city in 1929.

They designed a map of Chicago and found that crime was concentrated in city centers and was low in the peripheries of the city.

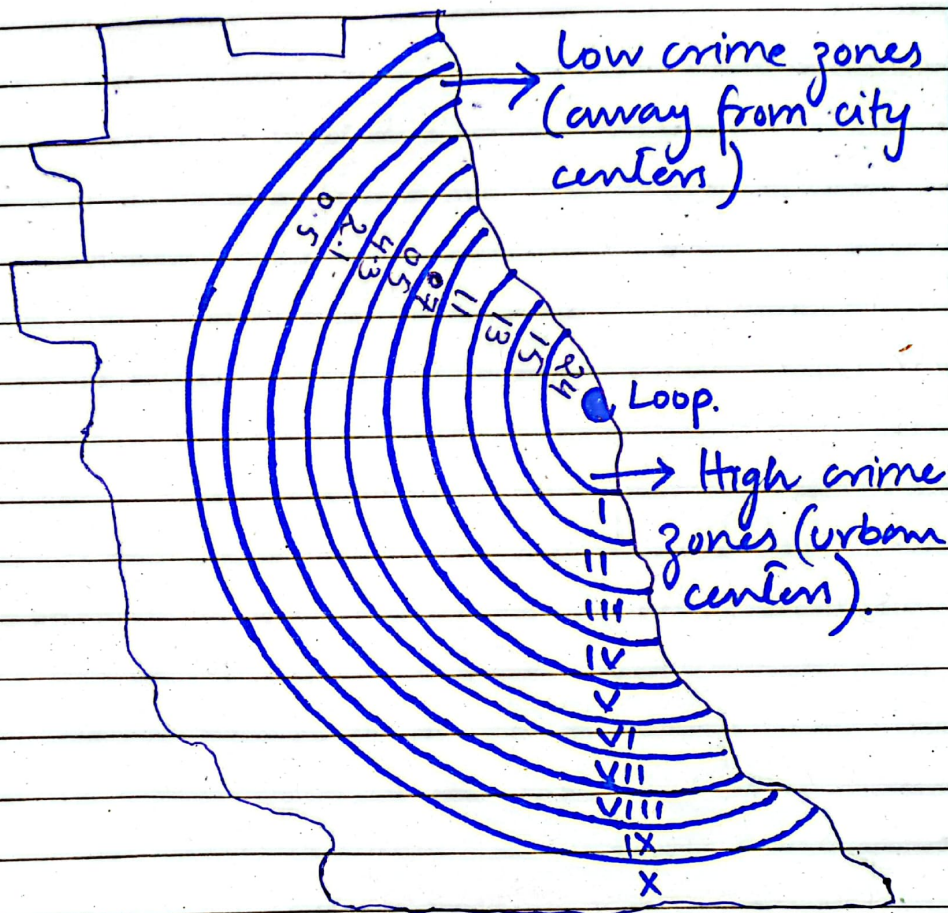


Fig: Chicago Map Shaw & Mekey

ii) Findings of Shaw & Markey:

a) Rapid Urbanization

In the 2nd mid-19th C. the city experienced rapid urbanization due to influx of foreign-born immigrants.

who settled in the center of city. They developed slums and poorly managed settlements. The settlers developed heterogenic cultures and adopted crime as source of living.

b) High crime in concentric zones

According to their finding, Chicago had high crime rate in I-V zones of the city that were close to the central areas.

c) Low crime in Peripheries

They also noted that crime rate in areas away from center of the city recorded low crime rate due to good living standards, employment opportunity and ~~poor~~ non-transitional neighbourhoods.

E. RISING CRIME RATE IN PAKISTAN'S URBAN CENTERS AND SDT:

Crime rate in Pakistan remains one of the most critical social issues with rapid urbanization as a key driver behind the dramatic surge. Large urban centers, such as metropolitan cities experience more crime as people from rural and sub-urban areas flock there to

find livelihood opportunities.

a) KARACHI - LARGEST URBAN CENTER IN PAK & SDT:

Karachi is not only the provincial capital of Sindh, but also the largest metropolitan city in Pakistan with an approximate population of **19 million** (2023 Census). The city records a high crime rate annually due to multiple reasons and has developed ~~an~~ concentric zones where crime is endemic. Critical analysis of the crime in Karachi under the Social Disorganization Theory reveals obvious freedom behind the uptick.

i) Migration and Ethnic Diversity

Being a port city, Karachi has historically received highest number of migrants since Independence in 1947. In search of employment, people from diverse ethnicities converged in Karachi which included Mohajirs, Pathans, Balochs, Sindhis, Punjabis and developed heterogeneous culture.

ii) Mushrooming Katchi Abadis (Slums):

As the city faced shortage of housing facilities, the rapid urbanization led to mushroom growth of slums and unplanned settlements where diverse ethnicities formed groups. According to UN Habitat Report 2023, ~~urb~~ more than 50% population in Pakistani urban centers lives in slums. Due to shrinking employment opportunities and poor facilities with lack of health and education, people resorted to crime to fight poverty.

iii) Loss of Social Control

Underdeveloped areas such as Lyarri, Katti Pahari, Orangi, Korangi transformed into concentric zones and hubs for major crimes and gang wars. Social institutions such as family and schools lost control and youth drifted towards drug abuse, thefts, highway robberies.

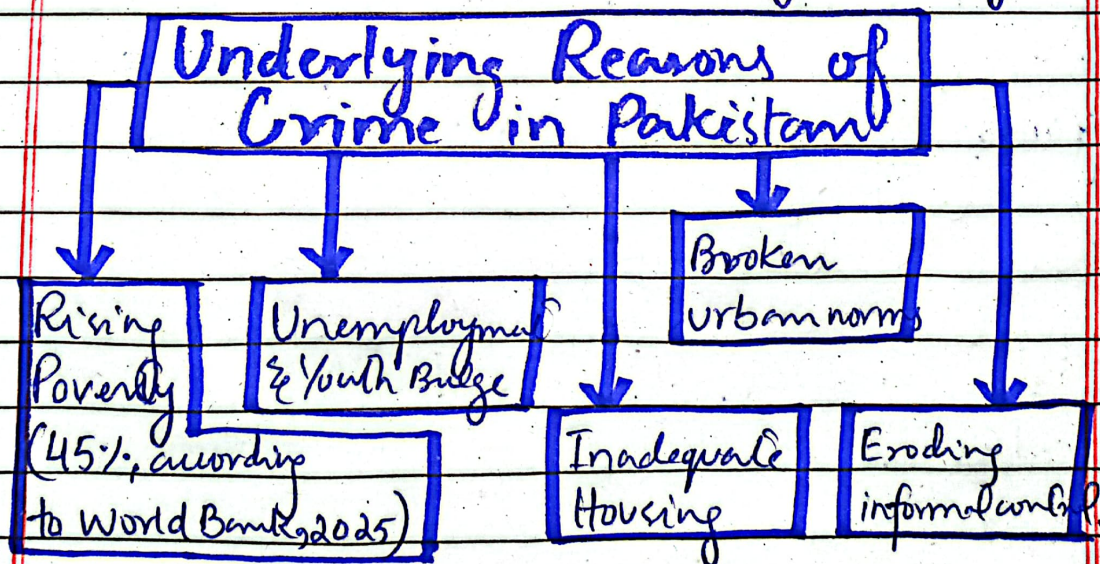
iv) Crime Careers:

Overnight shift in the financial conditions of criminals involved in drug trafficking, thefts, extortions attracted youth and they opted crime.

as a fulltime career. According to Sindh Police data, over 65000 street crimes were reported in 2025 in Karachi alone. The breakdown revealed that property crimes were rampant in ~~concentric~~ concentric zones such as Lyarri and residents lost around 39,000 vehicles and over 17,000 mobile phones.

b) Overall trend in Pakistan:

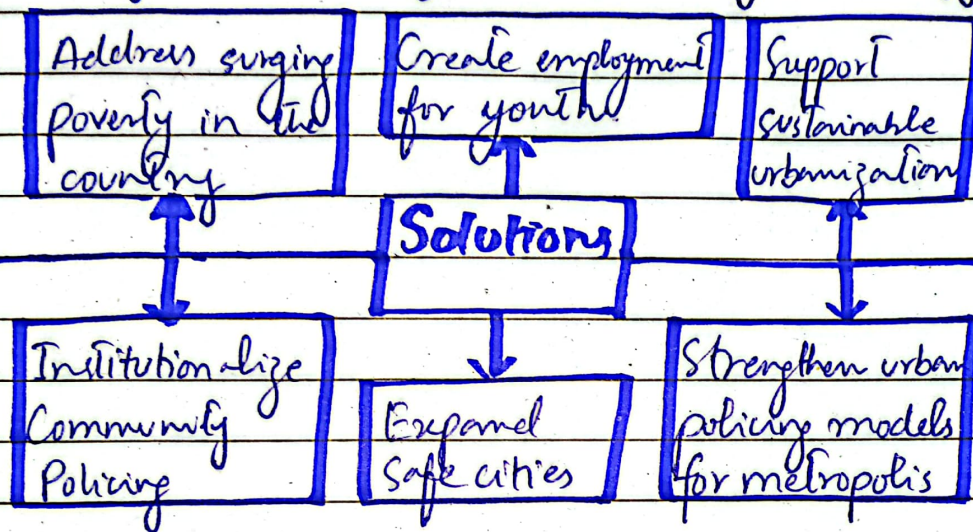
Like ~~the~~ Karachi's other urban centers in Pakistan including Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore report high crime rates each year. The reasons largely replicate those identified by McKay and Shaw in their Chicago study.



c) Recommendations to Control Crime in Pakistan:

According to SDT, crime is a direct result of internal migrations

amid absence of adequate facilities in the host cities. In order to overcome the spiking crime rate there is dire need to address the underlying reasons instead of symptoms. However, beside improving socioeconomic situation, the government needs to improve urban policy models by incorporating technology.



F. CONCLUSION:

In short, the Social Disorganization Theory provides a realistic portrayal of crime as a social problem. While the work of McKay and Shaw in Chicago elucidates a practical approach to map crime in urban centers, the crime trends in Pakistan, viewed from SDT lens, reveal that it is a multipronged problem and needs a comprehensive approach for redressal as rising crime rate is not only a symptom of poor social health but a sign of deep-rooted structural issues.