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THE CRIMINOLOGY OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR THROUGH THE LENS OF THE CONFLICT THEORY

Ishaan Deepak Joshi¹

ABSTRACT

Scholars and sociologists in the past have undertaken comprehensive analyses of communities from many angles in order to construct theories that effectively elucidate a broad spectrum of social phenomena. The conflict theory, a renowned conceptual framework developed by Karl Marx, posits that human societies are characterised by a state of disorder and turmoil, primarily driven by the perpetual competition among humans for limited resources and materials. In order to foster and maintain order in society, this model posits that power and control play a crucial role. The convergence of individuals who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and subject to oppression tends to heighten the likelihood of their collective participation in political endeavours and acts of resistance. The subject of youth criminality presents itself as a significant concern that may be examined by analysts from the perspective of conflict theory. The approach has the potential to provide more insights into the underlying causes of these actions, the primary factors that precipitate them, and effective strategies for addressing them.

KEYWORDS

Conflict, Youth Criminality, Socioeconomic Variables, Resource Misallocation, Delinquency, Systemic Injustice, Marginalization, Inequality

I. INTRODUCTION

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The theory of conflict is a sociological concept that posits teenage criminality as a societal problem resulting from limited possibilities, unequal distribution of assets, injustices in history, and a lack of programmes aimed at empowering young individuals. This paper's first focus revolves around the examination of conflict theory as a sociological framework that effectively elucidates the phenomenon of resource scarcity and the ensuing competition among individuals for these limited resources.

This situation augments the likelihood of conflicts and social instability. Another concern is that young individuals may become involved in criminal behaviour and acts of violence as a result of resource misallocation, limited employment opportunities, and insufficient initiatives to address their social needs. The ultimate contention posits that leaders have the capacity to depend upon the recommendations put forward by this model in order to address the issue of teenage criminality.

II. ANALYSING THE THEORY OF SOCIAL CONFLICT

An abridged analysis of functionalism may provide more insight into the characteristics of communities and the strategies individuals employ to achieve their objectives. The theories encompassed under this category largely centre around the examination of common principles, standards, viewpoints, and consensus as mechanisms for upholding order and fostering coexistence. Nevertheless, previous researchers have put out supplementary perspectives to question the feasibility and suitability of functionalism in elucidating many social phenomena.²

Both Weber and Marx in particular have made observations on the reliance of the affluent members of society on means of production in

² Ishaan Deepak Joshi, 'A Dissection of Durkheimian Literature: Anomie, Deviance and Suicide' (2023) 2 IJHRLR 137-148. Available at www.humanrightlawreview.in/vol-2-issue-4/.

order to sustain and accumulate wealth. Subsequently, they would employ a variety of tactics in order to uphold their positions while simultaneously maximising their level of impact. In the majority of instances, there is a tendency to engage individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to provide essential services, so perpetuating their position of power and influence.

The emergence of conflict theory as a framework for understanding the dynamics of rivalry within various groups worldwide is evident. The rationale for this form of competition stems from the scarcity of accessible resources and materials. As a result, a distinct set of circumstances often arises in which individuals from various social strata experience different challenges. In addition to the documented social hierarchies, affluent individuals who possess a majority stake in the means of production will employ disparate tactics to perpetuate and exacerbate socioeconomic disparities.

The aforementioned individuals construct situations that effectively encourage those with little financial resources to continue relying on their local communities for support. The exacerbation of poverty is attributed to a confluence of reasons including resource scarcity, the burgeoning global population, and the over exploitation of critical components of production. Advocates of conflict theory analyse societies as entities distinguished by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The ruling authorities are primarily responsible for formulating a majority of decisions, therefore exerting control over the allocation of assets and possibilities for the working class.

Conflict persists in contemporary society due to the propensity of political leaders to misallocate resources designated for impoverished populations. Furthermore, Sadovnikova's observations indicate that the initiatives and procedures that have been put into place are inadequate in addressing a wide range of difficulties experienced by individuals,

such as subpar health results, poverty, and limited work prospects. Sadovnikova utilised a similar conceptual framework to elucidate the escalating disparity between affluent nations and less privileged countries, which is observed in both developed and emerging contexts.³ The qualities and arguments derived from conflict theory facilitate a broader understanding of contemporary society among a larger population.

Symbaluk and Bereska argue that the framework provides valuable insights into the dynamics of capitalism and its role in generating novel manifestations of conflict. For example, governmental authorities and individuals in positions of authority have encountered significant disagreements and conflicts with various religious and social collectives. Symbaluk and Bereska argue that the failure of leaders to facilitate fair distribution of resources results in the experience of poverty among individuals who are underrepresented and marginalised. The existence of historical injustices and instances of discrimination has given rise to the formation of institutions that exhibit deficiencies in empowering marginalised individuals within the broader societal context. Furthermore, governmental entities have exhibited a sluggishness in implementing effective strategies to mitigate instances of inequality and enable a greater number of individuals to actively pursue their aspirations.

The aforementioned considerations substantiate the notion that conflict hypothesis is a pragmatic sociological framework with the capacity to elucidate a multitude of social phenomena. Sadovnikova et al. argue that historical revolutions have arisen as a result of the ineptitude and self-interest exhibited by those in positions of authority or influence. French Revolution when put under the lens, examines the role of the monarchy

³ Sadovnikova, M. N., Marianna, N., Arzumanov, I. A., Lichichan, O. P., & Startsev, E. N. (2019). Prevention of juvenile delinquency: The spiritual basis and mediation competence. *Journal of Advanced Research in Law and Economics*, 10(1), 348-356.

in France and its inability to effectively address the grievances of the people, encompassing issues such as poverty, escalating prices of essential commodities, and systemic injustice. In contemporary society, conflict serves as a key factor in elucidating instances of domestic violence, manifestations of social prejudice, and armed conflicts. The analysis of diverse historical events should serve as a catalyst for individuals to prioritise progressive concepts that possess the capacity to bring about favourable transformations in their lives.

An illustrative instance may be observed in the endeavour to enhance the experiences and results of all individuals via the advocacy of democracy. Scholars commonly invoke conflict theory as a framework for examining the concepts and historical underpinnings of global civil rights. The majority of effective leaders on a global scale prioritise identifying potential causes of discord within their jurisdictions and using pragmatic strategies to effectively resolve them.

Nevertheless, several individuals persist in participating in behaviours and making choices that possess the capacity to heighten the extent of social discord. This investigation, however, demonstrates that conflict theory is a robust sociological framework that effectively elucidates the characteristics and consequences of many societal concerns. Several significant factors may be identified, such as conflicts between individuals from distinct economic strata, equity in resource allocation, and instances of social injustice.⁴

III. Juvenile Delinquency, Crime and Conflict

The issue of youth criminality continues to be a prevalent societal concern that impacts several cultures worldwide, including both Canada as well as the USA. While Silcox acknowledges the decreasing trend of this particular type of offence in the nation, it is imperative for relevant

⁴ Symbaluk, D. G., & Bereska, T. M. (2019). *Sociology in action: A Canadian perspective* (3rd ed.). Nelson Education Ltd.

parties to persist in adopting effective methods. Several prevalent forms of misconduct observed among young individuals in Canada and the United States encompass robbery, sexual violence, physical assault, drug trafficking, and intimidation.⁵ In an optimal societal framework, it is imperative that people under the threshold of 18 actively participate in educational institutions, refrain from exhibiting truancy, and successfully resist the inclination to partake in juvenile criminality.

Regrettably, the presence of various pressures and problems in different places gives rise to opportunities for certain youngsters to become involved in both small offences and more severe criminal activities. In response to the inherent complexities of this social issue, nations have taken further measures to establish legislative frameworks and implement programmes aimed at the identification, guidance, punishment, or support of underage individuals. A utopian society would not exhibit the presence of juvenile delinquents participating in immoral or improper behaviours.⁶ Nevertheless, it is a fact that several towns around North America are still confronted with the issue of adolescent delinquency.

Kandala highlights vandalism, severe violence, and robberies as prevalent criminal behaviours documented throughout several civilizations. Scholars and legal professionals commonly refer to a range of sociological viewpoints that offer practical insights and explanatory power in understanding the nature, origins, and enduring presence of young criminality. The emergence of conflict theory as a viable framework stems from its comprehensive analysis of many reasons that might motivate young persons to discontinue their education and engage in delinquent behaviour. The framework analyses a range of traits that are

⁵ Badasa, G. G., Gameda, A., Gaduda, B. E., & Wondimu, B. (2019). Juvenile delinquency: A need to multiple explanations and interventions. *Open Access Library Journal*, 6(12), 1-10.

⁶ Ishaan Deepak Joshi, 'Strain Theories: Hypothesizing Criminality through a Societal Pressure Perspective' (2023) 2 *IJHRLR* 149-164. Available at www.humanrightlawreview.in/vol-2-issue-4/.

directly associated with the overall condition and well-being of the country as a whole. In societies characterised by inequity, those in positions of authority engage in the improper allocation of resources, resulting in limited access for the majority of marginalised residents.

Individuals who are impacted by these circumstances would encounter significant challenges in accessing chances that possess the capacity to bring about transformative changes in their life, such as access to quality education and career prospects. Parents who are impacted and face difficulties in fulfilling the requirements of their dependents may be pushed to participate in unlawful activities. The offspring of individuals may potentially emulate such inappropriate behaviour throughout their formative years, thereby elevating their susceptibility to engaging in criminal activities. The phenomenon of poverty may be examined as a state that is intricately connected to the inefficient distribution of resources.⁷ Children that engage in inappropriate or undesirable behaviours may be more likely to engage in delinquent activities within their communities. The existence of intrafamilial disputes might have adverse effects on children.

According to Kandala, the likelihood of an adolescent imitating inappropriate behaviours is heightened when they are raised in a household characterised by violence. Both males and females have the potential to exhibit increased levels of aggression and experience a decline in emotional intelligence. Certain individuals who have experienced victimisation may potentially experience disorientation and then make the decision to participate in unlawful behaviours. The lack of vital amenities or a failure to have a satisfactory quality of life throughout childhood as a result of social disputes would heighten their overall likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviour. These folks would exert

⁷ Kandala, L. (2018). Perspectives on crime theories and juvenile's recidivism based on socio-economic variables in South Africa. *Forensic Research & Criminology International Journal*, 6(5), 339-346

further efforts to persuade their acquaintances to engage in a variety of transgressions.

These factors have the potential to collaborate in a synergistic manner, resulting in a deterioration of the overall condition of the chosen community. In several societal contexts, individuals in positions of authority often face a deficiency in effective procedures to provide sufficient economic prospects for the younger generation. Silcox asserts that adolescents encountering difficulties in securing employment possibilities or engaging in income-generating activities throughout their educational pursuits may experience psychological distress.⁸ The observed consequence exhibits a clear correlation with individuals' disadvantaged economic circumstances and the escalating cost of living.

In the context of their own civilizations, these individuals may originate from homes that lack the capacity to adequately fulfil their requirements during their educational pursuits. As a result, those persons who are impacted may exhibit an increased propensity towards deviant behaviour and involvement in morally ambiguous actions. This deviant behaviour would be aimed at maximising their financial gains and effecting significant changes in their personal circumstances.

IV. RECAPITULATION OF FINDINGS

The prevalence of juvenile delinquency persists as a significant concern in several nations. The preceding discourse has shown that the occurrence of malpractice may be comprehended via the framework of the theory of social conflict. This theoretical framework recognises that the presence of inequities, improper allocation of resources, and limited access to opportunities are prevalent characteristics among several communities.

⁸ Silcox, J. (2022). Youth crime and depictions of youth crime in Canada: Are news depictions purely moral panic? *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 59, 96-114.

Individuals in positions of authority employ cunning tactics to subjugate individuals who are socioeconomically disadvantaged or belong to marginalised communities. When society perceives the youth as lacking maturity, a considerable number of them opt to participate in acts of rebellion or engage in misconduct with the aim of pressuring those in positions of authority to acknowledge and address their concerns.⁹

Based on the information provided, it is evident that there are several reasons that link adolescent criminality to the occurrence and characteristics of disputes observed in various communities. When considering the broader context, it is possible that young persons who perceive themselves as victims of historical injustices may exhibit aversion or disregard for established social standards. The potential correlation between the socioeconomic status of young persons' parents, resulting from limited access to education, and their inclination towards criminal behaviour may serve as a motivating factor.

Simultaneously, those in positions of authority persist in their limited efforts to mitigate the majority of potential catalysts for international crises. As a result, it is possible that young persons may want to participate in illegal acts as a means of rectifying previous injustices. They may also want to engage in a type of protest in order to persuade government officials to initiate efforts towards resolving social inequalities.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Criminal behaviour in Juveniles is a pervasive societal issue that has significant implications for Canadian society as well as several other nations worldwide. The conflict paradigm is a scholarly approach that utilises empirical evidence to elucidate the underlying essence of social

⁹ Ishaan Deepak Joshi, 'Youth Delinquency, Crime and Sutherland's Perspective of Differential Association' (2023) 2 IJHRLR 122-136. Available at www.humanrightlawreview.in/vol-2-issue-4/.

inequities and their role in instigating the improper allocation of resources. The aforementioned misconduct exacerbates the circumstances for individuals with little resources, rendering them unable of adequately addressing the evolving requirements of their offspring.

In the absence of adequate methods for empowering these young persons, they opt to engage in a diverse array of illegal activities. In order to develop effective measures to address teenage criminality, policymakers and leaders worldwide should adopt a conflict perspective while examining its nature. In summary, the implementation of these measures would enhance the potential for young empowerment, enabling them to succeed in achieving socioeconomic aspirations.