

# Case study on low self-control theory

[Education](#), [Discipline](#)



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## **Introduction**

Many different criminological theories exist, but the most commonly applied in recent times is the low self-control theory based on Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). The theory asserts that levels of self-control are visible in children between the ages of seven and eight. These levels continue to be constant as the children grow up to be adults. Crime will tend to be committed by the children who have low levels of self-control, which increases as they mature into adults.

## **Background of the Theory**

This theory bases crime on the internal factors that affect individuals. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), an individual's level of self-control determines whether he or she might engage in criminal activities. This theory assumes that there are no any inter-individual differences, which motivates individuals to commit a crime. The low levels of self-control increase the chances of an individual to give in to the seductive nature of

crime. These individuals with the low levels of self-control tend to act without much thought. The idea of risk taking entices them and makes them disregard any thought of the repercussions that may occur from their actions.

Based on the how self-control plays a vital role in affecting an individual choice of action, one can be able to see how criminal behavior increases. Most individuals engage in crime because of the sense of immediate satisfaction they derive from the criminal activities. Furthermore, crimes may occur unexpectedly without prior planning. Actions of crimes result to negative consequences, which may include incarceration and victims injured or harmed as a result of crime.

In order to try to resolve the issue of crime, one needs to know where low self-control originates. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that poor parenting causes low levels of self-control. This is especially the case in families where there is no attachment between the child and the parent. Children who are not disciplined when they do wrong tend to develop criminal behavior.

## **Weaknesses**

One of the weaknesses of this theory is that it presumes that low self-control is the central cause of criminal tendencies. Based on other studies, criminal behavior can be caused by factors such as negative peer influence, neighborhood problems and antisocial attitudes. Another weakness of the theory is the failure of Gottfredson and Hirschi to define self-control and the trend of criminal behavior independently (Akers, 1991). This creates the idea that concepts of self-control are similar to the ones associated with criminal

behavior. Another weakness is the idea, which Gottfredson and Hirschi argue that self-control is because of parenting. This can be challenged since low self-control can be caused by disorders such as the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

## **Strengths**

This theory provides valuable information as to why certain children with poor parenting background engage in criminal activities. Additionally, the theory can be applied to all types of crime and can be applied to different gender, race, schools, and family settings.

## **Example**

An example of low self-control can be seen through the story of an unemployed security guard that killed a man and his pregnant wife. Such a scenario indicates the need of immediate gratification.

## **Conclusion**

The levels of self-control contribute highly to the chances of an individual committing crime. However, one needs also to take into account other factors such as peer influence. Individuals with low-self esteem tend to have regard for the negative consequences that may arise because of their actions.