

Understanding the theories of criminal behavior sociology essay



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The issue of crime and delinquency is one of critical issues in most societies and of great concern for decision makers. There is a rapid response by politicians for changes in rates and types of crimes for adults or juveniles to treat the same with temporary solutions such as imprisonment, increasing financial support to solve such problems and creating plans to reduce crimes (Kumpfer, 1999). Governments often look at crime issue from economical and financing perspective – how much does crime cost the state? Crimes costs Britain 4 million pound per day in addition to psychological cost of crime and society terror, particularly aged people (Holdway, 1996).

(Kumpfer, 1999) sees that delinquency in American society such as youth crimes, early sexual deviations and drug abuse, are behavioral problems in American society, which cause serious concern in the country.

If crime is a normal phenomenon, then why does it increase in certain cultures as compared to others? Durkheim sees that crime is inevitable and shown by social change. Communities are different from each other as some communities have high rate of crime while others have lower rates. Industrial societies often have high crime rate, as there is a relationship between industrialization and crime. Crime doesn't only increases in an industrial society but also changes the type of crimes (Curran & Renzetti, 1994). Durkheim deems that rapid social change in industrial societies and town drives increase in crime rate. This is one of effects resulting from industrialization (Curran & Renzetti, 1994).

Juvenile delinquency, as social phenomenon, has been a material for theoretical theories and experimental studies in sociology, particularly since the second half of nineteenth century. Majority of traditional sociologists

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regarded delinquency as a phenomenon resulting from external factors. Theoretical development in “ Anomie” concept and social irregularity through(Durkheim)(1968) and(Park et al., 1967) and alienation concept through Marx (1963) have contributed to European social interpretation of incrimination and delinquency such as the studies that found a relationship between delinquent behavior and factors such work conditions and poverty (Marx), age, sex and religion (Durkheim), urban development (Park & Burgess).

Modern criminology has been affected by Marx’s interpretations of delinquent behavior with respect to crime and delinquency as political activities on one hand, and on the other hand, they believe that the delinquency is a reaction against repression (Taylor et al., 1973). They indicate that delinquent behavior is the outcome of repression and control of the class predominating the lower class. New criminology started from the perspective of social control system rather than delinquent behavior patterns. (Berlins et al., 1974), look at delinquency in society from perspective that children delinquency doesn’t mean that the problem is just deviation of children; rather the problem is significantly related to juvenile’s family, school, friends and social setting.

Social Control Theory

Social control theory has dominated on the deviance theory for decades, and it interested especially in mechanisms of social control for family and school (Hirschi , 1969). The main assumption in the theory is that youngsters deviance because some of some absent or not effective control powers,

which means that deflector of youth aren’t under the psychology or social
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control. There is an assumption that there are two types of control systems which are personal and social, the main personal control is self-esteem. The social control is in the attachments of main social institutions like family and school, and such attachments are often measured through the quantity of interaction between parents and sons.

There are four types of social bonds, (A) attachment with others like parents and teachers, (B) Usual commitment for objectives and activities like educational expectations, (C) Involvement with usual activities like spending time with family, (D) Beliefs in usual criteria. If such bonds are weak, then persons shall behave deviance, and also if attachment with parents and teachers is weak, then the person shall be free to behave deviance. These four types of social bonds are connected each other, so any defect of any type shall expose to affect on other types. Attachment refers to describing youth ability to merge with others like teachers, friends' groups, and to be affected with their beliefs, emotions and expectations especially their expectations concerning his behavior (Box, 1981). Involvement refers to participation in legal activities like when the student participates in school activities. Commitment is compliance with traditional rules of social controls.

Interesting with family factors and deviance has attached to family structure and the nature of relations inside the family (Geismar and Wood, 1986). The matters of family construction include broken families, which is that some of biologists is absent because of death, divorce or separation. The family relations relate to conflict of parents, relations of parents and sons, styles of inspection and education.

The familiar factors has an attachment with deviance in case of all youth regardless to age, racism, social category and sex, (Hirschi, 1969).

Consequently, the school has become from the important factors in social control theory, and through the focusing on importance of school and its relation with deviance has created future plans for academic success and creation of a positive relation with teachers. On the other side, failures at school or dismissed are exposure for deviance because their forwarding for future are frustrated with a certificate which is considered as hey of god income, (Box, 1981). The social control theory says that compliance relies on the bond between the person and social system. When such bond is weak, there will be a probability for deviance. There in important focus on the main and basic relations among parents, school and friends' groups as main resources for criteria and laws. The relation between the familiar variations and the deviance behavior, which is referred to it in social control theory, could be experienced in the experimental researches.

Strain Theories

Strain theories concentrate on social factors that drive youth to delinquent behavior. (Durkheim, 1984) paid attention to social regulation and stated that it is necessary to prevent delinquency. Social strain theories, such as those of Merton, Cohen, Cloward & Ohlin, on the other hand, deem that chaos in social order increases delinquency.

The key to any interpretation of strain in juvenile delinquency (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1956) is that some young people are droven to conflict with law in response to social failure or frustration from an experience. Such individuals have goals in the society but means should be <https://assignbuster.com/understanding-the-theories-of-criminal-behavior-sociology-essay/>

lawful in order to attain the same while such lawful means to success are closed.

(Merton, 1992) clarified that social structure has created inhomogeneous situations of responses and created correlation between cultural ambition and social structure means.

Cloward and Ohlin (1961) have assumption which included that the opportunity for different types of illegal activities is an important variable for the response of delinquents. Cloward and Ohlin indicated that strains between frustrations in economical success and failure of opportunities leading to success are more influential on youth category in lower class and hence encourage delinquent behavior (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961).

Merton (1956) modified Durkheim's concept of anomie as he sees that conflict among cultural goals (e. g. wealth, power, prestige) and lawful institutional means for attaining such goals is a main source of anomie. Merton used anomie concept not only in interpretation of suicide but also in various types of delinquent behavior. He attempted to explore how social structure places strain on individuals in the society to enter into non-homogeneousness more than leading to homogeneousness. If we want to place a specific group under strains, then we should expect high rate of delinquent behavior in such group because they responded to such social situation in which they found themselves involved (Merton, 1969).

Through this perspective, social structure is active and effective in creating types and pattern of behavior. Therefore, focus on social system and impact of standards shall build individual's behavior. Merton noticed that society
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encourages its members to be ambitious for wealth and prestige but allows a limited number of them to succeed in this pursuit.

Subculture Theories

Among important social schools in analysis of juvenile delinquency is that focused on characteristics of subcultures of groups that have their own values, beliefs and standards, language and lifestyle. Attempts to interpret juvenile delinquency and subcultures have rapidly developed in recent decades because modern societies encompass different subcultures and behaviors consistent with the standards of a particular sub-culture, which may be considered as delinquency outside such culture (Giddens, 1997). Subcultures theories attempt to explain delinquency through delinquent gangs that have certain conditions for their standards derived from internal social regulation, which constitute cultural pattern of behavior in class structure in the society.

The importance of theories on subcultures lies the fact that they are a key to convey beliefs in determining delinquent behavior. Focus is placed on such factors as inability of the working class children to compete to improve their situations and training in give them prestige in the society. Working class children have beliefs that opportunities will not wait for them until they graduate from school, and distinctions racism between ethnic groups, conflicts and marginalization experiences by the second generation of immigrants (Matza, 1964). Matza finds that delinquency is the result of conduct by some people in a particular manner, which is a response to acts. Consequently, what we call delinquent activity can be described social reaction.

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Sutherland, argued that the criminal behavior is gained and learned from the main groups especially peers group. Sutherland sees in theory of differential association that compliance and deviance are from the types of the gained behavior, and both of them comes in the sage of social upbringing which happen to person during his interact with others. The main hypothesis in this theory is that the social context for learning deviance and compliance has increased in the capitalism industrial societies because people are growing in such countries, and the life in these complicated societies consists from groups have a conflict with values and criteria against law.

The theories of subculture has succeeded in using experimental researches in interpreting deviance behavior (e. g.(Gordon et al., 1963);(Rossi et al., 1974) has found an important different results through abilities of social categories for pushing them to general legal criteria through measuring main figures such as income and job.

To sum up, one of strength matters in social control theory is that researchers can merge its items with other theories of deviance such as strain and Sutherland. As well as the social control theory has resented a great ability in interpretation of deviance behavior, not illustrating of all variations related to deviance behavior, but it showed a high relation and attachment among deviance, family's conditions and scholar experiences. The social control theory can't explain which factor can destroy the social bonds and create deviance behavior. Answering such question needs other perspectives.

Conclusion

The social studies in delinquency of young people have focused on development of different theories for understanding and explaining delinquent behavior. The assumptions of the main item of this research have developed three main theories orientation which are known as the theories of strain, subculture and social control. The two theories of strain and social control have focused on the socio-economic status, and they have shared tacitly that the delinquent behavior is association to the weakness of socio-economic status. Both of strain and subculture theories have focused that the main motivation for delinquent behavior is created by social conditions (Merton, 1938; Cohen, 1966; Cloward&Ohlin, 1960). The social control theory on the other hand, considers that there are some factors for preventing delinquency and they are called social bonds (Nye, 1958; Hirschi, 1969). Where they consider that the things which control young people from delinquency are the bonds, relationships with parents and school.

The main matter in this research with the family factors is concentrated around the nature of relationships between parents- children and family stability. The social control theory predict that such attachment with the family can decrease the delinquent behavior, on the other hand, the young people who come from families with less stability may face a high percentage of delinquent behavior. The social control theory also focus on that the negative directions towards school (Hirschi, 1969; Hindelan. Mj, 1973), the positive feelings towards teachers may be an opportunity for decreasing committing the draft behavior. The kind of relationships inside home and school predicts the delinquent behavior. The young people who

their relationship are good with their parents are less going for delinquent behavior, but the young youth have weak relationships with parents and teachers go for committing delinquent behavior. The amount of time spent by young youth with peers, and the peers are another theme can be known for explaining delinquent behavior. (Miller, 1981) considers that the subculture theory has referred that there is centrifugal relationship between going with friends and delinquency. The school is trying to test the theme taken from theories of strain, subculture and social control, for finding a comprehensive understanding for delinquent behavior inside state of Kuwait and this abstract approach shall be identify by interviews with delinquent juveniles.

I have chosen some themes from these three theories of strain, subculture and social control. The delinquency has many variables and they couldn't be tested in one interview. Some experimental studies have assured that some items of these theories aren't important "involvement" as an item of social control theory has been neglected because many experimental studies have referred that "it isn't important" (Elliott et al., 1985; Agnew, 1991). And I have determined in the research some themes which were very important and clear in some previous researched for the same theories. The delinquency of young people is often attached to the weakness of socio-economic status, poverty of parents and less attach to school, and the attachment with peers group.

Second Section ??

There are two theoretical approaches in analyzing delinquency reasons. The first approach focuses on background variables. In this connection, strain and subculture theories determine motivation for delinquency through <https://assignbuster.com/understanding-the-theories-of-criminal-behavior-sociology-essay/>

accumulation of increasing frustrations due to unfair structure. The second approach includes situational effects. Social control theory focused on failure of family and school experiences to be social bonds.

This structural approach (strain and subculture theories) and social control theory provide difference in determining causes for delinquent behavior. In general, structural approach adopts the view that individual's socio-economic status, as causative variable, leads to committing delinquency. This trend emphasizes diversified structural strains driving the individual to delinquency. On the other hand, social control theory indicates weak or loose bonds where an individual becomes 'free' to commit delinquent activities. According to this theory, presence of special motivation is not required for committing delinquent behavior.

Delinquency theories vary in their content, there is no single theory that interprets all kinds of delinquency. Each of different concentrations has strengths and weaknesses. In each theory, we find several themes that give strength to its interpretations. Some sociologists focused on integration of different theories in their works (e. g. Eve, 1978; Johnson , 1979;(Elliott et al., 1979) who employed their themes from several delinquency theories.

Strain and subculture theories don't contradict social control theory because they interpret delinquency through individual's social relationships. On the other hand, strain and subculture theories are distinguished from social control theory in terms of the type of social relationships that lead to delinquent behavior and motivation for delinquency.

The idea of integration of theories is useful in interpreting why young people engage in delinquent behavior. Key elements in these three theories are socio-economic status of the family and attitude towards parents, school and peers. This study is based on the assumption that there are situational and motivational factors that would drive young people to delinquent behavior. In the course of integration of theories, there is an assumption that delinquent behavior starts with assumption of social institutions such as family and school. Further, social control theory indicates how delinquent behavior develops and also through the individual's position in social system, And also as indicate of Strain and subculture theories association with tendency to delinquent behavior.

There are two sets of themes that make interpretation strong in this assumption. The first set indicates motivational factors for delinquent behavior while the second set indicates restraint factors for delinquent behavior. Strain and subculture theories are motivational theories while social control theory is a restraint theory. Therefore, assumptions in this study are based on that delinquent behavior is expected to be the result of socio-economic status disadvantages and weak controls.

Methodology

In this section I will present the thesis methodology including the problem of this study, research aims, research question, then I will focus on the interview with participants and ethical issues for research with children and data analysis.

Research Problem

The research is concerned with the background of juveniles lodged in Social Care House, Juveniles Care Department in Kuwait that is entrusted with delinquent juveniles and related factors that resulted in committing them to such House through their perspectives. Juveniles will explain their conditions, core problem and main reason for commitment to the House. Therefore, the study will explore the problems behind juveniles' misbehavior in Kuwait's culture and why Kuwaiti juveniles' rate of delinquency is increasing (according statistics). Nowadays, juveniles' problems are continuously presented through mass media such as runaway from school, fighting inside or outside the school, physical aggression against teachers and driving car without driving license. Social Care House has been selected as it the entity entrusted with juveniles against whom judgments were passed for the first time, i. e. it is their first delinquent behavior and have not been previously adjudged to be committed to the House. Researches indicate that individuals with previous experience in law are exposed to more stringent measures than those who had no experience with law.

This research attempts to consider the factors and conditions that will be stated by juveniles themselves that led to commitment to Juveniles' Care House; are these are economical, social or environmental factors? Are family income and relationship between a juvenile and parents among the reasons? Or encouragement and association with peers? Researches based on individual experiences are good material for understanding nature of surrounding environment impact on individual's behaviors.

Kuwait has entered into a socioeconomic change that affected the family role, nature of family structure and social control as well as youth behaviors, trends and social values that have changed in some manner leading some people to delinquency. Extended family was performing social control and supervision of young people but it became weak. Children's behaviors changed and some of them rejected traditional values. Some researchers (e.g. AlKandari, 2010; AlRumaihi, 1995) indicated that spread of new values generated from urbanisation, modernization and western values has impacted Kuwaiti society through different mass media and technological communication means such as availability of satellite that brings many mass media from different countries and in different languages.

Research Aims/ Objectives:

Juveniles' crimes and delinquencies are increasing in Kuwait, as according government statistics; however, the problem of young people has been ignored by researchers in Kuwait and received little attention from researchers. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to explore assumed reasons behind involvement in delinquent behavior by juveniles which resulted in commitment to Juveniles Care House. In addition, this research will examine the factors that assisted with or urged juvenile delinquency, particularly family factors such as the relationship between the parents-juveniles, punishment and reward within the family, parental supervision, the link between parents and the juvenile. The study also attempts to explore relations between the family socio-economic status and juvenile delinquency, and the impact of family income on attitudes and behaviors as well as the role of school and the relationship with peers.

The Study Questions:

What are the reasons that resulted in juvenile delinquency from their point of view?

What are the reasons behind involvement in their offend?

What is the relationship between the juvenile and his family with delinquency?

What is the relationship between socio-economic status of the family with juvenile delinquency?

What is the relationship between the juvenile's educational level and relation to school with delinquency?

What is the relationship between the peers group and juvenile delinquency?

Research Process:

The use of semi-structured interview is considered more for this type of studies. Given difficult access to Juveniles Care House and employment of another method such as observation by participation, interview advantages include that the researchers can obtain in-depth information on in studies where it is difficult to access the study population (Verma and Mallick, 1999).

Child centered Research

This research adopted child centered research approach, which assumes that young people are an active agents in society and their perspectives and attitudes about their status in life should be heard, and that the research will be based on considering young people as subject not object. However, there

is an increasing importance placed in “ listening” whether to a consumer in the market, a patient in healthcare clinic or client in social service field.

Although the same structural constraints exist, people will differently react allowing for a socially originated approach (Bryman , 1988);(Leibrich , 1993).

The research will provide young people with opportunity to talk about their lives, experiences and reasons for delinquency from their point of view.

Interviewing

Participants will be young people aged 13-17 years, who are lodged in Social Care House, Juveniles Care Department in Kuwait pursuant to a competent court judgment to commit them to Social Welfare Care House for a specific period due to committing a delinquent behavior that is punishable under Kuwaiti Juveniles Law of 1983, who are classified as “ Delinquent Juveniles”.

The research will consist of qualitative interviews with about 25 participants.

The interview will be based on the juvenile’s individual knowledge through his personal experience, viewpoint and interaction with his surroundings.

This is an essential issue in this research where reasons are disclosed from the juvenile’s own perspective (Bryman, 2008).

The interview will take about one hour depending on the discussion nature and will be held at Juveniles Care Department where inmates are not allow to go out from the Department to make an interview according to rules in authority . Participants will be given a list of examples for some questions to be discussed in the interview to assimilate the subject matter and what is expected from them in the interview in order to create mutual trust between the researcher and participants, make them feel comfortable about the

interview and ensure that there is no vagueness in the research for them .
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I will also present the method for turning recorder on/off so that a participant can stop it at any time during the interview. The participants can withdraw at any of search stages at their sole discretion. Research aspects, extent of information confidentiality and maintaining the participants' privacy will be discussed as well as answering all questions raised by participants regarding the research (Alderson et al., 2004).

Ethical Issues

To make sure that all participants have understood the research process will help in the research management. Consideration should be given to what could happen throughout research process in addition to the importance of ethical issues in this research where the participants are considered as 'vulnerable group'. Attention will be paid to ensure to psychological, emotional and physical well-being of participants (Alderson et al., 2004). I will start the research after ensuring that the participants have a comprehensive understanding of the research. I will give a 'consent form' to the participants before commencing the interview.

Ethical guidelines manual of British Society of Criminology (BSC) will be the main reference of ethical issues in this research, in addition to using the Durham university's school of Applied Social Sciences for any advice in vague matters or matters requiring further consideration due to lack of official reference for research ethics in Kuwait.

Data Analysis

Analysis of final data will utilize thematic analysis approach for digital recording, i. e. topics selected in the research. I will make transcription of

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digital recording so that it becomes legible and divided by topics affecting delinquency for easy analysis. Aspects of data confidentiality will be determined and converted into anonyms to protect participants in research. Themes and the relationship between topics and delinquency will be explained and then start writing-up stage.