

Individual theories



Individual theories Individual theories are established models that explain people's actions, behaviors, and thoughts and are applicable in understanding crimes, their causes, and possible control measures through social approaches. This paper seeks to explore individual motivational factors to adolescent crime.

Crime defines an act of either commission or omission that is prosecutable under the judicial system. Criminal activities falls within the direct scope of criminal law that defines what subjects to a legal jurisdiction should or should not do. As a result, people who commit crimes are aware of their actions' legal consequences, or ought to have been aware, and this awareness forms the basis of understanding the reasons why some adolescents are still motivated to committing crimes while others are not. This is because there are a number of variables among adolescents, which are believed to influence involvement in crimes. One of the set of factors is social environment that includes an individual's family, social systems, peer groups, and disruption of social factors. Psychological factors such as an adolescent's " intellectual weakness, mental disease, characteristics of personality and emotional stability" as well as economic conditions around an adolescent have also been identified as factors towards adolescents' crime (Sharma, 2004, p. 205). This, however, is a general and inaccurate perception because not all adolescents respond to their environmental conditions by engaging in crimes, some yield to adverse conditions of these factors while others do not. As a result, adolescent's motivation to crime primarily depends on an individual's personality and not environmental factors. Some adolescents are therefore motivated to commit crimes because of their compromised personality traits while others, who may be

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facing similar environmental conditions, are not motivated to commit crime because of good personality traits (Sharma, 2004).

High dependence on personality traits as an adolescent motivator to crime, as opposed to the teenagers' environment is supported by individual theories such as psychodynamic theory and behavioral theory.

Psychodynamic theory explains that motivation into crimes and other vices are facilitated by psychological instability among individuals that might have developed in the subjects' early stages in life. Such instability may result from psychological disorders such as schizophrenia, leading to anxiety, fear, and abnormally abrupt reactions. An adolescent with a psychological disorder will therefore be easily motivated into committing a crime while one without a psychological disorder will be rational, under the same conditions, to avoid criminal initiatives (Siegel, 2009).

Behavioral theory is another approach that explains difference in rationale among teenagers towards crime. According to the theory, adolescents' actions are based on their individual traits that they acquired from childhood interactions with other people. Violent encounters through observation or being victims, for example influences violent reactions among the subject individuals during their teenage. The same applies to other crimes that the adolescents may have been subjected to in their earlier lives (Siegel, 2009).

Personality traits are therefore the major set of factors that motivate adolescents' involvement in crimes. Adolescents with positive traits will therefore be motivated against committing crimes, regardless of their environmental conditions while those with poor personality traits will be motivated to committing crimes.

References

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