

Module 2: Theories of Crime

Criminological Theory

- Can be presented in abstract fashion as **discrete**.
- Each approach attempts to understand a particular phenomenon by asking **certain types of questions, using certain concepts and constructing a certain type of framework of analysis** and explanation
- **Ideal Type theory**
 - i. Is an analytical tool,
 - ii. Comprises a process of choosing **different aspects of social phenomena** and combines them into a typical model or typical example.
- **Classical Theory**
 - i. Locates the source of criminality within the rational,
 - ii. Reasoning individual, and sees it as a matter of **choice and intent** on the part of the offender.

Utilitarianism

- A principle central to classical theory, which is grounded in normative ethics.
- Holds that a normative course of action is the one that resulting maximum utility, typically defined as **maximising happiness and minimising suffering**.

Positivism

- The hallmark of positivism is that behaviour is determined, in the sense that **individual behaviour is shaped by factors outside the individual's control**.
 - i. Further asserts that individual differences exist between offenders, and these in turn can be acknowledged and classified.

Control Theory

- The idea that it is an **individual's bond to society** that makes the difference in terms of whether or not the person abides by society's general rules and values.
 - i. All people are inherently antisocial, and thus all people would commit crime if they so dared.
 - ii. Combination of **attachment, commitment, involvement and belief** that shapes the life world of young people, whether they will pursue illegal pathways to self-gratification.

Module 3: Sociological Explanations of Crime

Sociological Theories

- Focus on the **causes and social factors** of crime.
- **Social structures, processes and practices** that determine or shape both individual and group behaviour:
 - i. **Job**
 - ii. **Educational opportunities**
 - iii. **Neighbourhood dynamics**
 - iv. **Subjective meanings** that people bring to their actions and the actions of others (especially values, norms and cultures).
- **Collective Consciousness**
 - i. Shared **ideas, beliefs and values** that establish society's moral foundations and which operate as a unifying force within society.
- **Anomie**
 - i. A **lack of social regulation** in which the unrestricted appetites of the individual conscience are no longer held in check (**'anything goes'**).
- **Egoism**
 - i. Normative phenomenon in which a **value has been placed** on the unrestricted pursuit of individual desires (**'greed is good'**).
- Crime is a violation of the social consensus; it is a **natural and meaningful response to social strains**.
- Crime is **socially induced**; it is caused by **social strains** associated with structural opportunities and cultural processes:
 - i. Crime is the product of **social disorganisation**.
 - ii. There are links between **urban environments and crime**.
 - iii. Issues of **migration and settlement** processes may contribute to crime.
 - iv. Issues of **economic deprivation** may contribute to crime.
 - v. **Strain theory** regards crime as the product of a disjuncture between 'culturally defined goals' and 'institutionalised means'.
 - vi. **Individual responses** to the **means-ends** equation vary, and these responses differentiate law-abiding from maladaptive and unlawful behaviour.