

Crime and Deviance: A Search for an Alternative Explanation

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Abstract : One of the major areas of criminology is to look for an adequate, comprehensive and holistic explanation of the causation of crime. Attempts have been made by many sociologists and Criminologists to suggest theoretical explanations for this purpose. Some have emphasized on biological factors in human being, some on psychological factors, some on social factors and some on other specific factors. But, none of these theories provide an adequate, comprehensive and holistic explanation of the causation of crime. The authors of the paper have tried to identify the limitations of the existing theories and finally suggested an alternative explanation which emphasizes all the relevant aspects of human behaviour and action including 'human perception' of the situations in which crime takes place.

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to look for an alternative explanation of crime and deviance. In doing so, we shall talk about the concepts "deviance "and "crime" in the first place. Then we shall be discussing the dysfunctions and functions of deviance. This will be followed by a brief, but critical examination of the existing major theoretical perspectives of deviance. Finally, we shall try to make an attempt to submit an alternative theoretical explanation of crime and deviance.

Rationale

After a careful examination of the existing major theories of deviance we came to the conclusion that, although the

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existing theories are quite interesting and important to analyze the deviant behavior, none of them appeared to be an adequate, integrated and comprehensive explanation for the purpose. None of the theories consider the criminals' point of view, i.e. they do not consider how a man or woman perceives his/her world, understands and comprehends the entire situation and makes a decision to commit crime. Therefore, we hypothesize that the perception of one's own world, the understanding of the entire (relevant) situation is very important to a person in his/her decision to commit crime. In other words, if one thinks that conditions are in his/her favour he/she then takes interest to commit crime. Therefore, we suggest an alternative explanation of deviance in general.

Method

In doing this business, we have followed several methods. *Firstly*, we have used the methods of observation. Thus we, as informal participant-observers of our own society, have used our personal observational experience. *Secondly*, in order to deal with the concepts and theories of deviance we had to rely on some published sources, i.e. sociological and criminological works on crime and deviance. *Thirdly*, data were also generated from the primary sources. We have surveyed the opinions of 276 respondents on the six statements (each statement was nothing but the gist of the theories of deviance) including the one we proposed. We did not let the respondents know our own statement. Our purpose was to know the relative significance of the six theoretical explanations of deviance. And, as such we requested the respondents to record their comparative weightage on different theoretical statements printed on the questionnaire. In addition to this, there were two

open-end-questions where the respondents were requested to record their own opinion related to the causation of crime and deviance.

Deviance

To define deviance as a behaviour that does not conform to social norms is too simple. Because many norms tend to be fairly elastic, and varying degrees of deviance from them are tolerated or even ignored. There are many norms which are not particularly important and nobody cares much, whether people abide by those or not. The social reaction you get if you turn up late for appointments is very different from the reaction you get if you participate in orgies.¹

Sociologists are less concerned with minor deviations from norms, or deviations from norms that nobody bothers much about. On the contrary, sociologists are primarily concerned with deviations that arouse a strong negative reaction in a large number of people. Therefore, deviance refers to behaviour or characteristics that violate significant social norms and expectations and are negatively valued or stigmatized by large numbers of people as a result.²

There is a popular idea that society can be divided neatly into 'normals' and 'deviants'. This idea is probably totally false. Usually majority of people in a society conform to any specific norm and it is important for functioning of society. But most people (if not all) have violated some one or more important norms at sometime in their lives. In this sense, can we not say most people are deviant? If we subtract all the people who have stolen something, all the people who engaged in prohibited sexual acts, all the people who told lie from the 'normal' group of society we will see a very few 'normal' people left. Indeed most people escape discovery of

their deviant behaviour and therefore they are not stigmatized as deviants. Moreover, they hardly regards themselves as deviants.

Deviance is not absolute, it is rather relative. No act is inherently deviant. It becomes deviant only when it is socially defined as such, and definitions vary greatly from time to time, place to place, and group to group. What is right today may not be right tomorrow. For example, child marriage was once a norm in Indo-Pak-Bangla sub-continent. Now (according to child marriage restraint act of 1929) it is an act forbidden by law. Dowry was just a custom of our society, but it was restricted in 1980 by the dowry prohibition act (of 1980). Similarly, what is usual and normal views in one society may seem dangerously radical in a different society.

Therefore, the determination of who and what is deviant depends on who is defining, and who has the power to make the definitions stick.³

Social context is also important in defining deviance. The same act may be differently interpreted depending on the precise context in which it takes place. Thus, in American society, it is quite acceptable for you to 'do nothing' at home, but their society demands that you be 'doing something' in public. Again, if you stand around a street corner for long enough, you will probably be arrested for loitering. The police in the United States of America are entitled to ask what you are doing, and 'nothing' is not an acceptable answer. A nude photograph of a woman or man may be perfectly appropriate in an art museum but would be regarded as out of place in an elementary school classroom.⁴

A similar act may draw different reactions depending on the social status of the person concerned. If a lower class

male exposes himself in a park, he will probably be charged with public indecency. If a corporation president does the same thing, he has an excellent chance of being referred to a psychiatrist for treatment of a 'nervous breakdown'. Thus, deviance is never absolute. The definition of any act depends on the prevailing cultural interpretations that are applied to the act itself, to the context in which it takes place, and to the social characteristics of the person involved.⁵

Deviance and Crime

Deviance involves the violation of group norms which may or may not be formalized into law. Deviance is a comprehensive concept that includes not only criminal behaviour but also many actions not subject to prosecution. A pharmacist is excepted to sell his drugs on the basis of medical prescription. But if he secretly sells the same drugs to a narcotics dealer, he or she has committed both deviant and criminal behaviour.⁶

Some people violates legal rules by robbing banks, assaulting others, committing murder and speeding. Others violate informal rules by insulting others, habitually being late for appointments and failing to complete promised work on time. Each of these is deviance-behaviour that violates social norms.⁷

Therefor deviance is a more comprehensive term. It includes the violation of social norms as well as the violation of law.

Crime is an important type of deviance.⁸ It refers to the deviation from formal social norms administered by the state for which formal penalties are applied by some governmental authority. Crime is a violation of criminal law.⁹

Crime may be defined as behaviour that is prohibited by governmental authority and that can be punished through the application of formal sanctions.¹⁰

Crime is either an illegal act or omission of a formal assigned duty. The criminal must have criminal intent or motive. Crime must be punishable by the formal authority of the state.¹¹

The major types of crimes are juvenile delinquency, crime committed by adult people, white collar crime, organized crime, crime without victims (moral crime) and crime against person and property.¹²

Dysfunction and Functions of Deviance

Sociologists usually talk about both negative and positive role of deviance. It means deviance has both demerits and merits i.e. dysfunction and function.¹³

Dysfunction

First, the wide-spread violation of significant informal and formal social norms can disrupt social order. A society can function well if its members behave in expected and socially approved ways. Major and extensive deviations from important norms make social life unpredictable and can cause tensions and conflict between conformist and deviant groups.

Second, social control or the control of crime and deviance require much money which could be used for other social activities. Therefore, deviance brings a great financial loss to the society.

Third, deviance can undermine and destroy the trust necessary to preserve organized social life. Social order is possible only when people can expect a reasonable amount

of honesty and good will from others. We are willing to live in society with the expectation and belief that people will not break contacts, not exploit friendship, not attack when we walk down the street. Wide-spread deviance undermines this trust and generates anxiety in everyone, conformists and deviants alike.

Fourth, if deviance goes unpunished in some cases, people begin to disrespect law and naturally may look for the opportunity to break the norms. Again the presence of deviance can destroy other people's motivation to conform.¹⁴

Fifth, deviance can hamper the interdependence that is essential to a social system. All big social organizations require the cooperation of many people playing specific roles. If some people break the rules that govern their behaviour the whole system is in danger.

Functions of Deviance

First, deviance can help to classify and define social norms. The most significant function of deviance is probably the one identified by Durkheim: the existence of deviance helps to classify social norms and indicate the limits of social tolerance. If there were no deviants, there could be no conformists, there can be no 'we' without a corresponding 'they'. Many people in society can feel themselves honest, conformist or non-criminal because there are dishonest, violent and criminals. And the conformists may feel superior to deviants and can contribute to build up society with a sense of pride, prestige and patriotism.

Second, deviance can increase group solidarity. By collectively reacting against deviants, the conforming members of society reaffirm their norms and values and maintain social solidarity. Thus, provided it is kept within

reasonable limits, deviance has the function of maintaining social integration and cohesion.

Third, deviance can bring about needed changes in social system. Sometimes, a person or a group of persons are seen who stand against any particular traditional social norms and initially take the risk of becoming deviant. And, if they become successful and can set up new values replacing the traditional ones society experiences a great change. Thus, the people who stood against kingship and tried to work for democracy were once known as deviant. Similarly the early workers of women's liberation movement were ridiculed but the 'deviant' roles and attitudes, they upheld are rapidly being 'conformist'. When a social revolution becomes successful, the leaders who were once called 'deviants' become the ideals for others in society.

Fourth, some sociologists¹⁵ are of the opinion that deviance serves as a safety valve for social discontent; people can violate the rules rather than attack the rules themselves. They cite the example of necessity of prostitution in society and say that many people go to the prostitutions and act as deviants. But, according to them, this practice indirectly helps well-functioning of normal marriage system.

Major Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance

Before going to look for an alternative explanation of deviance it is necessary to briefly talk about the existing major theoretical perspectives.

Biological Perspective

One of the earliest proponents of biological causes of deviance was Cesare Lombroso, an Italian Physician who discovered the relationship between human physical traits and

crime. He says that criminals have unique physical traits that distinguish them from non-criminals. He believes that criminals are accidents of nature. They are said to be more close to apes or early primitive people than to modern humans. To him, criminals cannot control their behaviour. They cannot be taught proper behaviour. They are crude and offensive, and have physical features that resemble criminals.¹⁶ According to Lombroso people having abnormal or defective organs of body are more likely to commit crime.

Sheldon¹⁷ identified three basic types of body shape: endomorphs (soft and round), mesomorphs (muscular and hard), and ectomorphs (lean and fragile). According to him the mesomorphs are very ambitious and they are more likely to be criminals.

The theories of Lombroso and Sheldon are not considered valid today, but the search for a correlation between physical characteristics and deviant behaviour is still continuing.¹⁸

Contemporary research in this area is more refined than the work of Lombroso and Sheldon. One line of research, for example, examines the relationship between chromosome composition and violent behaviour: Normal men have an XY chromosome composition, but some men have an extra Y chromosome (XYY). Men having an extra Y chromosome are thought to be crime-prone. Despite the absence of solid evidence, interest in the extra chromosome increased dramatically. In 1960s some researchers found that an unusually large percentage of violent criminals in prison have this rare combination of chromosomes. However, these imprisoned men appear to be no more aggressive and violent than fellow inmates with the normal XY combinations.¹⁹

Researchers are currently studying how deviance may relate to such physical problems as tumors, birth defects,

and brain diseases. Some studies have suggested that heredity plays a role, especially in major crimes. A few researchers found that inherited criminal behaviour is more likely to involve in theft than violence.²⁰

Although the biological approach still deserves attention of many people, more research must be done before any firm conclusion can be drawn. Again biological theories do not consider the socio-economic factors in the study of the etiology of crime.

Psychological Perspective

Psychological theories of deviance are as popular as biological ones. Like biological theories, psychological approaches locate the causes of deviance inside the individual. However, unlike biological theories, psychological theories do not consider criminal tendencies to be inherited. Instead, deviance is seen as the result of character or personality deficiencies acquired in early life through faulty socialization.²¹

There are a good number of psycho-analytical theories of deviance. All these theories attribute deviance to the individual's inability to control their inner impulses. Drawing from Freud's concept of the id, these theories assume that all people have aggressive, selfish, destructive, and antisocial impulse. Those who do not develop adequate controls (or super ego) to check their impulses engage in deviant behaviour.²²

Of these theories, the idea of the psychopathic personality is the most important. The most widely accepted explanation for the development of the psychopathic personality is the absence of parental love, affection, protection and care. According to the experts, if parent

figures are not present during the earliest years of life, the super ego or conscience never develops.²³

One personality type that is prone to deviance is the extrovert—a person who is sociable but also impulsive, and who has a strong need for variety and excitement. Extroverts are more likely than others to go beyond the boundary of acceptable behaviour because they need thrills and risks. Whether they actually become deviant depends on how strongly they have been socialized.²⁴

According to frustration-aggression theory, frustration from unsuccessful attempts to satisfy needs leads to aggressive behaviour. As the degree of frustration increases, aggressive impulses increase. Depending on the situation, aggression may be expressed in outwardly deviant behaviour (murder, assault, rape) or in self-destructive deviance (self-mutilation, suicide).²⁵

Although Psychological theories take into account of the individual nature, personality and character it does not pay heed to social circumstances in which deviance takes place.

Sociological Perspective

While Psychological theories stress individual traits that can motivate people to act in deviant ways, sociological perspectives focus on the social environment. Psychological theories try to explain that deviants are different from other people, either biologically or psychologically. Sociological theories explain how the social environments make some people deviant.²⁶

There are three major sociological theories of deviance: the **anomie theory**, **differential association theory**, and **labeling theory**.

Anomie theory of deviance

According to Durkheim, anomie is a social situation in which norms are weak, conflicting or absent. Anomie causes society to become disorganized where individuals lose a sense of shared values and norms; individuals are uncertain about how they should think and act.²⁷

Robert Merton²⁸ used this concept of anomie in explaining deviant behaviour. According to Merton's anomie theory, deviance is most likely to occur when there is a discrepancy between culturally prescribed goals and socially approved means of achieving them. Merton argues that culture determines the things people should want (goals) and the legitimate ways (means) of obtaining these things. For example, the goal of a people is to earn social prestige and honour and society expects that one should earn prestige & honour by hard working-through a process of education-training and by working as an expert in any recognized profession or job. The people who accepts the cultural goals and legitimate means to achieve them is a conformist. And, the people who accepts the goals but rejects the approved means (and follow disapproved or illegitimate means) become deviants. It may so happen that if the socially approved means seem to be too much difficult; or if the legitimate means are too much limited (for example unemployment) people may follow illegitimate means to achieve the cultural goals, which make them deviant.

Merton's theory can't explain why a member of rich family commit theft. At the same time, this theory can't adequately explain white-collar crime, a crime that is committed by persons who are socio-economically well-established. Moreover, the theory can't adequately explain white-collar crime, a crime that is committed by persons who

are socio-economically well-established. Moreover, the theory fails to explain why many people from middle and lower middle class try to live a very honest life (people living a plain life with high thinking) even though they notice the discrepancy between their goals and means. Even, the theory can't adequately say why many poverty-stricken people do not commit crime, why people from such class gives importance on their honesty, not on the standard of living.²⁹

Differential association theory

The theory of differential association emerged from the cultural transmission tradition, developed by a group of sociologists at the University of Chicago during the 1920s and 1930s. Clifford Shaw and Henry Mckay report that delinquent behaviour is a learned behaviour. They see that delinquency in some neighborhoods persists because it is transmitted through play groups and gang. As new ethnic groups enter the neighbourhoods, they learn delinquent behaviour through interacting with the people already there.

Edwin Sutherland was a member of "Chicago School" who explains that criminal or delinquent behaviour is learned just like politics and basketball, principally in primary groups. He emphasizes on what we call sango-dosh (evil of bad company) in Bangla.

He says that we associate with some people who advocate obeying the law and some who do not. Those exposed to more people who advocate breaking the law are more likely to become criminals. The more intense the relationship with the person teaching deviant behaviour, the greater the number, frequency, and duration of contacts, and the younger the age of contact, the more likely it is that a person will become deviant. Sutherland says that although

persons are socialized by many different groups, they will accept the norms of those persons and groups that have the most influence over them.³⁰

Sutherland's theory is important because it takes into account of the learning process in differential situation. But Sutherland's theory of differential association has some limitations. It is obvious that not everyone who comes in contact with criminals follows the criminals. The theory cannot explain why many people coming in contact with morally sound and ethically strong people commit crime and also why many people coming in contact with deviants do not learn to commit crime. On the contrary, some of these people even stand against the criminals.

What is most important is that the theory does not give importance on individual personality. It means Sutherland ignores the 'free will' or the independent personality. It means Sutherland ignores the 'free will' or the independent opinion, attitude, taste and choice of the individual.³¹ An adult individual can't simply be a blind follower either of a deviant or of a non-criminal human being. Thus the theory does not give importance to individual role, character, perception and personality, and his mental make-up.

The theory cannot explain why one comes in contact with a criminal, why he selects him as a person to be associated with, and why he continues such association.

Sutherland's theory does not talk about the origin of crime. rather it tries to explain how one learns deviant behaviour from other deviants.

Labeling theory of deviance

Although anomie theory and differential association theory help us to understand deviance, they do not take into

account the relativity of deviance. None of these theories explains why the same act may not be considered deviant, depending on the situation, the time and the characteristics of the individuals involved.

Labeling theory attempts to fill this gap by focusing on the process of creating rules and judging the behaviour of others according to these rules. In this theory, no act is inherently deviant, deviance is always a matter of social definition. An act is deviant only if others respond to it as such; a behaviour is deviant only if others label it as deviant. According to this theory, deviance occurs when some members of a group or society label others as deviants. Thus, according to labeling theory society creates deviants by making rules and labeling those who violate them as outsiders. Moreover, the groups with the greatest power make the rules and those with little power are forced to accept them.³²

Labeling is only one step in a person's progress towards a career of deviance. Labeling theorists have identified three major steps in the process. *First* is the observing of the act by authorities, or by people who are close to the person committing the act. *Second* is the labeling of the person as deviant. *Third* is the person's joining a deviant group or sub-culture that provides social support for the deviant behaviour. Once all three of these steps have been taken, chances are that the person will not give up his or her deviant ways and return to conformity. The person will have embarked on deviant career-the adoption of a deviant identity and life style within a supporting deviant sub-culture.

Labeling theory is also not beyond criticism. It has overemphasized on the process of criminalization³³ or the formal procedures followed in identifying some one as criminal.

People who commit crime may not always need to be labeled as criminal. Because, they know it very well that they are violating the norms of society. Thus, they confess and label themselves as criminals, The theory does not give assurance that a man will not further commit crime, if one is not labeled as criminal.

Labeling one as deviant is probably the more severe punishment for many individuals than just being imprisoned. Therefore, labeling has a very important function for social control. Thus, labeling has its usefulness. But the labeling theorists blame the people in power who makes law and labels others as deviant. The powerful (who makes laws) are not above law and therefore, they are also labeled as deviant in accordance with law.

Searching an alternative explanation

we understand that most of the theories in social sciences may be brought under criticism and as such, theories we have just reviewed are not beyond criticism. What is most important to us is that none of the theories provide an adequate and integrated explanation of deviant behaviour.

It is probably due to the fact that each theory has taken a biased or partial view. One has emphasized on biology, one on psychology and other one on social environment. To our mind it is not correct to consider an individual having only biological, or only psychological, or only social factors in him. The reality is that each individual has all the above factors (among others) within oneself. Thus, each individual combines all the factors within him; and human behaviour and action is the result of the action and reaction of all those factors.

Therefore, we emphasize on the action and reaction of all those factors in him and the way how one **perceives** things around him, **interprets** them and takes **decision** to respond to any stimulus or social phenomena.

Obviously, we would also consider some of the ideas of symbolic interaction³⁴ to be important in our explanation. But, at the same time we do not adhere to the so-called idea of multi-causal explanation of deviance.³⁵ We combine essential points of all existing major perspectives and try to submit a different explanation of deviance from the point of view as to how and why man **perceives** the entire situation and decides either to commit crime or refrain from doing it.

Man is born and brought up usually in a particular culture. Each culture or society has definite processes of enculturation and socialization. Man goes through these processes. Society expects that the individual going through these processes will learn the norms and values of society, internalize those and build up his/her life, career and personality and, of course, behave properly in a non-criminal way. Thus, it is expected that he/she will be an acceptable member of society, a conformist and a law abiding person.

But not all people become fully conformist. Although a significant number or even majority people become conformist, (or relatively conformist) some people cannot satisfy the desire of family and society and become deviants.

These 'some' people act and behave in a way not prescribed by society. They violate both informal and formal norms and values of society. Why do they do so? or why do they fail to be a conformist?

People in society come in contact with different people who speak of norms, values, ethics, religion and law. They

see both conformist and deviant. They see or come in contact with people having different opinions, views, goals and ambitions. They see different groups and organizations having different and even diametrically opposite objectives and activities. In a word, each individual is like a participant observer of his/her own society though not always with an objective like a 'researcher'. Thus, an individual perceives people, society and culture around him/her, try to understand and interpret and interact with many of them and build up his mental make up, attitude and personality.

Initially at an early age, he/she may just imitate his/her significant other but when he/she comes of age, he/she becomes an adult and responsible member of society.

Indeed every body perceives things and responds to those on the basis of his/her own merit, aptitude and intellectual ability. One's perception depends on one's own psycho-physical nature, quality, fitness and ability on the one hand, and his social experience on the other hand. Perception is also selective. So, individual need, desire and choice are involved in perception.³⁶ Not all people perceive same stimulus at the same level or degree.

A teacher addresses all students of a class simultaneously. But not all students understand at the same level. Again if the subject matter or the theme of lecture is such that one may reasonably differ, then some students may agree with the teacher and others may hold different view, while a few others may not understand the theme at all.

These differences may be explained in terms of the students' Psycho-neuro-physiological fitness and ability, their needs, desires, and attention.

People in society observe, comprehend or grasp the

stimulus, understand the seriousness of situation, give meaning to those and then respond either positively or negatively. In understanding the entire situation he/she uses his/her insight and intellect. The process of one's understanding is influenced by one's psychoneuro-physiological nature and ability as well as his/her perception of the social reality.

Usually man responds to situation or acts on the basis of his/her decisions based on observation, experience and perception of the situation. Deviance, as we understand, includes both anti-social and illegal act reflecting a type of behaviour condemned by society, and therefore, punished by the legitimate authority. It is an intentional violation of significant informal and formal norms.

Now, sometimes man acts without any plan or motive. He may work almost unconsciously. No motive or intent is found behind such acts. Thus, if somebody, while talking to you, borrows your pen and forgets to return you back and takes it away he can't be called a deviant.

Sometimes, man acts or may need to act suddenly without being conscious enough for the pros and cons or about consequences of his acts. Situation may be so urgent that one has no time for making a plan and therefore, he may do things quickly or responds hastily. In this case, his motive may be more or less clear but he is less conscious. Thus, some ill-planned acts done hastily may be good while others may be offensive or criminal. A man's behaviour in the crowd may either be good or offensive. In some cases man suddenly responds to some situations violently with anger and may engage in deviant acts.

However, many human acts are well-planned acts and those are done with specific objectives. People do their duty

or professional work in a planned way, usually following a set of rules and conventions (let us call them **professional act**). Men also do some extra-professional good or noble works such as social welfare activities (Let us call them **extra-professional good act**). These works also require a rational plan, and people do it in a planned way. They give necessary time for it and try to do such works wisely, sincerely, honestly and deliberately. But the people who engage in deviance (let us call them **deviant act**) seem to be much more careful than those who do the professional or extra-professional good acts. They give much time and energy for making a plan for deviant act; they think time and again about their safety and security. They know that the act they are going to do is illegal, anti-social, irreligious and immoral. They know that they may have to lose their prestige in society, their family may suffer in many ways, so on and so forth. Therefore, while involving oneself in criminal act one has to be much more careful than others. Despite the fact that he knows the possible danger of committing crime, he/she does not or cannot refrain from doing it. Why does he do so? How can he/she dare to do such act? Why and how does he/she decide to engage in deviance then?

Obviously, those who give important to the above possible dangers-they do not engage in deviance, and those who do not care about the possible dangers, they are likely to engage in deviance and commit crime.

In order to make decision or plan for a deviant act he or she perceives and comprehends the entire situation of the 'act', and develops an insight into the whole process of criminalization. He interprets the situation, gives meaning to that (situation) and take careful steps so that he/she can avoid

arrest and punishment. Since he knows the probable adverse consequences of his deviant act-he/she makes him/her quite alert and careful in doing the 'act'.

Now, on the basis of his overall observation, interpretation and perception, **if he/she thinks :**

- (a) that the act though difficult, is not impossible one for him/her to do;
- (b) that nobody will see him/her doing the 'act'; (even none will doubt him/her. Thus, he/she feels over confidence on him/her);
- (c) that if some people see him/her doing the 'act', he/she might be able to avoid them following some tricks; or he/she will make it difficult for them to speak against him/her in the court as witness; and thus nobody will work as witness against him/her in the court;
- (d) that if he/she is arrested at all, he/she will be saved and protected any influential person or by any pressure groups;
- (e) that he/she will be bailed, and gradually justice will be made delayed and ultimately be denied;
- (f) that he/she, like many others (as he/she has probably observed before) will be set free as if he/she has not committed anything deviant

- then it is very likely that he/she will commit crime. Thus, deviants seem to be very pragmatic and practical in their business.³⁷

Upon thinking those possibilities and taking so many precautionary steps, he/she develops a turbulent character and attitude which lead him to engage in deviant act.

The deviants think that since he has taken necessary steps, and believes that he will not be arrested or punished-he does not give importance to the adverse consequences of deviant or criminal act. He, then does not bother to commit crime.

A normal human being does not touch fire because he/she knows (and is sure) that it will burn him. If people could be sure that deviants will never go unpunished, they would not commit it. Again, if one perceives that 'personal benefits' from deviance is more 'profitable' than the probable punishment, then one may commit it. It depends on how one perceives and interprets the whole situation related to crime and deviance.

The findings of our 'opinion survey'³⁸ do support our hypothesis. Thus, majority of our respondents i.e. 96(35%) respondents consider our hypothesis to be the most important and hence most effective to the study of causation of crime and deviance. On the other hand, 84(30%) respondents consider Sutherland's theory of differential association to be the most important and effective in the study of crime. Again, Merton's anomie theory has been considered by 52(19%) respondents as the most important and effective one. 19 (7%) respondents support labeling theory as the most important and effective cause of deviance. Only 16 (6%) respondents consider psychological theory and only 9(3%) respondents consider biological theory to be the most important and effective cause of deviance.

Want of trial, delayed trial, absence of rule of law (in the proper sense of the term), misuse of power, political conflict & instability, administrative weakness, have been recorded by the respondents as the leading causes of crime and deviance. Respondents also report that these situations make

a sense of insecurity among the victims of crime and the witness alike which make the deviants over-confident, and they do not bother to commit crime. These observations by the respondents also support our position.

Want of moral and religious education, faulty socialization, poverty, unemployment and illiteracy have also been considered to be quite important causes of crime in a society.

Thus, we have reasons to say that perceiving the entire situation is the most crucial factor in deciding to do any act, deviant or non-deviant, professional or extra-professional.³⁹

Some may, however, argue that the criminals apparently look intelligent and careful about his acts, but indeed they are not really so. They fail to understand that they will be punished ultimately. Yes, if it is the case then we have reasons to say that human actions are based on his decision or plan, which in their turn based on one's own psycho-neuro-physiological nature, ability and fitness. It depends on how one observes, interprets and perceives the situations in which one lives, and, decides his course of action; or on his/her degree of ability to perceive and interpret the situation.⁴⁰

Notes

1. See Ian Robertson, *Sociology*. New York: Worth Publishers, Inc. (1980).
2. See Robertson (1980); Jon M. Shepard, *Sociology*. New York: West Publishing Co. (1981); and David Popenoe, *Sociology*. New Jersey : Prentice-Hall (1986).
3. See Howard S Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press (1963). This is a pioneering and influential work which outlines the labeling theory of deviance. See also labeling theory discussed in this paper: Also see, Robertson (1980).

4. See Richard T. Schaefer, *Sociology*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. (1983). See also Howard S Becker, *The Other side: Perspectives on Deviance*. New York: Free Press (1964).
5. See Robertson (1980).
6. See Schaefer (1983) p. 160.
7. See Shepard (1981) p. 153.
8. See Shepard (1981) p. 163.
9. See Schaefer (1983) p. 168.
10. See Popenoe (1986) p. 205.
11. See বোরহান উদ্দীন খান, *অপরাধ বিজ্ঞান পরিচিতি*, ঢাকা (১৯৮৬)।
12. For detail see Robertson (1980) and Popenoe (1986).
13. For detail see Robertson (1980); Shepard (1981); Schaefer (1983); Popenoe (1986) and Neil J. Smelser *Sociology*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. (1981). We borrowed many ideas and arguments from these sources.
14. We do emphasize on this point. This is what is important in our situation. Such situation may lead to the problem of recidivism, where deviants commit crime again and again even after punishment. The recidivists are habitual criminal, often known as jail-birds.
15. See Roberston (1980) p. 181 for further reference.
16. See Shepard (1981); Isidore Silver, *Criminology: An Introduction*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books (1981) and George B. Vold. *Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press (1979).
17. See William H. Sheldon, *Varieties of Delinquent Youths*. New York: Harper (1949) and Shepard (1981).
18. See Shepard (1981).
19. See *ibid* (1981).
20. See A. Saleem and H. Loren, "Biological and Psychological factors in criminology" in D. Glasser (ed.), *Handbook of Criminology*. Chicago: Rand McNally (1974) and Shepard (1981).

21. See Michael S Serrill, "A Cold New Look at the Criminal Mind". *Psychology Today*. 11 (Feb. 1978) and Shepard (1981).
22. See Shepard (1981).
23. See William McCord and Joan McCord. *Psyopathy and Delinquency*. New York: Grune & Stratton (1956) and Shepard (1981).
24. See Popenoe (1986).
25. See Shepard (1981).
26. See Albert Cohen, *Deviance and Control*. Englewood cliffs. N.J. Prentice Hall (1966) and Popenoe (1986).
27. See Shepard (1981) and Popenoe (1986).
28. See Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press (1968) p. 194 and Robertson (1980).
29. According to Merton, the people who accept culturally approved means but do not accept culturally prescribed goals are also deviants. These people are called 'ritualist', and to him, ritualism refers to the mildest form of deviance. See Merton (1968) for detail.
30. See Edwin H Sutherland and Donald R Cressey, *Criminology*. Now York: J.B. Lippincott Co. (1978); Shepard (1980) and Popenoe (1986).
31. See Vold (1979) for detail.
32. See Becker (1963); Cohen (1966); Shepard (1980) and Popenoe (1986).
33. According to labeling theory, criminalization refers to a long process through which one is 'made' criminal. This process includes defining an act as crime, arresting some one under specific law, suing or making a legal claim, trial in the court and then gradually indentifying him/her as deviant on the basis of necessary evidence and finally sanctioning punishment in the form of jail, fine, etc. It may be mentioned that Marxist conflict theory also blames the powerful capaitalist rich class who make law to protect their interest and to make the proletrariat class deviant if they stand against the values and norms of capitalist society. According to Marxist authors, class conflict is the root of much deviance.

Deviance, is the result of capitalist mode of production and inequality of the capitalist society. Part of the Marxist conflict theory can be seen in anomie theory also. Because, in a society where jobs are too limited and prestige and power depends on money, people may not accept culturally approved means to achieve culturally prescribed goals. See Vold (1979) for detail.

34. Interactionist perspective is a major viewpoint of micro sociologists which focuses on how people interact in their everyday lives and how they make sense of their social interactions. George Herbert Mead emphasized not only the role of social conditions in the origins of human behaviour, but also the role of the individual in responding to, interpreting, and interacting with those conditions. He saw man as simultaneously the creator of and the product of his environment, as both determining and determined. See Vold (1979) and Popenoe (1986) for detail. Unlike Sutherland, we, drawing upon interactionist perspective, consider an adult human being (those who are not mentally retarded) both as "creator of and the product of his environment". Sutherland does not consider the fact that man is also the creator of his environment. To us, man perceives the world around him and develops his own view of doing things and thus becomes a responsible member of society, a "creator" of his environment. Thus, he is not only being 'influenced' by society, but also influencing others all the time.
35. Multi-causal or multi-factor analysis of deviance does not consider any particular theory to be enough for the study of deviance. Therefore, supporters of this view try to discover a variety of general and probable causes of a deviant act. They are 'too general' and 'more liberal' in finding out as many causes as possible for explaining a deviant behaviour. They believe that by studying many particular cases they will once be able to develop an independent theory. Such general explanation is not useless, but it is too weak and slow to develop a theoretical perspective of deviance. See Vold (1979) for detail.
36. Social Psychologists talk about two types of determinants of perception. The **structural factors** emphasize on the nature of physical stimuli and the neural effects they produce in the nervous system of the individual; and the **functional factors** consider

human needs, moods, past experience, and memory of the individual. See Otto Klineberg, *Social Psychology*. New York: Holt (1954) for detail. The authors of this paper take into account of those determinants of perception and, believe that any human behaviour or action largely depends on his/her perception of the concerned situation and reality.

37. However, criminals emphasize on the immediate benefit of their deviant acts. They seldom care about the ultimate consequences of their act.

38. Basic information of the respondents:

Age Structure of The Respondents

Age Range	Respondents
15-24	4
25-34	93
35-44	83
45-54	59
55-64	31
65-74	6
Total Respondents	276

Education Level of The Respondents

Education Level	Male	Female	Total Respondents
School Level	9	4	13
Under Graduate	6	5	11
Graduate	57	27	84
Post Graduate	115	53	168
Total Respondents	187	89	276

Class Status of the Respondents

Class Status	Respondents
Upper	7
Upper Middle	52
Middle	188
Lower middle	16
Lower	13
Total Respondents	276

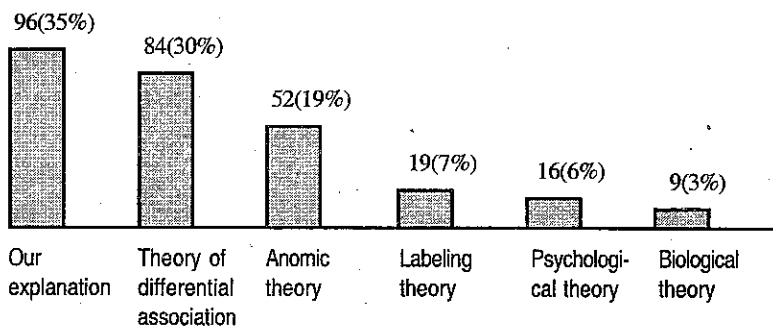
Occupation

Type of Occupation	Respondents
Teacher	59
Engineer	45
Doctor	10
Lawyer	8
Administration	9
Officers & employees promoting	17
Agricultural Development	
NGO	74
Bankers	41
Peon	8
Driver	5
Total Respondents	276

Sex

Sex	Respondents
Male	187
Female	89
Total Resp.	276

Statementwise Maximum Response



39. Even the criminals have different meaning of crime and deviance. They try to rationalize their deviant act, as if nothing happened illegal or immoral. The criminals also try to defend them. Thus, they have their own way of perceiving their world of deviance. Similarly, the agents of the criminal justice system also define the situation, perceive and interpret an act and actor and then it may depend on their explanation whether one has really committed a very serious crime or not. Thus, an officer may define a youngman as "serious delinquent", or as a "misguided youth" or as a "good boy" who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. So, on the basis of his observation, perception and interpretation of the situation, he will act upon the issue. See Vold (1979) p. 266 for detail. Therefore, 'individual perception' is very important to any person, be he a criminal, non-criminal, or a dignified honest man.
40. This is basically a theoretical paper. The alternative explanation which we have suggested here may be termed as the *perception theory of deviance* and this is a general theoretical analysis of the causation of crime and deviance. This explanation, like other theories, may be tested by researchers in any society; and this theoretical analysis may or may not fit to any particular society. Thus, further modification may be necessary in future as it happens to many other theoretical explanations.