

Crime : 1. Classification

2. Theories of Crime

Crime has been described both in social and legal context. The social definition of crime is that it is behaviour or an activity that offends the social code of a particular community.

Mowrer(1959) has defined it as an “anti-social act”.

According to gisbert (1970) crimes are the activities which threaten social order, offend morality and endanger person or property.

The legal definition of crime is considered to be precise, unambiguous and capable of measurement as the system of criminal justice is perceived from a legal approach. The legal definition of crime is that it is behaviour or an

activity in violation of legal code.

Paul Tappan (1960) has defined crime as “an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law committed without defence or justification and sanctioned by the state for punishment as a felony or misdemeanour”.

H. Jerome has defined crime as “legally forbidden and intentional action which has a harmful impact on social interests which has a criminal intent and which has legally prescribed punishment for it”

Types or Classification of crime

Bonger (criminality and Economic conditions 1916) has classified crime into four groups on the basis of their motives-:

- 1) Economic Crime- Dacoity, Theft
- 2) Sexual Crime -: Rape

- 3) Political Crime-: Treason, Antinational
- 4) Miscellaneous Crime-: Drunkenness, breach of trust.

Lemert (social problem (1958) has classified crime as 1) situational, which are committed because of the pressure of situation.

b) Systematic - The crime which are committed in a planned and systematic way.

Hayes classifies crime into 3 categories

- 1) Crime against order
- 2) Crime against property
- 3) Crime against Individual

Clinard and Quinny (1967) – classifies into 5 categories.

- 1) violent personal crime
- 2) occasional property crime

- 3) Occupational crime
- 4) Public order crime
- 5) Conventional crime

Crime can be classified on varied basis from legal point of view – and on the basis of atrocity and seriousness.

A. Misdemeanour – on the basis of motives and situation – as pickpocketing, alcoholism gambling.

B. Felony- Serious crime for which life imprisonment or death punishment as anti national, murder, rape etc.

Theories of Crime

Various scholars have attempted to build different theories to explain crime systematically.

Reid (1976) has clasified theoretical explanation as:-

1. Classical and Positive theories.
2. Physiological, psychiatric and psychological theories .
3. Sociological theories- devided in to two groups. a). Social structural theories. b). Social process theories.

Biological Theories

Lombroso ,Ferri and Garofalo were three major positivits who laid stress on the psychological incapacity of an individual.

Lombroso was an Italian professor of clinical psychiatry refered as father of criminology. According to him criminals constitute a distinct physical characterstics which are

born type. Certain physical abnormalities as asymmetrical face large ears, flattened nose retreating forehead etc, squint eyes etc.

Psychogenic Theories:-

The psychological theory emphasises feeble mindedness (low IQ). Mental disorders inferiority complex are the cause of various crime. "It is hereditary, feeble mindedness that accounts for the conditions of crime. To lessen the percentage of crime he had stressed on sterilization of criminals. William Healy - Psychiatrist in Chicago (1913) describes - Frustration causes emotional discomfort as schizophrenia, Maniac, Paranoia etc. criminality arises out of

conflicts and are related to attitude and our instinct.

George Vold 1968, describes that conflict in unconscious mind gives rise to feeling of guilt to restore a balance of good against evil

Geographical theory.

Montesquieu, Quetlet Kropotkin etc evaluates crime on the basis of geographical factors as climate, temperature, humidity, etc.

Montesquieu describes that criminality increases in proportion as one approaches the equator and drunkenness increases as one approaches poles.

Quetlet in his Thermic Law describes

that crime against person predominates in south and increases in summer and crime against property increases in North and in Winter.

This theory is criticized .

Economic theory – it focuses on the impact of economic conditions on criminal behaviour. Italian Scholar Fornasari describes about the relationship between crime and poverty in 1894. Marx believed that economic system as the sole determinant factor of crime.

Dutch Scholars Bonger in 1916 emphasises relationship between crime and capitalistic economic structure. Capitalism brings social inequality and leads to crime.

Sociological theory- describes that criminals are not born but made. Sociologist describes crime in terms of Pathological living conditions and breakdown of harmonious relations. Sutherland explains criminal behaviour on the basis of situational, genetic or historical. He also describes about lower class criminals and white collar criminals.