**Theories of Delinquency**

**A). Introduction**

Theories are commonaly considered as presumptuous sets of ideas and opinions that tend to explain different kinds of phenomena.

Adherently, under the amid and the thresholds of the new century we're in, there are quite a number of theories that have been brought about to explain the pact of Delinquency in the field of Criminal laws.

These theories include the following;

* **Rational Choice Theory**
* **Biological and Biosocial explanations.**
* **Psychological theories.**
* **Social disorganization and anomie, etc.**

Lest, in Today's case, we'll be prescribing and centralizing our minds on two Major Delinquencic theories,, their autonomy and synomamity, comparisons and contrasts, similarities and differences, and finally, their implications on treatment of juvenile offenders in Relation to their characteristics e.g. Gender, Education, Substance abuse, Mental health issues, Race. Etc.

**B). Description and Discussion**

**Theories of Delinquency.**

**1.) Rational Choice theory of Delinquency**

Rational Choice theory and its assumptions about human conduct have been integrated into a vast number of criminological theories and criminal justice interventions. It got its root during the late 18th century with the works of Beccaria Cesare. From then, the theory has been enormousized upon, expanded and stretched ; extended to include other perspectionalities such as ;

* **Deterrence**
* **Situational Crime prevention**
* **And other Routine Actival Theories.**

The Rational choice perspective has been applied to a wide ranges of crimes, including ;

* **Robbery**
* **Vandalism**
* **Drug abuse**
* **And Other White collar crimes.**

In Criminology, under Delinquency, Rational choice Theory assumes that a decision to offend is taken by a reasoning individual, weighing up the costs and benefits of their actions, in order to make a rational choice.

K**ey Assumptions of Rational Choice theory of Delinquency in criminology.**

The theory states that ;

* Humans possess the power to freely choose their conduct.
* Humans have hierarchically ordered utilities or preferences.
* Humans are goal oriented and purposive.
* Humans act based on rational judgments partaining to :

*The utility of Alternatives based on their hierarchically ordered preferences.*

*The cost of each alternative.*

*The best opportunity to Maximize utility. Etc.*

Furthermore, there's a great implication that Rational Decision- Making governs identifying opportunities and targets. The same seemingly holds true for Sex - trade workers. Research shows that women rationally decide whom to solicit and engage with, and what risks to take in fulfilling an interaction, that's according to Maher, 1996.

Extensively, substance offenders too, Amicably appear to rationally make their decisions to use drugs based upon the apparent benefits thereof in light of potential related cost, that was highly spearheaded by Petraitis, Flay and Miller, 1995.

In Additionally, theft and acts of violence too, seem to conform to the rational Choice Theory Model. They appear to be a function of perceived opportunities, risk of arrest and psychic rewards.

**Note :**

Viably, despite of its wide appeal, the rational Choice Model in Criminology, under Delinquency has garnered a vast number of notable criticism.

Many scholars have argued that the theory falsely assumes that all persons are capable of making rational choices.

According to O'Grady (2011), the theory fails to explain why young offenders unlike adults counterparts, would have the burden of responsibility excused from them. He further reasons that the theory seem to disregard persons considered Not Criminally Responsible on account of Mental Disorder.

Hysterically, Research suggests that the Rational Choice considerations can be overridden by Emotional Arousal. The role of Anger in the perpertration of assault is one of the common examples.

Moreover, individuals who, without regard for possible alternatives or long term consequences, engage in impulsive robberies to procure the basic necessities of life for immediate gratification provide another case to consider. That's in accordance to Wright, Brookman and Bennet, 2006)

**2). Social - Psychological Theory of Delinquency**

The Social-psychological theories appeased to delinquency causation are presented in this terminal. These theories place a vast and an incredible emphasis on early childhood development, I. E.

* **Moral Development**
* **Cognitive Development**
* **And Interpersonal Relations Development.**

Psychoanalytical theory inputs emphasis on early childho**od** experiences and how interpretations in a young person progress through emotional development stages might result in deviant behaviors.

Moral Development theories emphasize on the importance of the internalization of moral responsibilities and its acceptance to one's behavior.

Several personality inventories have been developed to measure personality traits and to identify those traits associated with abnormal behavior and those that are conductive to the development of a person who functions well in Society.

Psychopathic individuals, who apparently experience no guilt feelings for their delinquent acts and display no bonds of affection towards others are thought to have experienced extreme emotional deprivation or physical Trauma in Childhood. Some youths who commit very serious offenses do not have the capacity to distinguish between behavior that is morally and legally acceptable and behavior that is wrong. Typically, these children will be treated by either mental health or child service agencies.

**Note :**

Many Delinquent youths have poor home lives, and destructive relationships with people around them ; this viably indicates a disturbed personality.

Hypertheticaly, this delinquentic theory is prescribed to three prominent psychological perspections i.e.

* **Psychodynamic Theory**
* **Behavioral Theory.**
* **And Cognitive theory.**

**Key assumptions of Psychological Theories of Delinquency**

They state out that;

* The individual is the primary unit of Analysis.
* Personality is the major motivational element within individuals.
* Crimes result from abnormal, dysfunctional or inappropriate mental processes within the personality.
* Normality is generally defined by social concensus.

**Contrasts and comparisons between Rational Choice and Social Psychological Theories of Delinquency.**

Despite of some similarities in them, just like a pair of shoes, the two theories described above might look similar but they are distinctive in nature :

Below are the comparison and contrasts between them.

Unlike Psychological Delinquency Theory which is mainly concerned with childhood development and experiences, Rational Choice Theory focuses on the mindset of humans that make their decisions and choices by keeping their self interest a priority.

Viably, when Psychological Delinquency Theory Focuses on;

Psychoanalytical approach

Personality disorders

Mental illness

Morality and many more as it's major elements, The Rational Choice Theory is centralized to :

Rational Actors

Self interest

And invisible hand as its major elements.

In additionally, Rational Choice Theory is a utilitarian belief that states that humans use rational calculations to make rational choices, and that individuals have free will to choose between criminal or non criminal behaviors, this argument can be termed out to be of great difference when the theory is compared to the Psychological Delinquencic Theory, where reasonable actions are notably unseen.

**Similarities between Elements of Rational Choices and Psychological Theories of Delinquency.**

**Similarities.**

* Both the two theories focuses on human nature when it comes to the aspect of delinquency.
* Both the theories play a vital role when it comes to the description of what Delinquency and criminology are, in essentially.

**Differences**

* Psychological theories focuses on individuals personality and behavior as their major elements with indignation of how they can determine and predict criminal activities whereas Rational Choice Theory focuses on reasoning as its major element towards committing a certain offense.
* Secondly, Psychological theory of delinquency tends to examine the association among personality, intelligence, learning and criminal behaviors as its major scope and purpose , this is slightly different when compared with Rational Choice Theory of Delinquency.
* Furthermore, in Relation to the image of human nature, psychological theory believes that human posses psychological features that make them do or do not do things, this is Amicably different when compared to Rational Choice Theory.
* Moreover, when compared to Rational Choice Theory, the Psychological theory focuses on offenders, however, majorly on his or her behavior and psychological features. In some cases, according to it, self punishing behavior is driven by and a manifestation of guilt, viably, this feature ascribes its differences when compared to Rational Theory.

**Implications of the Two Theories on Treatment of the Juvenile Offenders.**

In the amid and the thresholds of over the past three decades, considerable progress has been made in the development, implementation, and evaluation of psychosocial treatments focused on alleviation of risk factors of delinquency, reduction of juvenile crime, and prevention of recidivism. In today's case, we'll be featuring in the implications of:

**Psychological theory of delinquency**

**And Rational Choice theory of delinquency.**

Towards the treatment of juvenile offenders in consideration to their characteristics

**A). Psychological theory.**

Under the implication of the psychological theory of Delinquency on the treatment of juvenile offenders, Prevention of criminal behavior is considerably not the only goal of psychosocial treatments in juvenile justice. Most youth in the juvenile justice system are likely to meet criteria for a psychiatric disorder, substance use disorder, or both. Depression and post traumatic stress disorder are among the most frequent internal-izing conditions co-occurring with juvenile delinquency.

Mental health services in the juvenile justice system need to be comprehen-sive; that is, they need to address multiple risk factors and involve environmental ldomains that influence the development and perpetuation of juvenile criminal behavior. Furthermore, never to forget the pact of Gender and the Education aspectionalities.

It has been suggested that the recent shift from a rehabilitative policy toward one based on retribution occurred in the juvenile justice, mostly in response to a general disillusion-ment with the ability of existing treatment strategies to rehabilitate juvenile offenders successfully and to control their behavior adequately. Interven-tions may be ineffective for many reasons, including failure to address relevant risk factors, insufficient dose or duration, or failure to address the unique needs of individual juveniles.

**B).Rational Choice Theory**

Under its implications, Prevention of juvenile crime and violence based on Rational choice theories can be achieved by making the punishments severe enough that the crime is not worth the act, or by making the crime difficult enough that the gain is not worth the risk. Under choice theories, crime prevention strategies have developed based on two premises:

**(1) deterrence**

**(2) situational crime avoida**nce.

The deterrence concept maintains that the choice to commit delinquent acts can be minimized by the threat of punishment. A core principle of deterrence is that the more certain, swift, and severe a punishment is, the more likely a juvenile will avoid that behavior. While deterrence as a crime prevention theory may make sense, using punishment to deter juveniles is problematic. In the criminal justice system, minors cannot be, and are not, punished like adults. This difference has a major impact on deterrence theory as a viable instrument is controlling youth crime. As a consequence, many critics suggest that trying to deter delinquency with legal punishment is futile.

On the other hand, Situational crime prevention appears more promising as a means for reducing juvenile crime. Its strategies focus on making crime more difficult, so that would-be delinquents find the risk of apprehension and punishment not worth the reward of crime. Situational crime strategies rely on

(1) increasing the effort a delinquent must perform to commit a crime,

(2) increasing the risks in committing a crime, and/or

(3) reducing the rewards. These efforts typically involve “target-hardening techniques” such as installing alarms etc.

**C). Conclusion.**

Despite some sorts of small differences in them, the two theories discussed above still plays a major role in Criminal law and criminology at large.

**D). References**

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