

# **CRIME AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AMONG THE YOUTH:**

## **A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MATIGARA BLOCK**

### **UNDER SILIGURI SUB DIVISION**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The sociological approach gives a way to look at the issue of youth crime, which is distinctive from other disciplinary approaches. Considering its multidimensional character, explanations, and interpretations that have emerged from different disciplines, the present study delves further with the sociological lens and tries to interpret it accordingly. The changing ideas, values, and changes in the various formal and informal institutions have resulted in increasing crime rates worldwide. Unprecedented and unanticipated dimensions of criminality extend the extensive scope of research on youth crime and its behavioral aspects. Thus, the present study also signifies its behavioral aspect, which has a sociocultural base and deserves examination accordingly.

Therefore, the definitional aspect of the phenomenon itself has emerged in several ways, and the parallel growth of the theoretical dimensions has paved the way for multifaced interpretation. Youth is a significant social category; their behavioral manifestations are based upon a distinct set of contextualizations that may not be similar to other social categories. It becomes more versatile when we are to examine their criminal behavior.

However, the sociological analysis broadly examines youth crime from two aspects and all the major explanations can be categorized under it. First is the structural

perspective, which emphasizes the larger social structure where youth crime occurs. It also raises the question about changes in the structure that result in crime and criminality. The other is the processual perspective, enquiring about how and why youth engage in different crimes and criminal behavior. The whole set of concerned theoretical traditions has developed accordingly. The emergence of ecological and sociological approaches has brought challenges to many conventional approaches that focus exclusively on biological and psychological factors. It was the primary turning point that directed the discourse towards social and sociological consideration.

Gradually, the inception of structural explanation derived from the classical work of E.H Sutherland (1949), which attempts to illustrate the interrelation between crime and occupational framework, and the concepts of occupational crime, white collar crime, or corporate crime have evolved. It is based on a class approach to crime and criminality, reflecting the structural disposition through status and occupation. It has achieved more elaboration with the experiment of John Hagan (1988) in his work on structural criminology, which examines the existence of power in the phenomenon of crime and criminality. The control approach developed by Hirschi (1960) expresses concerns about the behavioral consequences of individuals influenced by power relationship ties with institutions. Moreover, several other experimentations developed by scholars like Brown (2018) and Muncie (2004) have opened multiple dimensions to look into the issue.

However, the present study explores such orientation to understand the contextualization of youth crime and criminal behavior in Indian society. The diversity of the Indian social structure, which has multiple grounds for stratification, represents a complex existence in terms of caste, class, and gender, and the study has

considered these to uncover the hidden reality. These provide specific grounds for social values, moralities, and rationalities that guide an individual's social life within the particular social structure. It results in distinct attitudes and behavioral patterns often confronting each other's interests, eventually extending and intensifying the scope of deviance, crime, and criminality. (e.g., *riots, ethnic violence, etc.*).

The development of sociological tradition has brought the functional interpretation in examining such context, which may be understood by the work of Durkheim and Merton. Contemporarily, the conflict approach and Marxist tradition also became very significant, and the later development in modern theoretical tradition has led this into a more multidimensional character. Gradually, these classical approaches have been extended and replaced by several advancements in the field with newer approaches.

The whole set of subcultural explanations developed by William F. Whyte's work *Street Corner Society* and Albert Cohen's work on *Delinquent Boys* added a distinct dimension to the issue of youth crime. Moreover, from the very interactionist perspective, the emergence of imitation, labeling, and control theories enriched the examination to another level. More specifically, the inclusion of feminist and postmodern approaches has enabled us to micro-analyze the phenomena that have become heavily significant in the present theoretical evolution dealing with the phenomena.

Thus, based on the review of earlier works, the present study tries to locate the field within these theoretical rhizomes where the inclusion of multiple theories regarding both epistemology and methodology remains necessary. In categorizing the earlier works, the study finds that it majorly tries to analyze youth crime and criminal behavior as the individual outcome or the outcome of physical and social

surroundings at a macro level. Such orientation overlooks many contexts that remain significant at the micro level and can heavily influence the reality that conditions youth crime. In hypothesizing and testifying the fact, the present study stresses analyzing the contextualization of power and the state's involvement in youth criminality. The outcome of such effort remains significant and helps theorize the nature and characteristics of youth criminality. In contemporary scenarios, many dimensions of youth crime are directly and indirectly influenced and conditioned by the state and its governance. The present study analyzes the role of the state in drug-related crimes, which prevail among youth in the study area. Youth's behavioral representation through illicit drug addiction and dealing provides the scope of governance and thus validates the involvement of the state in it. At the same time, the state also facilitates and sponsors many contexts that seduce youths into criminality. It results in producing the context of criminalization and deviance and criminals. The critical approach signifies the importance of class in its examination where the drug behavior, addiction, and relevant crime and criminality of youth are influenced. In such a way, we see a process of translating drugs into deviance and criminality that intensifies the political economy of the state. Thus, the state has two strands that promote youth criminality: state-facilitated and state-sponsored contexts of youth criminality.

The present study has extended this framework to analyze the governmentality of the state through producing and reproducing the crime context to youth. In such circumstances, the examination of gender in youth criminality remains very crucial and necessary for the time. The study explores that the criminalization of genders in present times has become an unavoidable apparatus of the state's governance mechanism. Bringing more populations under the filtration of crime and criminality

enables the inclusion of many people into control whose behavior remained liberated traditionally. Moreover, the categorization of crime and criminality materializes the masculinization and feminization of certain specific crimes that orients the contexts of youth crime socioculturally. The present study explores the contextualization of sex crime in young women's bodies, which has become normalized as well as institutionalized. It is found that the intimacy of state and patriarchy has created the ground of governing through criminality, especially through youth crime. Thus, the evolvement of 'gendered crime and criminality' and the 'criminalization of gender' takes place in contemporary times.

However, the study has found a critical context in the conventional gender-based crime approach and also in the crime-based gender approach, where, in both cases, inequality persists in determining crime and criminal behavior. Moreover, it examines how the gender structure itself includes crime and criminality to establish and validate the unequal power relations in social stratification to regulate individuals. In such a context, inequality is not only executed with the male and female binary; moreover, the gender structure has also been reshaped and reformed in a way that all populations can be brought under its order. Thereby, the inclusion of LGBTQ+ (the rainbow community) people into the dominant gender structure has extended the field of power and politics and also contextualizes the scope of governing through crime and criminality (Simon 2007).

In analyzing the pattern and context of cybercrime among youth, the study tries to dissect the sociocultural consideration of cyberspace. It explores the process through which such spaces have reproduced the social inequality that often conditions the context of crime and criminality. The rationalization of the cyber industry has resulted in producing the cyber surplus value where youths are being exploited. Being the

prosumer, this eventually creates the ground of disappointment, frustration, anger, violence, and deviant behavior among youth.

Moreover, the study explores the inmates' living conditions and the prison culture. It has examined the multifaced dimensions of prison living mates and also focuses on the understanding of victimization.

After examining all issues, the present study may conclude that the analysis of youth crime, which traditionally finds youth as guilty in analyzing their criminality, is not the pertinent explanation. Instead, it is the social structure that has multiple sociocultural grounds for magnifying more and more youths in crime and criminality. The criminal behavior of youth is not innate; neither is it the result of learning circumstances through socialization as much as it claims in several theoretical approaches. Rather, it is more the outcome of sociocultural contexts that remain embedded into the social structure. Moreover, in present times, the intention of the state and operating governmentality through exercising youth crime as a means of controlling citizens has opened up another layer of youth oppression. Youth crime is a means of governance, and thus, it would not be wrong to state that doing youth crime in present times is more doing youth victimization. Therefore, it enables a fertile sociocultural context to produce and reproduce the passive citizen.