

FEATURES (POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FORMS) OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

Shaxnoza Rustamjon qizi Narziyeva
Asia International University

Abstract

This article examines negative examples of deviant behavior such as alcoholism, crime, drug addiction, and suicidal tendencies. These phenomena are considered a serious social problem. For example, according to approximate estimates, more than 60% of suicides are related to alcoholism. The following factors are usually identified as the main causes leading to the formation of deviations. In various fields of psychological and sociological knowledge, different views have been adopted regarding the phenomenon of social deviation.

Keywords

aggressiveness, secrecy, deviation, crime, social causes, anomie, stigmatization.

Deviant behavior is a term used to describe behavioral manifestations of individuals or social groups that do not correspond to the norms of a social system. In sociology and psychology, deviant behavior is also referred to as **deviating behavior**. The term originates from the Latin concept *deviatio*, which means “deviation.”

To evaluate manifestations of this phenomenon and to define the boundaries and norms of deviant behavior, standards and expectations of behavior within a particular social role are used as criteria. Some researchers believe that not only actions can be deviant. Personal views and worldview attitudes can also belong to this category.

Often, deviant behavior is discussed in relation to adolescents. This is connected with the prevalence of this phenomenon among young people. Boys and girls often suffer from a lack of self-realization and difficulties in adapting to a group environment. They are highly susceptible to external influence, and addictions such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and smoking can develop quickly.

Scientists attempt to explain the origins and causes of deviant behavior. Three types of theories can be distinguished:

- **Biological theories** (theories of physical types)
- **Psychological theories** (psychoanalytic explanations)
- **Sociological theories** (cultural, stigmatization, and anomie theories)

Let us examine these theories in more detail.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Italian physician **Cesare Lombroso** discovered a connection between criminal behavior and certain physical traits. He believed that people are predisposed to certain types of behavior due to their biological constitution. Lombroso argued that the “criminal type” is the result of degeneration to earlier stages of human evolution. This type can be identified by characteristic features such as a protruding lower jaw, a sparse beard, and reduced sensitivity to pain.

Lombroso’s theory became widespread, and some thinkers became his followers, also establishing a connection between deviant behavior and certain physical characteristics.

William H. Sheldon, a well-known American psychologist and physician, emphasized the importance of body structure. He believed that a specific body type is associated with certain personality traits. The **endomorph** (a person with moderate fullness and a soft, rounded body) tends to be sociable, able to get along with others, and inclined to satisfy personal desires. The

mesomorph (whose body is strong and resilient) tends to be active, restless, and less sensitive. Finally, the **ectomorph** (characterized by a thin and fragile body) is inclined toward self-analysis and possesses heightened sensitivity and nervousness.

Based on research on the behavior of two hundred young men in a rehabilitation center, Sheldon concluded that mesomorphs are most prone to deviance, although they do not necessarily become criminals.

Although such biological concepts were popular at the beginning of the twentieth century, other approaches gradually replaced them. Evidence has been obtained that some mental disorders, especially schizophrenia, may be caused by genetic predisposition. Moreover, certain biological characteristics can influence an individual's psyche. For example, if a boy is teased because of his short height, his reaction may be directed against society and expressed in deviant behavior. However, in such cases biological factors only indirectly contribute to deviation, interacting with social factors. Therefore, any biological analysis of deviance must take into account the combination of many factors.

The **psychological approach**, like biological theories, is often applied to the analysis of criminal behavior. Scientists who attempted to explain deviance psychologically emphasized the importance of so-called general conditions such as "mental defects," "degeneracy," "feeble-mindedness," and "psychopathy." Criminologists tried to establish a connection between these conditions and criminal behavior using scientific methods.

Psychoanalysts proposed a theory linking deviant actions to mental disorders. Their approach is based on the study of conflicts occurring within the consciousness of an individual. For example, **Sigmund Freud** believed that beneath the layer of active consciousness there is a sphere of the unconscious. The unconscious is our psychic energy, where everything primitive, limitless, and devoid of mercy is concentrated. The unconscious represents the biological essence of a person that has not yet been influenced by culture.

A person can protect themselves from the unconscious through the formation of the **ego** and **superego**, which restrain and limit instincts and base passions. However, situations may arise when internal conflicts between the ego and the unconscious destroy these defenses, and the internal content that is not regulated by culture breaks through. In such cases, deviation from cultural norms may occur.

Freud introduced the concept of "**criminals with a sense of guilt.**" This refers to individuals who unconsciously wish to be caught and punished because they feel guilty due to their "destructive drive." They believe that imprisonment could help them overcome this impulse.

Careful research has shown that the essence of deviance cannot be explained solely on the basis of psychological factors. Today, most psychologists and sociologists recognize that personality traits and motives of behavior have an important influence on all types of deviant behavior. However, the nature of crime and other types of deviance cannot be explained by analyzing only one psychological trait, conflict, or complex.

The **sociological explanation** takes into account social and cultural factors on the basis of which people are considered deviant.

The Theory of Anomie

The first sociological explanation was proposed in the theory of **anomie**, developed by **Émile Durkheim**. He used this theory while studying the nature of suicide. Durkheim believed that one of the causes of suicide is anomie (a state of normlessness or deregulation). According to him, social rules play a crucial role in regulating people's lives. Norms guide their behavior, and individuals know what to expect from others and what others expect from them.

People's life experiences—both pleasures and disappointments—generally correspond to expectations determined by social norms. However, during crises or radical social changes, life

experiences may no longer correspond to the ideals embodied in social norms. As a result, people experience confusion and disorientation.

Although Durkheim's theory has been criticized, the main idea that social disorganization causes deviant behavior is still widely accepted today. The term **social disorganization** refers to a condition in society in which cultural values, norms, and social connections are absent, weakened, or contradictory. Contradictory standards for evaluating human behavior and weak control by authorities contribute significantly to the growth of crime.

Relatively recently, the theory of anomie found a new expression in the concept of **social bonds**. **Travis Hirschi** argued that the stronger people believe in socially accepted values, the more actively they strive for success in education and socially approved activities, and the stronger their attachment to family, the less likely they are to commit deviant acts.

Some modifications to the concept of anomie were introduced by **Robert Merton**. He believed that deviance results from the gap between cultural goals of society and the socially approved means of achieving them. According to Merton, when people strive for financial success but realize that it cannot be achieved through legitimate means, they may resort to illegal methods such as racketeering or speculation.

Cultural explanations also belong to the sociological type of explanation, emphasizing the analysis of cultural values that encourage deviance.

Thorsten Sellin emphasized that deviance arises as a result of conflicts between cultural norms. He studied the behavior of certain groups of criminals whose norms differed from those of the rest of society.

Walter Miller further developed Sellin's idea of the relationship between culture and deviant behavior. He argued that there is a distinct subculture of the lower social strata, one manifestation of which is group delinquency. This subculture highly values qualities such as risk-taking, endurance, the pursuit of excitement, and luck.

Edwin Sutherland attempted to explain why only some people adopt the values of a deviant subculture while others reject them. He introduced the concept of **differential association** and argued that criminal behavior is learned. People adopt values that promote deviance through communication with individuals who already hold such values. If most friends and relatives of a person are involved in criminal activity, there is a high probability that the individual will also become a criminal. The frequency, duration, and intensity of contacts with deviants influence the degree to which deviant values are adopted. Age also plays an important role.

During the last twenty years, several new approaches to deviance have emerged that focus on those who label a person as deviant and on how society treats individuals who are labeled in this way.

Howard Becker rejected many psychological and sociological explanations of deviance because they are based on the "medical model," according to which a person displaying deviant behavior is considered "sick." Such approaches ignore the political aspects of deviance. Becker argued that deviance actually arises from the ability of powerful groups in society to impose certain standards of behavior on others.

Becker's concept and similar approaches are known as the **labeling theory**, because they explain deviant behavior by the ability of influential groups to label members of less powerful groups as "deviants." **Primary deviance** occurs when an individual occasionally violates rules but society overlooks it, and the individual does not consider themselves deviant. **Secondary deviance** occurs when a person is labeled as a deviant, treated differently by others, and gradually begins to perceive themselves as deviant.

Unlike theories that focus on the characteristics of individuals contributing to deviance, labeling theory explains how social attitudes toward individuals are formed.

A strongly political approach to deviance is adopted by sociologists who call themselves **radical criminologists**. They reject all theories of crime that interpret it simply as a violation of generally accepted laws. According to them, such theories portray society as a unified whole. From their perspective, the creation of laws and obedience to them are part of the conflict occurring between different groups within society. Radical criminology focuses not on why people break laws but on analyzing the nature of the legal system itself. Moreover, supporters of this theory view deviants not simply as violators of rules but as rebels opposing capitalist society.

Thus, there are significant differences among biological, psychological, and sociological explanations of deviance. However, all these theories share a common tendency. Recently, less importance has been attached to biological and psychological factors that push individuals toward deviant behavior. Modern theories emphasize the nature of society itself and attempt to determine the extent to which society is interested in creating and maintaining deviance. These theories are more critical of the existing social order and argue for the need to reform not only individuals but society as a whole.

In conclusion, deviant behavior in a broad sense refers to any actions or behavior of people that do not correspond to written or unwritten social norms. Such deviations may be **positive or negative**. They may include culturally approved deviations such as exceptional genius, heroism, self-sacrifice, altruism, and workaholism, as well as culturally disapproved deviations ranging from fare evasion to murder and other serious crimes.

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