

# Anomie Society and Crime

I. G. N. Prabhashini

University of Sri Jayewardenapura, Sri Lanka

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70504>

Received: 13 March 2023; Accepted: 24 April 2023; Published: 26 May 2023

## ABSTRACT

Recently, many forms of criminal behaviors have been reported from various parts of Sri Lanka which have been the subject of special discussion in the society. Hence, this article has been composed by identifying several criminal incidents where individual criminality and social damage were felt very intensely and combining them with a theoretical analysis. Accordingly, the unique criminal acts reported by the media in the years 2020, 2021, and 2022, in which the Sri Lankan society became a tertiary victim, can be mentioned as follows.

Homicide, Child abuse, Sexual harassment, Robberies, Smuggling, Cybercrimes, Road accidents, and Suicide.

The relationship between anomie and crime has been analyzed, highlighting the impact of anomie theory on the origins of crime through a theoretical analysis of these crime events. In the analysis of the above criminal events, it is clear that the anarchy that is built in society has led to crimes. That is, in the breakdown or degeneration of norms, man has committed criminal behavior. As society has become more complex, human needs have become unlimited, but due to the limited resources available to meet those unlimited needs, man has entered a competitive path.

Accordingly, human beings have moved away from primary relationships and focused on secondary relationships. There, the social animal who works hard mainly for the sake of earning wealth and creating a luxurious environment around him is focused on perfecting his needs, forgetting his duties, responsibility, and obligations. In the construction of this social situation, criminal behavior has been allowed to emerge.

## INTRODUCTION

A state of anomie has arisen in society due to the collapse of the social norms, values, and ideals that were accepted in society. In the anomalous society, the social norms and regulations have broken down. The anomaly society has been born with a state of changes in society. The presence of conflict between capital and labor in anomic societies, the weakening of collective feelings, the mechanization of individuals, the distancing of interpersonal relationships, and the rise of ego are the characteristics of the man living in an anomic society. In the same way, due to the rapid social change in society, people started to break the traditional social norms, morals, and values and started behaving in a way that is against morals. Accordingly, the formation of a society with people who are frustrated with the deterioration of values, beliefs, and morals that existed before the industrial society has revealed anarchy in the society. In the same way, the characteristics of an anarchic society can be characterized by the decline of morals and hopelessness in people (Perera, 2021).

The tribal man who lived in the prehistoric era faced various social changes with the civilization. The tribal man lived a simple life fulfilling limited needs. He lived a simple life by respecting the norms established in the tribal society and submitting to the rule of the tribal leader. In the tribal society, the restrictions imposed by the tribes can be identified, reducing the possibility of anti-social behavior. Sexual restrictions and residence restrictions are some of them. Society was governed by these restrictions. According to that was anti-social behavior control. Tribal man became civilized as society became civilized. According to that,

man built a house for his residence and lived together fulfilling social needs. Also lived as a group.

In this way, society has been born into the socialization of man. Various philosophers who lived in that society started to publish their opinions about society. Social behavior began to focus on human relationships and interactions. As a result, the subject of sociology has been born. Anomie society can be seen as a matter that definitely deserves attention in the subject of sociology. Socialized man is the main contributor to the emergence of Anomic society. With the social change of man, the Anomic society has emerged based on the nature of the system of behavior in society.

In focusing on the evolution of the subject of sociology, three basic social change agents are discussed. Those are 01. Religious Revolution, it is Reformation, often known as the Protestant Reformation, was a religious movement that arose in the 16th century in the Western church. Without question, John Calvin and Martin Luther were their most important leaders. The Reformation, which had significant political, economic, and social repercussions, served as the impetus for the establishment of Protestantism, one of the three main branches of Christianity (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2023). 02. Industrial Revolution, in modern history, the Industrial Revolution was the transition from an agricultural and handicraft economy to one that was dominated by industry and machine production. These technological advancements brought about unique working and living arrangements and radically altered society (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia, 2023). The third one is the Political revolution.

In focusing on an anomie society it is important to examine the meaning of anomie. Anomie is the state of broken morals or it can also be described as the declining condition of the norms. It is believed that the word “anomia” has been derived from the Greek word “Anomia” (Perera, 2021). Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, coined the term while researching suicide. He held that the breakdown of the social norms required to control behavior led to one sort of suicide (anomic). Common values and common meanings are no longer recognized or accepted, and new values and meanings have not formed when a social system is in a condition of anomie. According to Durkheim, such a society causes many of its inhabitants to experience psychological conditions that are characterized by feelings of hopelessness, purposelessness, emotional emptiness, and despair. Because there is no widely agreed-upon concept of what is desirable, striving is regarded as worthless (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

The Portuguese were the first European nation to colonize Sri Lanka in 1505, and the Dutch acquired control through the trade of spices between 1658 and 1796. In 1796, the British Empire assumed control. Ceylon was acknowledged as a sovereign nation by the Commonwealth of Nations on February 4, 1948. On May 22, 1972, Sri Lanka formally adopted the name Ceylon. Due to the effects of both internal and foreign influences, such as colonialism, modernization, westernization, and internal rule requirements, Sri Lankan society has undergone a significant modernization process over the past six decades, transitioning from traits typical of a feudal society. This significantly altered the built environment leading to an upsurge in crime in Sri Lanka after its independence (Ekanayake, 2016).

## **METHODOLOGY & DISCUSSION**

The methodology for this article is an analysis based on secondary sources. Accordingly, it can be stated as a theoretical analysis of a few crime incidents that were picked up randomly through the study of the unique and shocking crime incidents reported by the media in recent years 2020, 2021, and 2022. Crime can simply be defined as anti-social behavior. In antisocial behavior in society, the social animal constantly lives in fear and panic in society. Anomie society emerged due to the breakdown of norms, values, morals and etc.. in the society. In the years 2019, and 2020, the Covid-19 epidemic situation can be described as a crisis situation faced not only by Sri Lankan people but also by the entire world. In the face of that, people lost their sources of income and employment. Similarly, there was mental confusion. Due to this, a disorganized situation was created in society and it has affected the occurrence of crime.

In the same way, crimes occurred as a result of the decline of morals, values, and norms in society in the face of economic, health, and psychological oppressive conditions created in the crisis situation that occurred in the recent political instability. Crime is a common occurrence in anomic society.

Anomie society emerges as a simple society becomes complex. In social evolution, the simple society became a complex society. Emile Durkheim's concept of Solidarity can identify a society with mechanical Solidarity as a society with organic Solidarity. A person struggles with socially acceptable norms. A self-sufficient economy was built during the civilization of man. In that self-sustaining economy, man made himself, and many things like food and clothing, furniture, etc.. were generated and used by himself. In this self-sufficient society, the anomie society has emerged due to the way the traditional man who lived an agricultural life faced social change.

Due to industrialization, the rural youth living in remote rural areas was attracted to industry-related jobs. In the 1990s, industrial areas became highly populated areas. In that overcrowded society, a society was formed with complex working conditions, labor specialization, individualism, and a distance from primary relationships. In that society, a complex society has been formed with the separation of family relationships, the formation of secondary relationships emerged against primary relationships, personal isolation, busyness, and frustration. The society with these characteristics was accepted as a society with organic solidarity and as a result of that social system, the anomie society has emerged.

The anomie theory of crime was presented by Robert K. Merton, an American sociologist, stating that people reach depravity due to the rise of the anomalous state explained by Durkheim in society. Thus, in focusing on the cultural goals and cultural strategies presented by Merton, the effort to achieve that status has been given as an example of American society. That is, it has been stated that an anomalous society arises out of despondency in the formation of social imbalance (Rathnapala, 2007). In the study of anomie society, Durkheim presented suicide as a result of anomie society. Mechanized man tends to commit suicide due to personal loneliness, frustration, etc. There, he points out three forms of egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide, and anomic suicide and he further states that the cause of anomic suicide is anomic society (Samarakoon, 2008).

In this way, the influence of anomie society on the rise of depravity and criminal activities in society is clear. In further focusing on the crimes that occur in the anomalous society, we can focus on a saying of Locke, an Englishman. That is, when a baby is born, the mind is like a clean blackboard. It is written by society. In other words, under the influence of society, children tend to be deviant. In it, individual socialization is very strong. In socialization, the family can be called the main socialization agent and the lack of proper socialization can affect the emergence of criminal behavior later on. As David Matzah points out, a child does not engage in delinquent behavior with the intention of joining a delinquent subculture or not by the influence of the subconscious as Sigmund Freud suggests. Unknowingly, the child focuses on that action. That is, if the influence of sadhu dharma in social control is reduced, criminal behavior and immoral actions will be formed in the collapse of social control walls, and there Hirsch, a sociologist, is prominent. According to him, the social wall is built on 04 things. That is,

1. Attachment to one's parents, peer groups, or school.
2. The need to maintain socially accepted behaviors.
3. Engaging in traditional practices accepted by such society.
4. Belief that they should uphold their own rules and regulations (Rathnapala, 2007).

Taking into account all of Durkheim's literature on anomie, it is clear that he regarded it as a breakdown of the bonds that enable individuals to form a functioning society and a condition of social derangement. When the norms and ideals that might ordinarily offer stability are weak or absent, anomie periods are unstable, chaotic, and frequently riddled with conflict (Ashley, 2019). Unrestrained materialism is another illustration

of anomie. People might lose sight of what is actually essential in life when they get overly preoccupied with accumulating riches and material belongings. Even if they have everything they could possibly want, this might result in feelings of emptiness and discontent. In times of societal unrest, such as during wars or natural calamities, anomie can also develop. People may feel lost and bewildered when old institutions and ideals are no longer applicable. They could then behave in ways that are against social standards, including robbing or vandalizing (Nickerson, 2023).

When focusing on the current world, the influence of the anarchist society on the formation of criminal behavior can be strongly identified. That is, in the face of concepts such as globalization, westernization, and modernization, it is clear that crimes are caused by reasons outside of the individual's control, in criminological thinking when looking for the reasons that affect crimes. That is, based on the intention of gathering power, the intention of spreading power, etc., it is possible to see poor countries being captured by powerful countries. In this situation, deviant behaviors emerge. Indirectly engages in criminal behavior. It is clear that the emergence of an anomie society in that is the source of criminal behavior. When paying attention to these matters as well as studying criminal incidents, it can be identified that criminal acts may occur due to the rise of anomie in society. According to that the relationship between the anomie society and crime is very clear.

## REFERENCES

1. Perera, B.A.T. (2021). *සමාජවිදියා වාක්කෝෂය*. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Sri Jayawardenepura University Publication.
2. Ratnapala, (2007). *අපරාධවිදියාවේ මූලධර්ම*. Arya Publishers.
3. Samarakoon, M. (2008). *සමීභාවීය සමාජ විදියාඥයෝ*. Author's publication.
4. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. (2020, May 27). *Anomie*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/anomie>. 12.03.2023
5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia. (2023, April 5). *Reformation*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Reformation>
6. Cohen, A. K. (1965). The Sociology of the Deviant Act: Anomie Theory and Beyond. *American Sociological Review*, 30(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2091770><https://www.jstor.org/stable/2091770> 04.2023
7. Ekanayake, E. S. (2016). Structural transformation of society and development of criminality: a case study from Sri Lanka. In *2nd International Conference on Modern Education and Social Science (MESS 2016) DOI(Vol.10)*. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ems-Ekanayake-> 04.2023
8. Nickerson, C.(2023). Anomie Theory of Deviance in Sociology – *Simply Sociology*. <https://simplysociology.com/04.2023>
9. Ashley, C . (2019). The Sociological Definition of Anomie **Understand When and Why It Occurs**, <https://www.thoughtco.com/https://,thoughtco.com/anomie-definition-3026052,12.03.2023>
10. Media Reports in Sri Lanka 2020, 2021& 2022
11. <https://medcraveonline.com/SIJ/anomie-in-the-sociological-perspective-of-eacutemile-durkheim.html> , 12.03.2023