



Swami Vivekananda Advanced Journal for Research and Studies

Online Copy of Document Available on: [www.svajrs.com](http://www.svajrs.com)

ISSN:2584-105X

Pg. 165-168



## Understanding Social Deviance: A Comparative Analysis of Sociological, Psychological, and Anthropological Perspectives

**Vinay Negi**

Sumitranandan Pant Govt. Degree College Garur, 263641 (SSJ) University, Almora, Uttarakhand

Research scholar

Department of Sociology

[vinaynegi594@gmail.com](mailto:vinaynegi594@gmail.com)

*Accepted: 22/08/2025*

*Published: 26/08/2025*

*DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16949267>*

### Abstract

Social deviance, defined as behavior that violates societal norms, remains a critical area of study across disciplines. This paper provides a comparative analysis of sociological, psychological, and anthropological perspectives on deviance, drawing on secondary data from peer-reviewed literature. Sociologically, deviance is viewed through lenses like strain and labeling theories, emphasizing social structures and reactions. Psychologically, it involves individual traits such as sensation-seeking and personality factors that predispose individuals to norm-violating behaviors. Anthropologically, deviance is culturally relative, often linked to social scale and informal controls in small communities. The methodology relies on a thematic review of existing studies to synthesize these views. Key findings highlight intersections: social structures influence psychological predispositions, while cultural contexts shape both. The analysis reveals that integrated approaches better explain deviance's multifaceted nature, with implications for policy in addressing issues like crime and mental health. This interdisciplinary synthesis underscores deviance's role in social change and stability, advocating for holistic interventions.

**Keywords:** *Social deviance theories; Deviance perspective; Comparative deviance analysis*

## Introduction

Social deviance encompasses actions, beliefs, or conditions that contravene established norms within a society, eliciting disapproval or sanctions. From minor infractions like jaywalking to severe acts such as crime, deviance challenges social order and prompts varied interpretations across disciplines (Akers, 1968). Understanding deviance is crucial as it affects social cohesion, individual well-being, and institutional responses. In contemporary societies, rising concerns over youth deviance, cyber-deviance, and cultural clashes due to globalization amplify its relevance (Dullas et al., 2021).

Sociological perspectives frame deviance as a product of social structures and interactions, positing that norms are socially constructed and deviance serves functional roles, such as reinforcing boundaries (Bozec, 2024). Psychological views focus on internal processes, including personality traits and cognitive mechanisms that drive deviant choices (Kaplan, 2006). Anthropological approaches emphasize cultural relativism, viewing deviance as context-dependent rather than universal (Freilich et al., 1991). A comparative analysis reveals complementarities and tensions among these lenses, enriching comprehension.

This paper aims to explore these perspectives, identify overlaps, and propose integrative insights. It addresses the research question: How do sociological, psychological, and anthropological views collectively enhance understanding of social deviance? By synthesizing secondary data, the study highlights deviance's dynamic nature and implications for theory and practice. The structure includes a literature review with subheadings for each perspective, methodology, comparative analysis, and conclusion.

## Literature Review

### Sociological Perspectives on Deviance

Sociology interprets deviance as inherently social, shaped by norms, power dynamics, and institutional controls. Classic theories like Durkheim's functionalism suggest deviance clarifies moral boundaries and fosters solidarity (Akers, 1968). Merton's strain theory posits that deviance arises when individuals lack legitimate means to achieve cultural goals, leading to innovation or rebellion (Silva-Garcia et al., 2024). Labeling theory, advanced by Becker, emphasizes how societal reactions amplify deviance, transforming primary acts into secondary careers through stigmatization (Hagan, 1973). Empirical studies support this, showing that formal sanctions can entrench deviant identities, particularly among youth (Adler & Adler, 2006).

Social control theories, such as Hirschi's, argue weak bonds to society attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief predispose individuals to deviance (Mercer et al., 2017).

Recent research examines deviance in modern contexts, like peer influences in experimental settings, confirming social learning's role where exposure to deviant peers increases cheating behaviors (Mercer et al., 2017). In Türkiye, higher social class correlates positively with deviance among young adults, challenging Western assumptions and highlighting cultural variations (Ozbay et al., 2025). Bibliometric analyses reveal deviance research's interdisciplinary growth, with sociology dominating discussions on norms and equilibrium (Ashraf et al., 2024). Overall, sociological views underscore deviance's structural roots and potential for social change.

### Psychological Perspectives on Deviance

Psychology attributes deviance to individual cognitive, emotional, and personality factors. Social psychological theories integrate interpersonal dynamics, viewing deviance as responses to identity threats or group pressures (Kaplan, 2006). For instance, sensation-seeking traits predict risky behaviors like smoking, mediated by risk appraisal and situational motivations (Kelly et al., 2016).

The Big Five personality model identifies low agreeableness as a strong predictor of adolescent deviance, with family satisfaction negatively correlating to such acts (Dullas et al., 2021). Psychosocial escalation models highlight how peer associations and stigma influence intensification of deviance, like prescription drug misuse (Kelly et al., 2016). General strain theory, psychologically adapted, links stress and coping failures to deviant Outcomes (Silva-Garcia et al., 2024). Studies on mental health implications portray deviance as intertwined with disorders, where biological and psychological factors exacerbate social violations (Silva-Garcia et al., 2024). Freudian psychoanalytic views see deviance as unresolved conflicts, while cognitive theories emphasize distorted thinking patterns (Kaplan, 2006). Psychological perspectives thus focus on internal mechanisms, offering insights into prevention through therapy and trait modification.

### Anthropological Perspectives on Deviance

Anthropology treats deviance as culturally constructed, varying across societies without universal standards. In small-scale communities, deviance is "soft," managed informally to maintain harmony, contrasting with labeling in complex societies (Freilich et al., 1991). Ethnographic studies of groups like the Kung illustrate reluctance to

stigmatize, prioritizing reintegration (Freilich et al., 1991).

Migration and uprooting foster deviance through proximal/distal stress and socio-cultural adoption syndromes, particularly among minorities (Montaldi, 2019). Violence anthropology reveals cultural symbols and social belonging as mediators, integrating bio-psycho-social paradigms (Lee, 2016). Social movements, like animal rights activism, exemplify “positive deviance,” where norm challengers employ idealization techniques (Lindblom & Jacobsson, 2013).

Medicalization critiques blend anthropological and sociological views, showing how conditions become deviant via cultural lenses (Conrad & Bergey, 2015). These perspectives emphasize relativity, urging cross-cultural comparisons to understand deviance’s adaptive roles.

## Objectives

- 1) Conduct a comparative analysis of sociological, psychological, and anthropological perspectives on social deviance.
- 2) Identify synergies and divergences among these perspectives to inform a more comprehensive understanding.
- 3) Explore implications of integrated insights for addressing social deviance through policy and intervention

## Research Methodology

This study employs a secondary data analysis methodology, synthesizing existing peer-reviewed literature on social deviance from sociological, psychological, and anthropological perspectives. Utilizing a thematic literature review approach, data were organized into categories corresponding to each discipline, examining theories like strain, labeling, personality traits, and cultural relativity. Keywords such as “social deviance theories,” “deviance perspectives,” and “comparative deviance analysis” guided the search. Content analysis identified patterns and intersections among perspectives. Limitations include potential bias in secondary sources and lack of primary empirical testing; strengths lie in breadth and cost-effectiveness. Ethical considerations ensured proper citation to avoid plagiarism. This method suits exploratory comparative research, enabling interdisciplinary synthesis of deviance’s multifaceted nature.

## Comparative Analysis

Comparing perspectives reveals synergies and divergences. Sociologically, deviance is structural

strain from inequalities drives violations aligning with psychological views on stress-induced coping failures (Silva-Garcia et al., 2024; Kelly et al., 2016). Yet, psychology’s focus on traits like low agreeableness contrasts sociology’s emphasis on external bonds (Dullas et al., 2021; Mercer et al., 2017).

Anthropologically, cultural relativity challenges universal psychological traits, as deviance in small societies avoids labeling, differing from sociological amplification models (Freilich et al., 1991; (Hagan, 1973). Intersections emerge in psychosocial escalation, where peers (sociological) influence traits (psychological) within cultural contexts (anthropological) (Kelly et al., 2016).

Deviance as functional (sociological) aligns with adaptive in anthropology, while psychological views add mental health links (Akers, 1968); Lee, 2016). Integrated models, like bio-psycho-social, bridge gaps for comprehensive understanding (Silva-Garcia et al., 2024).

Table 1: Comparative Overview

Perspective	Key Focus	Theories	Strengths	Weaknesses
Sociological	Social structures/norms	Strain, Labeling	Explains systemic causes	Overlooks individual agency
Psychological	Individual traits/motivations	Personality, Sensation-seeking	Targets interventions	Ignores context
Anthropological	Cultural relativity	Ethnographic, Scale-based	Highlights diversity	Less predictive

## Conclusion

This comparative analysis illuminates social deviance’s complexity through sociological, psychological, and anthropological lenses. Sociological theories underscore structural influences, psychological ones highlight personal predispositions, and anthropological views emphasize cultural nuances (Bozec, 2024; Kaplan, 2006; Freilich et al., 1991). Intersections suggest deviance is neither solely internal nor external but interactively shaped.

Implications include policy: holistic interventions combining therapy (psychological), community programs (sociological), and cultural sensitivity (anthropological) could mitigate deviance (Adler

& Adler, 2006). Future research should employ mixed methods for empirical validation. Ultimately, understanding deviance fosters tolerant societies, recognizing its potential for innovation amid risks to order.

## References

- 1) Akers, R. L. (1968). Problems in the Sociology of Deviance: Social Definitions and behavior. *Social Forces*, 46(4), 455. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2575380>
- 2) Dullas, A. R., Yncierto, K. D., Labiano, M. A., & Marcelo, J. C. (2021). Determinants of a variety of deviant behaviors: An analysis of family satisfaction, personality traits, and their relationship to deviant behaviors among Filipino adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.645126>
- 3) Bozec K (2024). Dynamics of Crime and Deviance: A Sociological Perspective. *Social and Criminol.*
- 4) Freilich, M., Raybeck, D., & Savishinsky, J. (1991). *Deviance: Anthropological Perspectives*. Praeger.
- 5) Kaplan, H. B. (2006). Social Psychological perspectives on deviance. In Springer eBooks (pp. 451–478). [https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36921-x\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36921-x_18)
- 6) Silva-García, G., Vizcaíno-Solano, A., & Pérez-Salazar, B. (2024). The debate concerning deviance and divergence: A new theoretic proposal. *Oñati Socio-legal Series*, 14(2), 505–529. <https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl.1813>
- 7) Hagan, J. (1973). Labelling and Deviance: A case study in the “Sociology of the Interesting.” *Social Problems*, 20(4), 447–458. <https://doi.org/10.2307/799707>
- 8) Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (2006). The Deviance Society. *Deviant Behavior*, 27(2), 129–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15330150500468444>
- 9) Mercer, N., Crocetti, E., Meeus, W., & Branje, S. (2017). An experimental investigation of the influence of deviant peers on own deviancy: A replication study. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14(3), 429–438. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-017-9305-3>
- 10) Ozbay, O., Orak, U., & Bindik, S. (2025). Social class and deviance among young adults in Turkiye. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2025.2544840>
- 11) Ashraf, M. U., Ali, N., Hafeez, M. R., Hussain, S., & Imran, M. (2024). Worldwide publications on deviance: a Web of Science evidence from 1965 to 2024. *Global Knowledge Memory and Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/gkmc-05-2024-0286>
- 12) Kelly, B. C., Harris, E., & Vuolo, M. (2016). Psychosocial influences of the escalation of deviance: the case of prescription drug sniffing. *Deviant Behavior*, 38(8), 941–956. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2016.1229934>
- 13) Montaldi, M. (2019). Anthropology applied to the analysis of social deviances and the effects of uprooting on individual trans-generational behavior. *Rivista Di Psicopatologia Forense, Medicina Legale, Criminologia*, 24(1–2). <https://doi.org/10.4081/psyco.2019.64>
- 14) Lee, B. X. (2016). Causes and cures V: The sociology and anthropology of violence. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 27, 158–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.03.001>
- 15) Lindblom, J., & Jacobsson, K. (2013). A deviance perspective on social movements: the case of animal rights activism. *Deviant Behavior*, 35(2), 133–151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2013.834751>
- 16) Conrad, P., & Bergey, M. (2015). Medicalization: Sociological and anthropological perspectives. In Elsevier eBooks (pp. 105–109). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-097086-8.64020-5>

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The views, findings, conclusions, and opinions expressed in articles published in this journal are exclusively those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s). The publisher and/or editorial team neither endorse nor necessarily share these viewpoints. The publisher and/or editors assume no responsibility or liability for any damage, harm, loss, or injury, whether personal or otherwise, that might occur from the use, interpretation, or reliance upon the information, methods, instructions, or products discussed in the journal’s content.

\*\*\*\*\*