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Strain, Anger and Crime: A Sociopsychological Evaluation in the Context of the General Strain Theory

Gerilim, Öfke ve Suç: Genel Gerilim Teorisi Bağlamında Sosyopsikolojik Bir Değerlendirme

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Abstract

Several theoretical frameworks approach the phenomenon of crime and its causes from different perspectives. In this sense, various social-psychological theories have been used to understand and explain crime and delinquency. One of these theories, the General Strain Theory (GST), although developed relatively recently, is considered a vital theory that uses different methodologies and shows that there is a significant relationship between strain, anger, and crime. This theory concentrates on negative emotions, particularly anger, and posits that they trigger criminal behavior, making it more comprehensive than classical strain theories. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between strain, anger, and crime from a social-psychological perspective within the context of the GST. The study provides a comprehensive examination of criminal activities through the lens of this theory. In Türkiye, the explanatory potential of socio-psychological theories of crime, especially GST, to explain crime and delinquency has not been evaluated comprehensively and systematically. This situation indicates an essential gap in the existing literature. Therefore, conducting this evaluation highlights the importance of this study in this regard. The study used the technique of content analysis, a qualitative research method. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine how the GST explains crime and criminality. As a result of the literature review, data from critical studies in the criminological literature were systematically processed. Within the framework of the study, the basic concepts are first introduced. Then, the basic arguments of the theory of crime, criminality, and crime control are presented. In addition, the socio-psychological conditions that contribute to the emergence and development of criminal behavior are discussed.

Keywords: Crime, Strain, Anger, General Strain Theory, Social Psychology

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Suç olgusuna ve suça yol açan nedenlere farklı perspektiflerden yaklaşan bir dizi teorik çerçeve bulunmaktadır. Bu anlamda suç ve suçluluğu anlamak ve açıklamak için çeşitli sosyopsikolojik teoriler kullanılmıştır. Bu teorilerden biri olan Genel Gerilim Teorisi (GGT), nispeten yakın zamanda geliştirilmiş olmasına rağmen çeşitli metodolojiler kullanan; gerilim, öfke ve suç olgusu arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu gösteren önemli bir teori olarak görülmüştür. Bu teori, olumsuz duygulara, özellikle öfkeye odaklanmakta ve suç davranışının bu duygulardan kaynaklandığını öne sürmektedir. Bu yönüyle klasik gerilim teorilerinden daha ayrıntılı bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma gerilim, öfke ve suç arasındaki ilişkiyi GGT bağlamında sosyopsikolojik bir perspektiften değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, bu teorinin merceğinden suç faaliyetlerinin kapsamlı bir incelemesini sunmaktadır. Türkiye’de sosyopsikolojik suç kuramlarının, özelde GGT’nin suç ve suçluluk sürecini açıklama potansiyelleri kapsamlı ve sistematik bir biçimde değerlendirilmemiştir. Bu durum mevcut literatürde önemli bir boşluğa işaret etmektedir. Bundan dolayı bu değerlendirmenin gerçekleştirilmesi bu açıdan çalışmanın önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden içerik analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. GGT’nin suç ve suçluluğu nasıl açıkladığını incelemek için kapsamlı bir literatür taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Literatür taraması sonucunda kriminolojik literatürde yer alan ve önemli görülen araştırmalardan elde edilen veriler sistematik bir şekilde işlenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında ilk etapta kuramın temel kavramları tanıtılmıştır. Daha sonra kuramın; suç, suçluluk ve ayrıca suçla başa çıkma ile ilgili ortaya koyduğu temel argümanlar ortaya konmuştur. Ayrıca suç davranışının ortaya çıkışına ve gelişimine katkıda bulunan sosyopsikolojik durumlar ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suç, Gerilim, Öfke, Genel Gerilim Teorisi, Sosyal Psikoloji

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of crime has been a persistent problem in societies around the world, leading to the formulation of numerous theoretical frameworks aimed at elucidating its underlying causes. One of the most prominent frameworks for understanding crime is the General Strain Theory (GST) developed by Robert Agnew. Since its inception, this theory has been one of the most influential and widely tested theoretical perspectives in the field of criminology. Numerous researchers have linked it to various forms of maladaptive, deviant, and antisocial behavior, mental and physical health problems, violent crime, criminal victimization, and other contemporary issues. This theory generally suggests that individuals experiencing strain are more likely to engage in criminal behavior as a coping mechanism. According to the theory, individuals exposed to a state of strain or stress often experience distress and resort to criminal behavior as a result.

Agnew's GST has introduced a new perspective that transcends the limitations of classical strain theories, psychological strain theories, and traditional criminology. Most importantly, the GST redefines the concept of coercion, extending the occurrence of coercion beyond economic fundamentals and shifting the focus from macro-structural inequality to micro-sociological factors. In this respect, GST is a highly cited and critical social psychological theory in the literature, given the various inadequacies and shortcomings of the socio-psychological theories of crime in the existing literature (e.g., some theories prioritize psychological underpinnings in the criminal process while ignoring the sociological background and vice versa...), as well as the complexity of the crime phenomenon, it is not possible to claim that any one theory can fully explain criminality independently and comprehensively. This is precisely why socio-psychological theories of crime should be evaluated in the context of their explanations of the emergence and development of crime. For this reason, this study evaluates the potential of Agnew's GST, which is one of the socio-psychological theories of crime, to explain crime and delinquency.

In this study, how GST explains the process of crime and delinquency and the potential of explaining these phenomena in the theory were revealed. There are some studies on socio-psychological theories of crime, classical strain theories (Özbay, 2003; Özbay, 2008), and especially GST (Özbay, 2011; Tezcan, 2015) in Türkiye, which are not very comprehensive. However, many

studies do not include GST and examine the relationship between “anger” and “crime,” which is one of the types of strain, albeit limited (e.g., Soykan, 2003; Akbaş, 2005; Kızmaz, 2005a; Kızmaz, 2005b; Engür, 2008; Öz, 2008; Ersen, 2010; Arslan, 2013; Görgülü & Öntaş, 2013; Tatlıoğlu & Karaca, 2013; Özpınar, 2023; Maden, 2023; Seyidoğlu, 2024). This study did not comprehensively and systematically evaluate the potential of GST, which is one of the social psychological theories of crime, to explain the process of crime and criminality. Therefore, the importance of this study becomes evident when this evaluation is carried out. In this study, both the supporting arguments and essential shortcomings of the GST are evaluated. In this sense, the study provides a comprehensive examination of crime through the lens of GST, evaluating the basic concept of strain, the socio-psychological factors that contribute to strain, and its impact on criminal activity.

1. General Strain Theory

One of the most important social psychological theories that offers a detailed explanation of crime and delinquency is the GST formulated by Agnew. Agnew developed this theory to explain not only criminal acts but deviant behavior in general. In this theory, it is hypothesized that strain in individuals creates negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and depression, which leads individuals to seek relief through criminal acts (Agnew, 1992). In this respect, GST is a social psychological theory that expands on traditional strain theories by identifying a range of sources of strain and their potential to trigger criminal behavior.

The basic premise of GST is actually quite simple. According to the theory, negative emotions (such as anger and fear) often arise in individuals who are exposed to strain or stress. In some cases, individuals may resort to criminal behavior as a means of coping with these negative emotions. These individuals may resort to criminal activity to relieve or escape their distress. For example, an individual experiencing chronic economic distress may resort to theft, an adolescent experiencing parental abuse may run away from home, or a student may resort to physical violence against peers who are bullying him or her. Such individuals may engage in criminal activity as a means of revenge against the source of their distress or the parties involved. In addition, individuals may engage in criminal activity, such as drug use, as a means of self-medication to alleviate their distress (Mazerolle & Maahs, 2000; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

1.1. Strain and Crime

In his GST, Agnew argues that all individuals are susceptible to the effects of strains, which can manifest as psychological and physiological responses. Strain can be defined as the effect of stressors on the individual. The basic tenet of GST is the assertion that individuals, especially adolescents, experience strain when they are mistreated and resort to aggression or criminal activity as a means of coping. Agnew refers to these negative relationships as “strain” (Agnew, 2006b). In other words, according to Agnew (1992, p. 48), strain is defined as “relationships in which others do not treat the individual as the individual would like to be treated.” In this sense, strain can be defined as an emotional expression in response to situations or events that are perceived as unpleasant and undesirable. Thus, criminal behavior is seen as a means of solving problems or coping with difficult circumstances. Agnew argues that criminal behavior can be seen as an adaptive response and often provides effective, albeit temporary, relief from the distressing negative emotions caused by strain (Agnew, 1992; Maschi et al., 2008). In other words, he argues that criminal behavior is a means of reducing strain, taking revenge, or alleviating negative emotions. Situations that come from the individual's environment, interaction with other individuals, and many events throughout the life process cause strain and anger in the individual and lead to the emergence of crime. In this case, it can be argued that offending is a way for individuals to attempt to relieve their negative emotions and strains. Agnew first defined the concept of strain in two ways: objective and subjective strain. Later, the strain was defined in three different ways: experienced, vicarious, and anticipated strain.

1.2. Objective and Subjective Strains

In his analysis, Agnew used the concept of strain as a micro-level approach to explaining criminal behavior. He mentions two types of strains in his theory, which are objective and subjective strains. According to him, one moves from objective strain at the macro level to subjective strain at the micro level. In *objective strain*, it is essential how society perceives the strain. The category of objective strain refers to events or situations that are typically rejected by the majority of members of a given group. Thus, an individual's claim to be experiencing objective strain means that he or she is experiencing an event or circumstance that members of his or her group typically reject. Numerous events are generally viewed negatively by most people, including physical assault, inadequate access to food and shelter, and lack of protection. Objective strains are used to describe events and conditions that are generally frowned upon by the majority of individuals within a given social group (Agnew, 1992).

Subjective strain is concerned with how the individual perceives the objective strain. This concept refers to situations that are responded to by individuals who are or have been directly involved in the events mentioned in the objective strain category. As Agnew notes, individuals often have different subjective appraisals of the same objective strains. Subjective strains are defined as events and circumstances that a particular individual or individuals dislike. The primary distinction between subjective and objective strains is the level of impact. That is, objective strains have a social impact, and subjective strains have an individual impact. Subjective assessments of objective strains, such as academic failure, the end of a marriage, or the death of a family member, can vary widely from one individual to another. This is a crucial distinction because individuals often show significant differences in their subjective appraisals of similar objective strains. These differences depend on a variety of factors, including personal resources (such as self-esteem and self-efficacy), social resources (such as beliefs and social support), and various life circumstances. For example, some individuals perceive their divorce as one of the most traumatic experiences in their lives, while others see it as a positive turning point (Agnew, 2001a; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

1.3. Experienced, Vicarious and Anticipated Strain

The concept of strain can be understood through the lens of three different categories. These are experienced, vicarious, and anticipated strains. These categories explain the multifaceted nature of strain and how individuals can experience strain in different ways. *Experienced strains* can be defined as the physical strain that an individual actually experiences. An example of this would be the experience of being mugged or raped. Experienced strains are significant. Because it is the type of strain that has the most critical impact on determining the motivation to commit a crime. *Vicarious strains* are strains experienced within the family, kinship, social environment, or any social network that can create strain for the individual. Here, the strain is not directly experienced. Instead, it is caused by the strain experienced by another individual and interpreted as one's stress. For example, Agnew found that individuals whose family members or friends are victims of violence are more likely to engage in criminal activity themselves. This is especially true when strains are experienced by people in the immediate environment when the individual feels a responsibility to protect these people and experiences strain. *Anticipated strains* are a result of the individual's concern about a possible future source of strain. An example of an anticipated strain is when adolescents experience feelings of doubt about being accepted by their peers and participating in social group activities. Individuals are more likely to engage in criminal activity when they anticipate being a victim of physical violence in the near future (Agnew, 2002; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

1.4. Sources of Strain

Agnew divided the many variables that can lead to strain into three basic categories: The disappearance of a stimulus with a positive effect, the presence of a stimulus with a negative effect, and the unavailability of a stimulus with a positive effect. In the first of these categories, *the loss of positively valued stimuli*, individuals may experience strain. Strain occurs when highly valued people, objects, or experiences are lost or become inaccessible to an individual. Examples of such experiences

include the death of a parent or loved one, the end of a romantic relationship, the loss of a job, the theft of valuables, the loss of wealth, or suspension from school. Agnew defined the second classification as the activation of negative stimuli. Agnew argued that being involved in crime, being a victim of crime, being abused or assaulted, or being exposed to similar negative stimuli will inevitably lead to strain (Agnew, 1992; Kaufman & Widom, 1999; Widom et al., 2006).

The third and most important classification is defined as *the failure to achieve positively perceived goals*. Agnew elaborates on this source of strain, arguing that (a) the disconnect between aspirations, desires, and expectations, (b) the disconnect between expectations and actual outcomes, and (c) the disconnect between fair outcomes and actual outcomes can lead to strain. The first of these, *the strain arising from the disconnect between aspirations, desires, and expectations*, is a source of strain that contains the argument of classical strain theories. Here it is examined in terms of the mismatch between individuals' expected money and status and their actual, current, and desired goals and expectations of goal attainment (e.g., not getting a college degree). Contrary to the principles of classical strain theories, the achievement of these goals is assumed to depend on multiple factors (e.g., intelligence, ability, personality) that transcend status boundaries. Thus, individuals may experience strain because they lack the characteristics or skills (not just social class) necessary to legitimately achieve their goals. *The gap between expectations and actual performance* can also lead to strain. This source of strain is related to the mismatch between expectations and actual outcomes or rewards. Accordingly, failure to meet expectations can lead to a range of negative emotional states such as anger, disappointment, resentment, and unhappiness. Strain can also arise when there is *a discrepancy between fair outcomes and actual outcomes*. In such sources of strain, the goal is to ensure fair and equal interaction with others rather than to achieve a particular outcome. Individuals involved in a relationship will compare the ratio of their inputs and outputs to the ratios of certain others in the relationship. When the ratios are equal, individuals perceive the outcomes as fair or equitable. If the input/output ratios are unequal, the actors involved will perceive the situation as unfair, and as a result, they will be burdened by a sense of discomfort. Accordingly, it has been argued that individuals who are in unfair relationships are more likely to engage in criminal activity now or in the future due to the strain they experience (Agnew, 1992; Tezcan, 2015).

For a clearer understanding of the sources of stress, a broader perspective should be presented. Several examples can be given. For example, individuals seek gainful employment that not only meets their basic needs but also allows them to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle, including recreation. However, in times of economic hardship and in poor societies, opportunities to participate in employment or to earn money legitimately are very limited. Individuals experience significant distress when they perceive a mismatch between their aspirations and how they believe they can achieve them, leading to feelings of intense strain. For example, an adolescent may experience intense distress and strain if he or she is not accepted on the school sports team or if he or she is not accepted. In summary, the GST suggests that strains can be categorized into three main sources. An individual may experience the loss of something he or she values. For example, individuals may experience the loss of financial resources or the death of a close associate. The individual may experience mistreatment or negative treatment by others. For example, they may be verbally or physically abused by others. Finally, individuals may not get the results they want. For example, they may not get the money or respect they want. Because of all these sources of strain, they may become involved in criminal activity (Sigfusdottir et al., 2012; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

1.5. Negative Emotions and Anger

Strains can arise from negative emotions. There are many definitions of "negative emotion" in the GST. Basically, a negative emotion is an evaluation or reaction to an idea or behavior. While one person may exhibit depressive symptoms in response to strain, another may exhibit anxious behavior. Individuals may also differ in the degree to which they experience a particular emotion. The three main emotions commonly associated with strain in the theory are frustration, depression,

and anxiety. Other negative emotions, such as jealousy, hopelessness, and shame, can also play a role in triggering strain. Such emotional states can also have a negative impact on an individual's ability to cope with stress or strain. For example, those who experience negative emotions such as anger or frustration may be unable to accurately assess their situation and communicate effectively with others. In addition, these emotions may lead to a reduction in the perceived cost of the offense or a lack of clear perception of the sanction for committing the offense. For example, the distress associated with depression may rationalize the view that there is little to lose by engaging in criminal activity. Anxiety can also lead to a narrow focus on immediate, short-term responses, with less attention paid to future consequences. Ultimately, these emotions can lead to an increased likelihood of engaging in criminal activity. For example, individuals who experience anger often develop a strong desire for revenge (Agnew, 2006b; 2006a; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

From an analytical perspective, anger represents the most critical emotional response according to the principles of GST. Anger is a psychological state that occurs when individuals attribute responsibility for their distress to external factors. Indeed, Agnew argued that anger serves as the primary catalyst for deviant behavior and arises in response to increased strain. As Agnew (1992, p. 60) argues, *"Anger generates a desire for retaliation or revenge, provides the individual with a sense of motivation, and reduces inhibitions, in part because the individual believes that others will justify his or her aggression."* Anger is often a deceptive emotion that arises when the individual blames others for his or her distress. Anger serves to increase an individual's level of perceived harm, create a desire for revenge, and motivate negative action. Anger is an essential negative emotional state because it is based on the individual's perception that the aggression toward others is justified. Negative emotions, especially anger, put pressure on the individual that needs to be relieved. Anger is a more influential factor in offending than other negative emotions. In this respect, high levels of strain lead to increased anger. In a sense, anger plays a crucial mediating role in the transformation of strain into crime or deviance. Some studies have found that anger, as a negative emotion that creates strain, increases deviant behavior and delinquency (Agnew, 1992; Brezina et al., 2001; Capowich et al., 2001; Hay, 2003; Bao et al., 2004; Piquero & Sealock, 2004; Ostrowsky & Messner, 2005; Jang, 2007; Forrigio, 2007; Ganem, 2010). Anger reduces the individual's awareness of the potential consequences of criminal acts, fuels the desire for revenge, weakens the ability to identify effective problem-solving strategies, facilitates the development of justifications for deviant behavior, and motivates the individual to take action (Özbay, 2011). Anger has been shown to impair effective problem-solving skills, increase sensitivity to stressful stimuli, reduce awareness and anxiety about the consequences of criminal acts, create a tendency to seek revenge, strengthen the perception that the crime is justified, and encourage the individual to take action (Mazerolle & Piquero, 1998; Agnew, 2001a; Tezcan, 2015).

In summary, individuals experience strain as a result of unfavorable conditions and events that are perceived as undesirable. In the face of these strains, individuals experience negative emotions, especially anger. Therefore, they feel compelled to take an action that will make them feel good or cope with the strain. In this process, some third factors serve to increase or decrease the likelihood of criminal behavior. While some factors may prevent an individual from committing a crime, other factors may contribute to the individual's criminal behavior.

1.6. Age, Strain and Crime

The GST assesses the relationship between age, strain and crime. According to this theory, the likelihood of committing crimes is much higher at a young age, especially in adolescence, than in childhood, adulthood, and old age. In other words, it states that there is an increase in criminal activity among individuals with the transition to adolescence and then a decrease with the transition to adulthood. The theory explains this in terms of the fact that the adolescent years involve greater exposure to conditions that facilitate criminal activity and a tendency to respond to such conditions in criminal ways. In other words, adolescents face more strains than adults and the likelihood of offending increases as a result of these strains.

Adolescents are exposed to more stressors than children and adults, in part because they are integrated into a more complex and challenging social environment. After completing primary school, adolescents move on to secondary school. Secondary schools are larger, more diverse, and more challenging than primary schools. Adolescents also interact with a larger number of teachers and students, including those from different backgrounds. In addition, adolescents are subject to a greater number of rules, a heavier workload, and more rigorous grading, and romantic relationships become more important during adolescence. In addition, peer interactions are subject to a more complex set of social cues and often occur in settings where adults are not present. Collectively, these changes increase the likelihood that adolescents will face multiple strains, including peer abuse, victimization, academic failure, and negative relationships with educators, potentially leading to criminal behavior. Conversely, as adolescents move into adulthood, they experience a narrowing of their social world, accompanied by an increase in their capacity for self-determination. Adolescents often limit their social interactions to a few friends, choose a single romantic partner, and interact with a limited number of people at work and in the community. The above factors contribute to the formation of a distinct social structure during adolescence. This structure is characterized by a narrowing of social circles and a change in the number of social interactions (Attar et al., 1994).

Another element related to the relationship between age and strain is the mechanism of social control, especially family control. Parents and other adults often exercise close supervision and intervention on behalf of children. For example, parents often recognize conflicts between their children and intervene before the situation reaches a critical point. Adolescents, however, experience a significant decrease in adult supervision and the tendency for adults to intervene on their behalf. Unfortunately, adolescents lack the social and problem-solving skills of adults. This is due to both their lack of experience and their limited brain development, which predisposes them to impulsive behavior (Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

Adolescents may be less equipped to cope with strains due to a lack of financial resources for education or therapeutic interventions. In contrast, adults have a more comprehensive range of coping mechanisms than adolescents. For example, adults may seek education or therapy, gym memberships, and exercise to reduce strain, all of which require financial resources that adolescents may not have. In addition, individuals can develop coping strategies by forming a marital union, seeking support from a partner, or using other social supports. Adolescents often lack access to basic coping resources, such as power and financial resources. In addition, the financial consequences of criminal activity are less significant to adolescents. In addition, adolescents are more likely to engage in criminal activity because they tend to associate with people who engage in criminal behavior. As a result, adolescents are more likely to respond to adversity by engaging in criminal activity. The above factors contribute to the increased likelihood of criminal behavior among adolescents (Agnew, 1997, 2006b). As adults age, they face many stressors, especially financial pressures. However, they tend to face fewer criminal stressors. For example, as individuals move from adolescence to adulthood, they gain more autonomy in choosing their social networks, which consequently reduces their exposure to negative relationships and situations. Adults may acquire socially acceptable coping mechanisms, such as having a partner or forming a family through marriage, which may contribute to not offending or refraining from offending. In this sense, the spouse comes into play as a supervisory or controlling element, both reducing the severity of strain and preventing the individual from offending (Elliott et al., 1985; Warr, 1998; Broidy et al., 2000; Gunnison, 2001).

Research on the relationship between adolescents and delinquency indicates that reducing strain and anger contributes to many adolescents' decision to avoid criminal behavior as they transition to adulthood (Giordano et al., 2007; Eitle, 2010). Some studies have made an age-based assessment and found a significant relationship between strain, delinquency, and age. According to these studies, the negative effects of strain are most pronounced among adolescents and young adults (Mazerol, 1998; Hoffman & Cerbone, 1999; Aseltine et al., 2000; Eitle & Turner, 2003; Hoffman, 2003; Hay & Evans, 2006; Stogner & Gibson, 2010). Some studies have examined this relationship in

the context of different types of offenses. For example, some studies have shown that youth who experience strain are more likely to use drugs (Agnew & White, 1992; Bao et al., 2004; Stogner & Gibson, 2010), commit violent, injurious, and assaultive crimes (Aseltine et al., 2000); and commit nonviolent crimes such as fraud and theft (Hoffman & Miller, 1998; Mazerolle, 1998; Bao et al., 2004; Wulf-Ludden, 2016).

On the other hand, some studies consider the relationship between stress, age, and crime in the context of a natural relationship rather than a causal relationship, as it is considered in the context of GST. The decision to stop criminal activity is influenced by several factors as individuals age. Some researchers have suggested that the physical and mental changes that occur during the natural maturation process are the primary drivers of observed behavioral developments. In other words, they argue that turning away from crime with age is a normative, natural, and expected phenomenon (Glueck & Glueck, 1950, as cited in Schwartz et al., 2019). Alternatively, they see it as a process that already happens "spontaneously." Accordingly, the process of delinquency is attributed to biological changes as well as decreased motivation and capacity to re-offend (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Some researchers have linked the phenomenon of desistance from crime to the passage of time and the diminishing effect of social stigma over time. In this context, the decreasing impact of social stigma has a positive effect on the process of desistance among older offenders (Shover & Thompson, 1992). In addition, changes in the punishments that individuals may face for committing a crime or changes in the maturation process may also be effective in desistance (Terry, 2003; Blokland & Nieuwbeerta, 2005; Maruna & Toch, 2005).

1.7. Gender, Strain and Crime

The GST was extended to examine the influence of personality, age, and emotion on strain, as well as the influence of gender on these responses. The theory was hypothesized to address differences in recidivism rates between men and women and to elucidate the underlying reasons why women engage in deviant behavior in a historically male-dominated field. By emphasizing the impact of adverse circumstances on criminal behavior and acknowledging the possibility of gender-specific responses to significant stressors, the theory provides insight into the factors that contribute to criminal behavior, including the potential for women to respond differently than men in the presence of significant stressors (Broidy & Agnew, 1997).

In this sense, several assumptions of the GST can be mentioned that reveal the relationship between gender, strain, and crime. *The first assumption* is that men and women face different types of strain and respond to these challenging situations in different ways. The theory suggests that both men and women face strains due to different socialization processes. However, they argue that women are more likely to experience forms of strain (such as interpersonal strain) that do not lead to criminal behavior. *Second*, the difference in crime rates between men and women can be attributed, at least in part, to their different emotional responses to tense situations. According to this theory, as strain increases, the likelihood of negative outcomes increases, leading to increased tendencies toward anger and criminal behavior. In this sense, it argues that men and women generally show different negative emotional responses to strain. The theory suggests that men are more likely to experience anger in response to strain and tend to cope with this anger through aggressive behavior. In contrast, women are more likely to experience depression or depression-induced anger in response to strain and are less likely to use coping mechanisms for these negative emotions. This may be due to gender differences in socialization and social positioning. Anger is perceived as an inappropriate emotion for women, and women are more concerned about causing distress to others and disrupting valued relationships (Agnew & White, 1992; Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Sharp et al., 2001; Agnew et al., 2002; Jang, 2007; Posick et al., 2013; Grothoff et al., 2014). For women, anger is thought to be accompanied by feelings of depression, anxiety, and shame. At the same time, when women internalize anger as a response to strain, they are more likely to engage in negative behaviors such as substance use (Hoffman & Su, 1997; Broidy, 2001; Drapela, 2006), eating disorders (Sharp et al., 2001; Piquero et al., 2010), and suicide (Kauffman, 2009).

Some research on gender, strain, and delinquency suggests that women experience more strain than men (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Morash & Moon, 2007; Harrell, 2007; Kaufman, 2009). For example, women are more likely than men to experience certain types of gender strains, such as being subject to gender-based discrimination, various gendered behavioral constraints (Eitle, 2002), and being victims of certain crimes (e.g., sexual assault, rape, or intimate partner violence) (Kruttschnitt & Macmillan, 2006). On the other hand, some studies have failed to support the GST hypothesis that gender differences in the experience of strain explain gender differences in offending (Botchkovar & Hughes, 2010; Hoffmann & Su, 1997; Mazerolle, 1998).

It can be argued that males are more likely to experience various stressors that may contribute to an increased likelihood of criminal behavior. Such stressors include harsh parental discipline, negative experiences such as poor academic performance, negative peer relationships, being a victim of crime, lack of status, and financial inadequacy. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to experience problems such as sexual abuse and gender discrimination, to experience strains, and to commit crimes. Men are more likely to engage in criminal activities due to strains, especially those that involve harming others. The main reason for this is the existence of genetic differences in emotional responses to stress. That is, both men and women tend to experience anger in tense situations. However, there is evidence that the nature of this anger may differ between the sexes. In this case, men are more likely to use anger to commit crimes (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Robbers, 2004).

The male gender is characterized by lower levels of restraint and higher levels of negative emotionality. Males exhibit lower levels of social control due to reduced parental supervision and weakened school and home ties. In addition, men are more likely to associate with criminal social environments, adopt behaviors consistent with a criminal lifestyle, and display gender identities that are contrary to norms, such as toughness, aggression, and independence. Men are less likely to use legal means to deal with strains. Men are, therefore, more likely to engage in criminal activities than women (Agnew & Brezina, 2019). In summary, women experience strain differently than men. The sources of strain are also generally different. Anger, the primary negative emotion, is more prominent in men. Women internalize anger more than men (e.g., by finding a solution like drug use) and, in some way, prevent its negative effects. It is widespread that men externalize anger. They are, therefore, more likely to commit crimes (especially violence or theft) (Mazerolle & Maahs, 2000; Posick et al., 2013). When it comes to coping with strain, women are more successful than men. In this case, men are more likely to commit crimes than women.

2. Sociopsychological Factors Leading to Strain and Crime

This section discusses the major socio-psychological factors that lead to strains in general and, thus, to criminal activity. First, the four basic factors of strain proposed by Agnew are included. The second section discusses the socio-psychological factors that are most likely to lead to strain and crime. In the third section, based on the findings of both the GST and some studies that provide empirical support based on this theory, various causes of strain and their effects are presented.

2.1. Four Key Features that Lead to Strain and Delinquency

The GST identifies several broad categories of strain that encompass hundreds of specific strains. However, it shows that some of these strains are associated with increases in criminal activity, while others do not have a similar effect (Agnew, 2002, 2006b). In this sense, Agnew has identified four characteristics or factors that help to define the relationship between strain and crime. According to him, certain strains that lead to criminal activity tend to be of significant magnitude, perceived as unfair, associated with low social control and involve pressures or incentives to engage in criminal behavior (Agnew, 2001a, 2006b). Individuals with these characteristics are more likely to experience intense negative emotions. This adversely affects their ability to cope legally and reduces or exacerbates social control. It thus facilitates social learning of criminal behavior and contributes to negative affectivity and low self-control.

Strains of high magnitude can be defined as the magnitude of a challenge, the extent to which the challenge is evaluated negatively, i.e., the extent to which it is perceived as having a detrimental impact on a person's life. Strain is more likely to be considered high in magnitude if it has several characteristics. The degree, severity, or magnitude of strain is considered high. For example, a significant financial loss or a serious physical attack is perceived as more severe than a minor loss or a minor physical attack. In addition, stresses are characterized by their frequency, recent occurrence, long duration, and expected continuation into the future. They also pose a threat to an individual's core goals, needs, values, aspirations, and/or identity. It is understood that these high-level strains have a profound negative impact on individuals. These persistent strains reduce the individual's ability to cope with strains through lawful means, and the emergence of new strains overwhelms them. The effects of recent strains are more easily detected and more pronounced than those of more distant strains (Agnew, 2006b; Abeling-Judge, 2016).

Strains are more likely to be perceived as unjust when they involve a deliberate and conscious violation of a relevant norm of justice. Most strains involve perpetrators who negatively treat victims. Furthermore, perceptions of injustice are likely to increase when the victim is not consulted about the decision to use coercion and is not provided with a justification for the negative treatment. Strain is also more likely to be perceived as unfair when it violates social values, norms, or beliefs. In addition, perceptions of injustice increase when the victim is treated differently from past experiences in similar situations and/or from the treatment of others in similar situations. Strains can lead to beliefs that criminal activity is possible, justifiable, or excusable. This is particularly the case when strains are perceived as unjust and legal coping mechanisms are inaccessible. For example, individuals who are consistently unable to find work may come to believe that stealing and selling drugs is excusable. For example, individuals who receive disproportionate or excessive punishment for minor mistakes or who are punished with false accusations are likely to perceive the strain as undeserved and unfair. In this case, this perception of injustice is likely to lead to the occurrence of crime (Klemp-North, 2007; Tezcan, 2015; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

When *social control is low*, crime is more likely to be detected. This is because individuals who perceive low social control have less to lose by engaging in criminal activity and are generally less likely to be caught due to lower levels of control or supervision. For example, lack of parental acceptance and weak commitment in family relationships are associated with low direct control and immoral beliefs. When individuals perceive the severity of social controls to be low, it gives them even more power to deviate. In particular, if they believe that they will not be punished or will receive little punishment as an element of social control, then the outcome of the strain is more likely to be criminal activity. Conversely, high levels of social control mechanisms can also lead to high levels of strain. In addition, high levels of strain may accelerate criminal activity by reducing an individual's capacity for both direct and social control and his or her belief that the action in question is morally reprehensible. This reduction in social control may influence whether the strain is chronic, temporary, or long-term. In addition, a significant proportion of strains involve negative treatment by people or institutions in positions of authority, such as parents, educators, employers, and law enforcement (Konty, 2005; Brezina, 2008; Agnew & Brezina, 2019). However, some studies have failed to find a significant relationship between social control and lower levels of strain or have been inconclusive on this issue (Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994; Moon et al., 2009).

The existence of strains *creates a degree of pressure or incentive* to engage in criminal activity. The ease with which these strains can be resolved varies depending on the strain in question. Some strains are easily resolved, while others are very difficult to resolve. Individuals are more likely to use crime to resolve easily resolvable strains. For example, strains related to a desperate need for money can be easily resolved through crime. However, strains related to the inability to achieve educational and career goals are not amenable to criminal resolution. For example, individuals who are victims of physical assault may experience strains and subsequently develop beliefs that support

criminal activity (i.e., the belief that the perpetrator must respond to the crime, even if it is a crime). These beliefs become an incentive for individuals to engage in delinquent behavior (Agnew, 2006b).

2.2. Factors with a Very High Likelihood of Causing Crime

It is important to note that not all strains are the same and that certain types of strains are more likely to lead to criminal activity. In this regard, Agnew (2001a, 2006b, 2006a), in addition to the four characteristics mentioned above and based on these characteristics, has developed a list of specific types of strain that are most conducive to criminal activity. Agnew argues that many of these socio-psychological types increase the likelihood of offending. These types are;

- ⊙ Parental rejection,
- ⊙ Excessive and/or harsh parental supervision/discipline (e.g., humiliation/insults, threats),
- ⊙ Child abuse and neglect,
- ⊙ Poor academic performance,
- ⊙ Negative relationships with educators (e.g., teachers, principals),
- ⊙ Poor relationships with peers or the social environment (e.g., teasing, gossip, threats),
- ⊙ Unsatisfactory work-related situations (e.g., low pay, low prestige),
- ⊙ Ongoing marital problems,
- ⊙ Not being a victim of crime,
- ⊙ Frequent conflicts with others,
- ⊙ Poverty is homelessness, the need for money, food, and shelter,
- ⊙ Living in poor urban communities, and
- ⊙ Discrimination (such as race, ethnicity, gender, and religion).

Among these types, there are socio-psychologically important and prominent types. These types are economic deprivation, discrimination, social inequality, family dynamics, social environment, peer dynamics, and being a victim of crime. These types need further elaboration.

Economic deprivation is a major source of interpersonal conflict. People who are poor, unemployed, or financially insecure are more likely to experience feelings of frustration and anger, which may lead them to engage in criminal activity as a means of coping with their strains (Agnew, 1992). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in urban areas where economic disparities are stark and legitimate opportunities for success are limited. Economic pressures can create strain when an individual feels challenged by negative stimuli that evoke feelings of helplessness and anger (Menard, 1995; Agnew et al., 1996; Hagan & McCarthy, 1997).

Discrimination and social inequality also contribute to aggravating strains. Those who are marginalized, stigmatized, and discriminated against because of their differences, such as religion, gender, etc., and racial minorities often face systemic and structural barriers that prevent them from achieving their goals. The resulting frustration and perceived injustice can lead individuals to engage in criminal behavior as a form of resistance or survival (Agnew, 2001a).

Family dynamics are an essential factor in determining an individual's response to strain. In this context, a family environment characterized by conflict, rejection, neglect, or abuse may increase the likelihood of criminal behavior. Family factors also have the potential to exacerbate stressors. Family factors such as harsh discipline, inadequate supervision, fragmented families, parental conflict, and family delinquency have been identified as essential determinants of delinquency. The increase in strains due to family dynamics has been associated with an increase in violence and anger. This situation has been reported to increase the likelihood of deviance, particularly among male adolescents (Agnew, 1992; Brezina, 1999; Hay, 2003; Haas et al., 2004; Unnever et al., 2006).

In contrast, the presence of supportive family relationships has been shown to serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of strain and to reduce the likelihood of criminal tendencies. For example, some studies have identified family support as an essential factor in turning

away from criminal activity. Some studies conducted with inmates in prison have suggested that for some inmates, the family support they receive while incarcerated serves as a "hope" to alleviate the strain, stress, and pressure that the prison environment places on the individual and to facilitate their successful reintegration into society upon release (Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Rocque et al., 2013). In the study, which included individuals who had previously committed crimes and had successfully left crime as a sample, it was considered very important for family members to visit the convicted individual in prison. According to the study, the family support received during the prison process provides an opportunity to reduce the negative aspects of the prison process, reduce the burden of the prison burden and desist from criminal behavior in the post-prison period (Seyidoğlu, 2024).

The social environment and peer dynamics are another important and critical element in the relationship between strain and crime. The influence of criminal peers can exacerbate the effects of strain by facilitating the normalization of criminal behavior and providing opportunities for illegal activities. Peer groups may also serve to reinforce an individual's decision to engage in criminal activity as a coping mechanism by providing social support (Agnew, 2006b). Strains may facilitate the social learning of criminal behavior. This is partly because certain strains arise from exposure to individuals who engage in, condone, and perpetuate antisocial behavior, as well as from the adoption of beliefs that facilitate such actions. For example, students who are bullied at school often associate with and befriend individuals who engage in aggressive behavior. This helps them learn and reinforce criminality and deviance. In addition, those under strain may form friendships with other criminals as a way of coping with the effects of that strain. For example, those who cannot achieve status through legal means may turn to gangs to gain a sense of prestige, importance, and respect (Klemp-North, 2007). Adolescents typically spend most of their time with friends and are less likely to trust their parents with the details of their difficulties (Agnew, 1995). Adolescents may seek the support of delinquent peers to cope with their difficulties. The association with other delinquent peers becomes a motivating factor for these adolescents to engage in antisocial behavior.

Agnew argues that the high crime rates observed in poor neighborhoods or communities can be attributed to the presence of high levels of strain in these communities. Residents of such communities are less likely to achieve economic and status goals. As a result, they are more likely to experience prolonged periods of unemployment and to be employed in the secondary labor market (e.g., uninsured and low-wage workers). These economic difficulties then lead to a range of family, school, and social-environmental strains. Individuals living in such areas are more likely to interact with others who exhibit hostile and aggressive behavior. Therefore, these individuals are more likely to cope with strains by committing crimes. Individuals living in these areas often have limited access to social support, and the social control they face is often weak. In this case, individuals living in these areas may turn to crime (Agnew, 1999; Hoffmann, 2003; Brezina, 2017; Agnew & Brezina, 2019).

The support received from the social environment and the group of friends is also very effective in the process of delinquency. It has been suggested that the distancing of the individual from friends who engage in criminal activity and the relevant social environment represents another aspect of the process of abandoning criminal behavior or not committing crime (Byrne & Trew, 2008). A social environment consisting of law-abiding individuals serves to provide law-abiding models, reinforce law-abiding behaviors, and deter illegal attitudes and activities. In addition, relationships with friends who exhibit law-abiding behaviors can lead to the formation of bonds that prevent illegal activities (Osgood et al., 1996; Warr, 1998; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Shapland & Bottoms, 2011). On the other hand, some studies have found no significant relationship with the theory's assumption that the social environment of the offender can increase strains and lead to delinquency (Mazerolle & Piquero, 1997; Hoffman & Miller, 1998; Eitle & Turner, 2002; Rebellon et al., 2009).

GST also considers *criminal victimization* to be an essential factor that can lead to crime. One of the most vivid examples of a strain that is likely to be perceived as unjust is criminal victimization. In most cases, the victim (crime victim) decides to become a victim (commit a crime) and justifies doing so. This justification is usually that he or she has been "wronged." As Agnew argues, crime

victimization makes individuals more likely to turn to crime when they perceive the underlying strains as "unfair" and especially "intentional. Negative emotions due to unemployment, death, or poverty can be an essential source of strain for individuals. However, because these events are not intentional, they create less strain than criminal victimization. The fact that criminal victimization is particularly consistent with these factors leads to an increase in strain and a high likelihood of criminal activity. Victimization is likely to be different from the victim's previous experiences and the experiences of other individuals in similar situations (Agnew, 2001a, 2002; Ganem, 2010; Ostrowsky & Messner, 2005).

In addition, the results of some studies provide direct evidence of a strong relationship between witnessing crime and violence, being a victim of crime or violence, and committing violent crime, which is an essential measure of strain (Paschall et al., 1998; Eitle & Turner, 2003; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). In addition, some studies emphasize that in disadvantaged neighborhoods where violence is prevalent, crime victims are strongly encouraged by friends, family, and their sense of honor and respect to retaliate and attack those who have harmed them (Horowitz, 1983; Anderson, 1999; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003). Witnessing or being exposed to violence is one of the most serious forms of coercion (Agnew, 2001a). In fact, it has been found that witnessing or being exposed to crime increases criminal involvement and reinforces and encourages imitation of violent behavior (Akers, 1998). In this sense, it can be said that witnessing violence or being a victim of violence is the most critical socio-psychological process. According to the principles of GST, witnessing or being a victim of violence represents the most severe form of strain and is, therefore, more likely to be criminal. The empirical evidence presented by Agnew shows that victimization is the type of strain most likely to result in criminal behavior. Of course, victimization and social environment are interrelated factors. Individuals who are disadvantaged and who live in high-crime neighborhoods are significantly more likely to both witness and become victims of violence (Agnew, 1992, 2001a; Attar et al., 1994).

It should be noted, however, that the relationship between crime, strain, and victimization may be exaggerated in the theory. In fact, the theory recognizes that not all crime victims are involved in criminal activity. However, "crime victimization" is also influenced by various variables that the theory does not elaborate on. For example, there is a significant relationship between age and crime victimization. If the crime victim is a child, the effect may not be as the theory suggests. In fact, crime victimization is usually not recognized during childhood. The child may not even realize that he or she is a victim of crime. Therefore, situations in which crime victimization is not associated with criminal behavior need to be studied in detail (Cuevas et al., 2007; Finkelhor et al., 2009).

2.3. Various Causes of Strain and Their Effects

Numerous studies revealed different findings by establishing a link between strain, the type of strain, and the type of crime. Some studies in the literature show that the difficulties experienced during the prison process, the difficulties or harassment at work, and the relationship between mother and child are factors that can lead to strain. In addition, according to some studies, strain leads to suicide, gambling, bullying, drinking problems, drunk driving, property crimes, drug abuse, theft, and shoplifting.

Some research has been conducted on *the prison process*, incarceration, and strain. These studies use GST to determine whether physical victimization during incarceration increases the likelihood of post-incarceration recidivism. These studies have suggested that feelings of anger, hostility, or depression and perceptions of victimization may act as mediators in the relationship between recidivism following release (Morris et al., 2012; Zweig et al., 2015). For example, Piquero and Sealock (2000) conducted empirical research on delinquent youth who not only engaged in delinquent behavior but were also incarcerated. According to this research, youth in detention experience intense strain. As a result, their propensity to reoffend increases. Some studies have found that incarcerated female inmates frequently and significantly experience strain, stress, and anxiety (Fogel, 1993; Girshick, 1999; Alarid, 2000). However, it can be said that very few studies have

examined the strain and delinquency processes of incarcerated individuals, especially adults, from a GST perspective (Sharp et al., 2012; Listwan et al., 2013).

Hinduja (2007) makes an interesting contribution to the field when he examines workplace guilt. Supporting the basic assumptions of the theory, the researcher found that *workplace harassment or bullying* is associated with high levels of anger. Although Hinduja did not directly assess whether these heightened negative emotions triggered deviant behavior, participants reported experiencing aggressive feelings as a result of the harassment they were subjected to. The researcher, therefore, suggested that these strains could lead to future deviance and even violence in the workplace.

Reid (2011) links *mother-child strain to the sale of sex*. The study states that high levels of strain experienced by mothers may be a determinant of later child maltreatment. Children who are maltreated and oppressed are more likely to experience strain, show deviant behavior, and turn to crime. Girls, in particular, are more likely to run away from home and use substances at an early age. Running away from home and subsequent substance use exacerbates strains and increases the likelihood that young girls will become involved in sex trafficking.

Some research has identified specific types of offending that may be triggered by the strains experienced by individuals. For example, negative emotions and strains have been found to be strongly positively associated with *suicide and self-harm* (Walls et al., 2007; Hay & Meldrum, 2010). Similarly, individuals have been found to turn to *gambling* (Eitle & Taylor, 2011) and *bullying others* (Hay & Meldrum, 2010; Hay et al., 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2011) to cope with strain. Police officers exposed to strain have been found to have problems with *heavy drinking (heavy alcohol use)* to relieve the burden of strain (Swatt et al., 2007). In addition, some studies show that individuals exposed to various stressors are more likely to *commit crimes against property* (Piquero & Sealock, 2000), *substance abuse* (Aseltine et al., 2000; Baron, 2004; Posick et al., 2013), and less serious criminal acts such as *burglary and shoplifting* (Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994; Mazerolle & Piquero, 1998). It has also been reported that intense strain leads to risky behaviors such as *drunk driving* (Ellwanger, 2007).

3. Coping with Strain

Agnew notes that not all individuals respond to sources of strain and negative emotions with blame. Most individuals tend to use traditional methods of coping with strain, such as discussing their concerns with friends and seeking counseling. Accordingly, the extent to which strain triggers offending depends on several variables, including the characteristics of the individual and the environmental context. However, Agnew (2006b) mentioned that individuals can identify different strategies to cope with strain and identified five main factors that may influence the relationship between strain and crime. These are (1) poor coping skills and resources, (2) low levels of traditional social support, (3) low levels of social control, (4) relationships with criminal others and pro-crime beliefs, and (5) low costs and high benefits of coping with crime. These factors are more likely to increase the likelihood of offending as a result of strain.

In terms of individual characteristics, it can be argued that individuals with (1) *inadequate coping skills and limited resources* are more likely to respond to strains in criminal ways. Agnew identified several factors that can negatively impact an individual's ability to cope with criminal activity. These include deficits in problem-solving and social skills, lack of self-control and negative emotionality, low socioeconomic status, impulsivity, aggression, and lack of self-efficacy. Engaging in prosocial activities, receiving therapy, or utilizing community resources can help individuals manage their strains without resorting to criminal behavior. It is important to encourage the development of these strategies to prevent crime (Baron, 2003; Agnew, 2006b). Some studies have provided support for Agnew's assumptions in this regard. For example, some studies have found that individuals with stronger self-efficacy skills are less likely to engage in criminal activities in response to strains (Mazerolle & Maahs, 2000; Agnew et al., 2002). Similarly, problem-solving skills (Moon et al., 2009) and emotional and spiritual coping skills (Piquero & Sealock, 2000) serve to reduce the impact of strain on criminal behavior (Matthews, 2011).

Agnew argues that individuals who (2) *lack traditional social support structures* are more likely to respond to stressors with criminal behavior. This is because those with traditional social support can rely on a variety of individuals, including parents, educators, friends, and members of a religious organization, to help them cope with stress. The provision of social, physical, emotional, psychological, and even financial support can help individuals cope with the negative emotions that result from strain (Agnew, 2001b). For example, Jang and Lyons (2006) show in their study that having family and friends with whom to discuss personal issues can mitigate the negative effects of strain on emotional state and behavioral responses. Agnew (2006b) argues that individuals who lack traditional social support structures are more likely to respond to stressors with criminal behavior. This is because those with traditional social support can rely on a variety of individuals, such as parents, friends, and educators, to help them cope with strain. According to some studies, however, social support does not have a positive effect on individuals' coping with strain and thus on delinquency (Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994; Capowich et al., 2001; Rebellon et al., 2009).

Agnew (2006b) argues that individuals who are (3) *low in social control* or who do not believe in the moral wrongness of criminal acts, who have weak emotional ties to traditional social groups, and who show reluctance to participate in traditional activities are more likely to cope with strains through criminal acts. Evidence suggests that individuals with strong ties are less likely to engage in criminal behavior after experiencing strain (Agnew et al., 2002; Aseltine et al., 2000; Mazerolle et al., 2000). Strain may also lead to the (4) *adoption of criminal behavior among individuals who engage in criminal activity*. This is because friends may model delinquent behavioral responses to strain and subsequently reinforce this behavior among their peers. In addition, individuals who associate with delinquent peers may be reminded of stressful events, which may interfere with their ability to minimize the impact of these experiences (Agnew & White, 1992). In support of this, some studies show that individuals with delinquent or offending peers are more likely to engage in at least some types of criminal behavior when they experience strain than individuals with less delinquent or offending peers (Mazerolle et al., 2000; Baron, 2004).

Finally, Agnew (2006b) argues that individuals are more likely to engage in criminal activity when faced with (5) *conditions that offer minimal costs and substantial benefits*. In other words, it is the response or punishment that occurs when a crime is committed. If punishments are not sufficiently deterrent, this can lead to deviant behavior. For example, individuals are more likely to engage in criminal behavior when the probability of being caught is low, and the target of the crime is a valuable person or asset, such as expensive property. For example, compared to other street crimes, drug use is one of the most common coping strategies because of the widespread availability of illicit drugs and the low perceived seriousness of the acts, i.e., low costs (e.g., little or no punishment for drugs). Some studies have found that strain (in particular) is an important factor contributing to increased drug use among adolescents (Agnew, 1997). One of the main reasons for this is the low cost of punishment for this type of crime.

There is also a link between the development of coping with strain strategies and the desistance process of offenders. Implementing effective coping strategies and control mechanisms to manage anger and other negative emotions that could potentially lead to criminal behavior will serve to deter individuals from engaging in criminal activity. Individuals with a history of criminal behavior may avoid further criminal activity by developing strategies to cope with strain. Some studies have specifically tested coping strategies for dealing with strain and crime and found some support for the GST. These studies have shown that crime-related coping strategies have a positive effect on deviant behavior (Robbers, 2004; Baron, 2008; Morash & Moon, 2007; Rebellon et al., 2009).

CONCLUSION

GST provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the social psychological factors that contribute to criminal behavior. By identifying sources of strain and examining how individuals cope with strain, the theory provides valuable insights into the root causes of criminal behavior.

Implementing targeted interventions to address these factors has the potential to significantly reduce crime rates and promote a more just and equitable society.

Agnew's GST suggests that stressors, including maltreatment, can trigger psychological and physiological responses, including strain. Young people, especially those in abusive relationships, often turn to aggression or criminal activity as a way of coping with their situation. Agnew defines strain as an emotional expression in response to situations or events that are perceived as unpleasant. It can be argued that criminal behavior can be perceived as an adaptive response that provides temporary relief from distressing negative emotions. Strain factors resulting from environmental, behavioral, and negative life events contribute to criminal behavior, which serves as a means for individuals to relieve their negative emotions.

Negative emotions, such as frustration, depression, and anxiety, can lead to strain that may impair an individual's ability to respond to stress or strain lawfully. Such emotions may lead to a diminished perception of the seriousness of the offense or a marked lack of understanding of its consequences. Anger, for example, is an essential emotional response in GST because it leads to a tendency to retaliate or seek revenge, provides motivation, and reduces inhibitions. Anger is often a misleading emotion and occurs when individuals attribute responsibility for their distress to others. It increases the perceived severity of harm, creates a desire for revenge, and motivates negative actions. Anger plays a mediating role in the transformation of strain into crime or deviance. It impairs effective problem-solving skills, increases sensitivity to stressful stimuli, reduces awareness of and anxiety about the consequences of criminal acts, fuels the desire for revenge, weakens the ability to identify effective problem-solving strategies, and facilitates the development of justifications for deviant behavior.

Unlike many previous theories, GST takes a micro-level approach to the process of crime and delinquency. This theory incorporates a smaller-scale perspective compared to the assumptions of strain theorists such as Merton (1938), Cohen (1955), Cloward and Ohlin (1960), and Messner and Rosenfeld (2001). While these strain theories generally deal with social structures at the macro-structural level, GST focuses on the individual (the individual who interacts with and is affected by society) at the micro-level. These traditional strain theories suggest that some individuals engage in criminal activity when faced with strains related to economic gain (money) and the inability to achieve status success. The GST, on the other hand, expands the source of strain to include a broader range of strains, including those associated with the failure to achieve positively valued goals, the removal of positively valued stimuli, and the presentation of negative stimuli. According to the theory, the ways in which individuals cope with these life strains can be healthy or unhealthy, depending on the circumstances. For example, it is argued that when strains are particularly high, some individuals may turn to crime as a coping mechanism. For example, Merton (1938), the pioneer of traditional strain theorists, stated, in line with traditional strain theory, that the goals of obtaining money and status can lead to strain in individuals. However, Agnew stated that strains arise when an individual's ideal expectations and/or aspirations are not met. Similar to Merton, Agnew also stated that the inability to obtain money and status could lead to strain and expanded on these factors. In contrast to Merton's strain theory, the GST argues that young people's goals are existentially based and include many different goals. The most important goals are status, respect from others, and autonomy (control over one's actions). GST was developed on the basis of Merton's research. The theory incorporates assumptions from sociology and psychology about stress, justice, equality, aggression, and their role in human behavior, delinquency, and deviance (Agnew, 1992). Agnew introduced a new definition of "strain" into his theory. In contrast to Merton's perspective, which identified structural inequality as the primary source of strain, Agnew sought to elucidate the role of small-scale social psychological factors. This led to the formulation of a new micro-socio-psychological theory (Rebellon et al., 2012).

Early classical strain frameworks focused on the challenges faced by individuals from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds in achieving goals such as economic well-being. They

argued that these individuals are simultaneously motivated to pursue ambitious goals and operate in a competitive environment where limited resources are distributed among a large number of individuals (Bao et al., 2004). Therefore, these classical strain theories argue that crime originates from the lower socioeconomic class, especially the poor. In contrast, Agnew's theory represents a significant departure from previous conceptualizations. The theorist redefines the concept of "strain," expands the focus beyond thwarted economic aspirations, shifts the focus from macro-structural inequality to micro-sociological factors, and revitalizes the research field by identifying a process by which crime can be used as an adaptive response to strain (Agnew, 2006b; Rebellon et al., 2012). In his modifications of strain theory, Agnew used research from sociology and psychology in addition to traditional criminology to examine the relationship between stress, aggression, and equity/justice. In this regard, Agnew argued that his theory was primarily concerned with the socio-psychological level and the individual as well as the individual's immediate social environment (Agnew, 1992; Tezcan, 2015).

The GST has identified and explained the main types of strain in substantial agreement with the assumptions of psychological theories of strain (Asprea & Villone Betocchi, 1998). For example, the first social psychological theory of strain is recognized as the theory of relative deprivation. This theory posits that sources of structural inequality lead to feelings of "deprivation" and that poverty creates significant stress, which in turn can trigger aggressive behavior and contribute to crime. Accordingly, the theory recognizes that emotions such as hostility and anger can be provoked by sources of "structural inequality" as a cause of poverty (Box, 1981; Blau & Blau, 1982; Stack, 1984). In this respect, in contrast to traditional strain theories, the theory suggests that an individual's level of strain depends on his or her relative socioeconomic position relative to the reference group (wealthy groups). Thus, wealthy people (the rich) may experience significant strain when they compare themselves to even more wealthy people (the richer) (Burton & Dunaway, 1994).

Numerous studies provide general support for the basic assumptions of GST (Landau, 1998; Aseltine et al., 2000; Broidy, 2001; Maxwell, 2001; Baron, 2004; Sigfusdottir et al., 2004; Liu & Lin, 2007; Moon et al., 2008; Kaufman, 2009; Ganem, 2010). Some studies have shown that an increase in strain is associated with a significant increase in delinquency or deviance (Paternoster & Mazerolle, 1994; Baron & Hartnagel, 1997; Mazerolle & Piquero, 1997; Brezina, 1998; Benda & Crowyn, 2002; Jang & Johnson, 2003; Daigle et al., 2007). Some studies have shown that strain accelerates the onset of negative emotional states, which "partially" explains the observed effect of strain on crime (Capowich et al., 2001; Mazerolle et al., 2003; Ellwanger, 2007; Brezina, 2017).

There have been several criticisms of the GST. For example, Alexander and Bernard (2002) emphasize that the theory does not sufficiently define the instruments with which it can be empirically tested. Although the theory is designed to elucidate the processes underlying criminal behavior, it is ultimately the responsibility of the researcher, the theorist, to identify the specific actions that would encourage or frighten an individual to commit a crime because of the fear or anxiety they generate. If this is not done, the researcher's ability to test and evaluate the theory is limited. In this sense, it seems essential for the theory to further elaborate on the emotions experienced and experienced by individuals that may lead to criminality. There is another criticism from the same researchers. This criticism is that GST is not a holistic theory. GST does not have integrated content but rather specific and limited content (Alexander & Bernard, 2002).

According to the GST, individuals are more likely to commit a crime when there is a perception of high, unjust strain, when social control is low, when there are pressures and incentives for strain, and when there is no coping strategy for dealing with crime (Agnew, 2001a). However, the extent to which these factors influence crime, especially in the GST, remains unclear. For example, it remains unclear to what extent these factors influence criminal behavior through their effects on negative emotional states such as anger. In general terms, it is mentioned, but not elaborated, that a negative emotion, such as anger in particular, leads individuals to commit crimes. If anger leads to criminality,

when, in which situations, or for which individuals is this more likely? If anger leads to criminality, does the intensity of anger affect this situation? Can anger be eliminated or mitigated by different strategies? The answers to such questions should also be addressed by the theory, for example, in relation only to the emotion of anger.

According to the GST, strain and the resulting feelings of anger can often lead to violence (e.g., wounding), crimes against property (e.g., theft) (Aseltine et al., 2000; Piquero & Sealock, 2004; Agnew, 2006), and drug use by youth (Agnew & White, 1992; Hoffman & Su, 1997; Bao et al., 2004; Stogner & Gibson, 2010). When this situation is evaluated in the context of Türkiye, it can be stated that the GST has critical assumptions to explain the crime and delinquency situation in Türkiye, considering the most common crimes committed in Türkiye. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's Penal and Execution Institution statistics, the most common type of crime committed by convicts in prisons is theft at 26.1%, followed by violation of residential inviolability at 9.4%, injury at 6.7%, purchase, acceptance, or possession of drugs or stimulants or use of drugs or stimulants with 6.2% and damage to property with 5.8% (TÜİK, 2023).

The GST makes some assumptions about gender. For example, men may be less likely to use legal means to cope with distress, stress, and strain for a variety of reasons. Therefore, according to GST, men are more likely to engage in criminal behavior than women (Agnew & Brezina, 2019). In general, all statistics show that male criminality is much higher than female criminality, and this is not unique to Türkiye. Nevertheless, it can be said that the difference between the sexes is also quite high in Türkiye when the offense situation is taken into account. Let us look at the gender distribution of prison inmates in the statistics of the Penal and Execution Institution of the Turkish Statistical Institute. 95.8% of the prison inmates are men, and 4.2% are women (TÜİK, 2023). These proportions show that the gender distribution of crime in Türkiye can also be assessed using the assumptions of the GST.

Another issue is the relationship between offending and age. According to GST, the likelihood of committing a crime is much higher at younger ages, especially during adolescence, compared to childhood, adulthood, and old age (Attar et al., 1994; Agnew & Brezina, 2019). The theory emphasizes that young people are more likely to be unsuccessful in coping with negative emotions, such as anger, and that young people are more likely to engage in crime. From this perspective, GST can potentially explain juvenile delinquency in Türkiye. If it is assessed that young offenders are more likely to commit violent crimes, property crimes, and drug crimes than non-young offenders, this situation is parallel to the crime, type of crime, and age statistics in Türkiye. Let us look at the distribution of inmates in prisons by age in the statistics of the Prison and Execution Institute of the Turkish Statistical Institute, 37.15 percent of the population in prisons consists of persons aged 25-34, while the proportional density is mostly in the age group of 18-44 (41.05%) (TÜİK, 2023).

The GST recommends reducing the exposure of individuals to crime-prone conditions through rehabilitation and prevention programs. This recommendation is essential given the social, cultural, economic, and criminological situation in Türkiye. For example, participating in prosocial activities, receiving therapy, or utilizing community resources can help individuals manage their strains without resorting to criminal behavior. Facilitating the development of these strategies to prevent criminal behavior is of great importance (Agnew, 2006b). In this sense, various programs should be implemented in Türkiye to reduce the impact of individual and interpersonal strains, especially anger. It is also essential to have programs that aim to eliminate factors such as parental rejection, harsh discipline, child abuse, academic failure, bullying, unemployment, and crime victimization, which are essential sources of strain, as stated in the theory. The relevant ministries, youth services, probation services, and correctional services play the main role in this. For example, home visits and parent education programs can be successful in reducing family strains. The provision of family support services is an essential aspect of social policy. The implementation of counseling, parenting programs, and family therapy has the potential to strengthen family structures and reduce the likelihood of delinquency. At the same time, the influence of delinquent peers and high-crime

neighborhoods has the potential to exacerbate the effects of strains by facilitating the normalization of criminal behavior and providing opportunities for illegal activities (Agnew, 2006b). In this sense, peer counseling programs and the creation of support groups can be used as tools to counter the influence of criminal peers and promote positive behaviors. Ensuring that individuals live in a region other than the residential areas with high levels of delinquency that create strains in individuals should also be considered, and various programs should be implemented in this sense.

While it is difficult to completely eliminate or partially reduce certain strains, changes can be made to make them less conducive to crime. Through various training programs, teachers can be taught to reduce the perceived unfairness of low grades, and students with low grades can be targeted for interventions to increase social control (Agnew & Brezina, 2019). In addition, in Türkiye, collaboration between youth and sports centers and NGOs and programs can help young people avoid negative treatment and avoid certain situations by teaching them about social norms and the consequences of violating them. Individuals with low restraint and high negative affectivity are more likely to perceive events negatively, be treated negatively, and face obstacles in achieving their goals. Such individuals are more vulnerable to emotional distress, more likely to be involved in delinquent peer groups, and more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors, including involvement in criminal activities, poor job choices, and marital discord.

However, as stated by Agnew and Brezina (2018), it is very important that training is provided at the point of teaching anger management and strain control. In this sense, courses on anger and coping with strain strategies should be widely disseminated, significantly to minimize the effects of strains experienced by individuals due to strain and anger. These trainings, courses, and seminars should be developed within the framework of existing education and training activities in prisons. In this context, some studies have found that such programs, especially in prisons, help in the successful completion of the process of distancing from criminal behavior in the prevention of anger (Seyidoğlu, 2024). Therefore, it is possible that providing effective behavioral patterns to prisoners and convicts to help them cope with strain and facilitate problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, and similar issues may be beneficial. It can be considered that the implementation of programs that include problem-solving skills, cognitive restructuring, and social skills training can facilitate a healthy and harmonious existence both within the institution and in society after the release of the individual (Tezcan, 2015). Within the framework of prison education programs, anger management and strain management training and vocational training programs have been emphasized. The results of anger management and strain management training showed that the participants were able to effectively manage crises and avoid criminal activities. It is essential to consider the GST for this issue. Therefore, it can be said that "anger and strain management" programs are of great importance for convicted or ex-convicted persons, both during their imprisonment and during the probation period after their release. Through these programs, people who have been convicted and are in prison or who have been released from prison after serving their sentence can develop strategies for dealing with anger and stress. In addition, their risk of recidivism is reduced, and a positive contribution is made to the desistance from crime.

The prison process creates intense strains among convicts and increases the likelihood of offending both in prison and after release (Morris et al., 2012; Zweig et al., 2015). In this sense, it can be stated that the provision of psychosocial and moral support services in the prison environment is very effective in the process of giving up criminal activities. As a matter of fact, considering the intensity of strain that convicts in prisons may face, such programs are very important for developing the potential of convicts to cope with these strains. Some studies have found that the continuous utilization of psychosocial services and meetings with psychologists responsible for supervising these services contribute to stopping criminal activities. This situation is not only valid for convicts in prison. In this sense, it is essential to increase and expand mental health resources and to develop resilient coping mechanisms and effective strain management techniques. It has also been shown that the religious and moral development of prisoners is an effective factor in their successful

reintegration into society. Providing "spiritual and religious counseling" services by the spiritual guidance unit within the prison system is of great importance in terms of alleviating the burden of strains (Seyidođlu, 2024). In summary, the programs put forward in this sense both during the prison process and after prison release carry out an essential function. In this respect, considering the causal relationship between strain and criminality, it is essential to give more importance to these programs and to develop these programs.

According to the GST, individuals may become more prone to anger and more likely to engage in violent behavior in contexts of heightened strain, especially when exposed to social inequality or injustice (Agnew, 2001a). It is generally accepted that strain or anger can weaken an individual's ability to control himself, which may contribute to criminal behavior. For this reason, the issue of anti-discrimination policies is of great importance today. The implementation and enforcement of policies that address social inequality and discrimination have the potential to reduce strains between marginalized groups. In this regard, it is necessary to identify the situations that create discrimination and inequality in society and to eliminate their negative effects. In this sense, it would be wrong to say that only the strains experienced by individuals are effective in their criminality. It is best to recognize that structural and sociological factors such as discrimination, injustice, and inequality are factors that cause strain and to intervene in these phenomena.

Improving individuals' coping skills, increasing social support, and reducing exposure to stressors are critical to reducing crime. A variety of programs should be developed that can be effective in reducing stressors, including parental distress and child maltreatment, and reducing the likelihood that children will become involved in criminal or delinquent activities. Additionally, these programs should aim to reduce risk factors for antisocial behavior in the home, school, and environment (Agnew & Brezina, 2019). Considering the current economic situation in all countries, especially in Türkiye, the strains that individuals may face due to economic problems can be quite high. Economic difficulties can lead to a series of challenges related to family, education, and peers, and addressing these issues is crucial to reducing crime (Currie, 1998; Colvin, 2000; Agnew, 2006b). In this context, various support measures should be introduced, especially to address economic problems, and existing socio-economic support programs should be further developed. Providing financial assistance, job training, and employment opportunities can serve to reduce economic strains and, thus, crime. There is a need to expand the scope of existing mechanisms and services, with particular emphasis on providing direct psychological, sociological, and legal support to persons belonging to lower socio-economic groups.

As mentioned earlier, there are very few comprehensive studies in Türkiye that are based on classical strain theories, especially the GST. In this sense, the process of crime and criminality needs to be elucidated and understood, taking into account the socio-cultural conditions in Türkiye. Considering variables such as age and gender in Türkiye, there is a need for much more academic research that examines the relationship between strain, anger and crime, especially within the framework of critical socio-psychological theories such as GST. It is essential to explain the relationship of not only anger but also negative emotions such as fear, jealousy, frustration, shame, and hopelessness with strain and crime in the context of criminality in our country. In addition, research using GST in the context of social problems in Türkiye (such as economic problems, income inequality, increase in crime and violence, unemployment, education, terrorism, migration problems, and political problems) and especially the new strains brought about by the digital age and the problems arising from these strains (such as social media pressure, cybercrime, increased stressors during the pandemic period) will provide valuable insights.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Suç olgusu, dünya çapında toplumlarda süregelen bir sorun haline gelmiş ve bu durum, altında yatan nedenleri anlamayı amaçlayan çeşitli teorik çerçevelerin geliştirilmesine yol açmıştır. Bu teorilerden öne çıkanlardan biri Robert Agnew tarafından formüle edilen Genel Gerilim Teorisi'dir (GGT). Bu teori temel anlamda, gerilim yaşayan bireylerin bir başa çıkma mekanizması olarak suçlu davranışlarda bulunma ihtimalinin daha yüksek olduğunu öne sürmektedir. GGT, suç davranışını tetikleyebilecek olumsuz duygulara, özellikle de öfkeye odaklanarak klasik gerilim teorilerinden daha kapsamlı bir açıklama sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma gerilim, öfke ve suç arasındaki ilişkiyi GGT bağlamında sosyopsikolojik bir perspektiften değerlendirmektedir.

GGT, bireylerdeki gerilimin; özellikle öfke olmak üzere hayal kırıklığı ve depresyon gibi olumsuz duygular yarattığı varsayımıyla suç ve suçluluğu açıklayan sosyopsikolojik bir teoridir. Teoriye göre bu olumsuz duygular bireyleri suç eylemleri yoluyla rahatlama arayışına yönlendirir. Buna göre, gerilime maruz kalan/bırakılan bireyler genellikle sıkıntı yaşar ve bunun sonucunda suç davranışına başvurur. Hoş olmayan durumlara veya olaylara tepki olarak ortaya çıkan bu duygusal ifade, sorun çözme veya zor koşullarla başa çıkma aracı olarak suç davranışına yol açabilir. Bu anlamda GGT, üç ana gerilim kaynağı tanımlar. Bunlar; olumlu değer verilen bir uyarının ortadan kalkması, olumsuz değer verilen bir uyarının varlığı ve olumlu değer verilen hedeflere ulaşamamasıdır. Teori ayrıca gerilimi; nesnel ve öznel türlerin yanı sıra deneyimlenen, dolaylı ve beklenen gerilimler olarak sınıflandırır.

Hayal kırıklığı, depresyon ve kaygı gibi olumsuz duygular; bireyin gerilimle başa çıkma veya yasal/meşru yollarla üstesinden gelme yeteneğini bozabilir. Özellikle öfke, misilleme veya intikam arzusuna yol açtığı, suç davranışı için motivasyon sağladığı ve suçluluğa bulaşma noktasında engellemeleri azalttığı için GGT'de önemi vurgulanan kritik bir duygusal tepkidir. Teoriye göre öfke, etkili problem çözme becerilerini bozarak, stresli uyaranlara karşı duyarlılığı artırarak ve suç eylemlerinin sonuçlarına ilişkin farkındalığı azaltarak gerilimin suça, suçluluğa veya sapkınlığa dönüşmesinde aracı bir rol oynar.

GGT; yaş, gerilim ve suç arasındaki ilişkiyi değerlendirerek ergenlik döneminde suç işleme olasılığının diğer yaş dönemlerine göre daha yüksek olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Ergenler, karmaşık bir sosyal çevreye entegre oldukları için daha fazla gerilimle karşılaşır ve bu durum, suç davranışı olasılığını artırabilir. Bireyler yetişkinliğe geçtikçe, sosyal dünyalarında bir daralma ve kendi kaderlerini tayin etme konusunda bir artış yaşarlar, bu da suç davranışı olasılığını azaltabilir. GGT'de ayrıca cinsiyet, gerilim ve suç davranışı arasındaki ilişki de incelenmektedir. Teori, erkeklerin ve kadınların farklı türde gerilimlerle karşı karşıya kaldıklarını ve bu durumlara farklı tepkiler verdiklerini öne sürmektedir. Teoriye göre erkeklerin gerilime tepki olarak öfke yaşama olasılığı daha yüksektir ve bu öfke nedeniyle saldırgan davranışlar sergileme eğilimindedirler.

Teoriye göre çeşitli sosyopsikolojik faktörler gerilime ve suç faaliyetlerine neden olabilir. Bunlar arasında ekonomik yoksunluk, ayrımcılık, sosyal eşitsizlik, aile dinamikleri, sosyal çevre, akran dinamikleri ve suç mağduru olmak yer almaktadır. Ekonomik yoksunluk ve ayrımcılık; hayal kırıklığı ve öfke gibi duygulara yol açabilir. Bu duygular, suç davranışıyla sonuçlanabilir. Çatışma, reddedilme, ihmal veya istismar gibi aile dinamikleri ise gerilimi şiddetlendirerek suç olasılığını artırabilir. Sosyal çevre ve akran dinamikleri de suç davranışının grup yapısı içinde normalleşmesini kolaylaştırabilir ve yasadışı faaliyetler için fırsatlar sağlayabilir.

Agnew, gerilim ve suç arasındaki ilişkiyi etkileyebilecek temel faktör tanımlamaktadır. Bunlar; zayıf başa çıkma becerileri ve kaynakları, düşük geleneksel sosyal destek seviyeleri, düşük sosyal kontrol seviyeleri, suçlu sosyal çevreyle ilişkiler, suçu tetikleyebilecek inançlar, suçla başa çıkmanın düşük maliyetleri ve yüksek faydaları şeklinde belirtilebilir. Buna göre yetersiz başa çıkma becerilerine ve sınırlı kaynaklara sahip olan ve geleneksel sosyal destek yapılarından yoksun bireylerin ve gerilimlere suç teşkil eden yollarla karşılık verme olasılığı daha yüksek olabilmektedir.

Düşük sosyal kontrol ya da suç eylemlerinin ahlaki açıdan yanlış olmadığı inancı suç davranışı olasılığını artırabilir. Suçlu akranlarla ilişkiler, gerilime karşı suçlu davranışsal tepkileri modelleyebilir ve pekiştirebilir. Son olarak da suç faaliyeti için minimum maliyet ve önemli faydalar sunan koşullar suç işleme olasılığını artırabilir.

GGT, suç davranışına neden olan sosyal psikolojik faktörleri anlamak için anlamlı ve açıklayıcı bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Teori, gerilimin kaynaklarını tanımlayarak ve bireylerin gerilimle nasıl başa çıktıklarını inceleyerek, suç davranışının temel nedenlerine ilişkin değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu faktörleri ele almak için hedeflenen müdahalelerin uygulanması, suç oranlarını önemli ölçüde azaltma ve daha adil, özgür ve eşitlikçi bir toplumu teşvik etme potansiyeline sahiptir. Bu güçlü yönlerine rağmen GGT, çeşitli eleştirilerle de karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Bazı araştırmacılar, teorinin ampirik olarak test edilebileceği araçları yeterince tanımlamadığını savunmaktadır. Bu araştırmacılara göre GGT, bütüncül ve kapsamlı bir teori değildir. Daha çok spesifik ve sınırlı bir içeriğe sahiptir. Ayrıca bazı araştırmacılara göre de GGT'de tanımlanan faktörlerin suçu ne ölçüde etkilediği, özellikle de öfke gibi olumsuz duyguların rolü belirsizliğini korumaktadır. Bu bağlamda bahsedilen sınırlamaları ve eleştirileri ele alabilmek ve gerilim, öfke ile suç arasındaki ilişkiyi daha net bir şekilde anlamak için daha fazla akademik araştırmaya ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

Türkiye bağlamında değerlendirildiğinde GGT'nin, suç ve suçluluk durumunu açıklamak için kritik varsayımlara sahip olduğu belirtilebilir. Türkiye'de en yaygın suçlar arasında hırsızlık, konut/işyeri dokunulmazlığını ihlal, yaralama, uyuşturucu kullanımı ve mala zarar verme yer alır. Bu suçlar, GGT'nin varsayımlarıyla açıklanabilir. Erkek suçluluğunun kadın suçluluğundan çok daha yüksek olması nedeniyle, Türkiye'deki suçun cinsiyet dağılımı da GGT varsayımları kullanılarak değerlendirilebilir. Buna ek olarak, genç suçluların şiddet suçları, mala zarar verme suçları ve uyuşturucu suçları işleme olasılığı genç olmayan suçlulara göre daha yüksek olduğundan, GGT Türkiye'deki genç suçluluğunu açıklama potansiyeline sahip olabilir. Tüm bunlar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda ayrıca teorinin varsayımlarından yola çıkarak Türkiye bağlamında çeşitli önerilerde bulunmak mümkün olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, başta öfke olmak üzere bireysel ve kişiler arası gerilimlerin etkisini azaltmak için Türkiye'de çeşitli programlar uygulanabilir. Tabii bu programlar ebeveyn reddi, sert disiplin, çocuk istismarı, akademik başarısızlık, zorbalık, işsizlik ve suç mağduriyeti gibi faktörleri ortadan kaldırmayı hedeflemelidir. İlgili bakanlıklar, gençlik hizmetleri, denetimli serbestlik hizmetleri ve hükümlülere yönelik ıslah hizmetleri bu konuda çok önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Ev ziyaretleri, ebeveyn eğitim programları, aile destek hizmetleri, danışmanlık, ebeveynlik programları ve aile terapisi gibi uygulamalar aile yapılarını güçlendirebilir ve suç işleme olasılığını azaltabilir. Akran danışmanlığı programları ve destek gruplarının oluşturulması bireyleri suçlu sosyal çevre etkisine karşı koyabilir ve olumlu davranışları teşvik edebilir. Bireylerin suç oranının yüksek olduğu mahalleler dışındaki bölgelerde yaşamalarını sağlamak ve ekonomik sorunları ele almak için çeşitli programlar uygulamak da suçu azaltabilir.

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