Does Class matter? Exploring the Pathways of Deviance among Affluent Youth of Bangladesh

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Abstract: *Deviant behaviour has been predominantly associated with lower socioeconomic class. While it is partially true, there has been a surge in cases of affluent deviance in the media recently. Notable Cases of Oishee, Nibras and Anvir have challenged the role of social class in criminality in Bangladesh. Despite many criminological theories proving the difference in the development, execution and prevention of criminality between different social classes, not much work has been done exploring affluent youth's deviant activities like smoking, substance abuse, pornography, piracy, premature and illicit sexual activities and many more. To shed light on this under-explored topic, this study aims to explore affluent youth deviance by understanding lifestyle choices, behaviours and mindsets that, over the years, can result in criminal acts. With a qualitative approach and thematic analysis, this study focuses on identifying the pathways of this deviance, particularly exploring the social control mechanism of affluent youths. Affluent youths struggle with problematic behaviours due to lack of parental supervision, access to technology, engaging with delinquent peer groups, ego identity and role diffusion are some of the key reasons as the findings discuss.*

Keywords: *Deviance, Affluent youth, Social control, Drug abuse, Legal immunity*

Introduction

While both crime1 and deviance2 have long been associated with the lower tiers of social classes, recent studies have shown that these behaviours are not confined to a single socio-economic group. In fact, there are variations and differences in how different socio-economic groups perceive the concepts of deviance, crime and justice. This idea underscores the importance of studying crime and deviance within the context of social class. Although, criminal cases have long been associated with people from lower socio-economic clusters, who are more in numbers as the number of street crimes, theft and

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[1] Crime refers to acts that breach the law and are punishable by law, including theft, assault, and murder (Hagan, 2017).

[2] Deviant behaviour is any action that deviates from social norms, is unusual, or fails to meet social expectations. Examples range from minor infractions like unconventional dress to severe acts like substance abuse. Individuals who deviate from social norms are called deviants. Deviance is a concept that encompasses the state or condition of being deviant (Clinard & Meier, 2015).

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property crimes rule the data charts, the mass attention in sensational cases such as the double murder committed by the daughter Oishee Rahman in 2013 opened a new discussion around deviance in Bangladesh. She was 19 and had an affluent upbringing, yet she killed her parents. She was a drug addict which is not very unusual for youths who belong to the upper classes. This addiction, due to lack of parental supervision, did not take long to turn into a deadly crime (The Daily Star, 2013).

Data from the Department of Narcotic Control (DNC) shows that 75.64% of the youth population (aged between 16 to 40) are engaged in substance abuse and 25.89% of them are in their early twenties (DNC, 2020). Considering drugs are not cheap to buy, and yet, a developing country like Bangladesh is devastated by this deviant activity, our focus automatically shifts towards those who have the financial affordability for it; the affluent youths[3]. This opens an arena of scope for the youth to get engaged in other deviant activities. And the affluent ones are mostly vulnerable because they have the money and opportunity to fall for that. In light of this reality, this study tries to explore the stages of developing deviance among affluent youth, by looking into their lifestyle choices, social control mechanisms and deviance.

Rationale of the Research

A disproportionate number of youths who are arrested, convicted and locked up in Bangladesh come from the lower tiers of socio-economic class (Sharmin, 2021). One major reason behind this is that wealthy individuals are less likely to be caught for criminal activity and often receive lighter sentences due to their ability to afford private lawyers, unlike those who rely on public defenders (Sydney Criminal Lawyers, 2019). This sense of "social immunity" of the affluent class makes their youth more likely to engage in deviance. Besides, most of the deviant activities like drug abuse, pornography addiction, smoking, and crimes like drug possession, and traffic rule-break require money. Thus, many affluent youths can be considered "at risk" due to their financial capacity and perceived legal immunity to engage in deviance. However, when people hear "at-risk youth," they often think of those who are economically disadvantaged and the vulnerability of affluent youths to deviant behaviours is overshadowed. But, notable cases like Oishi's (The Daily Star, 2013) and Anvir's (The Daily Star, 2021) show how affluent youths can become dangerous if their deviant behaviours spiral out of control. To prevent this from happening, the first step is to understand their pathways to criminality: deviance. To understand their deviance, it is crucial to explore their lifestyle choices[4] and their impact on social control, which the study aims to shed light on.

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[3] The term "affluent youth" refers to individuals from the upper middle and upper classes, as defined by Marcelo Medeiros' concept of the affluent line. They are aged between15 and 35 years, and have attended an educational institution (Medeiros, 2006).

[4] Lifestyle choices refer to the decisions individuals make daily that affect their behaviour, habits, and environment. According to lifestyle theory, these choices are shaped by routine activities and social interactions, which can increase or decrease one's exposure to potential criminal situations (Maxfield, 1987).

Objective and Research Questions

The main objective of this research is to understand the lifestyle, experiences and social control mechanisms of affluent youth to find any possible connection to deviance. The aim is to understand the evolving lifestyle, experiences, and social control of affluent youth that contribute to developing a deviant identity over time. The other is more exploratory aiming to explore the trajectories and decisions that lead to deviance, and how being from a privileged background gives the youth the perception and justification to commit such acts. It also wants to analyse how these deviant tendencies might develop into criminality and how personal aspects like socio-economic advantages; peer pressures or family behaviours shape their deviance. With the objective in line, the study asks these questions:

1. How has deviant nature developed among affluent youths over time?

2. How do lifestyle choices contribute to the deviant behaviours among the affluent youth?

3. How do affluent youths perceive and justify their deviant behaviours?

4. How does deviance lead to criminality?

Literature Review

Over the years, the literature on affluent deviance has evolved significantly. Literature on deviance dates back to the early twentieth century. Edwin Sutherland's writings on the concept of differential association (1939) provide the first foundational understanding of how deviant behaviours are developed. According to Sutherland, individuals learn deviant behaviours from others through communication and social interaction (Sutherland, 1939). Although Sutherland did not contextualise this on social class, this proposition is particularly relevant for affluent youths, who, due to a lack of parental supervision and less social control, are more prone to engaging with deviant peers.

Building on Sutherland's work, Akers and Burgess (1966) proposed the social learning process, which suggests that deviant behaviour is learned through interactions with others. According to their study, individuals adopt behaviours based on peer association and imitation (Akers, 1998). Akers later developed the Social Structure Social Learning (SSSL) model, which integrates the influence of societal structures, such as family, peer groups, and community, on the learning process of deviant behaviours. Travis Hirschi's concept of social bond (1969) elaborates on the SSSL model exploring how these social structures act as control mechanisms that prevent deviance. Hirschi argued that attachment to family and parents, commitment to conventional goals, involvement in social activities, and belief in the structural law are crucial in preventing deviance. These are termed as social bonds by Hirchi. These bonds create a "stake in conformity," making individuals less likely to engage in criminal activities due to the potential loss of these bonds (Hirschi, 1969).

Erik Erikson's study on ego identity and role diffusion provides additional insight into how these social bonds make or break identities experienced by youths. Erikson (1968) described ego identity as a "sense of self" that integrates various roles and experiences over time.

Table 1: Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (1968)

Stage	Age	Psychosocial Crisis	Virtue Developed
1	Infant to 18 months	Trust Vs Mistrust	Hope
2	18 months to 3 years	Autonomy vs Doubt	Will
3	3 to 5 years	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose
4	5 to 13 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency
5	**13 to 21 years**	**Identity vs confusion**	**Fidelity**
6	21 to 39 years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love
7	40 to 65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care
8	65 years and above	Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom

Source: Child Development Institute (https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-development/erickson/)

Affluent youths, with their unlimited opportunities, can experiment with multiple roles, leading to confusion and vulnerability to deviant behaviours (Erikson, 1968). This confusion often results in isolation, where they may not receive supervision from parents or other authority figures, further increasing the likelihood of deviance (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005). Although most of the twenty-century studies primarily focused on explaining how deviant behaviours are acquired, often overlooking the importance of social class, 21st-century research began to focus on the unique challenges and vulnerabilities of privileged youths. However, these early theories have shaped and influenced the current batch of deviance scholars who are interested in exploring the problem of affluent youth deviance.

In 2005, Luthar and Latendresse found that affluent youths face high expectations and pressure to succeed, which can lead to substance abuse and other deviant behaviours. Their isolated upbringing and lack of social bonds often result in individualism and anti-social tendencies, causing them to idealise inappropriate role models (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005). A decade later, Clinard and Meier (2015) found how social disapproval plays a crucial role in moderating deviant behaviours. According to the study, affluent youth experience less social disapproval due to their privileged status, access to money and opportunities which can contribute to the initiation and continuation of deviant behaviours (Clinard & Meier, 2015). A year later in 2016, Goode highlights that they often engage in cyber-deviance, such as hacking, pornography and online harassment. This is facilitated by their

access to technology and the anonymity provided by online platforms (Goode, 2016). Not only technology, but they also have access to resources that may assist in committing deviant acts. This notion is backed by the study by Mooney and Leighton (2019) which explores the dynamic between lifestyle and deviance. They emphasised that the privileged lifestyle of affluent youth often includes access to resources that facilitate deviant behaviours, such as money for drugs and opportunities for unsupervised activities, laptops for porn addiction, internet for cyber-crimes, access to clubs for gambling etc. This access, combined with a lack of social control, can often lead to criminality (Mooney & Leighton, 2019). Moreover, they are less likely to face legal consequences due to their status, which can lead to continued breaking of norms and laws.

Very recently, deviant behaviour among adolescents has been extensively studied by Smith in 2022 where he used the term "Socially Deviant Behaviour (SDB)". He noted that most youths start to engage in some form of SDB during adolescence. The study identifies four latent statuses of SDB with transitions between these statuses influenced by various factors, including social control mechanisms and peer influence. The findings suggest that affluent youth, while initially engaging in less harmful behaviours, may escalate to more severe deviance over time due to a lack of significant repercussions. It happens in four stages: Minimal Deviant Behaviour, Primarily Status Offense SDB, Moderate SDB, and Severe SBD (Smith, 2022). The research also indicates that affluent youth are more likely to engage in deviant behaviours that are acceptable within their peer groups (e.g. smoking weed), further normalising these actions.

How Differently Do Developed and Developing Nations See Affluent Youth Deviance?

Deviant behaviour among affluent youth represents a nuanced area of criminological inquiry, where socioeconomic privilege intersects with individual and social factors to produce unexpected patterns of misconduct. While global literature has increasingly recognized that affluence does not immunize youth from deviance, the focus has predominantly been on developed nations, with limited exploration in South Asian and Bangladeshi contexts.

In developed nations, research on deviant behaviours among affluent youth often emphasizes the paradoxes of privilege, where high expectations and material abundance contribute to psychological strain and risk-taking. One study of affluent samples in the United States (Luthar and Latendresse, 2005) found increased levels of substance use and internalizing problems among these adolescents with success as shown through achievement pressures, parental over-involvement, weakened self-esteem devotion precipitating deviant ways to cope. Strain Theory and Social Learning Theory generally feature in studies as such, which argue that frustration from unfulfilled non-material targets channels deviance toward value-generating outcomes, reinforced by elite peer settings.

Although, North American literature on South Asian problems is expanding, it has traditionally investigated general adolescent populations, and not particularly focusing on their socioeconomic background. These generally view their issues through a lens of cultural or familial bonds. A study conducted in India by Sharma (2019) reveals that with the spread of rapid urbanization and western culture era affects the deviant behaviours such as drug abuse, aggression, etc. among urban youth family structure and peer pressure being significant mediators.

There is a dearth of literature in Bangladesh, and that too focuses largely on underprivileged or immigrant population and less on affluent youth. Other general research on juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh (Sharmin, 2021) refers to social causes such as unemployment, and influence of media however with a focus on lower socioeconomic status thereby not specifically spotlighting the strains or justifications among affluent youth.

In contrast, the literature from developed countries largely depicts wealthy deviance as a unique experience rooted in internal pressures and weak sanctions, which differs significantly from the repeated references made in South Asian studies about cultural conflicts and external changes. As Bangladeshi research in this area is still relatively new and follows South Asian patterns, it highlights vulnerability rather than privilege, has not applied a theory to see how economic elites legitimize deviance. This exposes a regional bias in favour of the underprivileged, and many times, rich youth are considered unlikely to be delinquent.

This gap in literature is significant, and to shed light on this gap, the study explores pathways to youth deviance from a unique and much needed lens of affluency, privilege and elite lifestyle choices.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses a theoretical framework based on both classical and modern criminological theories, primarily focusing on institutional and multiple factors approaches to study the lifestyle, experiences, social control and pathways in deviance. This have been discussed within the paradigm of Social Disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942), a theoretical model originally applied to urban poverty but adapted here to investigate how affluent neighbourhoods may suffer from the deeper levels of disorganization such as weak formal and informal community oversight and prevalent materialism that may give rise to antisocial behaviour among affluent youth. Amidst the stability of their residences and the financial means of their families exist forces which drive them to isolation or peer pressure and behaviours which contribute to, for example, substance abuse or reckless driving which are behaviours outside of the norm, essentially, deviance.

Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) provides another crucial lens that highlights how even the wealthiest youth rarely escape strain; the expectations of society (such as competitive academic success and attaining elite institutes) can be precarious after high

investment from families and youths alike, to whom they are often compared. Parents demand for unrealistic perfection which can block opportunity and therefore lead to "innovation" (deviant means to achieve goals) or "rebellion" (rejection of norms) in the form of cheating in exams, vandalism of property, or juvenile delinquency. This relates to the research question regarding how lifestyle factors relate to deviance, as affluent youth can experience it in order to cope or demonstrate strain (Agnew, 2006).

Differential association theory (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978) and social learning theory (Akers, 1998) have an emphasis on peer effects and learned behaviour among affluents. Aspirational youth, engrossed in elite cliques, may have assimilated through cross-cultural experience beliefs in entitlement, or in risk-taking from their peers who, through normative social networks, may have internalized a taste for expensively socialised deviance, rewarded by status or parental indulgence in corruption. This framework problematizes perceptions and practices that can be seen as deviance, as youth may see acts such as reckless driving or substance use as simple "harmless" acts in the context of their privileges.

Building on this, Social Bond Theory (Hirschi, 1969) explores the effects of disloyalty to conventional social institutions and finds that, even in generality of the affluent class, weak attachments to these institutions produce greater deviance risk. For example, overindulgent parenting or disengagement from academics in the face of elite education may weaken social ties and spur deviant experimentation. This issue is related to the question asked in the study, how deviance evolves over time.

Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) even proposes that affluent lifestyles characterized by unmonitored leisure, availability of luxury commodities, and accessibility to high-risk environments provide ideal conditions for deviance to become criminal, explaining the last research question.

To add the institutional dimension, the study employs Institutional Anomie Theory (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994), which proposes that in rich societies in which economy becomes overdominant, social institutions like the family, peers, education etc. are devaluated, turning people into the great machine of materialistic success that legitimizes deviant shortcuts. For privileged youth this attitude takes on a "win at all costs" mentality whereby any violation of a norm, such as cheating, fraud, or aggression, is rationalized if it leads to economic status. The theory shows how imbalances between the institutional realms of socialisation creates a legitimacy vacuum which paves the way for the pursuit of culturally accentuated goals using illegal means - thus increasing from deviance to criminality.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

Based on the epistemological and ontological strands, the study is conducted using a qualitative method incorporating in-depth interviews. The population includes

youths aged 18-35 from the upper middle and upper social classes, primarily private university students and graduates.

Sampling

This involved purposive sampling, culminating in eighteen semi-structured interviews. Five additional interviews were carried out with key informants including police officers and academic professionals to offer more contextual information and insights. This method enabled the collection of perspectives from individuals who were directly involved with or knowledgeable about the subject, ensuring that the data were relevant, timely and rich.

Data Collection

As data collection tools, semi-structured interview with open-ended questions have been used to explore issues concerning affluent youths' lifestyle, experience and perception. In terms of ethics, the study protected the privacy of all participants by providing a confidential space for the interviews to be conducted and all data collected and analysed using password protected and encrypted devices. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study and any identifiable features had been removed. Before data collection, informed verbal consent was obtained after being briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study as well as their right to withdraw at any time.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interview, notes were elaborated through coding and findings have been developed by thematic analysis. The analysed data have been presented through discussions using quotations from the participants.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research shed light on understanding the pathways of deviant behaviours among affluent youth. To understand the initiation of deviant behaviours, the research explored the life course of the participants from their own stories. The participants were asked about their daily routine, activities, and ages when they got into socially unaccepted behaviours to understand their social control mechanisms.

Understanding the Affluent Youth Lifestyle

The respondents have a distinguishably similar "privileged" lifestyle. Most of the respondents reported a not-so-eventful life. One aspect of their realisation of privilege was that they could choose their universities of interest and subject of study without thinking about extremely high tuition fees. All the respondents were from private institutions which charge a hefty amount of fees ranging from 5 lac to 10 lac for a single degree. While asked about how her daily routine goes, a respondent, Ms. Fatiha, a 22-year-old private university student answered, "My daily routine is not very interesting. I wake up late, go to classes if I want to, hang out with friends after class, come back home, browse social media, and sleep late."

Another respondent, Mr. Robin, who is a third-year student, replied, "I have a hectic schedule every day. My university pressure is insane. So, I have to study all night…I have a sleeping disorder now." The two scenarios show the two extremes of an affluent lifestyle. This can be related to the lifestyle theory where it is argued that a person's lifestyle and routine activities influence their deviant behaviour.

The privileged routine of a youth rarely includes any traditional community or religious activities. Most of them reported to be culturally inactive and do not participate in voluntary activities and social work. This hinders their childhood development and keeps them within their affluent circle. Thus, this can be related to the idea of Social Bond (Hirschi, 1969). The faulty childhood development in affluent youths has a relation to their involvement in activities in social institutions. This. Again, this comes from the reference to Social Bond (Hirschi, 1969), where it is said that involvement in social institutions keeps the youth busy with constructive work. It helps the individual to explore his social bonds and conform to the positive ones. When asked about the cultural and volunteer activities, most of the respondents did not find it as a significant thing to give time to. Mr. Maruf said, "I have never participated in any voluntary activity and I don't think that has anything to do with my behaviour." Another respondent, Ms. Jisa who is a third-year student at a popular university in Dhaka, replied,

> My mother admitted me to a cultural institution (BAFA) to learn singing. I did one class there and the next day, I did not go. I don't think cultural activities are for me. I never felt interested in those.

This shows a lack of interest among the affluent youths to engage in cultural and voluntary activities that may keep them engaged in social institutions making constructive lifestyle impacts. Besides cultural institutions, their involvement in religious institutions is significantly low. Some of the respondents consider themselves as "atheist." They lead a non-religious life, just like the other members of their families. Ms. Palki, who is a 27-year-old graduate from a private university said, "I have forgotten the last time I sat on a prayer. I consider myself a person with a neutral religious view." This shows how affluent youths decide their self-identities according to their own beliefs and interests, leading to a fragile identity which from the liquid modernity perspective, changes the mobile identity from one to another, creating a "role confusion" as Erikson describes it (Erikson, 1968). Another 21-year-old respondent, Mr. Bappi, when asked about religious activities, said, "I miss my prayers due to a hefty schedule all the time. I pray on Fridays regularly though. But most of the time, my prayers are skipped or interrupted." This view directly supports the ego identity and role diffusion concept by Erikson too. An affluent youth's sense of self-identity depends on how he perceives his role in society and not the actual role in society. The respondent believes he is an atheist, but in society, he is not considered one. This may create role confusion, which later initiates deviant behaviour.

The youths from privileged families have an "absent" kind of relationship with their family members; especially the parents. This is due to the unavailability of parental affection. Most of the affluent parents are working people and they allocate the majority of their time to working. This creates a gap between the child and the parent. This gap increases over their lifetime as the children get busier with work too, and at one point, the distance creates misunderstandings of social networks. Ms. Palki said,

> I used to live with my parents in Chittagong before moving to Dhaka for my graduation…This did not make me sad, as even when I lived with them, they were unable to make an effort to talk to me every day…We did not interact on a daily basis.

The lack of availability of parents has an adverse effect on the child's development. Although the child was "privileged," she did not have the privilege of parental love and care which are essential for healthy behavioural growth. This supports the theory of Social Bond and Family Systems Theory, as both of them discuss loose ties with familial bonds and their effect on deviance. A 24-year-old private university student, Mr. Maruf said,

> My parents did not support my career choice of being a sportsman. I have over 100 medals playing football and cricket but my parents never supported me in this. They wanted me to be a businessman like my father. And this is why they admitted me to BBA. I don't like studying BBA.

Thus, there is a gap in career expectations too which contributes to the lack of parent-children connection. This supports the theory of Erikson's psychosocial theory where contradicting expectations create contradicting identities. This creates confusion in the individual's head about his own sense of identity and the identity society wants him to accept. As a result, the individual is left with a weak ego identity and a strong role confusion.

A contrasting picture is seen among the affluent youths while studying the relationship dynamics with their friends. Most of them were devoted towards them and had regular communication via online platforms. Having healthy peer relationships works as a means of social control according to Social Bond Theory. However, the opposite is also seen to happen where affluent youths get influenced by their deviant peers. Almost all of them got into socially unacceptable behaviours with the influence of their peer groups. Respondent, Mr. Robin said, "I got into smoking from the influence of a friend. At that time I was reading in class 12." This describes an unhealthy peer group influence which is found constantly in this study. Apart from constant chatting and having unfruitful and unconstructive conversations, affluent youths do not have a strong bond with their peer groups either. Although they might have a strong ground of communication, most of them choose themselves over their friends if a struggling situation occurs.

All of the respondents have active social media accounts on at least more than two online platforms. This indicates their easy access to technology like high-speed Wi-Fi, high-configuration computers, high-end mobile phones, and other expensive gadgets like DSLR cameras, drones, gaming systems etc. Thus, the affluent youths are surrounded by expensive technology which exposes them to a vast number of opportunities to commit cyber deviance like pornography, buying and selling on the dark web, cryptocurrency and bitcoins trading, online fraud, joining radical and extremist groups, identity theft etc. Respond Ms. Zakia, a 24-year-old said,

> I discovered audio porn when browsing unintentionally. Before that, I used to watch porn occasionally but was never addicted to it. Discovering this side of the internet changed my life.

This shows how uncertain cyberspace is for those who have unlimited access to the cyber world, the affluent. Nobody knows what webpage comes in the next search. The technology of "incognito" where no history of internet browsing is recorded and the use of VPN allows young people to satisfy deviant desires, such as pornography addiction, dark web browsing, online dating, gambling etc. The figure below shows the pathway of deviance for the affluent youth:
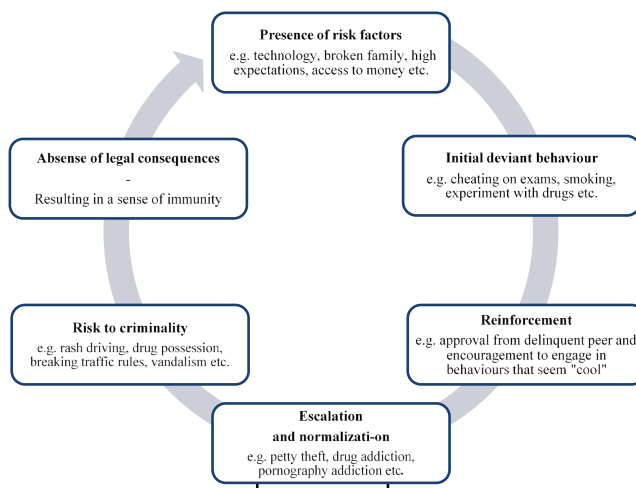

Figure 1: A Graphical Representation of the Pathways of Deviance among Affluent Youth

Source: Prepared by the authors of the present study

How Deviance is Initiated

All of the respondents agreed that they never had to refrain themselves from doing anything for financial causes. This is because youths who grow up in affluent families rarely worry about the negative consequences (financial) before deciding to do anything. This makes it easier for them to engage in deviant activities with

little to no worry about money. While someone from a lower social class can refrain themselves from chain smoking, thinking about the cost and benefit; an affluent youth is much more likely to "try out" smoking to look cool in front of his peers. Thus, his decision-making regarding the behaviour is much easier than other people. One of the respondents, Mr. Robin, who is a chain smoker, shared, "I first smoked (cigarettes) when I was 13. I did not like the taste of Navy cigarettes (a cheap one) then. Later, when I started smoking the Marlboro regularly, I was in class 12." From the statement, it is visible that the respondent's decision was not influenced by the price tag of the brand. Instead, he had the privilege of deciding what brand of cigarettes he liked to consume. This relates to the discussion done in the theoretical and literature section. And this is how they can easily decide to engage in deviant behaviour. Another respondent, a 25-year-old English Medium student, Mr. Adnan, on the same notion of deciding to engage in socially unacceptable behaviour, shared,

> I first used cigarettes when I didn't do well in my O levels. (O level is the equiv-
> alent of the Secondary School Certificate exam in English Medium schools.) On
> our result day, I cried in front of my parents which was humiliating for me. It was
> a mixture of sadness and anger. The next day, I decided to try cigarettes with my
> school friends. That helped me.

There is a significant role in friends and peer groups that were founded to help this initiation. This shows how affluent youths have extremely vulnerable ego identities and suffer from role confusion which allows their negative peer groups to influence their self-identity. They rarely think about how the identity of a "chain smoker" will affect their social bonds and social status. They care more about finding that relaxation that is provided by deviant activities like substance abuse. Honours student Mr. Bappi, similarly said, "I have never done hard drugs, but I do pot. Doesn't everyone do it nowadays?... My friends got me into this." This shows that there is an important role of the people the affluent youths surround themselves with. Thus, they place a higher value on their friendships with their classmates who engage in antisocial behaviour, such as smoking, drinking, and consuming drugs. This observation is comparable to what Akers, Sellers, and Jensen (2016) mentioned in their body of work.

How Lifestyle Choices Affect Deviance

There is a fine line between socially unacceptable behaviours and deviant behaviours. While socially unacceptable behaviours are less severe than deviant ones, they play a significant role in building deviant traits in individuals. The study found that most of the deviant acts were initiated as mere socially unacceptable behaviour, which later turned into a dangerous lifestyle habit. Most of the respondents got into substance abuse from smoking cigarettes. Those who tried hard drugs started with soft drugs like marijuana. Those who reported injuring passersby in car accidents started out driving cars without a licence. Mr. Rabbi, a 27-year-old graduate stated,

> My father bought me a car even before I had a licence. This is how everyone gets their car. They have the car, learn driving and then get a licence. I have never been caught for unlicensed driving as no one checks anything.

This shows that affluent youths are immune to the legal system. The sense of immunity gives them a mental privilege too. A Key Informant Interview (KII) of an OC from the Gulshan thana found similar data. The interviewee, Mr. Kalam said, "It is a common notion that the privileged kids will have drugs with them to keep up with the cool kids of Gulshan." When asked about how this notion developed, the respondent said that he doesn't know exactly how it started, it just has become the norm for the new rich of the city. Although statements like this give us a hint of the labelling process (that affluent youths are labelled as drug abusers), it is seen that affluent youths constantly feel the need to be in the trend. A trend of showing off and competition of who looks cooler. And this comes from the learning theory again where Akers' said that people learn deviant behaviours by imitating or trying to imitate deviant behaviours. On this notion, Mr. Maruf said,

> I started doing drugs to look cool among my friends. At that time, all hangouts had weed involved. If you take weed, you are in trend, if you don't; you are considered unsmart.

This shows how affluent youths choose their peer groups, and idealise them because they find their behaviours trendy. By differential association, they start adapting their deviant behaviours. This gives them a sense of self-identity and they become trendy too. This finding supports the theory of Erikson's ego identity and role confusion. When the youth does not possess a strong sense of self, and lets the social standards define a role for him, forming a pseudo-identity.

How Deviance Can Lead to Criminality

People often use the words "crime" and "deviance" interchangeably, but there are differences between the two. A crime is a violation of the criminal law, while deviant behaviour is a violation of social norms. Most of the respondents studied in this research tend to break social laws rather than criminal laws. But this does not mean they are not vulnerable towards criminal behaviours. Crime is the upper level of deviance and deviance often acts as the influencer for crime, especially among the affluent youths. A respondent, Ms. Palki, said, "In college, I once stole a book from a classmate. It was a prank for fun." When asked about other stealing occasions, Ms. Palki said, "My stealing can not be categorised as theft. Theft is done out of poverty, I did these because these were fun. I liked the reaction of my classmates." Property theft is considered a crime. Although the respondent's behaviour didn't seem criminal, the deviance can turn into a criminal activity of property theft. Another case, where deviant behaviour influenced criminality was when Mr. Sunny, a 27-year-old affluent youth got involved in stealing his mother's gold ornaments to buy cocaine. He said,

> Amma (Mother) found a pack (of cocaine) inside my drawer. She got my father involved and convinced him to cut off my pocket money…When I started having relapses, I couldn't help but have to steal her gold to pay for cocaine.

Although the person did not have any reason for committing a property crime of such level, his deviant behaviour of addiction forced him towards criminality. Besides, drug possession legally falls into the crime category. A respondent, Mr. Kabir, a 24-year-old with substance abuse disorder, said,

> I had friends who knew the drug dealing hubs. There's this place called Shi-shu-mela in Shymoli where our dealers physically sold drugs…It was secured and there was the involvement of police too. There are small tents, inside of which, the drug deals happen. There are khalas (middle-aged women) who help you with the pipe and smoke.

Most of the substance abusers dealt with criminal drug dealers on a regular basis. They were found from deviant peer groups' connections. Most of the contacts were done through online communication. Platforms like Facebook, Telegram, and Reddit have made it easy to communicate safely and anonymously. This creates a safe haven for criminality like drug dealing. Respondent, Ms. Borsha, a third-year private university student said,

> My friends added me to a hidden Facebook group. They make brownies with weeds. We call those hash brownies. Each sold for 4000 taka.

Besides drug-related crimes, piracy of intellectual properties is found to take place via cyberspace. According to Mr. Ifti,

> I used to make one lac a month by pirating those courses. Students were desperate for these contents. Now, I pirate all sorts of content via Torrent. This makes me approximately 2 to 3 lac each month.

Here, it can be seen as a pattern of developing a deviant identity without even realising the negative factors related to it. They think piracy is a non-criminal activity, saying, "No one buys movies anymore. Everyone uses pirated content online. Here we both are helping each other." A pattern of justification of the criminal activity is observed by the statement, which is supported by the social control theory where Ronald Akers (1985) found out that individuals define behaviour as per their own interest in its outcome. If the outcome of a deviant behaviour is favourable to the individual, he will commit it and justify his wrongdoings; and if the act does not have a favourable consequence, he will not justify it.

There is no denying that a person's microsystem relies heavily on the contributions of their surroundings, lifestyles and interaction with parents, offline and online peers, and activities that they emerge themselves in. Youths are no different. Their parents are the first ones to communicate and interact with them. They are the first institutional figures where the child grows up. The concern is not related to

physical growth only; psychological and behavioural growth are more focused in this study as they are directly related to the further development of deviant behaviour that leads to criminal activity. There are two primary tiers of authoritative interactions. At the level of the microsystem, it includes interactions that take place on a daily basis. It is very evident that particular characteristics of affluent families are associated with unfavourable outcomes for their children. When thinking about the risks faced by wealthy children, it is essential to consider the influence of their lifestyle choices on their deviant behaviours which the findings of this study have shed light on.

Recommendations

The findings from this study suggests that we should be more proactive about making multi-contextual interventions that address the added strain occurred as a result of privilege among affluent youth. Instead of merely imposing punitive sanctions, which alone may worsen entitlement or rebelliousness, these recommendations promote prevention and social-support processes intended to displace deviant trajectories for the at-risk youth. This will help to deter their progression to crime. They are directed to different stakeholders such as-

Educators:

- Design academic curriculum with ethics lectures

- Create a safe space to discuss topics related to peer pressure, strain, deviance, risk evaluation from an academic perspective.

- Bring opportunities to create strong social bonds by starting peer mentorship schemes in schools, colleges and universities.

- Provide on-campus support groups, specialized to handle at risk youths.

A. Families:

- Create safe space for the kids to reach out to parents, with an emphasis on emotional comfort.

- Seek family counselling in high-pressure situations.

- Discuss morals, values and ethics explicitly and listen for opinions, grievances and complaints of the younger members.

- Have family time, healthy family conversations and express support with goodwill.

B. Policymakers:

- Incorporate access and methods for registration of mental health screening for the youth population, both at the individual level and the group level, in schools to survey school and academic strain.

- Work with police to provide training to officers on identifying and intervening in deviance based in restorative justice rather than criminalization.

- Adopt a holistic strategy of prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation, aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Address root causes like institutional imbalances and peer dynamics to curb escalation and enhance youth development.

- Conduct future longitudinal studies to evaluate and refine these policies.

Conclusion

In the study of deviance, affluent youths are often overlooked despite their potential to misuse monetary and social power as well as the infinite opportunities (both positive and negative) they are blessed with. This study tries to explain how this class privilege relates to deviance. Findings suggest that affluent youths are prone to deviant behaviours due to their social environment and lack of supervision which further contribute to an absence of social control. Additionally, privileges such as early access to technology, immense financial supply and the sense of legal immunity amplify their deviance. These findings are significant in highlighting the importance of including affluent youths in discussions of deviant behaviour, particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh, where growing income inequality and wealth discrepancies are concerning. This difference among different social classes indicates a deeper-rooted problem of discrepancy in the justice system. In order to solve it from the root, it is recommended to implement targeted interventions that focus on behavioural development and social responsibility among affluent youths. Additionally, policies should aim to ensure that legal consequences are applied uniformly, regardless of social class, without granting the affluent youths the sense of immunity that drives their deviance.

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