

The Role of Self-control and Deterrence in Situational Action Theory (SAT) – The Results from the Slovenian High School Study

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According to Situational Action Theory, control is crucial in inhibiting delinquent behaviour, primarily when an individual overcomes moral concerns connected to the commitment of delinquent acts. This overpass of moral objections is facilitated by the circumstances under which the delinquency is tolerated or it is facilitated by an individual's disregard of the norms. In such cases, the deterrence (general prevention) and self-control become critical in the interpretation of delinquency. We conducted a quantitative empirical study on a sample of 409 high school students in Slovenia in 2011. The results show that contacts with delinquent friends (contact with socially undesirable moral contexts) remain the most important factor in determining delinquent activity; moreover, the influence of an individual's morality is annihilated by the contacts with delinquent friends. Perceived risk of punishment has a deterrent effect, especially when young people lack the internal respect of norms. Involvement in a circle of friends does not contribute to the rise of number of offences in youngsters with strong self-control. Those with low self-control show significantly stronger negative effects of associating with delinquent peers. These findings are in line with the situational action theory.

Key words: delinquency, high school students, Situational Action Theory of delinquency, control, self-control, deterrence

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