

The Rise of Retail Crime – A Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

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Speaker Notes

This slide shows a Fishbone Diagram, also called an Ishikawa Diagram (Ishikawa, 1968) or Cause-and-Effect Diagram, which is a visual tool used to identify the root cause of a specific problem. It helps us understand the reasons behind one main problem. In this case, the problem is the increase in shoplifting in the UK.

Let's look at the different causes, step by step.

First, we have "Struggling to Survive." Many people in the UK today are finding it hard to buy food and pay bills. Prices are going up, and many families are cutting back. According to the Office for National Statistics (2024), food prices increased significantly during 2023 and 2024, and many people are buying less or skipping meals due to the cost of living crisis. Some people feel forced to steal basic items like food. They are not doing it to make money - they are doing it because they are desperate.

Next is "Pain and Addiction." Some people who steal from shops have mental health problems or drug addictions. According to the Centre for Social Justice (2018), drug addictions may drive up to 70% of shoplifting cases. Many shoplifters also suffer from mental health problems and lack access to treatment. These personal struggles can push them into criminal behavior. Without treatment or help, this people may continue to steal.

Another cause is "Organised Crime Rings." This means some shoplifting is planned and done by groups. These groups may force other people to steal for them. They take the stolen items and sell them. According to the Centre for Social Justice (2018), this kind of shoplifting is not about survival - it is about profit.

Then we have "Blind Automation." Many stores now use self-checkouts. These machines make shopping quicker but can also be easy to cheat. The British Retail Consortium (2025) says shoplifters often take advantage of these systems when there are not enough staff watching.

Next is "No Response, No Consequences." In many cases, police do not come when

someone steals low-value items. According to the law, if someone steals goods worth £200 or less, their case usually goes to a magistrates' court (Magistrates' Courts Act, 1980). This makes some people think shoplifting is not taken seriously.

Another cause is "Weak Laws and Policies." According to the Home Office, the government is now trying to improve how it handles retail crime, but many people believe the rules are still too soft (Home Office, 2025). Store workers often don't feel protected, and repeat offenders are not always punished properly.

In summary, shoplifting is a growing problem with many causes. Some people steal because they are poor or struggling. Others do it because of addiction or mental health problems. Some are part of criminal groups. Weak security, little police response, and soft legal rules make the situation worse.

To solve this problem, the UK needs to take action in many areas. We need better support for people in need, stronger shop security, and clearer laws to show that shoplifting has real consequences.

References

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