

Psychology of Criminal Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Criminal behavior, particularly violent and antisocial behavior, is considered to be a major social problem with complex causes. It is known that a myriad of environmental, social, and psychological factors are associated with increased risk of convictions for this type of criminality. Interrelated factors include poverty, poor housing, and high levels of social inequality in society, low educational attainment, poor diet, low self-esteem, and impulsivity. There are common factors that characterize individuals who commit crime. Theories of crime vary based on their foundational assumptions of human nature. These theories and the documented characteristics of criminals have led to the development and use of risk assessment tools with reasonable accuracy. A relationship between mental disorder and crime exists but is minor and disorder-specific. Crime prevention aims to inhibit the development of criminal behavior in a variety of ways. The psychology of criminal conduct, then, is an approach to understanding the criminal behavior of individuals through the ethical and humane application of systematic empirical methods of investigation, and the construction of rational explanatory systems. The question as to why people choose to commit crimes, often in the face of severe consequences lies at the root of criminal psychology. This branch of study focuses on the behaviour and intentions of the people who intend to carry out criminal acts. Criminal psychology provides a glimpse into a criminal's psyche. It even plays a role in how the law is applied. Forensic psychologists and mental health professionals are often called to help in clinically evaluating the mental states of the people who break the law. In this paper, the scope of criminal psychology will be discussed, along with how it differs from related fields like forensic psychology and how it became a specialized field of study. The function and duties of a criminal psychologist in criminal justice procedures as a therapist, experimentalist, actuary, and advisor will also be covered in this study. The function that a criminal psychologist plays in the investigation, trial, conviction, and rehabilitation of offenders will also be briefly covered.

Keywords: Criminal psychology, Criminal behavior, Society, Environmental, Human nature

INTRODUCTION

Psychology is defined as a science that studies the mental aspect of an individual that helps in determining human behaviour. The study of psychology includes the study of conscious and unconscious states of mind. In other words, psychology studies the mind of humans and its effect on human behaviour. The aspects included are conative, cognitive, and affective aspects (Chaturvedi *et al.*, 2022).

Psychology plays a key role in police work as well. Forensic psychologists or criminal anthropologists help to determine the suspects through analysing a crime-scene, investigative into psychology, and other behavioural sciences. Law enforcement agencies often rely on these experts to get inside the head of a potential culprit by identifying the perpetrator's likely personality type, lifestyle habits, and quirks (Bates *et al.*, 2022).

Psychology has been helpful in the legal aspect as it helps in determining the *mens rea* of a criminal while

committing the crime, veracity of witnesses, and what punishment should be granted to a person committing an offence, by keeping in mind the person's psychological frame of mind. To some extent, psychology has started determining a criminal, as a person suffering from a mental disorder and thus suggests that such persons should be medically treated and not punished. The significant changes in psychology include the deinstitutionalisation of the mentally ill, with a greater understanding of the treatments and causes for mental disorders (Bonta and Andrews, 2016).

Psychology also helps in checking the veracity of witnesses, as often the eyewitnesses are known to be either influenced by the accused or they are afraid of the accused. Psychology can also help in reducing the false confessions by adopting peace models. Its studies include the examination of different areas having social and legal significance. It is based on the psychological and empirical research of law and legal institutions and helps in focusing on legal psychology rather than clinically-oriented forensic psychology. Considering the psychological aspects of a human mind while pronouncing a judgement ensures justice (Figueredo *et al.*, 2011).

There are various theories in psychology that explain criminal behavior. Among the most well-known is the social learning hypothesis, which postulates that people pick up criminal behavior from the others they associate with and watch. An additional theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of early childhood experiences and unconscious impulses in criminal behavior is the psychodynamic perspective (Bhagtani *et al.*, 2020; Kamaluddin *et al.*, 2015). The cognitive viewpoint also looks at how people make decisions that could result in criminal activity and how they process information. In conclusion, the biological perspective delves into the genetic, neurological, and hormonal elements that could potentially influence criminal conduct. It's crucial to remember that criminal behavior is multifaceted and intricate, frequently involving a combination of these and other elements (Hollin, 2013).

History of criminal psychology:

Psychology was first established as a scientific field in 1879. Since then, psychology has developed greatly, and several subfields, including criminal psychology, have emerged. Experiments carried out by numerous psychologists helped to establish the field of criminal psychology. Such as Milgram's 1960s experiment, which

provided a fair understanding of how people's innate behaviors change in response to stress. Even though Milgram's experiment made a significant contribution to the field of criminal psychology, the term "criminal psychologist" was not used to him. The 19th century is where criminal psychology first emerged. As such, it is a relatively new field that is still growing within the field of psychology. People around the world are starting to realize how important criminal psychology is these days. Criminal psychology is still in its infancy in India (Quinsey, 2002; Fan, 2021).

Eyewitness testimony is connected to early criminal psychology experiments. Since eyewitness testimony is crucial to a case's successful resolution. In North America, James McKeen Cattell conducted tests on eyewitness testimony that made a substantial contribution to the body of work on criminal psychology. Although they weren't initially done to add to the body of work on criminal psychology, these tests were eventually included. He forced his test subjects to recall daily events that they had witnessed. According to the findings of these trials, the majority of participants were unable to recall what they had seen the day before, and those that could were unable to articulate their memories precisely. As such, most of the information they provided was false. In 1938, James McLean Cattell carried out this experiment as his first attempt to investigate the psychology of eyewitness testimony (Williamson, 2012).

Pioneers in the criminal psychology:

Hugo Münsterberg was a German psychologist who wrote a book with a number of pieces discussing the important ways in which psychology might advance the study of law. He is frequently referred to as the founder of criminal psychology. He learned that the study of psychology can make a substantial contribution to the resolution of problems including hypnotism, false confessions, suggestibility, eyewitness evidence, and crime prevention. Wilhelm Wundt was a well-known criminal psychologist who taught Hugo. He testified as an expert witness in numerous trials, including the well-known Oz magazine case (Baker *et al.*, 2023).

William Stern was a German psychologist whose experiment, which involved arousing the eye witness's emotions, was very important. Participants in the experiment were forced to watch two students fight. One teenager pulled a revolver during the altercation and shot the other. They were emotionally stirred by this

experience, which had an impact on their evidence (Islam *et al.*, 2022).

Schrenck Notzing was a German psychiatrist, physician, and psychical investigator who specialized in researching paranormal phenomena pertaining to hypnosis, telepathy. Retroactive memory falsification, according to him, is the process of a witness's genuine memory event being tampered with by material from other sources including the media.

Psychologist Albert Bandura was a Canadian-American. His "Social Learning Theory" is very helpful in understanding the underlying causes of numerous behaviors. In order to test his social learning theory—which holds that people pick up behaviors from their environment through a process of mediation, retention, motivation, and reproduction—he conducted the well-known Bobo doll experiment.

Importance of Criminal Psychology:

A society's ability to function well depends on criminal psychology. Criminal psychologists' study can help detect potential offenders and help law enforcement stop crimes in the future. Moreover, because criminal psychology places greater emphasis on society than on individuals, it becomes imperative to establish community norms that promote harmony and guard against harm.

Criminal Psychology behavior:

The study of criminal behavior and its participants' goals, acts, emotions, viewpoints, and thoughts is known as criminal psychology. Criminal anthropology and criminal psychology are linked fields. The study aids in figuring out what motivates someone to commit a crime and how they respond in court, on the run, or after the crime. The decision-makers regarding criminals are criminal psychologists, sometimes referred to as legal psychologists (Sahni and Bhadra (Eds.), 2021). They assess the offenders' potential threat to the community. Criminal psychology investigates many forms of delinquency as well as criminal behavior. In addition to conducting assessments on individuals, this is also accomplished through research involving non-criminals. A criminal psychologist may also investigate the psychological causes of criminal behavior, evaluate the level of danger associated with certain persons, and create psychological and psychotherapy interventions for offenders (Steele, 2023).

Criminal psychologists are frequently relied upon as

witnesses in court to aid juries in understanding the thoughts and motivations of offenders. Moreover, psychology is useful in addressing certain facets of criminal behavior. "Any kind of antisocial behavior, which is usually punishable by law, but can even be punished by norms, stated by the community," is what is referred to as criminal behavior (Rai and Gill, 2022).

When conducting an investigation, such as looking at photos from the crime scene or interviewing the suspect, criminal psychologists do these tasks. There are situations where criminal psychologists are asked to develop a theory in order to predict the offender's future course of action following a violation of the law.

For the purpose of identifying the criminal, psychologists examine behavioral patterns. When an offender is reintegrated into society, are they more likely to become a sexual predator? Were they mentally stable when they committed the crime? And can they be tried successfully? These are some of the most psychologically taxing questions (Jones, 2013 and 2019).

Roles of criminal psychologist:

A criminal psychologist's primary responsibility is offender/criminal profiling. When it comes to offender profiling, the criminal psychologist examines the attitudes and actions of the offenders. Using items left or done at the crime scene, the psychologist uses this method to try and determine the person's emotional, personality, and mental traits.

Maintaining Rapport:

The ability for two people to feel as though they can connect and interact with one another is referred to as rapport. Values and interests serve as the foundation for rapport, yet it can also include other personal elements. Mirroring body postures, eye contact, and shared attention are some ways to foster a connection. The psychologist works to develop this kind of relationship with the person since it is crucial to keep up good communication in order to win the accused person's trust and enable him to feel free to express his opinions without feeling compelled. The forensic psychologist attempts to examine the offender based on his behavior, such as shaking during the interview, dilated pupils, or sweating palms, all of which could be signs that the person is nervous or lying. These insignificant deeds also aid the psychologist in comprehending the criminal's mental state (De Soto *et al.*, 2022).

Professor Lionel Haward once provided an explanation of how a psychologist could participate in criminal trials on a professional basis back in 1981. The following are the four roles that criminal psychologists play:

Clinical:

In this case, a psychologist participates in the evaluation of the individual in order to render a clinical opinion. A psychologist's tools include assessment, psychometric, and interviewing techniques; they can assist law enforcement or other agencies in deciding how to handle the concerned party. For instance, assisting in determining if the person is mentally ill and cannot comprehend the nature of the proceedings or whether he is capable of standing trial.

Experimental:

In this instance, the psychologist does research to support the claims. Experiments may be conducted as part of the research process; these may be done to support a claim or give the courts more information. This has to do with things like a fabricated memory and the veracity of the eyewitness tests. Example: One can respond to a query such, "How likely would a witness see an object in 100 meters?"

Actuarial:

In this position, a psychologist uses statistics to support a claim. In this scenario, a psychologist might be asked to estimate the likelihood that an event will transpire. Example: If a sentence is denied, one can inquire of the courts what the likelihood is that the offender will commit another crime.

Advisory:

In this capacity, a psychologist could provide police advice on how to conduct an inquiry. Examples include how to conduct an effective interview, predict an offender's behavior after committing the crime, and know how to effectively cross-examine a weak witness or another expert witness.

Criminal Psychology behavior and Punishment:

The process of assigning consequences for people's behaviors in order to prevent them from happening again over time is known as punishment. It is predicated on the theory of operant conditioning, which holds that individuals

will stop doing things that are penalized and resume behaviors that are rewarded (Verbruggen *et al.*, 2020).

A criminal psychologist's job is to determine the defendant's mental state at the time of the crime, since this will affect the punishment they get. Certain penalties necessitate that the offender demonstrate their purpose when engaging in unlawful behavior (Sahni and Krishnakumar, 2021).

However, if criminal psychologists can prove that a person did not intend to do what they did, then people with mental conditions might face alternative penalties. Because of their psychological condition, people may not always be held accountable for their deeds.

Psychological Factors That Contribute to Criminal Acts:

Personality Disorders:

A study was carried out in 2017 by researchers using a random sample of 228 convicts, of which 114 were men and 114 were women. 87.3% of the female test participants and 83.3% of the male test subjects had a personality disorder at the time of their criminal behavior. The following personality disorders are most frequently observed in individuals who have committed crimes, while many other disorders can also influence an individual's propensity to commit crimes:

- Principal Depression
- Disorder of Dependent Personality
- Disorder of the Antisocial Personality
- Personality Disorder with Borderlines

Trauma:

Does criminal behavior have a clear connection to early trauma? According to studies, children who encounter life-altering events like physical abuse, neglect, or witnessing a friend or family member die at the hands of another can have long-lasting effects.

Trauma symptoms like animosity and paranoid thoughts can occasionally linger into adulthood and influence victims to commit crimes. The probability rises with ongoing traumas, such as when a teenager witnesses violent crimes occurring frequently in their neighborhood.

Furthermore, according to the National Institute of Justice, those who have endured protracted trauma and have developed emotional detachment as a coping strategy are more likely to commit crimes again. They might be able to consciously disengage from the emotional effects of previous traumas and the emotions connected

to committing a crime by disengaging from their emotions.

Substance Abuse and Addiction:

In the United States, there were about 1.3 million people incarcerated in 2015. A sizable percentage of those serving sentences were doing so for drug-related and nonviolent offenses. So why drug addicts are becoming jailed at such a high rate?

Addiction modifies the way the brain functions, altering how a person thinks, sees the world, and behaves. Addiction can occasionally drive a person to engage in dangerous and unlawful behavior, such as stealing and domestic abuse.

Conclusion:

Criminal psychology is the study of a criminal's objectives, thoughts, behaviors, or reactions with the goal of identifying patterns that could aid law enforcement or other relevant agencies in the capture of criminals or in supporting a court during proceedings. Criminal profiling is a significant topic in criminal psychology.

In addition to helping to maintain justice, equity, and good conscience, psychology's function in the legal system is a step toward making it perfect. Understanding the mentality of criminals is the best approach to lessen crime, therefore studying criminal psychology can help stop more crimes from occurring in the future. Criminal psychology is still in its infancy in India. In order to attract academics and students interested in criminal psychology and to enable the conduct of an increasing number of studies and experiments with the goal of improving results, the government must increase funding and construct the necessary infrastructure.

A criminal psychologist's work is extensive and includes assisting the police with investigations, choosing police officers, conducting psychological assessments of suspects, victims, or offenders, providing intervention, planning, and managing the offender's rehabilitation, conducting this field's research, and training upcoming investigators and criminalists.

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