

THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A CRIMINAL: A SHORT REVIEW

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Abstract - Psychology of a criminal or Criminological psychology is basically a study of wills, thoughts, emotions and reactions of criminals and how these affect their behavior. A person is not a criminal by birth, but there are so many factors or situations which force an individual to become a criminal. Different researchers attributed different theories on what makes the person a criminal. Different psychological theories of crime found on the first hand knowledge or experience are abundant; they are mainly due to racism or prejudice, genetically oriented criminal mind set up etc. – all these affecting factors are put forth by various investigators based on their scientifically explored studies. This article presents a short review on different factors affecting the behavior of a person which lead him/her to commit a crime. Different databases were searched for relevant references and each study was properly compared against the inclusion criteria, prior to selection and data were analyzed. The review concluded that apart from the environmental and social factors, psychopathy affected more the behavior of an individual and made the person violent/aggressive thus guided the individual to become a criminal.

Key words: Criminal, Psychological, Psychopathy, Juvenile, Reactive, Proactive

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the terms, delinquency and criminal act are related to each other to some extent, nevertheless, it is very important to understand and distinguish them. Delinquency refers to an act that is prohibited by the social norms, whereas criminal act is violation of existing laws of a State. Therefore, criminal conduct is any kind of antisocial behavior punishable by the law. With the passage of time, crime is also exceeded. At times the way a crime is committed shocked us tremendously and thus it becomes essential to focus towards the behavior of criminal to better understand the offender. Many types of questions arise during an investigation of a crime regarding the criminal/criminals; under what circumstances the offence was committed and the thinking/frame of mind when the offence was committed. Juvenile delinquency is also a serious problem nowadays and on a rise in many countries. According to the National Survey in the US, 18.4% crime is committed by the young [1] and it increased to 11.6% during 2013 among the Turkish youth. [2]. Most of the time, a person or a juvenile commits a crime due to the influence of peer pressure or by the effect of the surrounding society. Criminals commit crime in different ways and under various situations mostly due to the overwhelming external circumstances. Many persons commit crime under the influence of drugs with or without any mental disorder. But some are genuine criminals who gain anti- social attitude and feel pride about the delinquent exploit [3].

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CRIME

Different researchers made different types of theories to investigate the criminal mind based upon experimental or scientific basis. Offenders usually act against the law for the personal gain or gratifications. Basically, there are three broad theories, accepted by the researchers to understand the criminal mind.

2.1 Biological Theory

According to this theory, a person inherits criminal behavior. An infant starts life with antisocial drives. Earlier, Lombroso in 1876 argued that the physical shape of the head and face determine the “born criminal”. But afterwards many modern theories determine the biochemical effects such as diet, hypoglycemia, hormones and neurophysiological (brain dysfunction) - all these can be responsible for the criminal behavior.

2.2 Psychological Theory

This theory describes the mentality of the person. Many crimes result from the abnormal, dysfunctional or inappropriate mental disorders of an individual. These people commit crime without any reason. Most of the cases found under psychological state include suicidal tendencies or they tried to harm themselves due to lack of empathy when nobody was around.

2.3 Sociological Theories

These include the social as well as environmental factors that are mainly responsible for the crime. Poverty is one reason that creates such a situation and pushes the offender to commit crime. Other factors include stress, frustration and the inability to fulfill their desires through legitimate means. Society and environmental factors are big reasons behind the crime.

3. VARIOUS STUDIES

Mehitta Shmideberg [3] surveyed the various regions with different types of people to identify the range of factors of criminal behavior such as under the influence of drugs, anti social factors, crime for fantasy, feeling of moral inferiority/superiority in criminals, effect of bad social conditions etc. Bland et al [4] conducted a study on prisoners and compared them with other people. Comparison showed the low literacy rate and high psychiatric disorder among the prisoners. Due to this, suicide attempts were also more among the prisoners than in the general population. It seems that the gender differences in crime rate and violent behavior were due to physical size and strength. Though both, males and females, are involved in criminal activities, however, males were more capable to attack due to their dominance in physical strength and more effective or skillful in producing injury (R B Felson [5]). Asnis GM et al [6] tried to evaluate the relation between violent/ homicidal behavior and mental illness/psychiatric disorder in their study. They surveyed the behavior of former psychiatric inpatients and compared with outpatients and surrounding community. The study showed the significant association between the violent/homicidal behavior and mental illness, but they concluded that some other factors such as alcohol abuse and dependence as well as antisocial personality disorder – all of these were also responsible for such kind of behavior. Further, mental illness of a person resulted in violent/criminal behavior. An outstanding study revealed that one of the mental disorder - schizophrenic illness - exhibited a significant relationship between schizophrenia, violence and crime (Jiri Modestin [7]).

Brennan et. al. [8] discussed the violent behavior of patients with mental illness which lead to hospitalization. The study which included both, men and women showed that the individuals who were hospitalized had higher rates of police arrest for violence than those who were never hospitalized. However, the psychopathic traits among the adolescent offenders were positively associated with self-reported delinquency and aggressive behavior. Besides the psychopathic traits, parental neglect and erratic punishment were also played a major role. Antisocial lifestyle was unrelated to emotional difficulties (Campbell et. al. [9]). Mao-Sheng Ran [10] studied the criminal behavior among the cohort of schizophrenia persons in rural china. The rate of criminal behavior was more associated with those males who were unmarried, previous violent behavior, homelessness, no family caregivers and high scores that measure the total symptoms of mental illness. Study of the biological factors such as Neuropsychological and Psychophysiological measures to understand why some individuals do not become antisocial or criminal in the presence of high social risk revealed that the IQ, high resting heart rate and increased skin conductance fear condition appear as the best replicated protective factor against antisocial behavior (Portnoy et al [11]). In-depth review about the association between psychopathy and criminal behavior by Dingra and Daniel [12] among the different age groups such as children, youth and adult, showed that psychopathy affected more the behavior of a person and lead towards the crime. On the other hand, Kamaluddin et al [13] presented the four psychological traits such as personality trait, low self control, aggressive behavior and cognitive distortion - showed the significance linkage to crime and criminality contexts. Nevertheless, the reactive (one reacts to a situation) and proactive (more or less accepts the situation) criminal thinking by self-reported data from males and females from mid to late adolescent members of the offending, crime and justice survey, showed the vital link with the reactive criminal thinking in the series of cognitive events that gave rise to crime. Proactive criminal thinking linked with only predictive of offending whereas reactive criminal thinking linked with both, i.e., predicted by and predictive of offending (Walters [14]). Taskiran et. al. [15] showed that among the association between crime severity and psychological factors such as gender, age and criminal history in the juveniles, it is the family history of crime was significantly associated with high severity crime group as well as with the psychiatric disorder such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). No difference was found in terms of gender, age, children's past history of crime and substance abuse.

CONCLUSION

The behavior of criminals varied with the different crimes and the reason behind this behavior was due to varied psychological traits which were responsible. Besides, a person committed crime in different situations. Poverty and environmental factors were linked more with the crime. The criminals of this type committed crime to fulfill their desires. Other factors like child abuse, improper education, torture at home and different other reasons affected an individual's brain and lead to commit a crime. The biological factors, such as the inherited mental illness and other

disorders also affected the behavior of a person. Psychopathy had a vital link with severe crime and it showed more often in juvenile, with the increment of juvenile crime. Certain disorders such as schizophrenia, neuropsychological measures prohibited a person's judgement of the correct/incorrect matters. These types of criminals were mostly suicidal and dangerous not only for others but also for themselves. To decrease the crime rate, understanding of criminal behavior was very important, so that proper reason behind the crime whether biological, psychopathic, environmental etc. could be investigated thoroughly and dealt with properly that would help to achieve a lasting elucidation in rehabilitation.

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