

## “Criminal Psychology”

*\*Rahesha Sehgal,  
New Delhi*

*\*\*Udit Malik,  
New Delhi*

### **Abstract**

Criminal psychology has always been a topic that has come into immense roar these days because of the increase in crimes all around the globe, it is impossible to make out who is iniquitous in today's time, a person sitting next to you in a local transport can be as dangerous to you as a murderer/rapist sitting inside a jail, hence the aim of this research paper is to find out the mechanics inside a criminals mind before and after committing a crime so that we can curb the number of criminals around the world by understanding their workings.

### **Introduction**

The term criminal psychology for most people may be associated with Hollywood movies, such as “Silence of the Lambs” while in the layman's language criminal psychologists are the people who help police catch the offenders, conduct interviews with them and gain a better insight into the offender's mind by talking to them about the committed crime.

It is related to the field of anthropology, it not only studies what makes someone commit a crime but also the aftermath of a crime inclusive of the feelings/emotions that the offender goes through while committing the crime and after the crime.

The term “criminal psychology” has been defined in a numerous ways. Even today it has no accepted definition. It can be defined as a science, which helps investigative institutions in fulfilling their mission more effectively by applying a psychological knowledge to it.

It is also the study of the thoughts, will, intentions, reactions of criminals and those who engage in criminal behavior.

This academic discipline was established not so long ago. It was late 19th century when universities started to teach it. But actual methods of offender profiling was used earlier by the investigators. **German psychologist Hugo Munsterberg<sup>1</sup>** is considered to truly start the criminal psychology, his works from 19th-20th centuries still are very useful for psychologists. Since early 20th century criminal psychologists role in the whole process of fighting criminal has been increasing rapidly and nowadays their work are highly appreciated in every developed country of the world.

Erstwhile it was thought that genetics is the only cause of criminal behavior but with time it came to everybody's knowledge that it's just not the genetics, because if a child who's mother is schizophrenic and father a murderer/rapist will likely become a criminal according to the genetics but if the child gets proper education, he will not become a criminal. So apart from genetics, situations also plays an important role to govern the criminal behavior of an individual.

---

<https://psychology.fas.harvard.edu/people/hugo-m%C3%BCnsterberg>

Situations where crime rate increases-

-Financial problems- when a person has to struggle everyday just to eat food to survive, the probability that they become thieves is high.

-Low social status- when one is bullied because of their class and economic status they can easily become aggressors and fight against the whole society.

Described as the *father of modern criminology*, **Cesare Lombroso's** theory of the 'born criminal' dominated thinking about criminal behavior in the late 19th and early 20th century.<sup>2</sup>

He gave the concept of criminal atavism, criminals and non-criminals can be distinguished from their physical features like sloping forehead, ears of unusual size, excessive length of arms and less sensitivity to pain. He mainly focused on the physical outlook of the criminals.

He was one of the first criminologists to attempt to formally classify criminals based on age, sex, gender, physical characteristics, education, and geographic region. When comparing these similar characteristics, he understood the origin of motivation of criminal behavior, and in 1876, he published his book called *The Criminal Man*. Lombroso studied 383 Italian inmates. Based on his studies, he suggested that there were three types of criminals. There were born criminals, who were degenerates and insane criminals, who suffered from a mental illness. Also, he studied and found specific physical characteristics. A few examples included asymmetry of the face, eye defects and peculiarities, and ears of unusual size, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Psychological and social factors on the functioning of our brain are the seed of all our actions and are also the central questions forensic and criminal psychology deal with.

The main question is '**Which patient becomes an offender?**', or '**Which offender becomes a patient?**'. Another main question asked by these psychiatrists is, '**What came first, the crime or the mental disorder?**'.

### **Recidivism and its Risk**

Recidivism is the act when the offender after completing its punishment can relapse and can re-offend in future, the act of a person to repeat an undesirable behavior after negative experience consequences.

It has been shown that prioritizing resources for individuals at moderate or high risk for reoffending can lead to a significant reduction in recidivism.

---

<sup>2</sup> First published by *History Extra* in 2015

<sup>3</sup>The physiology & psychology of crime, Volume 1 Cesare Lombroso, Guglielmo Ferrero

There are different ways in which recidivism can be decreased, one of the major way is the change of environment of the offender after the punishment has been completed.

To quote an example here if a soldier is humiliated and punished for a crime for say attempting to murder his neighbor, he is put in a dark room with no scope of sunlight and in absolute darkness for 42 days, now during this period of time the offender gets ample amount of time to self-introspect and realize it's mistake, hence at stage one the chances of recidivism reduces because the offender will become conscious of it's crime and has got time to reach a level of composure.

While after the duration of punishment is over change of environment is extremely important to reduce the risk of recidivism because the environment in which the person was humiliated and the place where the crime was committed will trigger him and will not let him be a new person, hence change of environment acts as a catalyst for the offender to be a new person and start life from a new leaf.

An individual's motivation to change can also reduce recidivism by implementing intrinsic motivation where the person reaches a level of self introspection and composure while expressing empathy without conveying approval for negative behavior can also help in the same.

### **Environment playing a major catalyst.**

Environment always acts as a catalyst to change the mentality of the criminals; a change in environment helps them lead a better life from a new chapter because with the change in their surroundings they no longer are reminded of their daunting past and are ridden from the guilt they were living with, it also reduces the risk of recidivism.

For example- a man who has killed his neighbor and after his due punishment he is made to live in the same colony where he killed his neighbor. This will make him feel more guilty and will act as a hindrance in his path of recovery because he will continuously keep getting the glares of the people living in his surroundings, while a change in environment would mean that he is a clean slate and he can start his life afresh.

Hence a change in environment acts as a major and an incredible catalyst in the path of recovery of a criminal.

### **Theories governing behind a criminal's action.**

#### **1.Five factor model-Costa and Mccare**

This model is also called the big five it brings us the current era in personality research. It has five components:-

-Extraversion- it's defined by the characteristic of outgoing, socially confident behavior

-Agreeableness- the factor agreeableness includes terms like generosity, amiability and warmth and aggressiveness and temper, all these factors make up the broader factor of agreeableness.

-Conscientiousness-trait that can be described as the tendency to control impulses and act in socially acceptable ways.

-Neuroticism- it draws where an individual draws their energy and how they interact with each other

-Openness- it refers to the person's individual mental life and experiences, it is at the same time also called intellect or imagination.

## **2.Eysenck's pen model<sup>4</sup>**

It has three components:-

Extraversion- engage in social activities.

Psychosis- a severe mental disorder in which thought and emotions are so impaired that contact is lost with external reality.

Neuroticism- it is a long term tendency to be in negative or anxious emotional state.

High neuroticism leads to high persistent in people which makes crime a routine that is continuously reinforced. (increase the rigidity of thought and decrease the guilt)

High extraversion and psychosis interferes with the learning social rules and conditioning increasing the likelihood of criminal behaviour.

It was found that costa and mccare's big five model was related to the p (psychosis) of the eyesenck's pen model. Apart from this a person's emotional behaviour and academic achievements also determine the chances of the person to indulge in crime.

## **3.Glenn D Walter's theory<sup>5</sup>**

Criminal behavior is a choice conditioned by the interaction of individual's traits and environmental circumstances.

Glen Walter's lifestyle theory has three components:-

-conditions

---

<sup>4</sup> Eysenck's PEN model of Personality-University of Nottingham(Study Material)

<sup>5</sup> Personality Theory of Context-Glenn D Walter(Book)

-choices

-cognition

Criminal lifestyle is the result of the choice that the criminal makes because of the environmental circumstances, cognition refers to cognitive styles people develop as a consequence of this biological and environmental conditions and the pattern of choices they made in responses to them.

Lifestyle criminals display cognitive features or thinking errors that make them what they are.

#### **4.Strain theory<sup>6</sup>**

By Robert k Murton states that society puts pressure on individual to achieve socially accepted goals and crime is a result of the conflict between a person's goals and the means they use to achieve this.

#### **Case Study 1**

**Aim: To know the society's response in reference to the rape victim.**

**Question: will you let your son marry a rape victim? How will you deal with the society's response?**

**Response (mother):** no, I want a clean chit daughter-in law.

Interpretation- Took less than a second to answer, she was adamant and strong on her stance.

**Father's Response-** Thought for a while and with lot of conviction said that. Yes, I'll allow him because it's the heart that overrules the wind, and with due regard to the society, these are all old age things nobody really cares about what the society thinks.

#### **Suchet (21 years old)**

Said that I'm no one to give or force my opinion on my son's marriage and nobody gave the authority to allow. The marriage will be treated like any other normal marriage.

#### **Case study 2**

**Aim- To know about acceptance of convicted criminal.**

---

<sup>6</sup> WatkinsM. "Merton's Strain Theory". *compass.port.ac.uk*. Retrieved 2018-03-10

**How will you treat a criminal and why?**

**Answer-** Post rectification and authenticity of his criminal enactments, I shall show no element of concern and sympathy.

Since the crime committed was a deliberate and should be subjected to punishment befitting crime.

**Note- From an anecdote narrated by the serving Commanding Officer of the Indian army.**

**Case Study 3**

**AIM- To know about pseudo rape allegations.**

**Following are the questions:-**

Q1. I'm sure you didn't expect to be here. What made you land in this situation?

Q2. Did you expect the person to have such a turn around of the events on you?

Q3. Do you think the charges have been levied due to animosity (revenge)?

Q4. If yes, what could be the reason for this hatred?

Q5. Why do you think that she has gone to this extent keeping her virtue at stake?

Q6. Do you feel that you have been victimized for somebody's gains?

Q7. I am sanguine that you will come out clean, do you plan any retaliatory action?

Q8. If yes, what. would be your expected reaction?

Q9. If no will you be okay living with this blemish?

Q10. Do you feel helpless because in a situation like this female sex are given more preference?

Q11. If you would like to voice your grievances to alert others for not falling into this trap. What it would be?

Ans-1 I don't know. I never expected a false rape charge against me. I think it was the anger and the feeling to take revenge that landed me here. The vendetta.

Ans-2 I did not expect such a turn around of events. This has turned my entire life upside down. The feeling of being a false case victim is inexpressible and deteriorating at the same time. The turn around of events was not foreseeable.

Ans-3 Yes. Because i a man who has always been a part of the female revolution and in promoting the rights of the women. I have always have sanctified the importance of consent and always has respected the consent of the woman.

Ans - 4 The possible reason is the breakup which we have had and the feeling of resentment and being left alone. The things had become really straining which led to our breakup and following that these frivolous charges.s

Ans-5 Maybe because she has been do dwelled into the relationship that has blinded her conscience and all she is looking now is a way to threaten me and coerce me to get back with her.

Ans - 6 Yes. I do. I feel that her personal satisfaction has overpowered and stigmatised my freedom and life respectively.

Ans-7 No sir. I just want these charges to go away at the moment. I do no plan to file any counter suit against a person whom i had been there for and was in love with.

Ans-8 - N/A

Ans-9 - The life that I will be leading would definitely not be blemished as I would be acquitted by the court but it is the social stigma that has already come up with it. In our society we are labelled as a criminal as soon as the charges are pressed. The rule of natural law says that innocent until proven guilty but the way how our society works is guilty until otherwise proven and even after acquittal you are labelled and stigmatised

Ans-10 Yes. Definitely. There is an increasing abuse of section 376 of the The Penal code along with abuse of other sections like dowry demand and cruelty and such other laws. The Penal code is not gender neutral but rather gender biased which is visible in aforesaid land laws like outraging the modesty of the women, voyeurism, stalking etc. While the code tries to empower th female, it comes with a hefty amount of abuse as well.

Ans-11 Such scenarios are not foreseeable but what measures i think can be taken are that you should have some proof that the intercourses was consensual like for example you can have it on chats like where will you be meeting or other messages related like at what time will she come or maybe talks related to the intercourse so that it can help the person developing circumstantial evidences when such fake charges are pressed.

But at the end of the day we cannot draft contracts for showing the consent in intercourse but what we can do is choosing the right person and not just having random intercourse at times.

### **Schizophrenia<sup>7</sup>**

It is a mental illness ranging from various symptoms like hallucinations and delusions to emotional flatness and catatonia. It also has the feature of psychosis which is characterized by thoughts or experiences that seem out of touch with reality accompanied with lack of concentration and difficulty in memory.

Talking about the national award winning movie 15 park avenue where the protagonist Konkana Sen Sharma is suffering from schizophrenia and is in a constant search for an imaginary place called 15 park avenue which does not exist in reality.

David Berkowitz better known as the “son of sam” and the 44 caliber killer killed six people and wounded seven, when taken into custody he confessed that he was following the instructions of a demon manifested in the shape of a dog called Harvey who belonged to his neighbor Sam.

Here, David was clearly suffering from schizophrenia where in he got hallucinations and delusions that Harvey the dog is instructing him to kill people.

One of the causes of schizophrenia is emotional or stressful life that might trigger psychotic episode while in this case david had a disturbing childhood where in his father left his mother for another woman and his mother abandoned him at a very young age, hence the chances for him to be a schizophrenic increased which further compelled him to be a criminal.

### **Madaari movie<sup>8</sup>**

A common man is compelled to be a criminal/kidnapper because of the situation he is put in. His only son died while going to the school, the bridge which connected his house to the school collapsed due to the corruption prevailing which didn't allow the constructors to use proper raw materials.

As a matter of revenge, he kidnaps the minister's son, here we talk about how a common man as we call it the mango people are compelled to become a criminal.

It was the social factors that urged him to become a criminal, in this case the social status discrimination and the hierarchy of classes, the feeling of helplessness compelled the common man to kidnap the minister's son and thus become a criminal.

### **Conclusion**

This research paper is a brainchild of the fusion of legal and psychological aspects in special reference to criminals around the world, it consists of various theories such as the psychodynamic theory given by Sigmund Freud, Eyesenck's PEN model, strain theory etc which undermines the basic thoughts that goes inside a criminals mind. We have already covered various topics under three case studies i.e related to pseudo rape allegations, acceptance of a rape victim in the society and the change of the lifestyle of the criminals post their punishment.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia/index.shtml>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5713232/>

For the purpose of research paper, we analysed various Hollywood and Bollywood movies including theatres. We quoted one of the recent movie called 'Madaari' which shows the ground level realities that instigates a common man to become a criminal due to circumstances that occurred in his surrounding during the course of his lifetime.

It was also said that behaviour differs not because of their personality traits but due to the situation one is in and characteristic of that situation.

Example- how does one become a criminal?

Take an example of a 20 year old who goes to school and wants to become a civil servant, now the behaviour of this person will be motivating, self-conscious and would see her father who is also a civil servant as a role model.

While on the other hand, a 20 year old living in a slum becomes a criminal because he has not been educated by his parents, his behaviour is surrounded by how his parents treat him, his father is a smuggler and is walking on his footsteps

This research paper is an attempt to show urgency of criminal psychologists to achieve the proper reformation of criminals around the globe.

Irrespective of any nation or country we discussed the fundamental basics of the mindset of convicted criminals

The study goes deeply into what makes someone commit a crime and also the reactions after the crime.

The benefit of doing this research was ultimately to help prevent crimes in the future as we will be able to understand the mechanics of the brain of a criminal, we will be able to understand why they are committing crimes in the first place, for example- some people may become abusive because they were abused as children while others might commit a crime because they are mentally ill. All this information is highly useful to curb crimes right from it's initial stage and this research paper is an attempt to do the same.