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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR: UNDERSTANDING MOTIVES AND PATTERNS

The intricate maze that is the human mind hides a dark and fascinating secret. Why do people turn to crime? What drives seemingly regular individuals to go against the law? These are the questions criminal psychology aims to answer, analysing the motivations and behavioural patterns underlying acts of crime.

A world apart from the fictions that feature criminal masterminds with singular obsessions, criminal psychology, in turn, offers a very different and much more intricate picture. There is no one “criminal personality”, but rather different influences, and many of them can contribute to the formation of criminal behaviour. These factors fall into three major categories: biological, psychological, and sociological influences.

BIOLOGICAL INFLUENCES:

It must be borne in mind that not all biological factors are deterministic, yet some of them may raise the level of vulnerability to criminal acts. A correlation between a low concentration of neurotransmitters and impulsivity or aggression has been proven in research, with serotonin being among such substances. Genes are likely to have an influence as well, but the mechanisms are as yet unclear. Environmental factors greatly affect how these biological features come to be expressed.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLUENCES:

Personality disorders : One such example is personality disorders, including antisocial personality disorder (ASPD, which involves the violation of social

norms and a lack of concern for others. ASPD patients may misuse people, take part in hazardous activities, and exhibit impulsive behaviour.

Cognitive distortions: Criminal behaviour, too, can be fostered by cognitive distortions that are primarily represented in the form of errors in thinking. For instance, a person who is inclined towards playing the “victim” role may view themselves as constantly being treated unjustly, which can consequently legitimize some retaliatory activities.

Mental health conditions: Major psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder can be associated with the incidence of crime, especially if left untreated; however, it is important to avoid generalizations. Most individuals suffering from mental health disorders are not violent.

SOCIAL INFLUENCES:

Socioeconomic disadvantage: poverty, low opportunity, and social inequality may lead individuals to engage in crime as a means of subsistence or to experience power.

Social learning theory: criminal behaviour is often learned through associations with others. Being exposed to criminal environments or to delinquent peers or learning from parents who struggle with criminality or addiction increases an individual’s risk of criminal behaviour.

Attachment theory: children’s early interactions with caregivers play a key role in their emotional and social development. Insecure attachment styles, which arise when children do not receive sufficient attention or care, is associated with an increased risk of criminal behaviour.

MOTIVES AND PATTERNS:

Instrumental Motives: The crime is committed to achieve a specific goal, such as financial gain (theft, robbery) or revenge (assault).

Expressive Motives: The crime is driven by emotions like anger, hatred, or a need for power (vandalism, hate crimes).

Disorganized Motives: Crimes driven by disorganization or confusion, often linked to mental illness or substance abuse.

Criminal profiling analyses crime scene details, victim characteristics, and offender behaviour to identify patterns. This information helps narrow down the pool of suspects and predict potential future actions. However, criminal profiling is not an exact science and should be used in conjunction with other investigative techniques.

WHY IT MATTERS?

The study of criminal behaviour has tangible benefits:

Crime prevention: We can better understand and address the social issues and environments that promote crime or anti-social behaviour.

Criminal profiling: For police investigations or apprehension purposes, criminal profiling can be useful.

Rehabilitation: Understanding the motivation behind criminal behaviour is crucial in successfully rehabilitating criminals and reducing recidivism.

CONCLUSION:

As the psychology of criminals illustrates, human motivations are multifield and complex; rational explanations can be narrow in their scope. Attention to the varied forces that shape delinquent – both individual and mass – behaviour is key to improving processes for prevention, intervention and rehabilitation. Policies guided by compassion and reason can address systemic inequalities, establish meaningful pathways for social engagement, rescue transgressors from a path of crime and violence, and allow them to live fulfilling lives as productive participants in a better world for all.