

Criminal rewards,
praises, as well as
developing self



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Criminal psychology is mainly the study of the underlying factors that make people to engage in criminal activities. Psychologists involved in this area study not only the thoughts and the wills of criminals but also the reactions that follow after committing the criminal activities (Winfree, Abadinsky, & Winfree, 2009). For that reason, they are very significant in criminal justice as they help the judges in understanding various issues concerning the mind of a criminal especially because criminology is a problem in every community due to various structures in the society. For instance, Merton strain theory explains that the American society encourages crime since there are certain materialistic goals that every individual is supposed to achieve. Consequently, those who are not fortunate enough to achieve such goals in the right way end up getting involved in crime in the struggle for success. There are so many issues regarding criminology that the criminal psychologists seek to answer.

For instance, it is not easy to understand whether anyone can become a criminal. Since there are many psychological and social theories that can be used to study criminology, this paper uses the Bandura's social learning theory, Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Eysenck's biosocial theory to discuss theoretically whether anyone can become a criminal. Social learning theory by Albert Bandura happens to be among the major theories of crime. It explains that aggression which is associated with criminal behaviour and criminal activities can be acquired through modelling. This happens after making various observations of the behaviour of other people in the mass media or the surrounding environment.

It further illustrates that individuals who adopt aggression believe that the behaviour can cause reinforcement which may make them to obtain rewards, praises, as well as developing self esteem. The problem of aggression is more common in young children and they grow with it and end up becoming criminals if it is not detected early enough. Therefore, according to the theory of the social learning, anyone has the capability of becoming a criminal as it is a learnt behaviour (Isom, 1998). Having gotten an overview of the social leaning theory, it is important to integrate all the factors that explain that anyone has the ability of becoming a criminal. Studies of Howitt (2006) indicate that results of the studies which have been conducted illustrate that there is usually a higher possibility of people living in high crime areas to become criminals compared to people living in low crime areas.

Media is yet another factor that can lead to aggression as highlighted earlier. More often than not, people who are involved in criminal activities end up gaining much attention and becoming famous. Therefore, after making such observations, people adopt the behaviour of aggression in order to receive the same reward. Television is particularly a main cause of criminal behaviour especially when such criminals go unpunished. For instance, since in a certain movie some girls witnessed a girl being raped with a bottle, they also ended up committing the same crime. Further studies illustrate that most of the murderers are addicted to watching violence on television (Howitt, 2006). The psychoanalytic theory by Sigmud Freud explains that individuals' behaviours are greatly affected by their childhood experiences.

Most importantly, the experiences which are at times traumatic affect behaviour negatively and an individual may not be conscious about it. The theory maintains that all human beings are naturally antisocial.

Consequently, during early stages of life, young children do contain antisocial drives or desires but the development of the superego does help them to overcome such drives. However, the development of the superego is affected by the experiences children learn from their parents or generally the environment. The ego which has the ability of judging between right and wrong controls the id and the super ego. Therefore, the psychoanalysis theory only explains that criminal behaviour comes about when the development of the ego and the superego is affected by some of the experiences that individuals are exposed to while growing up. Further explanation on the same illustrates that overdevelopment of the superego leads to guilt.

As a result, those people with overdeveloped superegos commit crime in order to be punished and subside their feeling of guilt. Therefore, the theory explains that everybody is born with ability to commit crimes but the environment plays a big role in determining whether the person will become a criminal or not. Although the above discussed theories indicate that anyone can be a criminal since the development of the behaviour is determined greatly by the environmental factors, Eysenck's theory of crime indicate that there are heredity factors that can make someone to become a criminal.

Even if environmental factors come into play, human beings are born with some heredity factors that determine the possibility of being conditioned by

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the environmental factors. Therefore, the theory explains the effect of some personality factors that influence the development of the criminal behaviour. For instance, studies of Brown & Campbell, (2010) indicate that people who are characterized by extroversion do not respond readily to the environment and the condition is caused by some genetic factors in the central nervous system.

Further studies explain that less responsive individuals commit crime either as a means of seeking extra stimulation or due to the fact that they do not feel the impact of punishment. Nevertheless, although there are biological factors which are very significant, environment plays a very big role on the same. In case children having low responsiveness live in places where there are a lot of criminal activities, they end up not becoming criminals. However, children who have normal conditioning may be influenced to become criminals if they live with parents who are criminals or in areas that are characterized by high crime rates. Although the theory is still criticized, the research indicates that it has been tested empirically adding to its reliability.

For example, studies have been conducted to affirm that individuals with a lower heart rate have got a high possibility of engaging in criminal activities (Vito, Maahs, & Holmes, 2006). Even though a lot of research has been conducted in regard to the Eysenck's theory of crime, the main focus has been on personality other than conditioning since it is much easier to conduct research on the former. However, according to Raine (n. d.), few studies which have been conducted on conditioning indicate that criminals, psychopaths and generally the group of people who are referred to as antisocial show poor conditioning while compared to people who score high

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on the social scale. A critical analysis of various theories of crimes illustrate that it is possible for anyone to become a criminal.

The Eysenk's theory illustrate that both the biological and environmental factors have got a role to play in determining whether someone will become a criminal or not as illustrated by the extract. " Not only does the social environment moderate the relationship between conditioning /arousal and antisocial behaviour, but also it is possible that early environmental processes can lead to changes in the autonomic functioning which may then predispose to crime along the lines suggested by Eysenck" (Raine pp. 138). Apart from illustrating how all the factors work together to influence criminal behaviour, such theory is very important because it helps future researchers to identify research topics that can be of great help in the filed of criminal psychology. Most importantly, the approach that the theory takes is different from other theories as it seeks to understand factors that prevent children from getting involved in the criminal activities. Therefore, in absence of such factors, anyone can have the ability of engaging in criminal activities. Social learning by Bandura is also among the theories of crime that suggest that anyone can become a criminal. This is due to the fact that it illustrates that the behaviour of an individual is influenced by the environmental factors.

Since behaviour is acquired, people become criminals after being exposed to violence either at the family level or from the media (Regoli & Hewitt, 2008). To affirm the same, the same studies indicate that in all the three thousand and five hundred published studies on the same topic, it is only eighteen studies that do not indicate that media exposure leads to violence. Lastly, the psychoanalytic theory also indicates that anyone can become a criminal.

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In spite of the fact that the fact that every one is born with an id that is antisocial, environmental factors come in to play in the development of the ego and the super ego. Since the ego and the super ego help in making moral and sensible judgement, any factor which affects their development ultimately contributes to the behaviour of a person. Therefore, it is not an understatement to conclude that a critical analysis of the three theories of crime indicate that anyone can end up being a criminal. However, there are environmental factors which interplay with the biological factors to determine the acquisition of the criminal behaviour (Winfree, Abadinsky, & Winfree, 2009).

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