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# Theories and Factors Governing Criminality: A Short Literature Review

Yashika Bansal

Amity Institute of Forensic Science, Amity University, Noida, India

**Abstract:** Criminal psychology focuses on the study of criminal behavior, where the term behavior covers variety of aspects like personality, attitudes, physiology of a person etc. that contributes to the commission of a crime or criminal behavior. Criminal psychology not only aims to comprehend criminal behavior but also to manage and change it. Criminal psychology is essentially the study of offenders' thoughts, emotions, wills and reactions, as well as how these influence their behavior. There are numerous circumstances or reasons that can make someone become a criminal; criminality is not something that someone is by birth. Researchers have offered a variety of explanations as to why someone becomes a criminal. All the influencing factors have been proposed by various investigators based on their scientifically investigated studies. A brief overview of various factors that influences on a person's behavior that cause them to commit crimes is provided in this review paper along with the theories proposed by various researchers. Criminal psychology is primarily concerned with figuring out what drives people to commit crimes. Psychologists working in this field examine not just the intentions and desires of criminals but also the behaviors that occur after they commit their crimes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Criminal psychology is a branch of psychology that specializes on the psychological elements that influence criminal behavior. Criminal psychologists use their understanding of human behavior and mental processes to analyze why people commit crimes and create plans for stopping and dealing with illegal activity. Law enforcement organizations, prisons, and academic institutions are just a few of the places where criminal psychologists may work. Victimology, forensic psychology, and the psychology of criminal behavior are some of the important fields of research in criminal psychology. Criminal psychologists can take on a variety of tasks, such as assessing the mental health of suspects and criminals, offering expert testimony in court proceedings, and creating treatment and rehabilitative plans for offenders. Criminal psychology, usually referred to as forensic psychology, is the study of the psychological causes of criminal behavior and the use of psychological theories and concepts in the legal and criminal justice systems. In order to prevent, investigate, and prosecute criminal conduct, criminal psychologists work to understand why people commit crimes. They might also create treatment and rehabilitation plans with offenders in jail or prison. Criminal psychology focuses on a variety of academic fields, such as sociology, criminology, psychology, and neuroscience. They might also make plans to stop crimes.

## II. THEORIES RELATED TO CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY

1) *Five Factor Model by Costa and Mccare:* The Five Factor Model (FFM), which offers five basic dimensions or features that characterize the human psyche, is a commonly used and extensively researched model of personality. And is widely used in forensics to determine the personality of suspects as well as criminals or victims etc.

These five elements are:

- a) *Openness to experience:* This quality encapsulates a person's degree of imagination, creativity, and openness to trying new things. Those with high openness scores frequently exhibit curiosities, are open-minded, and love learning new things.
- b) *Conscientiousness:* This trait describes how well-organized, dependable, and self-controlled a person is. High conscientiousness test respondents are frequently responsible, dependable, and goal-oriented.
- c) *Extraversion:* This personality trait describes a person's amount of assertiveness, friendliness, and energy. Extraverted individuals are frequently gregarious, outspoken, and love social interactions.
- d) *Agreeableness:* This characteristic reflects how empathetic, kind, and cooperative a person is. High agreeableness scorers frequently exhibit empathy, cooperation, and a willingness to provide a helping hand. A person with low agreeableness tends to lack empathy towards others.

e) *Neuroticism*: This personality trait shows how emotionally stable and resilient a person is. Those with strong neuroticism tend to be nervous, irritable, and easily stressed.

The Five Factor Model has been shown to have cross-cultural validity and is frequently used in personality assessment and research. Additionally, it has been discovered to be helpful in forecasting a number of outcomes, including work performance, school success, and mental wellness.

2) *Eysenck's pen model*: The psychologist Hans Eysenck created the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), a personality test. The PEN model, which Eysenck developed, claims that personality is made up of three main dimensions:

a) *Psychoticism*: The degree to which a person is prone to psychotic or psychopathic behavior is measured by this dimension. High levels of psychoticism are linked to characteristics like impulsivity, lack of empathy, and violence.

b) *Extraversion*: The degree to which a person is outgoing, gregarious, and assertive is measured by this dimension. Talkativeness, assertiveness, and a craving for stimulation are all attributes that are linked to high degrees of extraversion

c) *Neuroticism*: This personality trait describes how emotionally unstable and prone to worry and mood swings a person is. High degrees of neuroticism are linked to characteristics like anxiety, depression, and a propensity to feel bad. This factor is positively linked with criminality.

These three facets of personality are evaluated by the self-report Eysenck Personality Inventory. It comprises of a list of claims that the respondent ranks from "agree" to "disagree" on a scale. Numerous studies on personality have proven the EPI to be a relevant and reliable indicator of personality.

3) *Glenn D Walter's Theory*: The Lifestyle Theory of Crime is a theory that was created by criminologist and psychologist Glenn D. Walters. According to this hypothesis, a person's lifestyle choices influence their likelihood of engaging in criminal activity rather than just being poor or uneducated. According to Walters, those who commit crimes frequently do so because they like adventure, taking risks, and quick gratification. These people also not care about how their activities would affect them in the long run. According to Walters, criminal activity is frequently connected to particular lifestyle choices including drug usage, alcoholism, and membership in gangs or other illegal organizations. According to him, these lifestyle choices may result in a "criminal lifestyle" that is challenging to leave behind. Some people have criticized the Lifestyle Theory of Crime for being overly predicated on individual decisions and failing to consider more significant societal influences that influence criminal behavior. But according to Walters, a more thorough understanding of criminal behavior must take into consideration both individual and societal influences. His theory is aimed to supplement other criminological theories rather than to replace them.

4) *Strain Theory*: According to the criminological and sociological theory known as the "strain theory," social arrangements in a society could put pressure on people to commit crimes. Robert Merton presented the theory for the first time in the 1930s. According to this theory, people feel pressurized or strained when they are unable to accomplish their objectives by using legal means. Despite the risks and consequences, this tension might push people to turn to criminal activity as a means of achieving their objectives.

Merton classified strain-related reactions into five categories:

a) *Conformity*: People who, despite difficulty, continue to pursue their objectives through proper methods.

b) *Innovation*: Innovative people are those that use creative or illegitimate methods to accomplish an objective.

c) *Ritualism*: People who give up trying to achieve their aims but nevertheless stick with the tried-and-true methods.

d) *Retreatism*: Retreatism is when a person gives up on both their goals and the traditional methods of obtaining them, and frequently does this by abusing drugs or engaging in other types of abnormal behavior.

e) *Rebellion*: Individuals who rebel reject both their objectives and the traditional methods for achieving them and instead work to establish a new social structure.

Numerous criminal behaviors, including violent crime, white-collar crime, and property crime, have been explained by the strain theory. According to the hypothesis, easing stress and supplying more acceptable alternatives for reaching objectives can aid in crime prevention.

5) *Biological theories*: Biological theories of crime are criminological hypotheses that contend that biological traits, such as genetics or brain make-up, may influence criminal behavior. These ideas are predicated on the notion that some people may be biologically predisposed to criminal behavior, and that these traits may interact with environmental circumstances to generate criminal behavior. The genetic theory of crime is one biological theory that contends that genes may be a factor in how criminal behavior is inherited. Even though the link between criminal behavior and genetics is complicated and poorly understood, studies have indicated that some genes may be linked to criminal behavior. The brain dysfunction theory, which contends that abnormalities or damage to the brain may contribute to criminal behavior, is another biological theory.

Certain brain diseases or traumas may increase the likelihood that a person may commit a crime, according to some study. The hormone theory of crime further contends that hormonal abnormalities, such as those in cortisol or testosterone, may be a factor in criminal activity. High testosterone levels have been linked in studies to aggressive behavior, which may eventually result in criminal behavior. The numerous social and environmental components that affect criminal behavior, according to those who oppose biological theories of crime, are oversimplified. In addition, some people are concerned that biological ideas could be abused to support discriminatory laws or practices. However, proponents of biological theories contend that by understanding the biological elements that contribute to criminal behavior, more effective prevention and intervention measures can be created.

- 6) *Psychological theories*: Criminal law ideas called "psychological theories of crime" contend that specific psychological elements may have a role in criminal behavior. These theories are predicated on the notion that some people may have particular psychological features or diseases that increase their capacity for criminal behavior. Psychodynamic theory, which contends that suppressed feelings and unresolved conflicts may influence criminal behavior, is one psychological theory. This hypothesis suggests that those who have unresolved psychological issues or have trouble controlling their impulses may be more inclined to commit crimes. The social learning theory is another psychological theory that contends that interpersonal interactions can be used to teach criminal behavior. According to this hypothesis, people might pick up criminal behavior through being exposed to them or by being rewarded and penalized for particular behaviors. According to the cognitive theory of crime, incorrect thought processes or beliefs may underlie criminal behavior. According to this notion, people who have false or untrue beliefs about themselves or others may act criminally more frequently. Last but not least, the personality theory of crime postulates that certain personality qualities, such as impulsivity or sensation seeking, may be linked to criminal behavior. This hypothesis postulates that people with certain characteristics would be more inclined to act impulsively or in a risky manner, including committing crimes. Critics of psychological theories of crime contend that they oversimplify the intricate interplay between social and environmental factors and criminal behavior. In addition, some people are concerned that psychological theories could be abused to support discriminatory laws or practices. However, supporters of psychological theories contend that by comprehending the psychological elements that lead to criminal behavior, it will be possible to create more fruitful prevention and intervention plans.
- 7) *Sociological theories*: Criminal justice theories known as sociological theories of crime contend that societal issues including poverty, inequality, and social disarray may have an impact on criminal behavior. These theories are founded on the assumption that criminal behavior is impacted by bigger society issues rather than just being a function of individual choice or nature. The social disorganization theory is one sociological theory that contends that regions with high rates of poverty, social disorganization, and a lack of community cohesion have higher rates of crime. This hypothesis postulates that areas with high rates of unemployment and poverty may have weaker social institutions, less social control, and higher levels of social disorder, all of which may be associated with criminal activity. The strain hypothesis is another sociological theory that contends that when people are unable to achieve their objectives through legal means, they may resort to criminal behavior. According to this hypothesis, social institutions that restrict people's chances for success can lead to stress or pressure, which can motivate people to commit crimes. According to the hypothesis of cultural deviance, subcultures that uphold abnormal standards of behavior may be the cause of criminal behavior. This idea postulates that people who grow up around criminal subcultures may be more prone to become criminals themselves. Last but not least, the labelling hypothesis postulates that those who are stigmatized as criminals may be more prone to carry on with criminal behavior. This hypothesis contends that after being classified as a criminal, a person may suffer stigma and have little chances for successful employment, which may encourage them to continue engaging in criminal activity. Sociological theories are criticized for oversimplifying the complex individual characteristics that influence criminal behavior, according to those who oppose them. The possibility for sociological theories to rationalize criminal behavior by attributing it to societal issues has also been a source of concern for some. However, supporters of sociological theories contend that by comprehending the social elements that encourage criminal behavior, we can create preventative and intervention plans that are more successful.
- 8) *Integrated theories*: Integrated theories of crime are criminological theories that incorporate components from several theoretical viewpoints, including biological, psychological, and sociological theories, in an effort to offer a more thorough understanding of criminal behavior. According to these views, criminal behavior is the outcome of an intricate connection between a person's personal, social, and biological circumstances. The social control theory, which incorporates components of psychology and sociological theories, is one example of an integrated theory.

According to this hypothesis, social restraints that are inadequate, such as strong social ties, low degrees of loyalty to social institutions, and a lack of beliefs in conventional values, lead to criminal behavior. However, the theory also acknowledges the possibility of interactions between social and personal psychological traits, such as impulsivity and poor self-control to lead to criminality. The biosocial theory, which integrates parts of biological and sociological ideas, is another illustration of an integrated theory. According to this idea, societal factors like poverty, breakdowns in families, and social disarray interact with biological ones like heredity and brain shape to cause criminal behavior. Another example of an integrated theory that incorporates components of psychological, sociological, and biological theories is the life-course theory. According to this idea, criminal behavior is the consequence of a complex interaction between human variables, such as early experiences and personality traits, societal issues, such as poverty and dysfunction in families, and biological ones, such as brain development and heredity. According to the hypothesis, these elements may interplay throughout a person's life to affect their likelihood of acting criminally. Integrative theories have their opponents who contend that they might simplify the complicated aspects that influence criminal behavior and that they may not clearly explain the causal connections between these components. However, supporters of integrated theories contend that they offer a more thorough explanation of criminal behavior than do single theoretical approaches, and that they might be more successful in coming up with ways for intervention and prevention.

### III. VARIOUS STUDIES ON FACTORS INFLUENCING CRIMINALITY

The root causes of crime are intricate and multifaceted, as they depend on a variety of personal, societal, and environmental factors. Some of the most important elements that have been linked to criminal behavior are listed below:

- 1) **Biological factors:** Research has suggested that genetic and neurological variables may play a role in criminal behavior. Studies have revealed, for instance, that some genes may be linked to a higher risk of violent and impulsive behavior. Brain abnormalities or traumas may potentially raise the likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior.
- 2) **Psychological elements:** personality characteristics, mindsets, and mental health conditions are only a few examples of psychological elements that may influence criminal behavior. For instance, people who have personality disorders like antisocial personality disorder may be more inclined to commit crimes. Additionally, those with specific mental health conditions, like mood or substance use problems, may also be more likely to engage in criminal activity.
- 3) **Societal Aspects:** Social aspects including poverty, inequality, and societal disarray may also play a role in criminal behavior. For instance, people who are raised in underprivileged areas with little work and educational prospects may be more inclined to engage in criminal activity. Criminal behavior may also be influenced by social disorganization, which includes weak social institutions and a lack of community cohesion.
- 4) **Environmental factors:** There are a number of environmental elements that can influence criminal behavior, including violence exposure. For instance, people may be more inclined to act violently themselves if they are surrounded by violence in their own houses or neighborhoods.
- 5) **Cultural influences:** Cultural influences, such as the standards and beliefs of particular subcultures, can also influence criminal behavior. For instance, individuals may become involved in criminal activity themselves as a result of subcultures that encourage violence or other violent behavior.
- 6) **Economic issues:** Poverty and unemployment are two economic issues that can influence criminal behavior. For instance, people who are incapable to provide for their fundamental requirements may resort to illegal activity in order to survive.
- 7) **Historical Factors:** Past experiences with abuse or trauma, for example, may have influenced a person's criminal behavior. For instance, people who have gone through trauma or abuse in their life are possibly prone to turn to violence as a coping method.
- 8) **Family problems:** Family issues, such as parental abuse or neglect, may have a role in criminal behavior. For instance, children who come up in households where there is domestic violence or substance addiction by the parents may be more likely to commit crimes themselves.
- 9) **Peer Influence:** Influence from peers may also help explain why people commit crimes. For instance, people may be more prone to participate in criminal behavior themselves if they spend time alongside their peers and notice what they do who themselves are linked with criminal behavior.
- 10) **Abuse of drugs:** Abuse of drugs, especially those like alcohol and cocaine, can lead to criminal behavior. Abuse of drugs or alcohol can cause poor judgement and raise the possibility of committing crimes, especially violent ones.
- 11) **Education:** Education can have an impact on criminal behavior. People without access to learning may be more prone to get involved with criminal activity, especially when they lack the essential skills to find employment.

- 12) Law Enforcement and Justice System: Criminal behavior may also be influenced by how well law enforcement and the legal system function. For instance, people are probably more likely to commit crimes if they believe the judicial system is unjust or unproductive.
- 13) Media: Particularly in connection with violent crimes, the media can additionally impact criminal behavior. Violent media exposure, such as watching violent films or playing violent video games, may desensitize viewers to aggression and enhance their capacity to act violently.
- 14) The availability of firearms: The availability of firearms may potentially encourage criminal activity. Especially in a setting of interpersonal issues or domestic violence, those who have ownership of weapons may be more prone to act violently.
- 15) Socialization: People learn and internalize cultural customs, beliefs, and values through a process known as socialization. The socialization process has the power to affect criminal behavior, especially if people are subjected to standards and principles that allow or even promote illegal activity.
- 16) Trauma: traumatic events, such as sexual or physical abuse, can have a significant effect on an individual's mental health and may be a factor in criminal behavior.
- 17) Political factors: Criminal behavior may be influenced by political variables like corruption and insecurity. People who reside in nations with significant levels of corruption, for instance, might believe that committing crimes is vital to thrive or exist.
- 18) Technology: Technology, particularly as it relates to cybercrime, can have an impact on criminal behavior. Technology advancements have opened up new chances for criminal activity including identity theft and internet fraud.

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