



A Gateway to all Post Graduate Courses

An MHRD Project under its National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT)

Subject: CRIMINOLOGY

Production of Courseware  
e-Content for Post Graduate Courses



Paper : Unit-I- Introduction: psychology and crime

Module : Introduction: Definition, and Purpose of Criminal Psychology



Component - I - Personal Details

| Role                   | Name                | Affiliation                                   |
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#### Component - I (B) Description of Module

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|-------------------|--|
|                   | Description of Module  |
| Subject Name      | Criminology  |
| Paper Name        | Criminal Psychology  |
| Module No.        | M-1  |
| Module Name/Title | Introduction: Definition, and Purpose of Criminal Psychology                         |
| Pre-requisites    | Psychology, Research Methodology   |
| Objectives        | To Study about the definition and purpose of Criminal Psychology.                    |
| Keywords          | Criminal Psychology, Criminal Profiling, Psychological assessment, Criminal Behavior |

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| 1. Module I   |
| 2. Introduction   |
| 3. Learning Outcome   |
| Topic Name 1:<br>1. Psychology-<br>Understanding<br>Behaviour |
| Topic Name 2.<br>Definition:<br>2.1 What is                   |



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|--|
| Crime?<br>2.2 What is<br>Criminal<br>Psychology?   |
| Topic Name 3:<br>Psychology and<br>Crime           |
| Topic Name 4:<br>Purpose of Criminal<br>Psychology |
| Summary  |

## Introduction

Psychology is a scientific study of human and animal behaviour which is aimed at Describing, Explaining, Predicting and Controlling behaviour. Psychology as a subject involves studying behaviour scientifically.

The new paradigms have expanded the horizon of Psychology. It has also touched law, and Criminal Behaviour. This has led the birth of Criminal Psychology as an independent field in itself. And today, Criminal Psychology is a specialized field which is growing and has immense scope.

**Learning Outcome: Students expected to be able to**

- 1. Understand what Criminal Psychology is.**
- 2. Analyze the Role of Psychology in Criminal Psychology.**
- 3. Evaluate relation between Psychology, Crime and Criminal Behaviour.**

### 1. Psychology- Understanding Behaviour

Psychology has undergone great transformation and diversification as it is aimed to study behaviour scientifically. Paradigms of Globalization and liberalization which gained much popularity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have now been replaced with more specific paradigms. Today, there is an emergent need of diversification to understand the application and theory of specific aspects.

At the same time the need to have a holistic approach cannot be ignored thus we see that it is exemplary that eclectic and interdisciplinary, and multicultural approaches are considered to be more practical.

With the growing rate of crime, it has become essential and important for government agencies to increase their focus on improving legal services. It is also essential to find the reason of crime, Psychology of Criminals and to be able to devise interventions at individual and social level to improve social conditions.

Today we cannot ignore the presence of activities which are labeled as and under Organized Structures of Crime. Where, one can find; a small child, women, adult or an old age person to be involved in criminal activities. Crime can be as small as stealing, burglary, to murder and mass killing. We witness on a daily basis a lot of things which are criminal in intent, & it's irrespective of the country or state.

In many recent cases of rape, females have been raped and are assaulted beyond human imagination. This leaves us with a question that how can a normal man whom you probably just cross-by in a market or any public transport or place can stretch themselves to such extremes, forgetting about humanity, and do not even fear of legal actions.

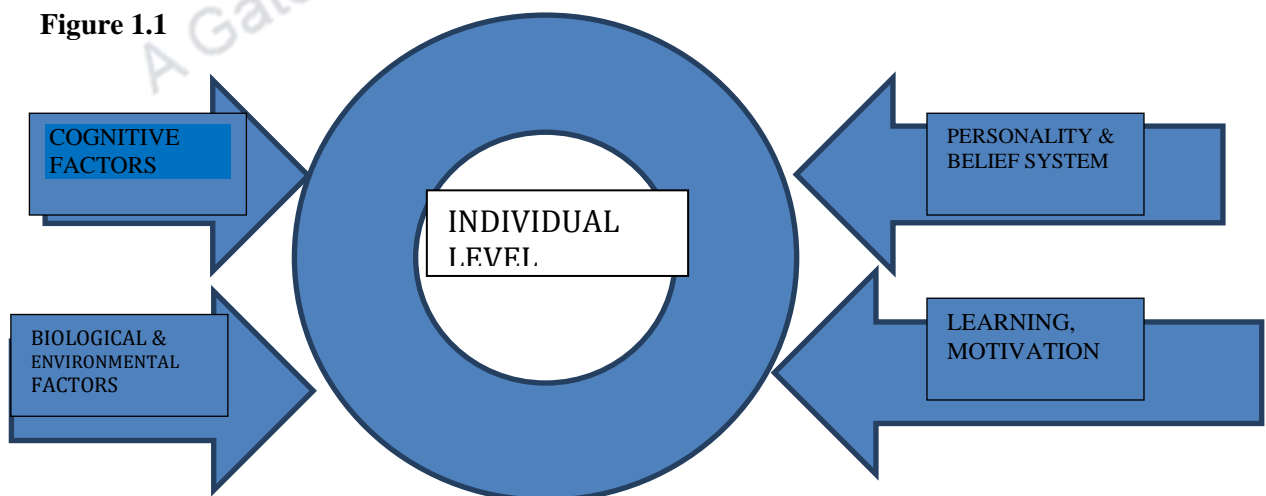
From one murder to mass killing! Have you ever thought what lead to The Holocaust? How one individual like Hitler can give orders for mass killing of people? And on the basis of caste, religion, race, political beliefs, discriminate people and give orders to kill them. His forces' followed his instructions without giving a second thought. The holocaust further formed and guided the basis of many experiments which aimed to understand extremes of obedience (Milgram, 1961).

Many cases in the history of Crime, has left many questions unanswered which can only be explained by understanding human behaviour.

Psychology is so varied and applied that it explains behaviour at all levels:

- i) Individual level: This is aimed at understanding cause of behaviour at individual level. Environmental, Biological, Physiological, cognitive, and Psychological factors affecting, or motivating individuals to behave in a certain manner.
- ii) Group level: This is aimed at understanding the social factors which can explain behaviour of individuals in a group. It is aimed at understanding how presence of others affects the behaviour of an individual.

**Figure 1.1**





The change today and shift in the paradigms has led to emergence of Psychological perspective as an important aspect in all fields of research, Practice and theory. Psychology today is a subject which has gained a significant place in all subjects which are directly or remotely related to behaviour.

Criminal Psychology is not only to understand Criminal Minds or Predict Criminal Behaviour it is also important to control the development of crime and to be able to give intervention to those in need.

## **2. Definition**

### **2.1 What is Crime?**

The term “Crime” or “Criminal” are very contextual in nature. And can be better understood, and should be used with reference to specific legal, and judicial system of a particular state, Country or Province.

It is to note that this term is required to be used with great caution as what one culture might consider as a crime might not be considered as a crime in another culture. On the other hand, an act may be considered as crime in one state, culture, province or legal system but may be considered to be a disease, which is also a reflection of enlightened cultures.

Crime is an act which indicates maladjustment to a particular culture and a social concern, which is legally considered as an act of violation of law.

Often confused as the similar the term “Criminality” and “crime” are different. While Criminality indicates intentions and attitude of indulging into criminal behaviour; Crime is an act against law. Criminal psychology aims to control Crime by providing interventions for Criminality.

Crime is at times difficult to be concluded as crime. As it is not just contextual in nature it is also situation based. In a war situation when a soldier kills another soldier of counter army it is considered as the act of bravery and pride. But in civilians it is considered as crime. In case of a civilian crime, it is also important to consider if the act is as a result of self-defense, or under the influence of a substance or social pressure.

Thus, on one side an act which is against the law is considered as crime as per the legal definition; the normative definition of crime highlights the act which offends our moral code.

To conclude it is ambiguous to label an act as crime as there is no objective definition which can define what all is included to be called a Crime. Meaning of crime can be only understood with respect to the social culture, Legal system, and context of act.

### **2.2 What is criminal Psychology?**

Criminal psychology is the study of Criminal behaviour, where term behaviour includes Personality, Attitude, Physiology, Learning, Motivation, Thinking and other cognitive Factors which contribute to the act of crime or criminal intentions.

It is important to understand the psychology of criminals as it enables us to describe, explain, predict and control such behaviour.



Criminal psychology has emerged from the major branches of Psychology:

1. Social Psychology.
2. Clinical Psychology

1. **Social Psychology:** It is an important and specialized field of Psychology which is helpful in understanding criminal behaviour and related aspects is Social Psychology. Social Psychology is the study of Behaviour in groups. It enables us to understand how people behave in presence of others, how views, actions of other individuals mould the perception and cognition of others present.

Social Psychology studies important aspects such as Competition, Collaborative behaviour, mob behaviour, Leadership, group Behaviour, internal and external factors affecting group behaviour, etc. This enables us to understand, explain control and predict behaviour in social situations.

Most of the crime is not always due to Clinical disorders; majority of crime is a result of deep planning which is a result of social issues, pressure and other environmental factors.

Humans are considered to be social animals. While most of our behaviours are guided by social norms, the definition of correct and incorrect behaviour, ethical and non-ethical behaviour and similar definitions are culturally driven. Social psychology enables us to understand the social context of a crime and reasons which foster such behaviour.

Social psychology also enables us to understand cultural reasons of particular behavior. Khabb which is a critical social issue is related to status of females in a culture, status of Children in a culture, status of males in a culture, and role of senior old members of a clan. These all and many more such factors can only be understood by having a deeper understanding of the culture and related social aspects.

Theory, research and experiments of social Psychology give a deeper understanding of individual motives, actions and behaviour in the presence of others and while as a member of a group.

2. **Clinical Psychology-** Clinical psychology enables us to understand the Mental, physiological, emotional and behavioural contributors of criminal behaviour. Mental health is a significant predictor of criminal behaviour.

While, we define mental health in a layman term as “an individual who looks healthy”. But mental health is described in a much holistic manner. It includes Physical, Social, and Psychological health of an individual. That is, an individual is considered to be healthy when he is physically fit, is able to interact with people, is able to maintain healthy social and family relations, and is psychologically also fit.

These two are major specialized fields of Psychology which are major contributors to Criminal Psychology. Apart from this, there are many aspects which can be explained under Psychology as an umbrella term which is also the reason why Criminal Psychology in itself is considered as a sub-specialization within Psychology.

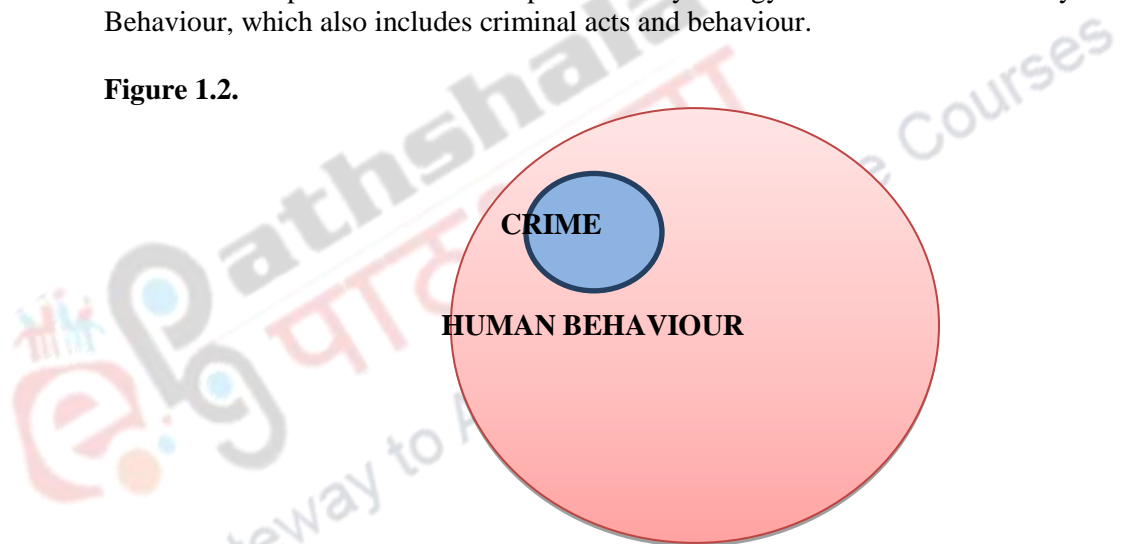
While At individual level there are many factors that play an important role and explain the cause of behaviour. Cognitive factors such as information processing, moral development also play an important role in constituting and predicting human behaviour. How an individual processes information, and the type of moral development can help a criminal psychologist to understand the intent and intensity of the crime.

Environmental factors also play an important role in understanding criminal behaviour. Extremities in climate along with other naturally existing factors may also lead to criminal behaviour.

### 3. Psychology & Crime

While Psychology and crime of course are two different terms and fields but each one of them is important and interdependent. Psychology is the scientific study of Behaviour, which also includes criminal acts and behaviour.

**Figure 1.2.**



Various school of thoughts of Psychology enable and foster the understanding of behaviours. Following are the school of thoughts in psychology:

1. Psychoanalysis
2. Behaviorism
3. Humanistic

1. **Psychoanalysis:** Sigmund Freud is considered as the father of Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis explains Personality organization and Personality development of an individual. Through Psychoanalysis root cause of a behavior can be understood. According to this approach behavioural issues are a result of unconscious desires, issues of fixation during the stages of Psychosexual development, and disturbance in functioning of the basic elements of personality (Id, ego and Superego). These issues lead to the use of defense mechanisms.

Personality as described in Psychoanalysis consists of three elements id, ego and Superego. Id is based on pleasure principle and seeks gratification of needs (these needs are largely instinctual in nature). Id does not takes into account the



consequences of Behavior. Superego is based on morality principle. While, Ego is largely guided by reality Principle. Ego seeks to create a balance between Id and Superego.

Unconscious mind is explained as a segment of mind which a person is not aware of. It is a store house of unfulfilled desires, repressed emotions, thoughts and feelings. Too much content in unconscious leads to personality issues.

Psychoanalysis till date is useful in understanding unconscious desires and conflicts of humans which lead to irrational behaviours.

- 2. Behaviourism:** Edward Thorndike and John B. Watson are the pioneers of Behaviourism. Further significant contributions were made by B.F Skinner and Ivan Pavlov. Behaviourism is a systematic approach which rejects the idea of psychoanalysis and believes that behaviour is a result of Stimulus which leads to a particular response (S-R). Behaviourism resulted in understanding of voluntary behaviour, and behaviour conditioning. It seeks to explain behaviour as stimulus and response relation and focuses on observable behaviour and rejects the idea of unconsciousness. Major focus is also laid on the effect of environment on behaviour of an individual. Majority of experiments in behaviourism were conducted on animals like Dogs, Cats, rats and also birds (pigeon) as the basic notion was to understand a response to a stimulus. Though behaviourism leads and guides to an objective measurement of behaviour and a much scientific reasoning of behaviour but it still faced criticisms as it ignored the individual level variables completely. It laid too much focus on objective behaviour and left little scope for free will. Thus, it was majorly criticised as it compared animal behaviour to human behaviour.

Despite all criticism Behaviourism enables Psychologists till date to give a clear prediction of behaviour and it guides major Behaviour modification interventions used in therapy.

- 3. Humanistic:** Carl Rogers in this approach emphasised on a whole person approach to understand behaviour. Humanistic approach views individual behaviour from subjective perspective, and not as stimulus response. In this theorists emphasize on free will of humans and have discussed the optimism of humans to overcome the impediments of daily life and emerge as fully functioning individuals. This approach emphasizes on scientific and objective investigation of behaviour. It rejects the scientific and measurement oriented approach to study behaviour and views behaviour as human journey.

Psychology has brought and can bring great transformations to humanity, as the basic application of Psychology is to be able to improve Psychosocial health of individuals. Criminal Psychology which is an amalgamation of Psychology and Law helps not only to understand criminal behaviour and criminal intentions but it is also to provide interventions to criminals to control and modify such behaviour.

It is difficult to meet every individual and assess the criminal intentions by legal authorities also. Psychology theories and principles are aimed at assessing behaviour. Though, psychology as an intensive research field also uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to study behaviour scientifically. But Psychology also relies on standardized tools, tests, batteries, inventories, and surveys to assess and understand behaviour, & attitude.

Standardised Psychological tests are used in Criminal Psychology to help in identification of criminals and to understand criminal behaviour. Psychology as a





science is used to Predict, describe and explain Criminal behaviour with the help of Psychological testing.

Psychology being a scientific study also entails and includes a lot of research. Research on behaviour enables to Psychologist's and legal authorities to understand crime, criminal intent and criminal behaviour scientifically.

There are various theories which explain criminal behaviour and it's not surprising that lines between crime and Psychology were drawn much later and theories based on research conducted in the area of psychology even before this prospect was raised, are still found to be useful in explaining criminal behaviour and has been added to the literature of Criminal Psychology.

Criminal Psychology is not only intending to understand criminal behaviour but it is also to control criminal behaviour. Thus, counselling and intervention for criminal and victims is much of an importance.

Many interventions have been made to control crime. For instance, Correction homes for Children which is an initiative to improve behaviour of children found guilty.

Many other Research based interventions are intended to improve the conditions and wellbeing of Criminals in order to enable them to lead a healthy life.

Overall Psychology and crime are found to be interlinked as Crime is an act/behaviour of an individual; and Psychology as a science enables us to understand criminal mind, behaviour and intentions. It also seeks to answer questions relating to explanation of criminal behaviour, apart from this controlling such behaviour and modifying behaviour with the use of Interventions is also more viable when the two disciplines i.e. Psychology and Law integrate. Criminal Psychology as an amalgamation has a larger scope of application.

#### **4. Purpose of criminal Psychology**

Purpose of Criminal Psychology is to understand criminal Behaviour and to be able to control and modify such behaviour.

A criminal Psychologist is required to assist police and legal authorities during investigation of a case by developing Psychological profile of frequent offenders and investigating reasons as to what led and resulted such behaviour.

It is not just to understand the offenders but also the police personnel dealing with the case. As many times, human errors and limitations restrict or delay the personnel from accessing information pertaining to the case.

A criminal Psychologist should also create instructions and increase the knowledge of investigators to help them deal with cases of mental illness who are involved in crime.

Purpose of criminal Psychology is also to research on ways to deal with investigator, offender and victims issues which arise during the process of case investigation. It is to draw and develop effective interventions to maintain and improve mental health of professionals and also to provide counseling to offenders and victims.



Criminal psychology is a specialized field and role of criminal psychologist is also to understand if schools and colleges are engaging students into activities which improve their mental wellbeing and prevent them from getting involved in violent acts and behaviours.

It is important to understand the mental state of youth in school and college who have shown deviant behaviour and how such offenders can be reintegrated back into the society.

Criminal Psychology also intends to understand developmental issues which may lead to criminal behaviour. Many researches conducted in the past are examples of how criminal psychologists have tried to understand, test and develop theories to understand developmental issues which may lead to criminal intent and behaviour (Lawrence Kohlberg's moral Development Theory, 1958; Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development, 1963).

Criminal Psychology deals and helps to solve cases involving issues related to custody decisions of child and conflict resolution in marital and family cases.

It is also important to note that criminal psychologists are also required to check and verify the Mental illness certificate produced by criminals. And, also to provide interventions and counselling to improve their condition.

Criminal Psychology in India is a growing field and purpose of Criminal Psychology indicates its essential need in today's society.

Intervention of Criminal psychologists in the legal system is need of the hour.

### **Summary**

- Crime is an act which indicates maladjustment to a particular culture and social concern, which is legally considered as an act of violation of law.
- Criminal psychology is the study of Criminal behaviour
- Criminal Behaviour can be studied at Individual Level and Group Level.
- Other branches of Psychology which contribute to Criminal Psychology significantly are Social and Clinical Psychology.
- Purpose of Criminal Psychology is to understand criminal Behaviour and to be able to control and modify such behaviour.

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**Recommended Further readings:**

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