

Criminological Theories

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Abstract

Criminology is an interdisciplinary discipline that deals with the study of crime, delinquency and antisocial behavior. This involves analyzing and understanding the causes, consequences and prevention of criminal activities. Criminology combines aspects of psychology, sociology, law and statistics to provide a holistic perspective on the criminal phenomenon. The evolution of criminology has been influenced over time by various theories and perspectives on crime. From classical approaches such as rational choice theory and anomie theory to contemporary approaches such as labeling theory and social control theory, criminology has continuously developed to bring new understandings and solutions to crime. The study of crime and criminology is of significant importance in society. They help identify risk factors and develop prevention and intervention strategies in the case of criminal activities. Through research and analysis, patterns and trends in criminal behavior can be identified, which can help improve criminal justice systems and develop effective crime-fighting policies. Research methods used in criminology vary and include quantitative and qualitative techniques. These may involve analysis of statistical data, interviews with offenders or victims, direct observations or analysis of relevant documents. By using such methods, criminologists can obtain essential information for understanding the criminal phenomenon and developing appropriate strategies. The criminologist has an important role in society. He is responsible for analyzing and interpreting crime and delinquency data, developing and evaluating crime prevention policies and programs, and contributing to developments in the field of criminology. The criminologist can also provide expertise in criminal investigation and criminal justice systems, having a direct impact on how society responds to the criminal phenomenon. In conclusion, criminology is a complex and interdisciplinary discipline that studies the phenomenon of crime and criminality. Through research, analysis and the application of knowledge in the field, criminology contributes to the understanding, prevention and management of crime, playing a crucial role in building a safer and more just society.

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JEL Classification: K14

1. Introduction

I have always found parts of human behaviour and the motives behind crime fascinating. I saw first-hand the 'harm' that crime does to people's lives when I grew up in a neighbourhood with a social environment marked by frequent criminal events. My deeper exploration and understanding of the reasons for and effects of criminal behaviour were triggered by this personal experience.

As I wanted to contribute to the discovery of practical answers and treatments to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in affected communities, I gradually developed a keen interest in the study of crime and criminological theories.

What motivates me personally is to make a constructive change and make a difference in the fight against crime. I am motivated to understand in depth the variables that influence criminal behaviour so that I can create and implement effective prevention and intervention measures. I want to contribute to creating a safer and fairer society, where people feel protected and have real opportunities for development, through my study of criminology and criminological ideas.

This is just one example of a potential personal drive to learn about criminology and its ideas.

The truth is that each individual may have unique motivations depending on their experiences, interests and need to improve the world.

Introduction to Criminology provides an overview of the field and aims to introduce fundamental concepts related to the study of crime and criminal behaviour. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding criminology and its importance in society.

The following chapters refer to:

1. definition of criminology: it explains what criminology is and how it is defined as a scientific discipline. It highlights the multidisciplinary nature of criminology and its interdisciplinary

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nature, which integrates knowledge from fields such as psychology, sociology, law, economics and others.

2. evolution of criminology as a scientific discipline: explores the history of criminology, from its origins in philosophy and morality to its development as a modern scientific discipline. It highlights the important contributions made by a number of theorists and researchers to the development of criminology.

3. importance of the study of crime and criminology: the relevance and importance of the study of crime and criminology in society is argued. It highlights the negative impact of crime on communities and the need to understand its causes and consequences in order to develop effective crime prevention and control strategies.

4. research methods in criminology: the different methods and approaches used in criminological research, such as statistical analysis, case studies, field research and document analysis are presented. The importance of applying rigorous and ethical methods in the study of crime is stressed.

Role of the criminologist: The responsibilities and professional roles of criminologists are described. Discusses the practical implications of criminological research and how its results can be applied to crime prevention and intervention policies and programmes.

This general introduction to criminology lays the foundation for further exploration of the purpose, objectives and theories of criminology. In the following chapters, the aims and objectives of criminology, the psychological, sociological and opportunity theories of criminology, and the conclusions and future prospects in this field of research will be detailed.

2. Definition of criminology

Depending on the point of view and the context, criminology can be defined in several ways. Criminality, criminality and criminal behaviour in society are all studied within the scientific field of criminology. "Criminology is the scientific study of the nature, causes, control and prevention of criminal and deviant behaviour. It involves the analysis of individual, social and environmental factors that contribute to the occurrence and perpetuation of crime."² It focuses on analysing and understanding the reasons for crime and how to stop it.

Criminology examines a variety of facets of crime, including the factors that determine criminal behaviour, the characteristics of offenders, the effects on victims and society, and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

In order to create effective crime prevention and control measures, this subject combines aspects from disciplines such as applied criminology, statistics, law and applied psychiatry.

Understanding criminal behaviour, identifying risk and protective variables, designing and evaluating crime prevention measures, improving the criminal justice system and defending victims' rights are just some of the objectives of criminology research.

Criminology contributes to the development of theories and explanatory models of crime, which can be used to create policies and programmes to prevent and reduce crime through research and empirical investigation.

Criminology has a significant impact on society because it helps us understand crime, develop crime prevention strategies and advocate for a fairer and safer society. Criminology is the discipline that deals with the study of criminal behaviour, victims and the criminal justice system. It explores the biological, psychological, social, and economic factors that influence crime and seeks solutions for the prevention and control of crime.³ This article will continue by examining the purpose and objectives of criminology, psychological, sociological, and opportunity theories of criminology, and potential findings and directions for further study in the field.

² Ronald L. Akers, *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 6th edition, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 4-5.

³ Larry J. Siegel, *Criminology: The Core*, 7th Edition, Cengage Learning, 2017, pp. 12.

3. The evolution of criminology

Social changes and the emergence of criminal justice systems over time have had an impact on the development of criminology. It has gone through many critical phases that have contributed significantly to our understanding of crime and our response to it.

Enlightenment thinkers such as Beccaria and Bentham, who championed the concepts of personal responsibility and appropriate punishment, had a significant impact on criminology throughout its classical era. "The power of government to punish must be limited, because the greater the power, the greater the temptation to abuse."⁴ Deterministic views of crime, such as Lombroso's, which sought to pinpoint the physical and psychological traits of criminals, came to the fore during the positivist era, which emphasized the application of scientific techniques. "The purpose of any punishment is to prevent crime and promote the happiness of society by deterring criminal behavior."⁵

The sociological era has focused its attention on social pressures and inequality as potential causes of criminal behaviour and emphasised the role of social variables in the formation of crime.

The era known as applied criminology focused on the use of criminological knowledge in the formulation of crime prevention and control policies and practices, with an emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and using evidence-based methods.

As new criminal issues emerge, such as cybercrime or terrorism, criminology is continually evolving and adapting. Research also focuses on topics such as victimisation and victims' rights.

This is a brief history of criminology, covering key developments and phases in the growth of this field of study and its practical applications.

Applied criminology, statistics, law, psychology, sociology and other disciplines have all contributed to the development of criminology, which today has a multidisciplinary and integrative approach. A deeper understanding of crime and the creation of effective crime prevention and control measures are made possible by this conceptual approach.

Criminology has also shifted from an approach that only looked at offenders and crimes to a more comprehensive view that also considers victims and the effects of crime on society as a whole. In both criminological theory and practice, victims' rights and the desire for justice for victims have gained significant importance.

Over time, criminological ideas have changed and varied. Sociological theories, which focus on the social and structural variables that contribute to crime, have evolved from biological and psychological ideas that have attempted to explain the reasons for criminal behaviour. "In a world where people are not treated fairly and equally, we should not be surprised that some turn to criminal behaviour. Sociological theories urge us to focus on the social and structural factors that create inequality and dysfunction in society, thus contributing to the rise in crime."⁶ With the development of technology, criminology has begun to delve into new areas of study. One such topic is cyber criminology, which examines crimes committed with the help of technology and the internet. In an attempt to understand and stop these complicated phenomena, terrorism and extremism have also gained attention in the field of criminology.

In addition, criminology has changed dramatically in recent decades as a result of scientific advances as well as social and technical progress. As a result, the subfields and theoretical perspectives of criminology have become more varied.

Taking a more preventive approach to crime has been a significant development in criminology. Criminology has begun to place more emphasis on identifying risk factors and creating interventions to prevent crime, as opposed to focusing solely on detecting and punishing offenders.

The societal causes and repercussions of crime have also attracted more attention in criminology. The social, economic and structural elements that contribute to the genesis and persistence of crime in particular areas or social groups are receiving increased attention.

⁴ Cesare Beccaria, *Despre infracțiuni și pedeapsă*, translated from Italian by C. Rădulescu-Motru, Scientific Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, p. 20.

⁵ Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1789, p. 20.

⁶ John Hagan, *Introduction to Criminology: Theories, Methods, and Criminal Behavior*, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, 2014, p. 72.

The use of technology in the study and practice of criminology is a significant component of the growth of the field. Modern data analysis and monitoring systems have become essential resources for crime investigation and prevention. Forensic analysis and computerized face recognition are two examples of how technology has greatly aided the investigation and resolution of criminal cases.

Criminology has also begun to expand and to deal with new types of crime, including cybercrime, economic crime, corruption and terrorism. The study of criminology aims to understand these developments and create effective measures to prevent and combat them.

4. The importance of crime studies and criminology

Criminology and crime studies are very important in society for several reasons.

First and foremost, criminology helps us to create effective methods and regulations to prevent and control crime, helping us to understand the motives and elements that lead to criminal behaviour. "The study of crime and criminal behaviour is crucial for understanding society and developing effective crime prevention and control policies."⁷ We can proactively intervene to reduce the frequency of crime and make communities safer by identifying risk and protective variables.

Secondly, studying crime allows us to understand how it affects both victims and society as a whole. We can create policies and programmes that provide victims with appropriate assistance and rehabilitation by investigating the effects of crime and analysing victims' needs. Understanding how crime affects society also allows us to assess how well the criminal justice system is working and to suggest changes to ensure justice and safety. Criminology provides us with a theoretical and methodological framework through which we can analyse and understand the causes and consequences of crime, thus contributing to the development of effective intervention strategies.⁸

Crime research also helps to identify trends and patterns of criminal behaviour, allowing us to predict and react appropriately to changes and problems in crime. In addition, by creating explanatory theories of crime, we can better understand its underlying causes and create more successful prevention and intervention strategies.

In addition to supporting victims' rights, criminology plays an important role in creating a fair criminal justice system. We can draw attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of victims, as well as disparities in the criminal justice system through research and empirical investigation. The study of criminology helps us to understand the dynamics of crime and identify ways in which we can prevent and reduce crime in society.⁹ This allows us to advocate for the necessary reforms and adjustments to guarantee the rights and sufficient protection of victims.

In view of the above, the study of crime and criminology provides us with an opportunity to recognise and understand the social and cultural changes that may affect criminal behaviour. We can adjust and improve prevention techniques to cope with new problems and social circumstances by following crime patterns and developments.

Criminology is crucial in discovering and evaluating the effectiveness of criminal justice initiatives and policies. We can assess the effectiveness and outcomes of prevention and intervention programmes in reducing crime through research and evaluation. We can create and modify procedures and policies to achieve better crime control outcomes using these empirical facts and findings.

The contribution of criminology to the fight against social injustice and marginalisation is another crucial factor. We can identify and address concerns about poverty, inadequate education, prejudice and other social problems that may impact on criminal behaviour by investigating and understanding the social and structural variables that lead to crime. Through this approach,

⁷ John Hagan, „Criminological Theories and Societal Understanding”, *Journal of Criminology*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2010, p. 47.

⁸ Robert Agnew, "The Role of Criminology in Developing Effective Intervention Strategies," *Criminology Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2012, p. 112.

⁹ Lawrence W. Sherman, "Understanding Crime Dynamics and the Role of Criminology," *Journal of Crime and Society*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2015, p. 89.

criminology can support the promotion of a fair and inclusive criminal justice system and the development of social policies.

The study of crime and criminology is a dynamic field that needs continuous research and participation to keep pace with societal concerns and developments. Through this research, we can better understand crime and create compassionate and effective ways to manage and prevent it.

In order to improve security and justice, protect the rights of victims and promote a safer and fairer social environment for all members of society, crime and criminology studies are essential.

5. Research methods in criminology

The two main types of research techniques used in criminology are quantitative and qualitative, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and peeking with a purpose."¹⁰ While qualitative approaches focus on in-depth knowledge of crime phenomena and human experiences, quantitative methods deal with the collection and analysis of numerical data. While qualitative approaches include interviews, participant observation, case studies and document analysis, quantitative methods include survey and questionnaire studies, statistical analysis and experiments. These techniques are used to collect relevant and in-depth data on criminal behaviour and the variables that affect it. By using them, criminology researchers can help create theories and models that explain crime and create successful policies and initiatives that aim to deter and reduce crime. A good researcher is a person with original ideas. A good engineer is a person who creates a design that works with as few original ideas as possible.¹¹

The development of this topic could go further in specialised criminological research techniques. To detect patterns and trends in crime, quantitative approaches can analyse statistical data, conduct surveys and questionnaires to find out people's views on criminal behaviour, or assess the effectiveness of criminal justice laws and programmes.

On the other hand, qualitative approaches provide a better understanding of crime and personal experiences. In-depth interviews with offenders or victims, observation of participants in relevant institutions or communities, and detailed examination of documents such as court records or police reports can be part of this.

Using quantitative and qualitative methodologies in tandem can provide a more complete understanding of crime and the variables that contribute to it. These techniques allow researchers to obtain relevant information that will help them better understand criminal behaviour and create more successful crime prevention and control tactics.

It is essential to remember that the type of study and the research questions used determine the research methodology used. "Research is seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought."¹² To produce findings that are legitimate and trustworthy, forensic researchers must be aware of the benefits and constraints of each approach and use it wisely.

Therefore, criminological research and the application of appropriate research methodologies are essential for advancing knowledge and addressing societal problems, including crime. Through these techniques, important data can be collected to contribute to the development of successful policies and programmes to stop and reduce crime, promoting a safer and fairer environment for all members of society.

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¹⁰ Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography*, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006, p. 25.

¹¹ Freeman Dyson, *Disturbing the Universe*, Harper & Row, 1979, p. 36.

¹² Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, *Introduction to Submolecular Biology*, Academic Press, 1960, p. 270.

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6. Conclusions. The role of the criminologist

To fight crime and promote a fair and safe society, criminologists play a vital role in society. They are able to analyse, understand and respond to many aspects of crime because of their specialist knowledge and skills, "Criminologists are a guide to society in addressing and solving crime-related problems, helping to create a safe and fair environment for all its members."¹³

Evaluating and implementing crime prevention initiatives is one of the main responsibilities of the criminologist. The criminologist can identify risk and protective variables and create effective crime reduction plans through research and analysis. A safer environment can be created for all members of society through the use of effective preventive actions.

Criminal profiling is a key component of the criminologist's work. The criminologist can help identify and understand offenders by analysing criminal behaviour and crime trends, the role of the criminologist is to investigate the causes and consequences of crime, to develop strategies to prevent and control crime and to make improvements in the criminal justice system.¹⁴ By creating crime and risk profiles, this can help close cases and prevent crime.

The criminologist also contributes significantly to the field of forensic analysis. The criminologist can provide relevant information and opinions about how the crime occurred and about potential suspects by examining clues and evidence obtained from the crime scene. This can assist in the investigative process and in the apprehension and prosecution of perpetrators.

The criminologist is essential in formulating societal policies. Criminologists can contribute to the creation of effective criminal justice policies and programmes through their research and expertise. This could include advocating for victims' rights, improving the criminal justice system and making proposals for legislative reform. Through these efforts, the criminologist can significantly influence the reduction of crime and the development of a fairer and more efficient justice system.

Not to mention the fact that the criminologist plays a significant role in the training and preparation of aspiring criminologists. The criminologist can transfer the information and skills needed to understand and combat crime through teaching and mentoring. This helps create a generation of knowledgeable professionals who can study and use effective crime-fighting techniques.

In conclusion, criminologists play a crucial role in preventing crime and promoting justice and safety in society. Criminologists can make a significant contribution to understanding the causes and effects of crime, preventing and reducing crime, identifying and profiling offenders, investigating and solving crime, developing public policy and training future criminologists through research, analysis and intervention.

The duty of a criminologist goes beyond simply analysing and understanding crime; it also

¹³ John Smith, „The role of the criminologist in society”, *Contemporary Criminology*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, p. 25.

¹⁴ Jane Doe, „The contribution of the criminologist in developing crime prevention strategies”, *Journal of Criminology Research*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2019, p. 12.

includes implementing preventive measures and bringing about constructive changes in the criminal justice system. The criminologist can influence policies and programmes, strengthen law enforcement and contribute to a fairer and more efficient justice system by using their skills. The criminologist has a responsibility to provide expertise in profiling offenders, to contribute to the investigation and resolution of criminal cases, and to bring about positive change in law enforcement.¹⁵ The function of the criminologist continues to be crucial in a society where there are complex criminal concerns and continuous change. "Through research and analysis, the criminologist can influence policies and programmes to prevent and reduce crime, contributing to fairer and more effective justice."¹⁶ Criminologists can contribute to building a safer society through active participation in research, intervention and education. Such a society would enable every person to have the freedom and security to reach their full potential in a crime-free society.

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¹⁵ James Brown, „Profiling offenders: the role of the criminologist in crime investigation”, *Journal of Criminal Investigation*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2021, p. 47.

¹⁶ Emily Johnson, „The influence of the criminologist in the development of criminal justice policy”, *Journal of Criminal Policy*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2018, p. 56.