

A Descriptive Essay on the Impact of Age, Gender, and Economic and Social Factors on Committing Crime with Emphasis on Personality-Centered Theories of Criminology

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1. Introduction and Problem Statement

The rate of crime and criminality is influenced by numerous factors that vary from one society to another. These factors are generally divided into three categories: individual, social, and economic. Understanding these factors is crucial in developing effective strategies to combat crime and ensure the security and well-being of societies. Individual factors play a significant role in shaping crime rates; personal characteristics such as age, gender, and level of education can influence the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Research has consistently shown that young men, especially those with low levels of education, are more prone to committing crimes. This can be attributed to a combination of factors such as peer pressure, lack of opportunities, and a sense of alienation from mainstream society. Social factors also play a fundamental role in determining crime rates; high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality have consistently been associated with higher crime rates. Economic factors are also closely related to crime rates; economic inequality, limited access to resources, and a lack of economic opportunities can drive individuals toward criminal activities. Studies have shown that areas with high levels of unemployment and economic deprivation have higher crime rates.

2. Methodology

The research was conducted with a descriptive-analytical approach and using documentary and library methods. Considering qualitative and quantitative studies, the research data were collected from credible scientific sources and databases including Web of Science, APA PsycNet, PubMed, Sage, and Wiley Online Library.

3. Theoretical Foundations: Personality and Criminal Behavior

Personality reflects the totality of a person's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and ways of interacting with the social world. Personality is the sum of all human characteristics that make an individual unique among people and consists of a set of discrete human traits or characteristics. These characteristics can differ among humans and in some individuals combine to form recognizable orientations or behavioral and cognitive patterns. Personality theories in relation to criminal

behavior believe that criminal behavior is associated with the existence of certain personality traits or a specific criminal personality. Personality psychologists relate personality to criminal behavior in two main ways: First, a criminal may possess certain personality traits that make him more prone to criminal activities; Second, some psychologists suggest that specific criminal offenders, known as antisocial personality disorder, exhibit a criminal personality that includes a set of traits that predispose individuals to criminal behavior. Prominent theories in this field include: Eysenck's biosocial personality theory (dimensions of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism), Gottfredson and Hirschi's social control theory, and Tellegen's model of positive affect, negative affect, and constraint. Empirical evidence shows that traits such as impulsivity, low self-control, difficult temperament, high novelty-seeking, low harm avoidance, and antisocial-psychopathic tendencies are strong predictors of criminal behavior.

4. Concepts of Crime and Theoretical Analysis

In modern criminal law, the most common view is that crime is a category created by law; in other words, something is a crime if it is enforceable in the relevant criminal law of that country. Crime is an act that is harmful not only to certain individuals but to a society or state ("a public wrong") and is prohibited and legally punishable. Social changes often lead to the enactment of new criminal laws and the obsolescence of older laws; behavior that is legal in one country may be criminal in another, and an activity that is a minor offense in one jurisdiction may be considered a serious crime elsewhere. In theoretical analysis, the distinction between descriptive and explanatory theories is raised. Second-order theoretical analysis is a process of constructing a theoretical explanation by transforming descriptive categories based on the existing data reservoir. Low-level theory evolves from the study of a phenomenon in a specific situational context and is applicable to immediate and specific situations. Descriptive decision theory also deals with describing and explaining the regularities in the choices that individuals tend to make and is distinct from normative decision theory.

5. Factors Affecting the Commission of Crime

5-1. Hereditary Factors

The role of genetic factors in crime is a subject of ongoing research and debate in the fields of criminology, psychology, and genetics. While there is no single "crime gene," genetic factors can influence an individual's propensity for criminal behavior by shaping traits such as impulsivity, aggression, and sensation-seeking. Genetic predispositions interact with environmental factors to determine the probability of an individual engaging in criminal behavior. Specific genetic variants, such as the MAOA gene (associated with higher levels of aggression and antisocial behavior) and CDH13 (associated with impulsivity and conduct disorder), have been

identified. The role of genetics in criminal behavior is not deterministic; environmental factors such as family rearing conditions can reduce or enhance the expression of genetic predispositions. The results of adoption studies have shown a relationship between the criminal behavior of biological parents and the criminal outcome of the adopted child, a finding that has been noted for property crimes but not for violent crimes. Findings from the Danish adoption cohort suggest that violent crimes may be genetically related to other types of behavioral deviance.

5-2. The Impact of Acquired Factors on Criminal Personality

In addition to social and environmental factors, individual personality traits have a complex relationship with maladaptive behaviors. Albert Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes the role of observation, imitation, and modeling in the learning process. According to this theory, individuals can acquire new behaviors and knowledge by observing and imitating the actions of others. The consequences of observed behavior play an important role in determining the repetition of the behavior; positive reinforcement (reward) increases the likelihood of repetition, and negative reinforcement (avoidance of punishment) also affects behavior. Factors such as dysfunctional family dynamics, parental neglect, abuse, high-crime neighborhood, peer influence, and substance abuse shape an individual's criminal psychology. Genetic research and twin studies have also played a major role in determining the genetic influence on criminal behavior, and the interaction of genetic-environmental factors plays an essential role in this behavior. Researchers prove the influence of the environment on criminal behavior, but also prove that in all cases the relevant environmental factors do not affect criminal behavior.

5-3. The Impact of Gender on Committing Crime

Research shows that while there are differences in the criminal behavior patterns of men and women, individual personality traits play an important role in predicting crime regardless of gender. An individual's tendency to commit crime is associated with personalities such as low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, extraversion, and high neuroticism. Based on the Big Five personality model (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), personality may directly influence individual susceptibilities to criminal behaviors and be useful in developing interventions to manage and reduce such tendencies. Psychopathic traits such as egocentricity, hostility, and impulsivity are strong predictors of criminal behavior in both men and women and are associated with a higher likelihood of arrest, imprisonment, and conviction. Women commit significantly fewer crimes compared to men, with some variations in crime types. Self-report studies show a smaller gender gap in delinquency, suggesting that more girls may be unwilling to admit to committing crimes. Low self-control and difficult temperament are also

important predictors of criminal behavior, regardless of gender. Gender role theory states that traditional feminine values discourage criminal behavior, while masculine values are more conducive to crime and criminality. Gilligan's theory of moral development suggests that women's lower involvement in crime may be due to better social-cognitive abilities and social skills.

5-4. The Impact of Offending Age on Committing Crime

The relationship between age and crime from a personality-centered perspective shows that age-related changes in personality traits significantly contribute to the decline in antisocial behavior and criminal activities over time. This perspective emphasizes the co-development of personality and antisocial behavior from late adolescence to early adulthood, with personality changes underlying the development of antisocial behavior during this formative stage of the life course. The age-crime curve shows a strong association between age and crime, along with a decrease in antisocial behavior as individuals mature. This decrease is attributed to normative changes in key personality dimensions. Impulsivity is a key construct in understanding the relationship between personality and crime; as individuals mature, there is a normative tendency for a decrease in impulsivity and other externalizing behaviors, consistent with the maturity principle of personality development. The age-crime curve, which peaks in adolescence and then declines, appears to reflect changes in prevalence (proportion of individuals who offend) rather than incidence (rate of offending by offenders). The longest remaining duration of criminal careers may be between the ages of thirty and forty, not at the peak age. Early identification of individuals with at-risk personality traits and providing appropriate interventions can help reduce the risk of crime.

5-5. The Impact of Economic Factors on Committing Crime

The impact of economic factors on crime from a personality-centered perspective is understood by examining how economic conditions affect individuals' personalities and behaviors. Higher unemployment rates are associated with increased crime rates, especially for property crimes; because unemployment can lead to feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and lack of opportunity that drive individuals toward criminal activities. Poverty has a significant positive effect on property crimes and a negative effect on violent crimes; this suggests that poverty can lead to an increase in property crimes due to the need for financial survival, while it may lead to a decrease in violent crimes. Inflation, which can lead to economic uncertainty and reduced purchasing power, is associated with increased crime rates. Certain personality traits such as novelty-seeking and harm avoidance can increase the likelihood of criminal behavior, while traits such as cooperativeness and self-control can decrease it. Offenders with low-income backgrounds tend to have lower emotional intelligence, which can lead to poor decision-making and increased

aggression. Psychopathic traits characterized by a lack of empathy and conscience are more common among offenders from economically deprived areas and are often associated with a history of trauma, neglect, or abuse in childhood. This can significantly affect an individual's likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior in the future by affecting brain development and leading to maladaptive coping strategies.

5-6. The Impact of Social Factors on Committing Crime

Social factors play a fundamental role in determining crime rates. The social environment in which individuals live can reinforce or inhibit criminal behavior. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality have consistently been associated with higher crime rates. Social disorganization, weak social ties, and lack of social cohesion can contribute to creating an environment conducive to criminal behavior. Personality-centered theories in this context include: Eysenck's biosocial personality theory (traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism), Gottfredson and Hirschi's social control theory (low self-control as an important predictor of criminal behavior), and Tellegen's model of positive affect, negative affect, and constraint. Factors such as lack of parental supervision, broken families, criminal parents, and poor social conditions are associated with the development of antisocial personality traits and criminal tendencies. Research shows that criminals differ from the general population in terms of personality traits; for example, in a study with 36 male prison inmates and 37 normal controls, high scores in intelligence, impulsivity, suspiciousness, self-sufficiency, and self-sentiment and low scores on the emotional scale were observed in criminals. Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn behaviors, including criminal behaviors, through observation and imitation of others. Exposure to criminal models or environments in economically deprived areas can contribute to the adoption of criminal behavior. The field of forensic psychology focuses on understanding how psychological principles can illuminate the causes of crime, the motivations of criminals, and the impact of crime on victims and society.

6. Conclusion

Crime is an act that is harmful not only to certain individuals but to a society or state and is prohibited and legally punishable. Personality factors play a very important and determining role in the formation of such a situation; because personality reflects the totality of a person's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and ways of interacting with the social world. The categorization of affecting factors is:

Hereditary factors: The role of genetic factors in crime, by shaping traits such as impulsivity, aggression, and sensation-seeking.

The impact of acquired factors on criminal personality: The environment plays a significant role in shaping an individual's criminal psychology.

The impact of gender: Low self-control and difficult temperament are important predictors of criminal behavior, regardless of gender.

The impact of age: Age-related changes in personality traits contribute to the decline in antisocial behavior and criminal activities.

The impact of economic and social factors: The complex interaction between economic conditions, individual personalities, and criminal behavior.

The relationship between social factors, personality, and criminal behavior is complex. Some personality traits predispose individuals to criminal behavior, and these traits can be influenced by the social environment to which the individual is exposed, especially during certain periods. Understanding these connections is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies to address criminal behavior.

Article Suggestions:

- Transforming crime prevention approaches from being purely one-dimensional criminal to multi-dimensional.
- Governments should place personality-centered prevention approaches on the agenda to reduce criminal costs, at least in secondary offending.
- Positive social and economic approaches for the general public in the form of welfare states can be a good model for reducing crime and criminality even in the personality-centered dimension.

Keywords:

Crime, Prevention, Punishment, Personality-Centered Factors, Economic Factors, Social Factors