

ISSUES OF CRIMINOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

The article reviews parts of sociological, criminological and psychological approaches concerning the research into the factors instigating and restraining criminality. An attempt is made to identify the spheres within the competence of the science of psychology that focus on the study of crime in traditional theories and mark prospective research directions.

The following is a description and analysis of some subfields of criminological psychology as one of the branches of psycho-legal studies. Social control and strain are regarded from different theoretical perspectives including D. Uznadze's theory representing the Georgian school of psychology. In particular, the article discusses the following: (a) establishing connection between the efficacy of social sanctions and motivational models in psychology, including the models of 'expected values' and 'behaviour potential'; (b) explanation of strain as a leading factor of criminality, as proposed by sociological and criminological theories, from the perspective of psychological Theory of Set and its connection with the concept of readiness in Set Theory, where readiness is understood as a state of tension; (c) differences in social integration and social regulation and the advantages of each in terms of their ability to exercise control; defining the specificity of the two forms of social control by types of underlying mental formations (i.e. situational set and dispositional set), their differential psychological characteristics (stability, steadiness, excitability, reactualization potential) and the dynamics of interaction.

It is assumed that the elaboration on the issues of criminological psychology and psycho-legal studies in general, will not only stimulate the development of different sub-disciplines of psychology, but will also ensure social stability and security as well as the productivity of multidisciplinary efforts.

Key words: *deviation, social control, strain, set, stability*

Criminological psychology is one of the directions of a sub-discipline of psychology-psycho-legal studies. There are many views of the subject, goals and objectives of criminological psychology. Several of them are illustrated below.

"Criminal psychology, also referred to as criminological psychology, is the study of the views, thoughts, intentions, actions and reactions of criminals and all who participate in criminal behavior" (Koscis, 2009).

According to David P. Farrington, criminological psychology strives to explain the criminal behaviour of individuals and is also concerned with reducing and preventing criminal behaviour. Two of the main questions for criminological psychologists to address are: (1) Why do people become offenders, and (2) Why do people commit offenses? The distinction between these two questions is that the first tries to explain the development of offenders (between-individual differences), while the second tries to explain the commission of offenses (within-individual differences) (Farrington, 2004).

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Vimala Veeraraghavan describes criminological psychology as “a branch of applied psychology that focuses on determination of the criminal’s reasons for committing a crime. It can also be described as a study of thoughts, intentions, reactions and wills of a criminal so as to ascertain why the crime was committed” (Veeraraghavan, 2022).

Criminological psychology which focuses on the psychological factors underlying criminality (e.g. personality characteristics of the deviant/criminal, psychological mechanisms of deviant behavior, deformations of the socialization process and their outcomes), in addition to the causes of crime, studies the means of affecting/eradicating crime or the factors restricting crime. Find below a brief review of several theories explaining restraining and instigating factors of criminality.

Factors Restraining Criminality

In the social control theories about the factors restraining criminality “sometimes socialization is considered to be a social control mechanism. To be more precise, it is the process of the internalization of social control, its transformation into self-control” (Ольшанский., 1970.). To this legitimate point of view (except for not distinguishing internal and external versions of social control) should be added the following: the internalization of social control (and even more so its self-regulatory version), that is the internalization of social norms and values, becomes psychologically understandable and explains the actual and effective mechanisms of instigation and regulation of normative activity only if we view them from the perspective of underlying processes, that is the formation and dynamics of corresponding mental entities or their equivalents (like sets, expectancies, value system). Their effectiveness, or the ability to restrain deviant behavior depends on the type of those mental formations/entities (situational, fixated, dispositional). For example, one of the specificities of social regulation is related to the neutralization of deviant tendencies and deviant behaviour via situational sets which are formed on the basis of current conditions. Their functioning is limited to the period during which the source of regulation exerts its direct impact. This means that such impact is external and one-off, and, therefore, only ensures unstable social control.

Differently from social regulation, social integration implies the existence of basic sets (dispositional set as a personality trait) and the performance of activity on the basis of such sets which are “always in the actual state, permanently stimulate the patterns of normative behavior and the function of their dynamics is to block deviant sets and/or prevent their formation.” (Nadareishvili V.G.& Buachidze-Gabashvili,M, 2017) This means that dispositional sets ensure internal and stable social control.

The effectiveness of the above-mentioned mental formations depends on differential psychological characteristics (steadiness, stability, reactualization potential and dynamic set). It is also important that to analyze the effectiveness of regulatory and integrative types of social control, it is necessary to consider the psychological regularities of opposition or synergy between conscious, voluntary and unconscious, set-based regulation (Nadareishvili, V.G., & Chkheidze, T. , 2013).

According to a general and widely accepted definition of social control, it is a “combination of processes within a social system (society, social group, organization, etc.) which ensures adherence to certain activity patterns as well as adherence to behavioral restrictions, violation of which has a negative impact on the functioning of the system.” (Л. Ф. Ильичёв, П. Н. Федосеев, С. М. Ковалёв, В. Г. Панов., 1983) According to another definition, “the major mechanisms of social control are social sanctions: positive, stimulate those deviations from norms that are acceptable by the group and negative, repress undesirable deviations.” (Ольшанский., 1970.)

As we see from the above definitions, social sanctions play a leading role in exercising social control. One of the functions of sanctions is the stimulation of behaviors that are in correspondence with norms or the stimulation of blockage of those behaviors that do not correspond to norms. In both cases we deal with the determinants motivating behavior.

Here we discuss the relationship between the legal and psychological factors in determining the effectiveness of social sanctions. The effectiveness of any sanction or its ability to instigate or block behavior depends on (a) timeliness of sanction; (b) its inevitability; (c) correspondence with the action.

Find below several theories to present the psychological context:

1) The formula used to predict behavior ($BP = f(E \& RV)$), has the following meaning: “Behavior potential is a function of expectancy and reinforcement value. Or, in other words, the likelihood of a person exhibiting a particular behavior is a function of the probability that behavior will lead to a given outcome and the desirability of that outcome. If expectancy and reinforcement value are both high, then behavior potential will be high” (Mearns, 2021).

2) “Today it is no longer possible to think about research in motivation without taking into account expectancy-value theories (cf. Feather, 1982). If for no other reason, this is because value and expectancy are the two fundamental variables producing motivation tendencies, which in turn provide us with the option to do or not do something.” (Beckmann, J. & Heckhausen, H., 2008)

3) In D. Uznadze’s interaction theory, behavior is evoked by combination of objective and subjective factors. At high levels of mental regulation, the objective factor can be represented by imaginary, predicted and expected object. The subjective factor (need) is used in a broad sense, which, among other things, implies its relatedness to valence. This combination is arranged in different types of set and ensures the instigation of certain types of behavior (in our case the instigation of normative behavior and blocking of non-normative behavior) or plays motivating and regulatory functions.

As we see, all the three theoretical approaches imply that the instigation of activity is ensured by a composite formation which combines cognitive (probability/expectancy) and affective (value/importance/valence) dimensions. From the above-mentioned preconditions that determine effectiveness of sanctions, we relate (a) inevitability and (b) timeliness to expectancy/probability and (c) correspondence to the importance/valence of sanction. It is just the combination of cognitive and affective aspects, their intensity and congruence

that transform an expected event (in our case the social sanction which is a future, expected response to an action) into the motivating/motivational determinant and instigate the corresponding activity.

Causes of Crime

Labelling theory which explains the causes of criminality says that a label (for example, 'criminal') affects social subjects and provokes in them the behavior corresponding to the content of that particular label (in this case provokes criminal behavior). From the psychological perspective, a label can evoke the behavior corresponding to that label,¹ as well as the opposite tendencies, which depends on the individual's general psychological characteristics (e.g., dispositions) and a specific actual psychological condition (e.g., situational set) (Nadareishvili, 2020).

'Social disorganization' theories mainly emphasize the nature of social formations (large and small social unities) that have been formed as a result of frequent and uncontrollable migration. These formations are heterogeneous, fragmented, and are in opposition with each other, which is caused by religious, ethnic, and political differences as well as unequal economic and social status. Such an incongruence together with a conflicting nature of individual groups causes unacceptance of the norms of the main (host) culture or the legal system, prevents adherence to those norms, reduces motivation of their acceptance and triggers the tendency to go against them. As a result, the groups are inclined to violate the norms to reach their own objectives, which develops into an established practice. On the other hand, adaptation through non-normative means causes deviance and crime. It is clear that to further elaborate the psychological aspects of such sociological approach, it becomes necessary to consider their role in the process of socialization and re-socialization. This implies a rigorous analysis of the psychological regularities of adaptation, examination of the ways in which attitudes /fixated sets and normative social expectations are formed and changed as well as the understanding of the regularities that govern the congruence of those formations.

One of the groups of sociological theories that deals with the causes of crime (Durkheim's concept of anomie and R. Merton's strain theory) emphasizes dissociation between the goals and the available means of their achievement. "My central hypothesis is that aberrant behavior {behavior deviating from the norm (V.N.)} may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations." (Merton, 1968). Such a dissociation makes it impossible to achieve the goal and reduce the strain through normative means, and, consequently, triggers deviant models of adaptation to eliminate the strain. "The technically most effective procedure, whether culturally legitimate or not, becomes typically preferred to institutionally prescribed conduct. As this process of attenuation {ex-

¹ For example, the label 'convict' limits or blocks the opportunity of receiving legal income through employment, which, as a result, provokes the use of alternative adaptation methods or the reduction of strain which has been caused by 'frustration' through a deviant behavior.

tion of the behavioral model implied in the norms or decrease of emotional support to performance of this behavior (V.N.) continues, the society becomes unstable and there develops what Durkheim called “anomie” (or normlessness)” (Merton, 1968).

In like theories explaining the mechanisms of the production of strain from the sociological perspective, little attention is paid to the essence of strain and its origin. Despite the dominance of the issues concerning the impact of social structures, R.Merton’s perspective on one of the sources of dominance deserves special attention: “It appears unlikely that cultural norms, once interiorized, are wholly eliminated. Whatever residuum persists will induce personality tensions and conflict, with some measure of ambivalence. A manifest rejection of the once-incorporated institutional norms will be coupled with some latent retention of their emotional correlates. Guilt feelings, a sense of sin, pangs of conscience are diverse terms referring to this un-relieved tension.” (Merton, 1968) We relate this legitimate and in-depth analysis to:

a) one of the stages of the volunatary process, namely the cause of necessity to pause a behavior and make a voluntary effort. It could be described as a conflict or dissociation between weak, residual tendency/readiness with a minimum actualization potential to perform normative behavior and a deviant behavior stimulated by actual situational formations. This is what happens when it becomes necessary to block a deviant behavior and construe or ‘reanimate’ the set of normative behavior through conscious, voluntary effort (Nadareishvili, 2020).

b) problems caused by incongruency between the components of a fixed formation in the context of activity when, at the initial stage of dissonance formation, these components might be originating from different sets and, therefore, be in conflict with each other.

From the psychological perspective, one of the approaches considers the following reasons for the creation of strain and, consequently, induction of deviant behavior:

a) Non-existence of the set necessary for adaptive behavior. In such case the mental formation ensuring the satisfaction of need through normative means cannot form. This results in the accumulation of tension which already exists in the need. To release this tension the given need is incorporated in the set of a different behavior (in this case deviant behavior) and tries to realize itself through this particular set; b) impediment of the realization of sets or actualized psycho-physical resources existing in the form of readiness (when this kind of readiness is considered a mental formation containing tension). This stimulates the transformation of tension (i.e. the tension accumulated in the set) into a different set underlying non-normative behavior and stimulates the reduction of tension through that different set. In other words (a) both set and need imply, to a different extent, actualization/readiness of psycho-physical resources, the tendency to realize/bring into action these resources and, consequently, evoke the ‘primary’ tension/impulse, which is necessary for any activity (‘positive’ tension); (b) secondary, additional tension of unsatisfied need and unrealized set tends to transform into another set (including the set underlying deviant behavior) to release tension and realize oneself through the given set (‘negative’ tension).

Therefore, when dealing with the relationship between deviation and tension, one of the approaches could be the following: "It is not the inability to achieve the goal that creates tension. Tension is created because of the inability to form set – a psychological basis of behavior ensuring the activity necessary for goal achievement. Another reason could be the blockage of the realization of set and its existence in unrealized form. In more general terms, the reason for the creation of tension is a mental imbalance where balance is understood as a continuous dynamic process of the formation of set (and, consequently, behavior), its change and realization." (Nadareishvili, 2008)

Conclusion

Research into deviant behavior is dominated by complex sociological-criminological theories. Despite their importance, it is still difficult to conclude that those theories are comprehensive enough for conducting research into the factors inducing and restraining deviant behavior. To reduce deviant and criminal behavior, and, consequently, solve the stability and safety-related problems, it is necessary to elaborate on the relevant fields of psychology to a needed extent and develop a single multidisciplinary approach together with the above approaches.

Based on the analysis presented in the given text, we believe that the research should take the following directions: a) examine the effectiveness of social control from the perspective of psychological models; b) explain strain, as the main factor of criminality through the analysis of set as a general state of readiness for action as well as of unrealized set as mental formation implying secondary tension; c) examine the difference in the effectiveness of social integration and social regulation by specificity of underlying situational and fixated sets, dynamics of their interaction and differential – psychological characteristics.

Students of this field (Pakes, F. & Pakes, S., 2012) believe that psychology tries to find an answer to the following main questions: (a) how psychology can further our understanding of crime, its causes, consequences and prevention, and (b) how psychology can help the criminal justice system and other agencies deal with crime. According to the authors mentioned above, since criminological psychology is a branch of applied psychology attempts should be made to apply general psychology to the issues of crime and justice. It is clear that the above legitimate perspective implies the stimulation of the development of different fields of psychology through their inclusion into the research conducted in criminological psychology (including Georgia), consolidation of the existing data and their approximation to the international research agenda.

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