

Editorial

Crime & Psychiatry I

Crimes are acts that are legally forbidden by a society. As communities and nations define crime, very few types of human behaviour have been deemed criminal in all times by all social groupings. Only disloyalty to the group, such as treason and incest within the immediate family approach the status of universal crimes. Many acts are considered criminal by most modern societies such as individual murder, theft and arson – but from a cultural standpoint such considerations are relative to time, place, persons and other circumstances involved. Each society tends to prohibit acts that it fears as potentially harmful to its own structure, e.g. totalitarian regimes forbid political dissent, and capitalist societies multiply states aimed at the protection of private property.

Indeed the definitions of crime vary from culture to culture based on social needs and circumstances.

As most legal restrictions on behaviour function to preserve life, property, or the social order, others result from moral and religious taboos.

Since criminal behaviour varies so much from one social group to another, then its root cause in most instances may be traced to general conditions. Crime may also be seen as functional in terms of the illustration and maintenance of social norms. Because arrests, trials and executions of sentence are highly publicized, they constitute a major part of any society's educational process.

Sociologically crimes can be classified according to discernible behaviour systems of those who engage in it.

Social scientists classified criminal activity according to behaviour systems of those engaged in it, this can be advantage of helping to apply more accurate scientific methods to the study of criminal behaviour. It has been classified as the following:

- 1- Violent personal crime, including murder, assault, forcible rape and child molesting.
- 2- Occasional property crime such as shoplifting, check forgery, vandalism
- 3- Occupational crime
- 4- Political crime which includes treason, espionage, sabotage, etc....
- 5- Public crimes such as drunkenness non-forced sex of fences, gambling and drug addiction.
- 6- Conventional crime, comprising robbery, larceny, burglary
- 7- Organized crimes for example drug trafficking
- 8- Professional crimes, like forgery, counter fitting and pick pocketing.

It was found that individuals involved in the first four of these behavioral systems usually do not think of themselves as criminal. Those committing political crimes violate the law as a matter of conscious.

Persons engaging in conventional, organized or professional crime are usually aware of the criminal nature of their activities. Criminals of the first two types engage in individual offences with little

groups or group support and in direct violation of the society standards of legitimate behaviour. Others may aspire at least to the social norm of economic success. Only the occupational crimes fall to elicit strong society reaction.

Three factors of undoubted importance in the etiology of crime: age, sex and social background.

Age plays a major factor like in juvenile and adult delinquency about 50% are convicted for indictable offences in the age between 10 to 21. Crimes are largely male characteristics, females commonly commit larceny and shoplifting put is convicted rarely for breaking and entering and much less often than male sexual offences.

Social factors predispose to crime. They can be seen as indices of social deprivation and they include the following: Low social class status, membership of large family, irregular schooling and a broken or inadequate home and especially in Psychiatric conditions. Broken homes can be an indication for mentally disturbed offenders. Broken homes can be seen in cases of repeated changes of parental figures as well as emotional deprivation. Death of parents or separation from the mother has no adverse effect if the child was kept in a familiar environment.

Bad family relationship are most significant factor predisposing to criminality undoubtedly the etiology of crime is multiple, it is quite insufficient to look for the causes of crime in general, more profitable to look for the causes of certain specific crimes and it is essential to examine the individual looking for his back ground of personality and motives.

Criminals are a very heterogeneous collection of people most of them are normal and their criminality is short lived. Those who are mentally ill constitute a minority of the criminal population, it is probably only in 10-20% of cases that the psychiatrist has undoubtedly a contribution to make to the understanding and treatment of criminal behaviour.

Author:

Prof. Farouk Lotaief

Prof. of Psychiatry
Institute of Psychiatry
Ain Shams University

Address of Correspondence

Prof. Farouk Lotaief

Prof. of Psychiatry
Institute of Psychiatry
Ain Shams University