

Welcome Student!.

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In this particular paper of criminal psychology, we have four units. The first unit is 'Understanding crime and Criminal Psychology'. The module which we're going to cover today is defining crime. In this particular module, we are going to look at defining crime, criminal law, and constituents of criminal behaviour. At the end of this module, you will be able to understand the concept of crime and also discuss constituents of criminal behaviour.

Before we start with our course on criminal psychology, it is very much important for us to know what is a crime. And the best way, to know what is a crime and to define crime is to define it in terms of legal terms.

We have various definitions given by different scholars. One of them is given by Munice and McLaughlin, 'an act or omission punishable by law', is defined as a crime.

Wikström has another perspective. According to Wikström, an act of breaking 'a moral rule defined in criminal law' is a crime. If we see both, these perspectives are very clear and have various advantages. And it is very much important for us to know what is a crime in detail, and what is considered to be a crime before we even embark on the journey to know what is criminal behaviour.

According to criminologists, criminal law is far from static, it is a moving target. To define any criminal act, we need to know when the act is committed and where it is committed, unless the place and the time is specified, it can not be called a Criminal Act; cause crime is a socially constructed class of acts. It is not a 'given' feature of the world.

To take an example, we have examples of drugs, gambling, homosexuality. etc. These particular crimes, if you see, are punishable by the law according to times and places. To elaborate further, let us take an example, drug 'A' might be illegal for sale on usage in State 'A'. But the same drug might be legal for sale and usage in state 'B'. So usage of this particular drug won't be a crime in state B.

Accordingly, take let's take a real-life example, homosexuality was considered to be a crime in India certain years ago. Today, in the year 2020, we do not consider it as a criminal act. Because we have had amendments. So because of this nature of law, which has amendments and the way it changes from state

to state, and times we have a problem with psychological explanations of criminal behaviour. As Wortley notes, if an act is considered to be a crime today, but not tomorrow, it is going to create an issue for us to understand criminal behavior. Therefore, to address this issue. Robert Agnew gives his perspective as, 'Acts that cause blameworthy harm are condemned by the public and/or are sanctioned by the state are to be called as criminal acts. We see that the burden is shifted from the acts that are prescribed by the law to a wide range of harmful acts.

Another perspective which is given, focuses on deviant or antisocial behaviour rather than criminal behaviour. Antisocial behaviour means any behavior which is against the social norms. And what are social behavioural norms? Social norms are unwritten rules of society.

Criminal and antisocial, these two terms significantly overlap, but they do not complete each other. So our focus in this particular paper is going to be on criminal behaviour. We are going to study something called 'male in se' or 'core offences'. Criminologists define, 'male in se' or 'core offences', as more serious and which have more severe penalties. These type of crimes are not culturally or historically relative. Example, robbery, rape, murder and serious assaults. Looking at the examples you will be able to understand that these types of acts are considered to be criminal or harmful in all types of cultures and societies. We would also consider a variety of acts like drug use, war and green crimes for our study. Although they may not be criminal acts in most of the countries or societies as they create or they support violence or they are also considered as serious harmful acts.

To know further on this topic and to study more about it, you could refer to this particular book, which is mentioned i.e. An Introduction to Criminal Psychology by Durrant.

Thank you.