

# CMY1501

## Explanation of criminal behaviour

### Theme 4

All content found in this PowerPoint presentation has been derived from "Introduction to Criminology: Crime, Offenders and Criminal Behaviour" (UNISA Study Guide for CMY1501).

# Theme 04

## Explanation of criminal behaviour

Learning outcomes:

- Understand the different dimensions (biological, psychological and social) of the causation of crime behaviour.
- Describe the general and specific risk factors contributing to criminal behaviour.
- Illustrate the application of crime theories in understanding criminal behaviour.
- Use your knowledge about crime causation and explanation to solve well-defined problems presented in scenarios.

# Individual-orientated perspectives on the causes of crime

The human is divided into 3 categories for the purpose of study. These 3 categories include: biological, psychological and social.

## ○ Biological

<u>Genetic factors</u>	<u>Neurophysiologic factors</u>	<u>Biochemical factors</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Behaviour stems from <b>inherited genetic</b> criminogenic characteristics.</li> <li>•Family, twin &amp; adoption studies have been conducted to investigate the genetic factors that contribute to criminal behaviour.</li> <li>•<b>Genectic disorders</b> that contribute to criminal behaviour include: chromosomal disorders, hyperactivity, Tourette's syndrome and other related behavioural disorders in juveniles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Research reflects a <b>significant difference</b> in brain-wave activity for criminals and non-criminals.</li> <li>•The following advances in technology allow for studies of the brain in living persons: EEG (measures brain-wave activity), CAT scanner (photographs internal organs), PET scanner (analysis the metabolism of the brain), BEAM and Superconducting Interference Device (these determine the areas of the brain responsible for anti-social behaviour).</li> <li>•Children with <b>behavioural disorders</b> could be suffering from <b>impaired neurophysiologic processes</b> in the nervous system and brain.</li> <li>•Chronic violent criminals reflect a <b>higher frequency of brain dysfunction</b> that non-violent criminals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Factors such as <b>diet, blood chemistry and allergies</b> can contribute to criminal behaviour.</li> <li>•Diets high in sugar and carbohydrates are found to be linked to violent behaviour.</li> <li>•The functioning of ductless glands and their hormones which are secreted directly into the blood impact on human behaviour.</li> <li>•The <b>difference</b> in the incidence of criminal activity amongst male and female can be attributed to the varied levels of <b>sex hormones</b> produced.</li> <li>•<b>High levels of Adrogen</b> promote impulsivity, tolerance for pain and anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul>

○ Refer to case study/abstracts on pages 136-141.

# Individual-orientated perspectives on the causes of crime

## ○ Psychological

<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Emotion/ Affective</u>	<u>Volitional</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The elements in the process of cognition involve: awareness and observation, learning, memory and thinking.</li> <li>•The <b>components of social cognition</b> associated to criminal behaviour include: empathy, locus of control, moral reasoning, self-control and impulsiveness, social problem solving and the mind-set of offenders.</li> <li>•<b>Cognitive approaches</b> to explain criminal behaviour include: <b>moral development (Kohlberg's theory</b> of moral development includes pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional), <b>Social learning approach</b> (behaviour is learned/imitated) and <b>Rational Choice</b> (people are reasonable beings who weigh advantages vs. disadvantages).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Emotions impact on behaviour from a genetic, psychological as well as social level.</li> <li>•A few examples of emotions include: <b>happiness, anger, jealousy, fright, guilt and shame.</b></li> <li>•The <b>level of intensity</b> of the experienced emotion will directly impact on behaviour.</li> <li>•Thoughts and memories are linked to a 'fight' or flight' reaction.</li> <li>•<b>Intense negative emotions</b> can trigger aggressive reactions.</li> <li>•In situations that spiral out of control individuals are likely to react in an '<b>approach</b> (attack)' or '<b>avoidance</b> (withdrawal)'. </li> <li>•Common <b>traits of a psychopath</b> include: lack of remorse and empathy, emotional immaturity and a short temper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Volitional refers to acts out of <b>free-will</b>.</li> <li>•Intent includes <b>cognitive</b> (intellectual) and <b>conative</b> (voluntary) processing.</li> <li>•The <b>three components of intent</b> include: direct (dolus directus), indirect (dolus indirectus) and dolus eventualis.</li> <li>•The <b>three views on free-will</b> are as follows: total free-will (Classical School), limited free-will (Soft Determinism) and no free-will (Hard Determinism).</li> </ul>

○ Refer to case study/abstracts on pages 149-10.

# Individual-orientated perspectives on the causes of crime

## ○ Social

<u>Family</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Peers</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•The <b>influence of the family</b> plays a major role in an individuals development.</li><li>•<b>Negative experiences</b> such as parental rejection, abuse and/or homelessness at an early age <b>contributes to early criminal involvement.</b></li><li>• Environmental factors that impact on delinquency include: parental conflict/broken homes, parental rejection and methods of parental control.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•The <b>school is the first area</b> of socialisation out of the home where the child is exposed to different influences, rules and choices.</li><li>•The congregation of children from different backgrounds can in some instances be <b>conductive to delinquent behaviour.</b></li><li>•Learners who violate school rules are <b>more likely</b> to be associated with law-breaking behaviour than those who conform to the school regulations.</li><li>•Low academic performance, negative attitude towards school, truancy and poor organisation can impact on delinquent behaviour.</li><li>•<b>Negative encounters at school are most closely linked to delinquency in comparison to any other social factor.</b></li><li>•Schools situated in <b>poorer areas</b> where unemployment is high often reflect a <b>higher rate of delinquency</b> from their students.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•<b>Young adolescents</b> are more <b>vulnerable</b> to peer pressure than adults.</li><li>•There is a strong relationship between peers and delinquency.</li><li>•<b>Gang involvement</b> is commonly found in <b>poorer areas</b> where children <b>lack structured family</b> setting and seek the security and belonging.</li><li>•South African males find themselves faced with unemployment and often turn to gang involvement as a means to pass time, gain an income and entertainment.</li></ul>

# Milieu-related causes of criminal behaviour

## The general factors contributing to crime in South Africa:

- ◉ Population structure: South African population structure is disproportionate; more than 50% of South Africa's population are under 18 years of age. Young people are daring and seek immediate gratification for their needs and wants; criminal activity is statistically prove to be higher for youth in comparison to adults. Young people between ages 12-19 are twice as likely to become victims of crime.
- ◉ Rapid migration from rural to urban areas: The influx of people are rural areas into the urban areas has caused social pressure for smaller communities to support a larger group. The limited availability of resources such as land, jobs and food creates stress and consequently has led to the development of informal settlements.
- ◉ Rapid urbanisation: The most detrimental consequence of rapid urbanisation that South Africans are faced with is unemployment. Urbanisation stems from the break-down of traditional values, social norms and the detritions of social control. Crime rates are escalated in urban areas due to high number of people with limited resources.
- ◉ High unemployment: In addition to the rapid urbanisation, the recession experienced by South Africa has led to high levels of unemployment and poverty. South Africa's unemployment rate is as high as 45% and escalates in certain communities to a higher 80%. Criminal activity increases as a result from unemployment as people cannot find jobs to earn an income for survival needs and therefore turn to criminal activity.
- ◉ Political factors: Due to the political instability in the country the crime has escalated, especially in the years that followed the 1994 election.
- ◉ Social transformation: The breaking down of social norms leaves a void for social values and rules. Weakened social control contributes to criminal behaviour.
- ◉ The system of migrant labour: Migrant labour plays a prominent role for income to families in the rural areas. However the lack of a male parental guardian due to work away from home disadvantages the families regarding a higher incidence of crime.

# Milieu-related causes of criminal behaviour

## The general factors contributing to crime in South Africa:

- ◉ Inadequate welfare services: In general, South Africa lacks the means for a developed social welfare system that supports families in need. There are current programmes implemented in the department of Social Welfare which aim to address the needs of such families.
- ◉ Inadequate education for labour: Although the formal educational functioning of South Africa is improving, many adults do not have an education thus making it increasingly difficult for many people to find jobs.
- ◉ Problems with the criminal justice system: The criminal justice system comprises of SAPS, Correctional Services and the Courts. In all 3 areas of justice the major problem faced is corruption; this results in a general ineffectiveness of the justice system.
- ◉ Large numbers of illegal immigrants: Individuals from South African neighbouring have entered into SA borders in search of work and improved living conditions. The locals in the country view these immigrants as a threat due to the scarcity of jobs and facilities in the country.
- ◉ Emphasis on human rights: Although the practice of human rights is vital, it sometimes threatens the rights of the broader community. An example of this would be the easy award of bail to an offender whilst he/she awaits trial; this maybe detrimental to the safety of the broader community.
- ◉ Large scale amnesty: The sudden release of criminals into society who have been granted amnesty creates a major threat for communities. The incidence of recidivism is estimated at 70%.
- ◉ Poor firearm control: Firearms are being smuggled from neighbouring countries into South Africa; the increase of violent crimes can be partially attributed to the easy availability of unlicensed firearms.

# Milieu-related causes of criminal behaviour

## The specific factors contributing to crime in South Africa:

- ◉ The negotiated transition and destruction of social control: The shift from the politics of confrontation to a negotiated democratic political system resulted in a breakdown of social control agencies that have not been re-built/replaced by legitimate practices.
- ◉ Political culture, violence and crime: South Africa's history of conflict and confrontation has resulted in a culture of crime and violence. Violent practices have become an answer to political, social and economic issues.
- ◉ Political rivalry as a factor contributing to crime: In the apartheid practices, violence was seen as a means of social control; this practice has been carried through with some political parties still using violence as a means of control.
- ◉ Absence of national political consensus on crime issues: The growing rate of crime and more so violent crimes has resulted in crime being viewed as a 'vote catcher', whereby simplistic solutions are offered to combat crime. Politically orientated crime is now viewed as criminal violence.
- ◉ Unemployment, poverty and relative deprivation resulting from apartheid: Crime rates escalate in areas where the levels of unemployment is high. There is a complex relationship found between factors such as poverty, unemployment, repression, inequality and discrimination and crime.
- ◉ Crime and economic development: South Africa has a mixed feature of economic development. These include: modernised banking, sophisticated telecommunication facilities, transport systems and well developed infrastructure. However, there is a lack of control or means of prevention for fraud and corrupt officials which dampens the economic improvements and promotes crime.
- ◉ Youth marginalisation: The history of young black Africans who were socially, economically and educationally deprived has led to feelings of discrimination and rejection. The Bantu Education Act subjected black people to inferior educational facilities which led to the Soweto uprising. Gang related activity, drug abuse and alcohol abuse are strong factors that lead social cohesion.



# Milieu-related causes of criminal behaviour

## The specific factors contributing to crime in South Africa:

- ◉ Inadequate support for victims of crime: There are various implemented measures in South Africa that aim to assist crime victims; However, despite these measures there still remains a lack of awareness and limited facilities to educate and aid victim in protecting themselves and their loved ones against crime.
- ◉ Vigilantism, revenge and self-defence: The result of a historically inefficient criminal justice system in conjunction with inadequate victim assistance has resulted in a culture of vigilantism, revenge and self-defence in order to protect oneself against the political and criminal dangers in society.
- ◉ Socio-psychological factors: The social and political changes in the 1990's created an atmosphere of stress, fear and insecurity in communities. These feelings are compounded by high the escalated violence an crime. The result of this stress is that communities are armed with vigilantism and revenge to protect themselves. The feelings of fear and powerlessness are often transferred and results in domestic violence and violence against women and children.
- ◉ Access to firearms: There is an influx of easily available firearms in South Africa due to the liberation struggle and in boarder countries. High rates of gun ownership influence the high rates of violent crime.
- ◉ Gender inequality: Gender inequality increases the risk of gender based crimes internationally. Inadequate victim support structures contribute towards criminal activity, especially towards women.

# Application of Theory

- ◉ **What is a theory?:**

Theories are explanations that provide answers to the question why? Theories often begin as generalised and the link two or more events or elements that are related to each other.

**Criminological theories have developed under the following premise:**

- ◉ Crime is a congenital trait.
- ◉ Crime is a tendency that individuals have acquired.
- ◉ The causes of crime are to be found in the structure and function of society.

**Four vital components for a good theory:**

- ◉ **Plausibility:** a theory must provide a plausible explanation for the relation between two or more facts.
- ◉ **Evidence of validity:** A good theory will be one that is empirical and reflects the findings of the research.
- ◉ **Falsifiability:** All theories are subject to falsifiability testing; theorists develop explanations that are precise enough to be tested.
- ◉ **Predictability:** a theory which not only provides past and current explanations of crime but also predicts future crime patterns/ trends/ behaviour.

# Application of Theory

## Important factors to study in a theory:

- Background: there are various factors in a theorist's background which may affect their explanation of theory. Environment and psychological factors are a major component which plays a contributing factor.
- Key premises: the principals and framework of the theory.
- Responsibility of actions: the study of crime has generated a considerable amount of explanations for criminal behaviour. An important factor to question is to what extent does the individual act as a free-agent.
- Policy implications: a theory that encompasses a good empirical premise should include policy implications on social dilemmas.
- Evaluation: theories are evaluated in terms of their adequacy, comprehensiveness and usefulness. Theoretical adequacy refers to a theory's plausibility, empirical support, falsifiability and predictability.

## The usefulness of theories:

Theories assist us in understanding why crime occurs; and furthermore assist in prevention strategies.

# Application of Theory

## Classification of theories:

- Classical and Positivist theory: these are the 2 oldest categories are criminological theories. Classical theory is based on laws and the rights of the individual. Positivist theory is based on the pathology of the criminal and deals with the correction of criminality.
- Structure and process theory: explanatory theories that are subdivided into structure and process. Structure theory focuses on the way society is organised and how it influences behaviour. Process theory do not stress social structure, but aim to explain criminal behaviour through learning.
- Consensus and conflict theory: also known as old and new criminological theories. Consensus theory focuses on individuals as free-agents who understand between right and wrong. Conflict theory argues that there is no consensus in society, since people have conflicting values.

# Explanation of Crime

**The key premise of this general theory of crime:**

- The definition of crime is less defined.
- The criminal act and the criminal offender are considered separate concepts.
- The explanation for individual differences in the tendency to commit criminal acts may be found in a person's level of self control.
- The root cause of poor social control is inadequate child-rearing practises.

# Explanation of Crime

## Common characteristics of Crime:

- Crime provides immediate gratification.
- Crime provides easy and a simple satisfaction to the needs or desires.
- Certain crimes do not require skills or a great deal of planning.
- The victims of crime experience pain and discomfort as a result of the criminal act.

## The potential offender:

- The majority of offenders have a minimal tolerance for frustration.
- Their reactions are immediate and there is no thought for the consequence of actions.
- Crime is not associated with long-term benefits.
- Criminals lack the necessary self-control which result in various circumstantial factors associated with poor self-control.

# Conclusion

Theme 04 encompassed the following areas of study:

Learning outcomes:

- ◉ Understand the different dimensions (biological, psychological and social) of the causation of crime behaviour.
- ◉ Describe the general and specific risk factors contributing to criminal behaviour.
- ◉ Illustrate the application of crime theories in understanding criminal behaviour.
- ◉ Use your knowledge about crime causation and explanation to solve well-defined problems presented in scenarios.