

Assignment topic;

Environmental Approach to Explanation of Criminal Behaviour ;

Rationale & Approaches

Criminal Behaviour

Criminal behaviour is defined by statute and as such is necessarily a social and legal concept rather than a biological one. In light of this fact, some researchers have argued that criminal behaviours should be examined within the wider context of antisocial behaviour. Environmental criminology focuses on criminal patterns within particular built environments and analyses the impacts of these external variables on people's cognitive behaviour. It forms a part of criminology's Positivist School in that it applies the scientific method to examine the society that causes crime.

Environmental criminology is the study of crime, criminality, and victimization as they relate, first, to particular places, and secondly, to the way that individuals and organizations shape their activities spatially, and in so doing are in turn influenced by place-based or spatial factors.

Criminal behaviour refers to conduct of an offender that leads to and including the commission of an unlawful act. The situational and environmental perspective in criminology refers to a collection of theories and approaches that focus on the role that immediate circumstances play in producing criminal acts. This contrasts with criminology's more usual preoccupation with what creates offenders' criminality: depending on the disciplinary orientation, the disposition to commit crime is accounted for by genetic makeup, developmental experiences, or current social, cultural, and economic conditions. Environmental factors that contribute to juvenile crime and violence include violent and permissive families, unstable neighbourhoods, and delinquent peer groups.

Why do some people commit crimes and others don't? In this lesson I will try to explain the definition of Environmental Criminology and explore how it attempts to explain why people become criminals.

Environmental Factors of Criminal Behaviour

It is widely accepted that the model for the development of human behavior is extremely fluid and effected by several factors, not just genes or environmental factors alone but in fact an interaction between the two. There are several important theories that do not advocate the influence of heredity or environmental factors over one another but in fact display the importance of their interaction in determining an individual's behavior. An individual's genetic disposition is important in that it lays down a fundamental framework that can be a guide for propensities of certain courses of action. It is a fact that someone may be born with the disposition for a higher than average intelligence but environmental factors play a tremendous role in how this trait would be expressed. If an individual were to grow up in an environment that fostered the pursuit of academic interests, this intellect trait would have the ability for increased expression rather than if the individual were in an environment that placed little value on learning. This can in turn relate to criminal behaviour and social deviance. Various developmental and sociological factors play a role in an individual's inclination towards exhibiting criminal behaviour.

Environmental Approach of Criminal Behaviour

Environmental Criminology is a positivist theory that suggests crime is influenced, if not caused, by a person's spatial environment. The basis is specifically how individuals, with all their diverse attributes, become influenced to commit crimes by the elements in their immediate location. In 1971, C. Ray Jeffery published "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design", in which he examined the role that immediate environments play in crime and suggested a range of strategies for reducing crime by modifying immediate environments. He also coined the term "environmental criminology".

One such environmental criminology approach was developed in the 1980s, by Paul and Patricia Brantingham, putting focus of criminological study on environmental

or context factors that can influence criminal activity. These include space (geography), time, law, offender, and target or victim. These five components are a necessary and sufficient condition, for without one, the other four, even together, will not constitute a criminal incident. Despite the obvious multi-faceted nature of crime, scholars and practitioners often attempt to study them separately. For instance, lawyers and political scientists focus on the legal dimension; sociologists, psychologists and civil rights groups generally look to the offenders and victims, while geographers concentrate upon the location of the event. Environmental criminologists examine the place and the time when the crime happened. They are interested in land usage, traffic patterns and street design, and the daily activities and movements of victims and offenders. Environmental criminologists often use maps to look for crime patterns, for example, using metric topology.

Environmental criminology is a family of theories that share a common interest in criminal events and the immediate circumstances in which they occur. According to Brantingham and Brantingham (1991), 'environmental criminology argues that criminal events must be understood as confluences of offenders, victims or criminal targets, and laws in specific settings at particular times and places'. Environmental criminologists look for crime patterns and seek to explain them in terms of environmental influences. From these explanations they derive rules that enable predictions to be made about emerging crime problems, and that ultimately inform the development of strategies that might be employed to prevent crime.

Crime analysis is an investigative tool, defined as 'the set of systematic, analytical processes that provide timely, pertinent information about crime patterns and crime-trend correlations'. It uses crime data and police reports to study crime problems, including the characteristics of crime scenes, offenders and victims. Crime patterns are analysed in terms of their socio-demographic, temporal and spatial qualities, and may be represented visually using graphs, tables and maps.

The concerns of the environmental perspective contrast sharply with those of most other criminological approaches. Traditional criminological theories are concerned with criminality. They seek to explain how biological factors, developmental

experiences and/or social forces create the criminal offender. In this, they take an historical perspective, focussing on the distant causes of crime. The occurrence of crime is understood largely as an expression of the offender's acquired deviance, which may be a function of events that occurred many years beforehand. Once the criminal has been created, crime is seen as more or less inevitable: the exact location and timing of the criminal act is of little interest. The prevention of crime is viewed in terms of changing offenders' fundamental criminality through enriching their childhoods, removing social disadvantage, and – once they have offended – providing them with rehabilitation programmes.

The environmental perspective takes a very different view. Here crime is the object of interest. The offender is just one element of a criminal event, and how offenders come to be the way they are is of little immediate relevance. Instead, the focus is on the current dynamics of crime – where did it happen, when did it happen, who was involved, what did they do, why did they do it, and how did they go about it?

The aim of the environmental perspective is to prevent crime, not to cure. The aim of the environmental perspective is to prevent crime, not to cure offenders.

The environmental perspective is based on three premises.

1. Criminal behaviour is significantly influenced by the nature of the immediate environment in which it occurs. The environmental perspective depends upon the principle that all behaviour results from a person- situation interaction. The environment is not just a passive backdrop for criminal behaviour but rather, it plays a fundamental role in initiating the crime and shaping its course. Thus, crime events result not only from criminogenic individuals; they are equally caused by criminogenic elements of the crime scene. Environmental criminology explains how immediate environments affect behaviour and why some environments are criminogenic.
2. The distribution of crime in time and space is non-random. Because criminal behaviour is dependent upon situational factors, crime is pat-

terned according to the location of criminogenic environments. Crime will be concentrated around crime opportunities and other environmental features that facilitate criminal activity. Crime rates vary from suburb to suburb and from street to street, and may peak at different times of the day, different days of the week, and different weeks of the year. The purpose of crime analysis is to identify and describe these crime patterns.

3. Understanding the role of criminogenic environments and being aware of the way that crime is patterned are powerful weapons in the investigation, control and prevention of crime. This knowledge allows police, crime prevention practitioner and other interested groups to concentrate resources on particular crime problems in particular locations. Changing the criminogenic aspects of targeted environment can reduce the incidence of crime in that location. Environmental criminology and crime analysis combine to provide practical solutions to crime problems.

Across these three domains of theory, analysis and practice, the environmental perspective is multi-disciplinary in its foundations, empirical in its methods, and utilitarian in its mission. The environmental perspective draws on the ideas and expertise of sociologists, psychologists, geographers, architects, town planners, industrial designers, computer scientists, demographers, political scientists and economists. It embraces measurement and the scientific method, and it is committed to building theories and providing advice that are based on rigorous analysis of the available data. Finally, environmental criminologists and crime analysts actively engage with law enforcement personnel and crime prevention practitioners to help reduce crime.

Environmental Influences on Criminal Behaviour

Several genetic research characterize at aiming the existence of genetic influence on criminal behaviour. Studies on twins also play a major role in determining the existence of such theories. Physical and mental disorders too contribute to such behaviours. Nonetheless researchers also prove the effect of environment

on the criminal behaviour. In contrary to it researchers also prove that not in all cases that the relevant environmental factors do influence the criminal behaviour. The interaction of genetic-environment factors also contribute majorly to such criminal behaviour. The relevancy of such biological and environmental testimony can play a major role while dealing with criminal cases. Research seems consistent in recognizing that heritability influences adult behaviour more than environmental influences, but that for children and adolescents the environment is the most significant factor influencing their behaviour. One of the most important environmental factors during childhood development is that of socialization or the way a child is 'taught' how to act. This refers to the period of childhood development when children learn the rules and values of their society. This model hypothesizes that initially children learn to merely obey the rules of their society. Certain actions are repeated because of directly correlated consequences. A child does not intuitively know that stealing is wrong; they have to be taught through negative consequences that this behaviour is not acceptable. They then internalize these rules and eventually believe them to be fundamentally correct. In other words, socialization refers to the developmental period where the ideals of morality and socially acceptable behaviour are instilled in a child. If a child is consistently taught how to act through both positive and negative reinforcement, the child will begin to exhibit certain characteristics because they believe them to be inherently correct. If a child is not taught how to properly act or inconsistently reinforced, clear-cut moral obligations may not be instilled leading to effected social judgment and a disposition towards criminal behaviour.

Conclusion

In conclusion, crime and victimization are not evenly distributed across people or places. Several approaches to the study of victimology suggest that understanding the targets, or victims of crime, that make them more attractive to offenders can provide valuable information to the examination and study of crime. Knowing which places or people are most likely to become victims of crime allows us to make better predictions about where and when crime is most likely to occur and

better informs the mapmaking and crime analysis process, a critical part of preventing and reducing crime.

Environmental approach to crime represents a socio-cultural phenomenon which is not associated with physical or mental capacities of an individual as such. Punitive approach is very traditional approach to crime, which is universal in nature. It regards the criminal as a basically bad and dangerous sort of person. The object of this approach is to punish the offender so that the society may be saved from his misdeeds. Therapeutic approach to crime is of relatively recent origin, which considers the criminal as a victim of circumstances and a product of various factors within the criminal and society. It regards the criminal as sick person requiring treatment. Different approaches to crime provide better basis for the determination of specific policies for dealing with crime and criminals.

Traditional approach defines crime in terms of violation of public law, whereas modern approach to crime emphasizes upon functional aspect of law. Theoretical explanation to crime involves individualistic and environmental approaches to crime. Individualistic approach to the crime for the first time paid attention to the personality of the offender which laid the foundation of modern criminology.

Environmental criminologists look for crime patterns and seek to explain them in terms of environmental influences. They derive rules that enable predictions to be made about emerging crime problems, and that ultimately inform the development of strategies that might be employed to prevent crime.

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