

Mental Disorder and Crime: a General Overview

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Abstract. This paper aims to provide a broad overview regarding the relationship between major mental disorders and criminal thinking which further alludes to criminal behaviour. Current research proposes an especial correlation between Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) and criminal tendencies, where ASPD will be utilized as an exemplar to offer intricate explanations of such relationships. As previous studies of similar angles tend to focus on subtle aspects within this web; zooming out allows for a comprehensive summary of current findings and suggested directions for further investigation. Symptoms of other mental disorders associated with the topic will not be omitted despite the primary focus on ASPD. Whilst it is important to note that the materialization of thinking into behaviour is undeniably complex, the analytic framework of epidemiology can be used to deduce potential causes for delinquencies and offences which in turn fuels according change within criminal justice systems. Many questions and controversies remain unresolved especially in relation how disorder should authorize special treatment. 'Crime' in this case refers to both mindset and action; psychiatric lens are likely to lend more insights to motives within the broader socio-cultural landscape. This paper will account for the social values whilst maintaining a precise scientific approach, sketching out a logical chain from causes to consequences of crime in relation to mental disorders and finally its implications from a legal and rehabilitative perspective.

Keywords: Antisocial Personality Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, crime, mental disorders, etiology.

1. Introduction

Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) is defined as a chronic and pervasive tendency to disregard and violate the rights of others (DSM-5). Manifestations commonly include repeated violations of law, extreme aggressions, and exploitation, accompanied by the ignorance of social and personal responsibilities. Indifference and apathy are also defining characteristics of the disorder. Other disorders to be discussed include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a disorder that results from witnessing or experiencing an event that evokes terror and helplessness which stimulates a protective response to diminish responsiveness with the arousal of disinterest, detachment, and estrangement from surroundings (DSM-5). Bipolar disorder is an umbrella term for mood disorders where manic and depressive episodes alternate (DSM-5). Research into emotion, crime and anti-social behaviour has successfully established an affective-textual analysis that draws from emotional dimensions to reasonings of crime [1].

All analysis and perspectives shall be seen as hybrid as psychological phenomena are rarely reducible to solely socio-cultural, cognitive or biological influences [2]. Taking into the account of diverse dimensions would eventually lead to a contemplative compilation of materials as to better understand the underlying motives of crime. Mental disorders are just one of numerous ways in which theoretical knowledge could be condensed as to tackle systemic loopholes to promote equity and justice.

Associations between emotion and crime are increasingly heightened within the status quo [3] and mental disorders are often perceived as predispositions for criminal activities as they primarily serve as a classification of irrational emotions. Most models of psychopathology are derivative of the premise that inappropriate experiences of emotion constitute psychological malfunctioning which shall be regarded as one of causes of behavioural manifestations – crime – at the very least [4].

This paper will expand on this proposition through outlining the main features of various mental disorders, etiology, individual and societal impacts and proposed implications that places a emphasize

on the applicatory value of such understandings and reviews. The conclusion would then turn to summarize the discussion and evaluate the psychiatric angle when compared with competing theories and its corresponding prevalence to social contexts. All psychological explanations are multi-faceted; each fragmented constituent is only reductionist portion of the greater image. The criminal justice system could well benefit from tailored resolutions that recognizes the needs of the mentally-ill rather than focusing on philosophical premises.

2. Methodology

This paper is a review based on articles and journals published on Google Scholar, JSTOR, Science Direct and DOAJ in the field of psychopathology and criminology with an especial focus on the etiology of mental disorders.

All definitions of outlined disorders are obtained from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: 5th edition. The emotional dimension of mental disorders is derived from primarily S. Rachman's 1991 study on the causes and consequences of disorders of emotion and theoretical claims draws upon Criminal Theories and Behavioural Images, published under the American Journal of Sociology [5]. Crime and Mental Disorder: An Epidemiological Approach constitutes the basis of the etiology section, accompanied by several extensions tying etiology to impact, social consequence, and future implications [6].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Etiology

'The main problem in discussing any relationship between criminal behaviour and mental disorder is that the two concepts are largely unrelated... it would be surprising if such a *mélange* had a clear-cut relationship with any social parameter...' John Gunn writes as the introduction to his analysis of Criminal Behaviour and Mental Disorder [7]. The claim is largely plausible in the sense that it outlines the pragmatic difference and a supposedly adamant barrier when approaching the subject. However, the complexity of this topic precisely unravels within how they are 'not completely unrelated'. Some would argue that mental disorder serves to diminish one's criminal liabilities when regarded as legally insane, however research also suggests that some specific symptoms of mental disorder could be a catalyst or motive for crime [6]. Specific internalization and externalization mechanisms associated with greater PTSD symptoms demonstrates an increase in the probability of engaging in criminal behaviours [8].

Analysis of ASPD offers a distinct illustration correlating antisocial behaviour to reductions of moral reasonings which could otherwise be categorized as legal 'insanities'. A neurological model hypothesized that specific genes alter structural and functional impulses in the brain, for instance a polymorphism in the monoamine oxidase a gene [9]. It is also important to note that environmental risk factors may offer more exposure to altered gene expression as to perform antisocial tendencies. Both neurological and socio-cultural considerations should be acknowledged given that neural circuits underlying morality succinctly distinguishes ASPD patients. Characteristics as ignorance and indifference listed above align with this hypothesis. Classical genetic designs which analyze resemblance amongst family members of different biological and environmental relatedness further revealed that some dimensions of antisocial behaviour were sufficiently evidenced by familial correlations [9]. Pairing this with Karl Christiansen's that found that 35 percent of monozygotic twins in Denmark were both legally guilty compared to 13 percent of dizygotic twins which shared less of the same genetic makeup, it could be deduced that antisocial tendencies run in the blood and such genetic predispositions would lead to a higher prevalence of crime [10].

Aside from genetic predispositions, environmental stimuli are demonstrated via a correlational study conducted on US Army soldiers, establishing a direct cause and effect chain from suffering PTSD symptoms to criminal behaviour. Archival data was collected from 310 incarcerated and

another 310 nonincarcerated male soldiers, thus suffer from sample and gender bias. Those who exhibit increased symptoms of PTSD are externalizing such symptoms through psychopathic tendencies whilst simultaneously internalizing such symptoms through suicidal ideation, both resulting in increased criminal tendencies [9]. Psychopathic mechanisms often include aggression, violence and impulsivities, denoting the relationship between PTSD symptoms and incarceration as positive [11, 12]. Notions of reduced empathy and personal attachments also connote to the risk of unlawful manifestations [13]; both could be categorized as PTSD symptoms due to severe environmental shocks.

Sometimes, the experience of mental disorders is highly subjective, and definitions of terms may be scrutinized, in which case depressive episodes thoroughly depicts these subtle possibilities. It is agreed by most authorities that the frequency of violent crimes is above average for criminals diagnosed with depressive states when compared to exalted states which could be associated with depression or bipolar [14]. Investigations by Norwood East revealed that out of a total of 53 studied law-breakers, 34 has committed crimes associated with varying degrees of violence, yet only 7 has been legally convicted in a group of 52 exalted subjects [15]. Woddis further explained that within irregular depressive episodes psychomotor retardation and difficulty in thinking are to be noted which constituents of potential motives [14] are. Neustatter reported an attempt at throttling one's mother, stunning one's brother and after a year committed suicide due to depression which was unrecognized at the time [16].

Brief illustrations of various mental disorders have unveiled the complexities of this intricate web, where biological and environmental stimuli, along with components of other subjects are all ingredients of the menagerie. Debates surrounding externalities and internalities, objectivities and subjectivities remain to be featured on the forum as to aid holistic reviews surrounding the issue.

3.2. Consequences and Implications

Articles focusing on social consequence diverges from an etiological approach, rather analyzing the social traditions as the result of the occurrence of mental disorders and associated crime. This paper would focus on how social organizations and processes function as to acknowledge the relationship between mental disorder and crime as opposed to analyzing the symptoms of such disorders. The individual's image is already painted through social etiological models whilst the consequential shall be coloured by identifying the social antecedents as a collective rather than social antecedents of a single particular disorder [17]; social antecedents in this case refers to social factors or conditions that precede and influence an individual's behaviour [18]. The social consequence model stresses empirical associations with mental health and how such disorderly behaviours are integrated into our social networks.

Turning to Barlow's model where he contrasts those who develop problems as having inappropriate emotional responses, the socio-economic hierarchy is polarized in the sense that even if the term is reduced to solely education and income, one's socioeconomic status is inversely associated with all rates of mental disorders, positively correlating appropriate emotional responses with environmental exposures [4, 19]. It is undeniable that narratives remain competitive and imbalanced, yet clinical implications may suggest mitigative procedures as to tackle internal stressors. The replacement of inappropriate outlets with those deemed as legally appropriate would be the primary concern. In parallel, therapeutic solutions such as cognitive behavioral therapy should also incorporate and emphasis controlling emotions as a vital criterion. All unlawful and unjustified behaviours stir from an expression that lacks fundamental control [20].

Law doesn't address 'free will', it is a system built upon problems related to competence and responsibility, including consciousness, comprehension, rationality etc. According to moral and legal theories of fairness, criminal law is fully consistent with determinism and universal causation that supposedly are the bedrocks of responsibility [21]. What capacity would suffice for holding anyone legally and morally accountable has been long debated; an excusing condition should only be bestowed to one with a genuine affecting condition such as lack of rational capacity, except the

severity of disorders vary and often symptoms fluctuate and are present in episodes. It is extremely difficult to pinpoint whether at the time of crime, the patient had control.

Mental disorders are diagnosed mainly based on behavioral indications [21]. From a social justice perspective, the definition by American Psychiatric Association remains vague and ambiguous. Lingering questions awaiting a definite answer include controversies upon diagnosing mechanisms, at which level was the condition caused by, for example biological, cognitive or socio-cultural, and whether a concrete evidence chain could be established between mental illness and criminal liabilities as to responsibility and justifiably avoid retribution. Though many courts do accept a self-report or external diagnostician, the subject stands as contentious.

4. Conclusion

‘The most compelling assumption about the causation of complex human behaviour,’ wrote Stephan J. Morse ‘is that it will require a multifield, multilevel approach’. Though this paper attempted to reduce this subject to theoretical claims and realistic impacts, research into the specifics remain limited and obscure. Studies and theories utilized are merely reduced to its simplest form, therefore the transferability and temporal validity of the works referenced could be questioned.

In conclusion, the etiology of mental disorder could be seen as a spectrum with genetic and environmental factors sitting on the two ends. Different disorders utilize differing explanatory approaches, whilst it is crucial to recognize that mental disorders are merely a condensed sector of a greater circle. The investigation of mental disorder is not synonymous to a biological approach, instead it is one of the many ways in which psychological discrepancies materialize in the status quo. Through a holistic analysis of social consequences and current implications, it is obvious that the issue deserves more attention that could then lend insights into amending the justice systems and therapeutic support. Simply claiming special treatment with such treatments varying case by case would not suffice when tackling antisocial behaviours and inappropriate emotional responses. ASPD, PTSD and bipolar disorders are just a few that scholars investigated, yet there are countless other mental disorders such as schizophrenia, substance use disorder that too require etiological analysis which would largely contribute to the formation of improved social welfare and justice.

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