

"Forensic Psychology at the Crossroads: Emerging Trends and Future Directions"

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Abstract

The multidisciplinary area of forensic psychology examines how people behave in legal situations by fusing psychology, law, and the criminal justice system. In order to better comprehend the mental states of witnesses, victims, and criminals, this study examines the origins, development, scope, and uses of forensic psychology. It looks at how forensic psychology has developed both internationally and in India, highlighting how it is linked to victimology and criminology to provide a comprehensive understanding of crime. The article also discusses the many functions of forensic psychologists in victim support, jail rehabilitation, judicial testimony, profiling, and policy formation. Future directions of the field are also examined, including emerging fields like digital forensic psychology, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Forensic Psychology, Criminology, Victimology, Correctional Psychology, Victimization, Rehabilitation.

1. Introduction

Psychology is defined as the study of features and applications of mind and behavior of an individual. Forensic Psychology is the sub field of Psychology that deals with the study of application of psychological principles and methodologies in the medico-legal matters associated with the investigation of crime. It is not only applicable to studying the mindset of criminal or victim but also the eyewitness and the mental state of people at the time of commencement of crime [1].

Forensic Psychology involves the application of field of-

- Psychology
- Criminal Justice System
- Legal And Law Related Matters

Forensic Psychology is formed from the intersection of fields of law and psychology as forensic is a term that is associated with the court of law. This field deals with addressing the psycho-legal or medico-legal psychological issues. It focuses on the functional behavior or mindset of people rather than studying the diagnosis or treatment of the particular disorder [2].

This field requires a firm understanding of the legal matters as well as the understanding of standards and protocol of legal profession, act as expert witness to provide testimony in the court of law and knowledge of legal terms to communicate with the lawyers, judges

and others associated with the court.

Forensic Psychologist are involved in the legal matters and are required for the psychological assessment and evaluation of the criminal, victim, suspect, eyewitnesses or any other individual associated with the scene of crime. They have skills that involve communication skills, interview that allows them to comfort their patient and to go deep in the matter to prove the culpability of the perpetrator involved in the legal system.

There are majorly 3 missions that a Forensic Psychologist must fulfill during their investigation time-

- They should protect and preserve the Human Rights of people involved in the matter.
- They should ensure that justice must be served and must not be biased against a particular person.
- They should enhance the well being of the patient by applying the psychological principles and methods.

Forensic Psychologist perform their assessment and methods on children subjected of abuse, women subjected to domestic violence, victim of assault, any victim or suspect suffering from any psychological disorder or any sort of stress, anxiety and depression, assessing the juvenile victim and any other adult offender associated with the case.

Psychology has turned to be a diverse field in the past decade and there are wide varieties of fields and branches that are associated with this field. These people are found working in the prison, rehabilitation centers, in the legal system, hospitals, juvenile system and other therapeutic areas to deal with wide variety of patients [3].

2. What is criminal psychology and criminology?

2.1. Criminal Psychology: Criminal Psychology is defined as the dealing with behavior and mindset of criminal at the time of commission of crime or any other disorder associated with the criminal due to which the person was subjected of committing such crimes [4].

2.2. Criminology: Criminology deals with studying all the ins and outs of the particular person and researching in detail regarding the behavioral pattern in order to find the actual perpetrator of the crime.

3. Role Of Forensic Psychologist

Forensic Psychologist gives a complete different sight to the investigation by studying the mindset and behavior of individual by determining the hidden motives to commit the crime. The Forensic Psychologist work in the legal system and have different roles that are-

- Forensic Psychologists are trained to apply their psychological knowledge and skills in the legal system to ascertain the mental state of the victim or suspect in the criminal trials.
- Their working conditions are still challenging in the developing country like India where their need and application is still unknown in some places.
- They spend their most of the time in the prison, juvenile boards, courts to assess the mental state and to evaluate the presence of any psychological disorder or to have a knowledge of diminished mental capacity of the person in taking decisions [5].
- They work with the victim of crime as well in the investigative and therapeutic capacity to help the people.
- They offer counseling services to people who have suffered from violent crimes including sexual crimes, domestic abuse, child abuse or violence to help them to recover from trauma and mental illness.
- Forensic Psychologist often assist the law enforcement agencies in developing the criminal profile that is used to identify the criminal associated with similar types of crimes.
- They are often used in family courts to provide psychological support to the child in case of divorce and also for conducting the child custody evaluation and assist the attorney and court in the decision making.
- They often apply their knowledge and skills in the research organization to make discoveries that are related to both psychology and field of law and their intersection.
- They are often employed in the mental health care centers, private sectors, family courts, child protection agencies, correctional institutions, research organizations, legal advocacy centers and other colleges and universities.

- They evaluate the effectiveness of preschool intervention strategies designed to prevent violent behavior among children [6].

4. Victimization

Victimization is the process of being a victim. A victim is a person who has suffered any sort of crime or is harmed by other people for some sort of profit. The person can be victim physical, psychological or from any sexual or moral point. Victimology is defined as the study of incidents, process and effects of victimization on people [7].

Victimization is a way by which people study to identify and investigate the crime, its consequences, impact on the life of people. There are several impacts that are associated with the victimization that are:

4.1. Physical Impact-The person may suffer from injuries or eventually leading to death of the individual. There may be burns or injuries on different body parts.

4.2. Mental Impact-The person can suffer from mental trauma, disorder, depression or any other psychological disorder.

4.3. Social Impact-The person gets socially withdrawn, there is peer pressure, the person suffer discrimination from society and they are subjected to a lot of pressure and hatred from people around them.

4.4. Financial Impact-There is loss of property, the person and family are not able to get job in any office, there can be bankruptcy and poverty can be the root cause.

4.5. Factors Affecting Victimization-There are several factors that affect the process of being a victim that are-

- Family background
- Lack of education
- Drug abuse
- Psychological disorder or illness
- Peer groups and social factors.

5. Types Of Victimization

Victimization is the result of physical, mental or psychological factors. Some of the types of victimization include-

5.1. Rape-This is the most common form of victimization and is the sexual penetration in the vagina of the female with force or threat without any consent from the female. The penetration in case the female is abducted or intoxicated is also considered as Rape and the punishment of this act is given under Sec 376 of I.P.C.

5.2. Stalking-Stalking is the repeated following of the person with evil mind to harass a person or put them in such a situation where they need to think about their personal safety. This can be cyber-stalking as well when the person social media is being followed

to threaten or harass the person. It is a type of sexual misconduct in certain situations.

5.3. Domestic Violence—Domestic violence is a heinous crime when the wife or husband is being subjected to violence by the other partner or their families in interest of money or any other resources. This can include physical, emotional, sexual or mental abuse suffered by the person. The punishment for domestic violence in India is dealt according to sec 498A and 304B of I.P.C.

5.4. Theft-Theft is a crime that involves the act of stealing something valuable or any resource from the person with intent to cause harm.

5.5. Threat of Harm—Threat of harm is basically the threats that are given to an individual to get something from the person. This is also a type of victimization.

6. Coping With Victimization

There are factors that can help in dealing or coping with this victimization that are—

- Providing financial help to victims.
- Education and training them on how to tackle such situations.
- Providing them employment opportunities to help them recover from this situation early.
- Creating awareness program not only for the victim but also for the society to make them aware about such cases.
- Providing them health and services at the utmost priority [8].

7. Scope And Applications Of Forensic Psychology

A very broad and useful field, forensic psychology connects psychology with criminology, law, and the criminal justice system. Its application spans legal, therapeutic, correctional, and investigative contexts. Forensic psychologists help with crime investigation and trial procedures, as well as victim protection and offender rehabilitation, by putting psychological concepts to use in actual legal situations [9].

Among its most significant uses are:

7.1. Profiling of Criminals:

One of the most well-known uses of forensic psychology is criminal profiling. It entails researching the motivations, psychological characteristics, and behavioural patterns of criminals, especially when it comes to serial offenses. In order to create psychological profiles that assist law enforcement in identifying potential suspects, forensic psychologists examine crime scene evidence, offender conduct, and victim-offender interactions.

7.2. Testimony in Court:

In court, forensic psychologists frequently testify as experts. They testify on psychological matters such as the accused's mental condition at the time of the offense (insanity defence), their capacity to stand trial, malingering (faking mental illness), or the veracity of witness accounts.

7.2. Jury Conduct and Determination:

Forensic psychologists investigate how jurors evaluate testimony and evidence, as well as how group dynamics, biases, or preconceptions may influence their choices in nations where jury trials are a component of the legal system. By examining prospective jurors' views, biases, and appropriateness for a case, they may also participate in jury selection procedures.

7.4. Psychology of Police:

When it comes to assisting law enforcement, forensic psychology is crucial. Because of their job, police officers frequently experience significant levels of stress, trauma, and psychological strain. To assist police in overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and burnout, forensic psychologists offer crisis intervention, stress management programs, counseling, and resilience training.

7.5. Testimonies of Child Witnesses:

In situations involving domestic violence, abuse, or neglect, child witnesses are frequently crucial. However, suggestibility, fear, or trauma can affect children's testimony. By employing age-appropriate questioning techniques and making sure the child is not under any duress, forensic psychologists evaluate the dependability and trustworthiness of child witnesses.

7.6. Counseling and Support for Victims:

Giving psychological support to crime victims is another significant use. Forensic psychologists assist victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, and other crimes in their recovery from despair, anxiety, and trauma. In order to help victims deal with their experiences, they create therapeutic interventions and offer counseling services. Additionally, they support victim rights in the legal system.

8. Relationship Between Forensic Psychology, Criminology And Victimology

Together, the disciplines of forensic psychology, criminology, and victimology offer a thorough understanding of crime and justice. By analyzing the mental health of witnesses, victims, and offenders, establishing their capacity to stand trial, judging the reliability of eyewitnesses, and supporting offender rehabilitation, forensic psychology mainly deals with the use of psychological concepts in legal contexts. Contrarily, criminology is a more comprehensive field that investigates the social, economic, cultural, and psychological elements that impact criminal conduct in order to identify trends, causes, and ways to avoid crime [10].

It focuses on comprehending the causes of crimes and how society might lessen them by implementing efficient laws and programs. By studying the rights, experiences, and psychological effects of crime on victims, victimology enhances both of these disciplines. In addition to emphasizing the role of victims in investigations and trials, it investigates the physical, emotional, social, and economical effects of victimization.

These three fields must be connected in order to provide a

comprehensive and balanced picture of crime, its causes, its effects, and its resolution within the legal system. Forensic psychology aids in evaluating and interpreting the behaviour and mind set of both victims and offenders, criminology offers insights into the larger social and systemic patterns of crime, and victimology makes sure that the impact on victims is taken into consideration [11].

9. Future Of Forensic Psychology

With the combination of contemporary technology, neuroscience, and international collaboration, forensic psychology is expected to grow considerably in the future. The application of artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most exciting fields. With the help of AI-driven profiling and predictive policing, forensic psychologists will be able to examine digital footprints, body language, and speech to identify potential crime hotspots and identify signs of deceit, aggression, or criminal intent.

In a similar vein, developments in neuropsychology and neuroscience—using methods like fMRI and EEG—will aid in determining responsibility, intent, memory recall, and emotional control, resulting in the burgeoning discipline of "neurolaw," which enhances decision-making in the courtroom [12].

Digital forensic psychology, which focuses on comprehending criminal behavior in cyberspace, such as identity theft, hacking, cyberstalking, and online harassment, as well as addressing the psychological trauma experienced by victims of digital crimes, was also born out of the growing prevalence of cybercrime.

In order to guarantee a just and compassionate justice system, forensic psychologists are expected to play a more active role in criminal justice reform and policy-making beyond technology. They will advise governments on victim care frameworks, offender rehabilitation initiatives, and crime prevention tactics.

10. Conclusion

Offering vital insights into human behavior in legal circumstances, forensic psychology has a pivotal position at the nexus of psychology, law, and the criminal justice system. The field has made a name for itself as an essential part of contemporary investigations and the administration of justice, from evaluating the mental health of victims and offenders to helping with

criminal profiling, trial testimony, penitentiary rehabilitation, and victim support. While its current applications encompass jails, courts, law enforcement, and rehabilitation facilities, its historical development—both internationally and in India—reflects a slow realization of the value of psychological competence in legal matters. With the combination of digital forensics, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, and international partnerships, the field is set to grow even more in the future and maintain its relevance in tackling the complexity of both established and new crimes.

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