

THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN CRIME INVESTIGATION AND IN EXPEDITING JUSTICE

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***ABSTRACT:** The relationship between psychology and law can be traced back to the 19th century, albeit with little attention having been given to the two disciplines' interactions. The interface between these disciplines has grown tremendously over the years and the existing relationship needs to be nurtured and developed if the criminal justice system is to win the war against crime and criminality. The main objective of this paper was to review the literature related to the contributions of psychology to the field of law with a view to coming up with better answers to the questions that have always been raised about unresolved criminal matters. It analyses the importance of offender profiling, interviewing witnesses and suspects, construction of police line ups/identification parades as well as the importance of testimony giving by experts in the criminal courts. It concludes that, without the proper integration of psychology into the criminal and legal matters, many cases can be improperly handled resulting in false convictions, wrongful acquittals and inappropriate sentencing of accused persons*

KEY WORDS : *Crime investigation, Expert witness, Justice, Law, Police line ups, Profiling*

Modern-day policing is a colossal task for many law enforcement agencies. Oftentimes, the challenges faced are largely due to the unpredictability of the policing environment. The advent of new digital technologies, as well as the general increase in education, should stimulate the law enforcement agencies to innovate and come up with robust models for investigating and detecting crime. Further, those charged with the investigation, prosecution and hearing of cases for the purposes of administration of justice need to be familiar with how human

beings behave and also, how their behavior can be studied for the purposes of understanding crime. Psychology as a science which deals with human behavior, should, therefore, be harnessed and exploited for proper and effective delivery of justice.

AN OVERVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY

To understand the role of psychology in the criminal justice system, it is critical to explain what psychology is and what its aims are. According to Kalat (2016), the term psychology derives from the Greek roots *psyche* meaning “soul” or “mind” and *logos* meaning “word” and thus, psychology is literally the study of mind or soul. A clearer definition was provided by Feldman (1993) when he posited that psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes.

In other words, psychology is concerned with explaining, predicting, modifying and improving the lives of people and the world in which they live. To achieve its aims, psychology employs scientific methods and procedures in order to answer questions about the nature of human behavior. It is primarily concerned with the elimination of harmful and unwanted behaviors while nurturing and promoting helpful ones. The role of psychology in crime investigation can be fully explained using forensic psychology which is a subfield within psychology which deals with crime investigation for the purposes of making court decisions.

CRIMINAL PROFILING

One of the most visible roles played by psychology in crime investigation is criminal profiling. This is an investigative technique used by psychologist or police officers to infer an offender's characteristics from his or her crime scene behavior. Criminal profiling is sometimes referred to as psychological profiling, offender profiling, criminal investigative analysis, crime scene analysis, behavioral profiling, criminal personality profiling, socio-psychological profiling and criminological profiling. In this review, however, the phrase criminal profiling will be used

interchangeably with offender profiling and psychological profiling. In support, Ebisike (2007) asserts that offender profiling is a crime investigation technique whereby information gathered from the crime scene, witnesses, victims, autopsy reports and information about an offender's behavior is used to draw up a profile of the sort of person likely to commit such crime. Profiling is by its very nature, a complementary technique and is usually taken up when no physical traces were left at the crime scene.

POLICE LINE UPS/IDENTIFICATION PARADES

Police line ups, also known as identification parades in investigation terminology, are a police procedure used to identify a suspect by placing him or her among a group of individuals who normally have nothing to do with the crime being investigated. While these line ups are regarded as a mere police procedure, it is critical that they are understood in a psychological sense. As a matter of fact, once a line up has been constructed, a key witness or witnesses are invited to come and identify the suspect. Remember, eye witness identification is a function of memory. For one to accurately identify a suspect, much is dependent, to a larger extent, on their ability to retrieve information stored in the memory. But, a person's ability to recall incidences can seriously contaminate the identification as a result of such issues like their own biases or stress factors resulting from the crime experienced.

EXPERT WITNESS

Another key contribution of psychology to crime investigation and justice is in the courtroom. Psychologists especially the forensic psychologists, are normally invited to criminal or civil courts to provide psychological evaluation for the determination as to whether the accused or the plaintiff is fit to stand trial. In support, Wilson (2019) traces the contribution of psychology to the courts to as far back as 1896 when a psychologist identified as Albert von Schrenck-Notzing testified at a murder trial about the ramifications that suggestibility has on witness

testimony and based on that action, psychological factors were taken up for considerations during subsequent criminal, civil and family trials. Since then, psychology has played a role in evaluating the competence of the accused or plaintiff in terms of their cognitive, emotional and psychological competence to offer an acceptable defense

CONCLUSION

From the discussions made, it can be seen that the interplay between psychology and the criminal justice system is the backbone of effective criminal investigation and the good administration of justice. The symbiotic relationship between the two fields needs to be nurtured and developed in a way that benefits the criminal justice system in particular and the society in general. It has to be remembered, however, that the discussions made in this review are not exhaustive in terms of what psychology can offer to the legal field. Empirical studies can be carried out to validate the relationship between psychology and the criminal justice system .

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