

13 - 8. Criminology and penology

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© SPMM Course 8. Criminology and penology In simple terms, criminology is the study of crime, its origin and effects; in a broader sense criminology is said to include the study of: i) Attributes of a criminal. ii) Characteristics and extent of crimes. iii) Effects of crime on victims and society. iv) Methods of crime prevention. v) Types of crimes.

3 levels of explanation are often discussed with respect to the origin of criminal behavior Individual level (personal characteristics of the criminal), Situational or contextual level (immediate circumstances or situations), Social-structural level (social relationships, milieu and institutions). Different theories of criminology tend to construct their primary explanation for criminal behaviour at one of the above levels. Penology comes from the Latin word poena (punishment). Penology deals with the societal response and treatment of crime and criminals and thus focuses on the characteristics and workings of the Criminal Justice System. Also known as penal science, the broad goal of penology is to aid society repress criminality. In this sense, it mostly deals with the punishment of the offender but in the context of mental health issues, penology also covers medical treatment and education that aims at rehabilitation and social inclusion of the offender. Relationship between crime and mental health: It is difficult to have a clear-cut understanding of the relationship between crime and mental health. By definition, crime is understood in a social context; what is a crime in one setting may not be a crime in another time or place. So acquiring data relating crime and mental health is very difficult. Also, convictions are not same as crimes. Most data available pertains to conviction rates; nonconvicted or unregistered crimes are far too many. Also, it is not easy to study if the mental illness was directly related to an offence. A mentally ill person can commit a crime as everyone else could, but whether it is related to his mental illness is the most important but often unanswerable question.

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