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Forensic Psychiatry and its Relation to Criminal Behavior

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Abstract

Forensic is a diverse field, it has its branches from forensic engineering to serology. One of the crucial part of forensics is Forensic Psychiatry which deals with the mentally disordered patients who have committed serious crimes such as Homicide, sexual assault etc. Forensic Psychiatry is an interface between law and psychiatry as it deals with both at the same time. It is a crucial part as it provides justice to the victims but also to the culprits who are mentally disordered by treating them for their ailments and helping them become a responsible and sane citizen of the country. From a criminological standpoint, forensic psychiatry helps to understand the psychological motives underlying the antisocial acts and helps prevent crimes through therapeutic and rehabilitative measures. Thus, this is an essential part of forensic science to ensure fairness, ethical responsibility, and safety for society. This paper discusses various types of psychiatric disorders and correlates these disorders with violent behaviors.

Keywords: *Forensic psychiatry, criminology, criminal justice.*

INTRODUCTION

Forensic psychiatry is a sub-specialized branch of forensic science that stands at the intersection of law, psychology, and medicine. It deals with the assessment and management of individuals whose mental disorders are associated with criminal behavior.

Forensic psychiatrist work in different settings such as prisons, asylums, psychiatric hospitals etc, and work with different patients like adolescent psychiatry, psychotherapy and forensic learning disability. There has long been a connection between mental disorders and criminal behavior, studied both in psychiatry and criminology. Certain psychiatric conditions, such as psychosis, antisocial personality disorder, or impulse control disorders, may affect judgment and perception of reality or reduce the capacity for self-control, leading to unlawful acts

Forensic Psychiatrists also have to testify in some cases as an expert witness in the court of law.

Laws associated with Forensic psychiatry

Following are the acts and laws associated with Psychiatry:

The mental health act, 1987

The lunatic act, 1912

The mental health act, 1987

The MHA (mental health act) was enacted for the better care and treatment of psychiatric patients. The act has provisions for the management of property and affairs of mentally ill patients.

The lunatic act, 1912

It is the act related to unite and amend the laws related to lunacy.

Sections 45-51 of the Indian Evidence act deal with the applicability of expert opinions.

TYPES OF PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESS

There are many kinds of psychiatric problems that an individual might be suffering from, many of these are also genetic and many are due to upbringing, background or related to childhood traumas of an individual. Although some diseases are not genetic and can affect a person in the later stages of life or are related to other bodily diseases such as dementia, epilepsy etc.

Psychiatric illnesses also lead to insanity which is the main problem as to why an individual gets violent.

He/she does not have the calibre to distinguish between right and wrong, good or bad. Many of these illnesses also arise from alcoholism or drug addiction. Alcoholism is a very common problem in India and all over the world, which leads to major crimes like homicides, domestic violence and rapes. Some of the major psychiatric illnesses that led to crime are described below:

Schizophrenia

It is a mental illness that affects how a person thinks and behaves. Many individuals who suffer from this often lose a touch with the reality. They hallucinate and have delusions throughout. These delusional thoughts are the main cause of violence although schizophrenic patients are not likely to get violent but the risk prevails.

Personality Disorders

People with personality disorders tend to have a hard time in understanding emotions and handling stress and they often act impulsively. This impulsive behaviour often leads to crime and violence. People with personality disorders lack trust in others and are often suspicious of others and is often aggressive or angry.

Shared Psychotic Disorder or folie-a-deux

Shared psychosis is a rare disorder that is shared by 2 or more people who live in a close relation like a couple or a family. In this disorder a psychotic person

(deluded person) when in a close setup, shares the psychosis to the nonpsychotic individual. This disorder is rare but is very dangerous as the psychotic individuals or the group have the tendency to self-harm or harm other normal individuals due to their delusional beliefs. Case example: Barbie and ken murderers, Burari deaths.

PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a disorder which is developed after an individual has suffered life threatening situations or traumatic experiences which has altered their thoughts and practices. Individuals with PTSD are often fearful and suspicious and have flashbacks of the event repeatedly. If untreated, this disorder can develop into psychosis or delusional disorder which makes the individual insane and violent in some cases.

Alcoholism and Drug abuse

Alcoholism is a major problem all over the world. It not only deteriorates mental health but also the physical health of the individual causing major

diseases like cancer. Drug abuse is also a life-threatening problem, drugs alter the chemical balance of the mind and the body causing the individual to experience a euphoric state. Alcoholism and substance abuse have a fair share of after effects which are mind altering, many alcoholics are schizophrenics and suffer from mania. Alcohol is the main reason of major domestic violence cases in India. People who abuse substances on regular basis are often aggressive and delusional and cause violence in the community.

CASE STUDY

The Burari deaths

A case of shared delusion that shocked the entire nation, The Burari deaths. In 2018, Delhi India, family of 11 hanged themselves inside their home. There was no sign of forced entry in the home and the autopsy confirmed the suicide. As the doctors performed the psychological autopsy it was confirmed that one of the family members was suffering from psychosis which was then shared to the entire family in a level that they were so deluded they committed suicide while performing a ritual in hopes that they would not be killed and would be saved by their dead father. This shared psychosis is also known as folie à deux or madness of two.

From the point of view of forensic psychiatry and criminology, this case presents a situation in which psychological influence, religious beliefs, and family hierarchy may interplay and develop into collective delusional behavior. It also points out the dangers of untreated psychosis and the importance of early psychiatric intervention.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Forensic psychiatry is an important part of the Indian judiciary and criminal justice system. It ensures that the victim has received justice at the same time ensuring that the culprit is given the right treatment for the insanity. Forensic psychiatry and forensic psychology form essential pillars of modern criminology, providing valuable insight into the psychological dimensions of criminal behavior. These disciplines bridge the gap between mental health and law, ensuring that justice is served with fairness, empathy, and scientific understanding. Cases like the Burari deaths underline the complexity of human behavior and the deep repercussions that arise due to psychological disorders like folie à deux when they go untreated. Forensic psychiatry is the emerging field as more people are getting aware about the importance of a sane mind and good mental health and it is important for a crime free society and the criminal justice system.

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