

A PROFESSIONAL CRIMINAL: CONCURRENCE BETWEEN EXPERTS' OPINION, PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND RESEARCHER'S CONCEPTUALIZATION

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Six social-psychological and offence related variables, conceptualizing a Professional Criminal in the Pakistani context, have been operationally defined. These are Occupational Life Pattern, Type of Crime, Interpersonal Context, Premeditation, Criminal Record, and Criminal Associations. Twenty-three questions tapping these variables were posed to 151 representatives of law-enforcing agencies and general public to judge the level of concurrence between researcher's conceptualization of a Professional Criminal and that of the respondents. Generally, high level of such a concurrence was found. Implications of the findings and direction for further research have been pointed out.

Evolving offender typologies has been of interest to criminologists since long and can be traced as far back as Lombroso in nineteenth century. The need for identifying distinct types of law breakers has been felt on many accounts. For example, it was observed that categories yielded by legal statutes such as felonies, misdemeanours, property offences and violent crimes, etc., fail to help the researchers in scientific analysis of criminal behaviour, specially those interested in etiological processes (Lindesmith & Dunham, 1956). Many criminologists assert that separate etiological accounts on different types of criminals are needed for explanation or causal analysis of criminal behaviour. Typological efforts have also been motivated by diagnostic and treatment interests where rehabilitation of offenders was the major concern (Gibbons, 1965). Psychologists have been interested in studying criminals and delinquents to discover "personality types" and formulate their treatment policies

accordingly (Megargee, Bohn, Meyer, & Sink, 1979; Warren, 1976).

Researchers have formulated different classification schemes and typologies of criminals and their criminal acts (for a review of these, see Gibbons, 1988). They have tried to demonstrate the existence of offender types by identifying similarities in personality characteristics and the social-psychological circumstances and backgrounds to which these offenders belong. However, most of the proposed types are not well-defined; are merely illustrated by case histories of criminals and lack explicit statements of definitional attributes. These are difficult to be subjected to research tests as it is quite unlikely that different researchers would classify particular offenders in the same way or within the same types. A few researches done to test these types failed to provide any satisfactory empirical evidence (see Gibbons, 1975, 1985). Moreover, these typologies are not based on any kind of broad organizing theory. Most of the patterns of criminal behaviour have been defined ad-hoc and due to this reason number of types equals the number of researchers who purported them. In fact, diversity in criminal acts and the fact that the individuals who commit those acts manifest such a large amount of differences in background and the contexts in which their acts take place make it abundantly difficult to classify criminals in theoretically meaningful categories.

However, despite the difficulties encountered in evolving typologies of criminals or criminal behaviours which could also stand the stringent demands of empirical evidence, it seems that certain classification schemes will continue to have some heuristic value. Differences among such kinds of criminals as professional killers, psychopathic rapers, habitual thieves and white-collar criminals exist. Even among committers of one kind of illegal act, say murder, differences are observed not only in their offence-related behavioural patterns but also in their personalities and backgrounds. In the specific socio-cultural milieu of Pakistan, for example, the personality of a murderer who is a professional robber and operates in an urban setting is to be explained in a different way from that of a villager who commits murder under the pressure of the social value of taking revenge, or on some interpersonal dispute. Gibbons (1985) also observes that the idea that there are different types of criminals in a given

society is, in fact, "in the culture", because lay persons do perceive, believe and speak about a "criminal class" of different shades and varieties. From this one also gathers that crime is to be viewed essentially as a social and cultural phenomenon and is to be understood only in its specific social context. For example, Western researches generally show that violent crimes are somewhat associated with personality pathology which could be attributed to some psychological adversities in life. But in Pakistan many among those who commit crimes of murder, etc., may not necessarily have been exposed to those psychological adversities in their lives which are more frequently experienced by violent or non-violent property offenders (Tariq, 1989).

POSTULATES

In view of the above, the work on the development of a culture-specific empirically derived typology of Pakistani criminals was initiated. The tentative clues found from an earlier study on convicted prisoners (Tariq & Durrani, 1983) and an intuitive understanding of the Pakistani society led the researcher to believe that among the prison inmates of the country, the prisoners were largely found, in the two broad types — which were arbitrarily labelled as "Professional" and "Non-professional" Criminals. Six variables related to the offender and his criminal act were identified as defining a "Professional" Criminal and differentiating him from a "Non-professional" one. The present article reports how these two types were conceived and what was the level of the concurrence regarding this conceptualization when it was sought from the experts belonging to various law-enforcing agencies as well as from the important segments of general public. The six variables or constructs are described below:

(a) Occupational Life Pattern

Crime is a main source of living for a Professional Criminal. He is usually not trained for any skilled job, has a very chequered occupational history and his efforts to get a lawful job and stick to it for a reasonable length of time are usually not very consistent and serious. A Non-professional Criminal, on the contrary, is skilled or/and trained to do some job. He is gainfully employed and whenever unemployed, he makes serious efforts to get a job and then sticks to it.

(b) Type of Crime

As crime is a source of living for a Professional Criminal, he mostly engages himself in a variety of non-violent property crimes. Non-professional Criminals, on the contrary, commit mostly crimes of murder, assault, etc.. However, a few exceptions to this general observation can be identified and explained in the Pakistani context. For example: (a) Those who commit crimes against person (murder, etc.), while committing crimes like robbery, burglary, etc. (property crimes), are also considered Professional Criminals as their prime motive is capturing of property and money, and not attack against person; (b) Those who commit crimes of kidnapping, etc., of boys and girls for trade rather than sexual motives are considered Professional Criminals.

(c) Interpersonal Context

Professional criminals like thieves, robbers, pick-pockets, etc. , mostly commit their crimes in impersonal situations and their victims are usually strangers from outside their personal spheres of social interaction. They may also indulge in "victim-less" crimes. On the contrary, a Non-professional usually commits crimes on interpersonal conflicts in various interactional situations and his victims are usually known to him.

(d) Premeditation

A Professional Criminal usually commits premeditated crimes with planning and he carefully executes them. On the contrary, a Non-professional usually commits crime on the spur of the moment without premeditation or/and planning. However, exceptions can be observed when a Non-professional Criminal also commits a crime with planning or/and premeditation. This particularly happens when he commits a crime under the pressure of social values such as taking revenge, saving the honour, and 'cleansing' shame, etc.

(e) Past Criminal Record

A Professional Criminal persists in criminal career and usually has past criminal record. Those offenders whose past criminal activity is not known or those who have just entered

into criminal way of life may 'need' some years of experience, have frequent contact with law-enforcing agencies and serve some sentences before they could become 'Professionals' in the real sense of the word. A Non-professional usually does not have past criminal record. At times, however, he may report previous arrests and convictions but a careful analysis of his encounter with law-enforcing agencies may reveal a Non-professional pattern. This is so because like his present offence his previous offences, if any, may have been committed in interactional situations due to interpersonal conflicts, disputes, etc.

(f) Criminal Associations

A Professional Criminal usually has associations with those who themselves practice criminal behaviour. A Non-professional Criminal, on the other hand, usually does not have criminal association typical of the Professional.

METHOD

Sample

One hundred and fifty one subjects including serving officers of different ranks from the law-enforcing agencies and representatives of general public were contacted and requested to fill-up the questionnaire. The description of the respondents is as follows: 32 representatives of courts such as judges and lawyers; 7 prison authorities; 40 representatives of police including junior and senior police officers; and 72 representatives of general public having heterogeneous demographic characteristics such as age, socio-economic status and education.

Instrument

The researcher constructed 23 questions (in Urdu) in such a way that each described a Professional Criminal in the context of one or the other of the six variables of the study. A response to each question could indicate whether the respondent conceptually agrees with the researcher's conceptualization of a Professional Criminal or not (the questionnaire is available with the author).

Procedure

Each filled-up questionnaire was checked with the help of a "Key" which indicated whether or not a response was in-accord with researcher's concept of a Professional Criminal and hence showed concurrence or lack of it. The frequencies and percentages of in-accord responses were recorded item-wise as well as construct-wise.

RESULTS

Table 1 indicates item-wise percentages of concurrence between researcher's conceptualization of a Professional Criminal and those of the four groups of respondents.

Table 1
Item-wise percentages of concurrence to the researcher's conceptualization

Item Nos.	Courts	Jails	General Public	Police	Average
1.	68.7	100.0	66.7	95.0	83
2.	78.1	100.0	63.9	97.5	85
3.	56.2	57.1	68.1	85.0	72
4.	96.9	100.0	94.4	80.0	93
5.	78.1	85.7	62.5	90.0	79
6.	62.5	100.0	70.8	90.0	81
7.	71.9	71.4	80.6	82.5	77
8.	78.1	100.0	81.9	85.0	86
9.	75.0	74.3	93.1	77.5	83
10.	62.5	100.0	73.6	97.5	83
11.	75.0	85.7	81.9	100.0	86
12.	87.5	85.7	79.2	72.5	81
13.	84.4	71.4	90.3	82.5	82
14.	56.2	71.4	62.5	97.5	72
15.	31.2	57.1	33.3	57.5	45
16.	87.5	100.0	91.7	90.0	92
17.	87.5	71.4	84.7	92.5	84
18.	81.2	85.7	81.9	70.0	80
19.	59.4	85.7	68.1	85.0	75
20.	62.5	100.0	58.3	92.5	78
21.	46.9	42.9	41.7	46.0	44
22.	90.6	85.7	84.7	90.0	88
23.	87.5	85.7	86.1	87.5	87
Average	72	83	74	84	79

There seems to be a general concurrence as indicated by high percentage of in-accord responses in different categories of respondents. However, there can be observed a relatively low level of concurrence on items 15 and 21.

Table 2 presents the construct-wise percentage of concurrence. These percentages have been obtained by averaging the percentages of relevant items tapping a particular construct.

Table 2

Construct-wise percentages of concurrence

Construct with Item Numbers	Courts	Jails	General Public	Police	Average
Occupational Life Pattern (Item 1)	68.7	100.0	66.7	95.0	83
Type of Crime (Items 3,5,8,13,16, 19-22)	76.3	83.7	78.2	86.8	82
Interpersonal Context (Items 9,10,11,12-18)	76.2	89.0	82.0	84.0	83
Premeditation (Items 7,15 & 21)	50.0	57.1	51.9	75.0	55
Criminal Record (Items 4,14 & 20)	73.4	92.9	69.8	91.9	82
Criminal Associations (Items 6,17 & 23)	79.2	85.7	80.5	90.0	84

In each construct, the average percentage is above 80 except in case of the construct of Premeditation (tapped by items, 7,15 & 21) that shows a low level of concurrence.

DISCUSSION

Generally, a high level of concurrence was found between researcher's conceptualization of a Professional Criminal and

that of the respondents on all items except on items 15 and 21 which pertained to the construct of "Premeditation" (see table 2). Excluding items 15 and 21, the percentage of range of concurrence on 21 remaining items is 72 to 93. However, an overall average of 79 has been observed including the percentages on items 15 and 21. The average percentage could rise to 82 if the percentages on items 15 and 21 were not considered (not shown in the table).

The overall average range of concurrence across respondent categories is 72 to 84, and across items it is 72 to 93 (excluding items 15 and 21). Both of these ranges of concurrence could be considered somewhat big. The range is even higher across items in each individual respondent category or across respondent categories on each item. This could mean that certain items describe a Pakistani Professional Criminal more 'closely' (eliciting high concurrence) whereas other do not do so. This in turn suggests that the items could be arranged in an hierarchal manner indicating the extent to which these describe the commonly held concept of a Pakistani Professional Criminal.

As regards the items showing low concurrence, it should be noted that another item, i.e., item 7 taps the same construct, namely, premeditation and has a concurrence percentage as high as 77. In fact, most respondents agreed to item 7 that a Professional Criminal usually commits premeditated crimes. However, when asked in items 15 and 21 whether, in their opinion, "a Non-Professional Criminal commits a premeditated crime to take revenge of some insult or injury in an interpersonal conflict or dispute", most of them ignored the given "Yes" and "No" options of the answer and wrote, instead, "not necessarily". This resulted in a low level of concurrence because these responses were excluded from analysis. However, this could mean that the respondents do think that even a Non-professional Criminal may commit a premeditated crime in the situations and for the objectives described though knowing also that such crimes usually take place on the spur of the moment under situational pressures. In this way, in fact, the items indicate agreement with the researcher's view, rather than any disagreement (see researcher's description of Professional Criminal regarding the construct "Premeditation").

These items may continue to have value as discriminating between Professional and Non-professional Criminals. However, as the construct 'Premeditation' seems to be linked with situational factors vis-a-vis Professional and Non-professional Criminals, the items may have to be rephrased to make the context in which the crime takes place clearer and specific.

As there is a high concurrence between the significant people regarding the definition and description of a Professional Criminal, one might say that a Professional Criminal in this society is conceived in the following terms: A Professional Criminal is a person without any regular and lawful source of income. Criminal activities being main source of living for him, he mostly commits a variety of non-violent property crimes. At times, however, he may hurt or murder someone particularly when his intended offence against property is checked or thwarted in such a way that he fears failure and the resultant arrest. He mostly commits his crime in non-interpersonal situations and his victims are usually strangers to him. He usually commits crimes with planning. He is a recidivist and usually has association with those who themselves practice criminal behaviour.

A Non-professional, on the other hand, mostly commits crimes against person like hurt and murder in an interpersonal situation, and his victims are mostly his relatives or at least well-known to him. He commits crime usually on the spur of the moment. However, even if he plans and carefully executes his offence, it is done in a non-professional manner. He is usually not a recidivist but even if there is some previous arrest or/and conviction, it is of "non-professional" type. His previous offences are also usually against person and not against property. He does not have close association with those who practice criminal way of life.

It seems that the six constructs identified as defining a Professional Criminal can serve as a basis for developing a scheme which may classify criminals into limited but two very important and meaningful categories in the Pakistani context. The first type includes those who are more or less continuously engaged in criminal acts, though of different types but mostly property offences. The seriousness of a singular act committed seems to depend upon extent of

committer's personality, aggressive, anti-social disposition, his experience and training in committing criminal acts in the past and also on situational factors such as opportunity, facility of action and on probability of detection, arrest and conviction, etc. The other type is of "one-time losers" or transitory offenders responding mainly to situational pressures or/and social cultural values urging them to run counter to law (e.g., taking revenge personally for some insult or injury). The first group is labelled as "Professional" and the other as "Non-professional" because most of the law-enforcing agencies and general public perceive them as such.

This conception of a Professional Criminal may, however, be somewhat different from what a Professional Criminal is thought to be in some other society. Gibbons (personal communication, December, 1989), for example, observes that "... in the American criminological literature, the notion of professional criminal usually is applied to individuals who not only have engaged in repetitive law-breaking, but persons who work full time at crime and who exhibit a high degree of skill at crime". In Pakistani society, a Professional Criminal does not seem very different from his American counterpart as crime repetitiveness may remain to be one of the basic factors related to both of them. Still, a Pakistani Professional may not be whole-time or full-time working on crime, having chequered history as far as legal occupations are concerned. Pakistani Professional thieves and burglars, etc., may not exhibit a high degree of skill and may not belong to any criminal organization or subculture because the crime in Pakistan, by and large, has not been an organized phenomenon. It is only very recently that some organization seems to have emerged in form of drug trafficking, etc. What is likely to be common between a Pakistani Professional Criminal and an American Professional Criminal is a "disposition" to engage continuously in anti-social, illegal and unscrupulous activities with individual differences in the extent and nature of such activities. Nevertheless, this is open to verification. It may, in fact, be quite an interesting research to find out the cross cultural similarities and differences in the lay man's perception of a professional criminal, reasons for which people commit crime and other such issues.

It goes without saying that this kind of a classification scheme can hardly meet Gibbons' (1985) or any other similar

criteria of evaluating an offender typology. In fact, it seems futile to develop typology of criminals expected to yield mutually exclusive types in which each incumbent (offender) could be placed only in one type. This does not seem probable as long as these remain offence-specific in any manner. For example, it will be unrealistic to believe that offenders commit only one type of offence and that they specialize in it. Thieves do not commit only thefts, they might rob some one, cheat, embezzle, defraud or even kill someone if the victim resists in any way or the other. Everything except the disposition to deprive other of some material possession and a life style of living on "crime" seems to change from situation to situation and from time to time. So, if we describe this person as a professional criminal, who persists in criminal activities, it may be a better typological proposal rather than describing him as a professional thief, habitual check forger, or with any other offence-specific label.

This also shows that types can be empirically derived which have some heuristic value. No matter how crude they are and how poorly they meet the stringent criteria of an ideal typology, these will continue to have value for psychologists and for those whose interests persist in the etiological understanding of criminal behaviour. These types are useful also in correctional settings for the effective and appropriate management of offenders (Gibbons, 1988).

The inductively discovered variables included in this study yield only two broad types. The variables are offence-related (not offence-specific), operationally definable and hence, objectively scorable. None of these is of etiological nature. One may argue that past criminal record may contribute to the development of a Professional Criminal. True, but it has more of an identification value objectively differentiating Professional from the Non-professional.

However, the empirical evidence has yet to be obtained regarding the extent to which these six variables would sort inmates of Pakistani prisons in the proposed types. Two of these, namely, "Premeditation" and "Criminal Associations" are likely to pose a great deal of difficulty to the researchers in obtaining reliable and valid data particularly when the source of information remains convicts themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

There seems to exist a lay perception of the types of criminals in the Pakistani society as people seem to perceive criminals of being different types. It also seems that there are certain offence and offender related variables which help identify these types. However, the classification which the variables included in this study purport to yield has only a heuristic value and can not have any typological claims. It seems relevant only to a limited segment of total prison population in Pakistan. It does not preclude other types of criminals which might empirically be found among prison inmates or among the general population. However, these two types of criminals seem to represent the majority of the total population of prison inmates. Moreover, these seem to be homogeneous types in which the etiological process is likely to be the same for most members of one particular type. The classification can also provide a basis for an adequate handling and treatment of the offenders. However, more research is needed to demonstrate further the validity of the proposed classification scheme and the psychological meaningfulness of the types it yields.

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