

Q) Critically analyze biological theories of crime/criminality.

Introduction:

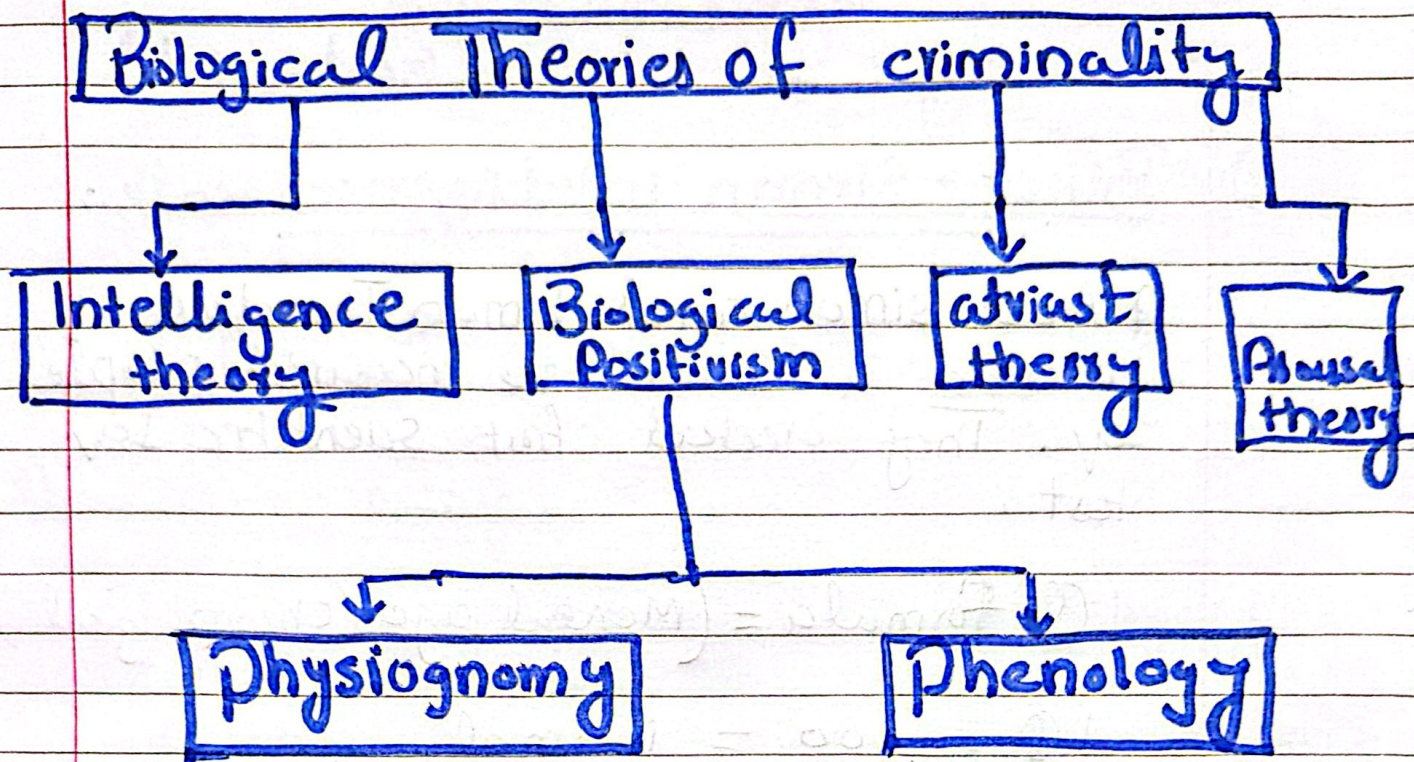
Biological theories are the earliest interpretation of crime, criminal behaviour and stems of crime. Biological theories sought to understand biological causes of crimes. In addition, there are multiple biological theories such as **biological positivism, atavism, intelligence, and arousal theory** delineating crime. Nevertheless, later critics consider some of these theories as pseudo science, with no scientific proof.

"Criminals are born, not made" (Cesare)

Biological theories of criminality:

Biological theories explain crime as a inherited behaviour, not socially or environmentally created. Biological theories interpret crime for different reasons, which includes their facial symmetry, nose, skull, and mind. To fully comprehend, following are theories clearly explaining crime as

a inherited behaviour.



i) Intelligence theory:

People with IQ below 75-80 are considered to be more prone to criminal behaviour. Earlier intelligence was linked criminality. Low intelligent people are perceived as sinners, unclean, cursed, sometimes even executed. However, later on shift of biological positivism delineate crime with other factors such as **social or biological**.

"Crime is a product of
- feeble-mindedness"
(Godward).

i) Binet - Simon intelligence scale:

Alfred Binet and Simon Theodore invented a scale to measure people's IQ. They created first scientific IQ test.

IQ formula = $(\text{Mental age} / \text{Chronological age}) \times 100$

IQ = 100 = Normal.

IQ < 100 = feeble-minded.

ii) H.H. Goddard contribution to Intelligence

theory:

Goddard translated Binet-Simon scale to English. He concluded with a result of, people who have IQ less than 75% are criminals.

The result of his research is:

- i) Criminals are feeble-minded.
- ii) feeble-mindedness is inherited.
- iii) feeble-minded people should not reproduce.

Criticism of Intelligence theory:

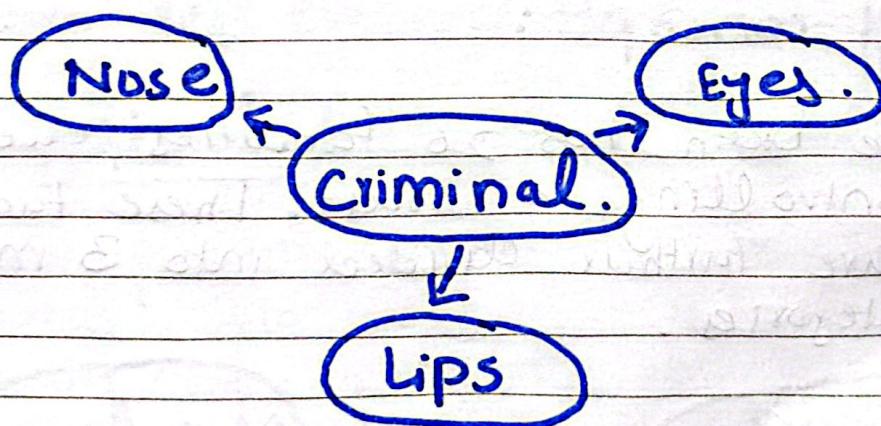
- i) Iq test are culturally biased.
- ii) Crime cannot be fully explained by intelligence merely, other factors poverty, environment, and opportunity affects more.

ii) Biological positivism theories:

1) Physiognomy:

Physiognomy theory was the first theory explaining crime. Johan casper introduced the concept of physiognomy, which linked crime with facial features.

Key concept of physiognomy:



Johan casper believed that facial features are the result of criminal

behaviour. 'Beardless men' and 'Bearded' women are considered as deviant by Johann.

Criticism of physiognomy:

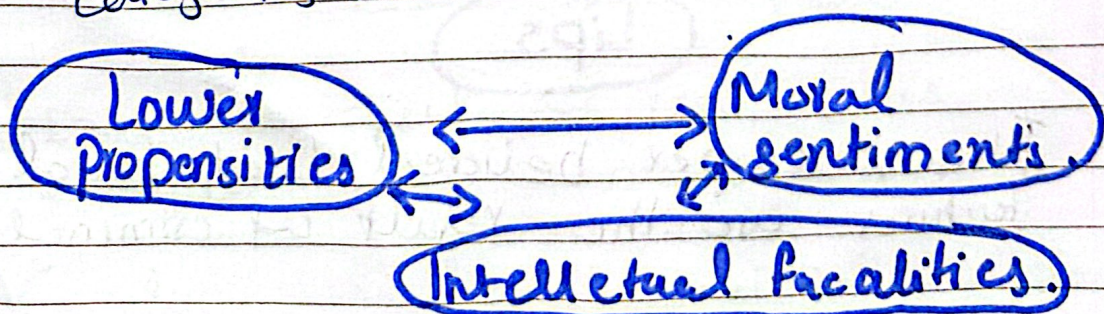
- i) physiognomy is considered as pseudo science: no scientific validity.
- ii) Modern psychology rejects the concept of physiognomy, as there is no stable link between face and criminality.

ii) Phrenology:

Phrenology connects skull with criminality. The skull was believed to reflect different regions of brain. Phrenology was founded by Franz Gall.

Key concept:

The brain has 26 faculties, each controlling a trait. These faculties are further divided into 3 main categories.



The bump ~~on~~ destructive area of skull is likely a sign of criminal behaviour.

"Brain is the organ of mind". (Franz).

iii) Atavist theory:

Atavist theory was founded by Cesare Lombroso. The theory explains that criminals are born criminals. He believed that they are atavist to primitive humans and animals. While performing an autopsy of a thief, he sees depression in region of his skull similar to rodents. This led him to conclude that criminals are less evolved humans.

Physical features of born criminals:

Cesare performs a test on 832 criminals versus 390 non-criminals and identified traits of criminals. He concluded that: Large jaws, big chin, twisted nose, big eyes, asymmetry facial, wrinkle, monkey like ears.

Men = 5 traits = Born criminal,
Women = 3 traits = Born criminal.

Why they commit crime:

According to Lombroso, individuals with these traits have primitive impulse and they are likely to commit violence, criminality, and craving for evil.

iv) Arousal theory:

Arousal theory explains individuals with low arousal level are likely more prone to criminal behaviour. Some people have chronically low arousal level, so they seek stimulation to feel normal. Crime become a thrill seeking activity for these kind of individuals.

"People with low arousal levels requires strong stimulation to feel normal"
(Seigel).

Optimal Arousal level:

People with higher arousal level feels stress and anxiety. Whereas, people

on other hand with low arousal level seek stronger stimulation, so they do crimes.

Conclusion:

Biological theories helps to explain root causes of crimes. They are the earliest explanation of crime. However, they failed to address the other factors like social, environmental, and opportunities. Biological theories lead toward the path of modern explanation of crime and other famous theories.

"Crime is learned not inherited". (Edwin)