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### **Epidemiological Criminology**

Epidemiological criminology is a recent academic field that has gained considerable global attention. Whereas it does not involve a paradigm shift, there are continuous calls by the criminal justice and public health scholars. Presently, epidemiological criminology or 'EpiCrim' has received widespread coverage in the health sector than in the criminal justice spheres. According to Archibald & Akers (2018), the theory of EpiCrim is offered as a linking framework that can enable a better understanding of the significance of community healthiness in the crime and justice system and vice versa. For instance, epidemiological criminology involves rethinking crime as a measure of one's social health. The methods and theories advocated by health and criminal justice scholars are not new because they have been present for generations and have been crucial in understanding the explication of diseases and illnesses. Epidemiological criminology proposes a pragmatic application of these methods and strategies in tracking trends like the spread of certain types of crime like crystal meth in inner cities (Archibald and Akers, 2018). This paper explains what epidemiological criminology is and why some scholars in the community health sector and justice system call for this methodology to be adopted.

Epidemiological criminology must be understood within the context of crime because it helps in clarifying operations and terms for those unfamiliar with the other disciplines. For instance, public health experts may not comprehend the difference between criminology and criminal justice. Consequently, criminology experts may not appreciate the variations within the public health spectrum. Criminology is the methodical scrutiny of the scope, control, nature, and cause of criminal conduct. In contrast, criminal justice involves crime control strategies, policies and philosophies adopted by the justice department, law enforcement agencies, and the

department of corrections. The bottom line is that criminology focuses on the theory, but criminal justice concentrates on the practice.

Public health focuses on the prevention and eradication of diseases that affect society. Epidemiology is one of the fields in public health: environmental health, biostatistics, health services policy and administration, and social and behavioral health. Above all, epidemiology is a method that studies variables, factors, and vectors that affect the spread of diseases. Epidemiology has also served as the foundation for many public health mediations. Criminology is directly linked to criminal justice, just like epidemiology related to public health, despite each being distinct.

Epidemiological criminology assimilates the different disciplines in criminology and public health. Specifically, epidemiological criminology integrates criminal justice and epidemiological theories, practices, and methods (DeLisi, 2018). In essence, it involves the study of anything affecting societal health, like crime and diseases. In simple terms, epidemiological criminology is the study of crime as a disease that affects society. Crime is a sign of the social body facing catastrophe and requires a solution that can address both the symptoms and the causes of the disease (DeLisi, 2018). Equally, it is extremely problematic to construct the visuals of crime without exploring its social body. This approach suggests that crime and its relationship with the social conditions ought to be synthesized in a manner that appreciates the societal causes of criminal behavior.

Crime as a disease must be understood within the context of the causal relationships that include using medical analogies; the causal relationships can include the biological or physiological causes of crime. One of the single most persistent variables is that men are more likely to engage in crime than women. According to Hurst (2016), one potential explanation for

this variable is best understood by neuroandrogenic theory (ENA), which suggests that males based on their sex hormones and the evolutionary thought of being aggressive results in dominant males producing the inferior ones have their attempts suppressed. This type of aggression in men is manifested via various forms of violence like rape and assault (Hurst, 2016). Also, experts suggest that certain crimes are centered on the inherent biosocial characteristics of some entities. Biological predispositions like genes can predict alcoholism and substance abuse.

This type of deterministic theory assumes disengaged and objective values based on the principles of atomism. Atomism is based on the principle that things can be reduced to the basic unit of their composition, which is atoms. In the context of criminology, it is the view that criminality is a result of a different set of variables that lead to such behavior (McMillan, 2020). Advocates of epidemiological criminology argue that the variables can be accurately unearthed, operationalized, and measured to determine what leads one to engage in criminal behavior. Relationships can also include examining crime as a disease based on social conditions like hopelessness, poverty, or an unforgiving society.

Beyond the basic understanding previously highlighted, there are other pertinent issues to contend with. The most relevant for the present argument is that health matters can alter and impact criminal justice policy and practice. For instance, the majority of crime-allied behaviors have a significant correlation to physical and mental health problems. A good example is driving under the influence of alcohol and other related substances that is a legitimately sanctioned conduct affecting a driver's mental and physical capacity, let alone the health status of the accident victims. Thus, interventions aimed at curbing this conduct must consider physical and

mental factors leading to the use of intoxicating substances since criminology and public health elements can expose the causal factors for drunk driving.

Those championing epidemiological criminology have also observed that the criminal justice structure has a way of defining and using health. For instance, the health apprehensions of inmates are essentially centered upon how these incarcerated entities find themselves fashioned by the meaning-generating scheme of the criminal justice system. Suppose the focus is on these individuals as dangerous but damaged individuals. In that case, the intervention strategies turn out to be focused on the risk assessment and less on the individual's humanity.

The proponents of epidemiological criminology methodology, like Scott (2020), advocate for a paradigm shift whereby the disciplinary boundaries are eradicated. Public health, psychology, and other social science disciplines ought to be integrated. For instance, criminology and criminal justice and public health are the two most significant fields that are likely to address health and crime-related issues and are the two crucial areas that should be integrated (Scott, 2020). Besides, epidemiological criminology in its multidisciplinary nature allows health care workers and correctional facilities a common ground instead of the traditional divergence methods of correction. For example, some state-run departments of corrections segregate HIV-positive convicts in virtual lockdowns, hence depriving them of their privileges and rights compared to their presumed healthy colleagues. Thus, the amalgamation of the different disciplines under the epidemiological criminology methodology can help limit such intrinsic conflict.

To sum it up, the central unifying idea of epidemiological criminology has never been explained in a comprehensive manner that allows serious thought, analysis, and comparison. Literature has presented an understanding of epidemiological criminology that explains the

traditional, contemporary link between health behavior and crime. Also, the existing disciplines like criminology, psychology, and criminal justice are more conflicting than inclusive. Also, most criminal justice and criminology programs are compartmentalized, and the resulting inherent friction between practitioners and scholars cannot lead to the achievement of meaningful progress. Whereas conflict is expected, it should motivate social change and the resulting process. Epidemiological criminology advocates for society's general health and well-being, with the critical argument being a positive tool for meaningful change. Epidemiological criminology methodology will reverse exclusionary trends highlighted above via meaningful debate and inclusion rather than pretentious synthesis. Also, intersections between public health theories and criminology and the analytical approaches serve as an example that can aid in uncovering destructive social policy. Epidemiological criminology or 'EpiCrim' seeks to integrate the two fields of thought to enhance societal health and well-being positively. For that reason, by theorizing crime as a prime indicator of a wider societal disease, this line of thought is warranted.

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