

# A Critical Analysis of Thinking Patterns and Decision-Making Skills of Juvenile Criminals and Those with a Mental Disorder

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**Abstract:-** This research aims at understanding the reason(s) behind mental illness, crimes, and juveniles' association with it. A thorough study is conducted to understand the human brain and criminal personality. This paper also presents the rehabilitation programs present for the above situations. The study finds a strong correlation between thinking patterns and decision-making. A change in thinking patterns can impact our decision-making skills. Therapies and programs are present for individuals with a changed thinking pattern. However, they are provided after they get or are involved in a crime or suffer from a mental disorder. A possible way of solving this problem is by introducing a comprehensive curriculum to the schools where cognitive skills are trained to identify, monitor, and correct the thinking patterns. Hence, the curriculum designed for school students can be advantageous as their brain is still developing, and thinking can be molded to be more conscious before becoming concrete.

**Keywords:-** *Mental-Disorders, Criminal-Personality, Juveniles, Thinking-Patterns, Decision-making.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The human brain consists of 86 Bn neurons, and the amount of it is the same in children and adults. The different connections between neurons or the synapses happen after the sensory data collections from the local environment. By the age of two, there are over one hundred trillion synapses inside the human brain. As one matures, 50 percent of the synapses pair back, and the weak and useless ones get eliminated from the system. This process structures the thinking patterns, and the thinking patterns decide behavior. A person's thinking changes due to various reasons. It can be disrupted, manipulated, and can have an error. In either of the cases, a person makes poor life choices that affect the people around them. And sometimes, unfortunately, even a stranger suffers the consequences of someone else's poor and destructive life choices.

There are Rehabilitation programs for such individuals, but it doesn't solve the problem from the root cause. As per my knowledge, there are no programs or studies developed which can stop an individual from getting associated with Mental illnesses and crimes in general. The lack of Awareness and stigma around the above subject worsens the situation. Therefore, we need to take preventive measures to decrease the increased rate of mental illness and crimes.

We may be able to achieve this by shaping the thinking patterns of an individual during their teenage. With physical

and hormonal changes, a teenager also goes through neural changes. Neural reorganization happens during teen years, affecting the sense of self, i.e., self-consciousness and shaping behavior. School can provide a safe and commonplace for juveniles to teach them to identify, monitor, and correct their thinking patterns (if it needs to be).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The rate of mental illness and crimes has increased in India. By the age of 14, half of the mental disorders start (Jaggi, 2021). Fifty million children in India have a mental illness, of which 80% to 90% of them have not received any form of aid (UNICEF, 2021). Total cognizable IPC crimes in 2020 by juveniles is 31,618 (NCRB, 2020), where 1,297 were cases of hate crimes. An individual tends to make poor decisions and suffer consequences when the signs of mental illness and criminal personality are unidentified and untreated in the initial stages due to lack of awareness and stigma. The human brain develops until age 25, and fundamental neural reorganization happens in the teen years (Eagleman, 2015). Therefore, it is interesting to study the juvenile data in this paper.

(Eagleman, 2015) Explains the emergence of feelings, ideas, thoughts, and decisions in the human brain. It also focuses on the networking of the brain and its thinking patterns. Furthermore, it highlights the decision-making process in the adult and adolescent brains. It also briefly describes the reason behind the mental disorders and how to bring them in order. (Chand SP, 2021) explains the process of CBT and how it treats mental illness. (Choi, 2011) & (Sarah Luxford, 2017) reviews the effectiveness of CBT when conducted in the school. (Samenow, 2014) thoroughly discusses the criminal personality and their thought process. Moreover, it also presents the reason behind the crime committed and how to change criminal behavior.

A human should consciously make decisions and not unconsciously; this depends on the thinking patterns. Over the years, therapies and programs with promising results have been developed for individuals with mental disorders or criminal personalities. However, it is given to them after they have suffered or are currently suffering from the consequences by making destructive choices. To my knowledge, there is no study developed which can stop any individual from getting associated with such situations in the first place.

### A. Objectives

The overall goal of this paper is to present a possible solution that can prevent mental illness and crimes.

- To investigate the reasons behind mental illness, hate crimes, and other crimes committed.
- To study the Indian data of juveniles having a mental illness and those associated with crimes.
- To understand the relationship between thinking patterns and decision-making skills.

### III. DATA AND METHODS

#### A. Human Brain

The human brain is flexible and shapes according to its local environment. It takes 25 years for complete brain development in humans (Eagleman, 2015). Every life experience plays a part in shaping the human brain. It lets all the sensory information and processes it; every sensory information takes a different time to process. After data collection, the brain then synchronizes and makes assumptions (this is also the primary function of the brain) about the outside world on the grounds of the internal model. Based on these assumptions and synapses (neurons' connections), the brain serves us narratives that we accept as our reality. Every brain has its version of the truth that we believe, and a tiny change in the brain's circuitry can lead to different realities. The synchronization of the sensory information and time to serve the narrative makes the conscious brain slower than the unconscious brain. Therefore, making the conscious brain responsible for only 1-5% of our life.

In the skull, every second trillion of exchanges happens between neurons. During these energy exchanges in the unconscious brain, new combinations form, and some repeat: generating new ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Synapses, which are of no use, get eliminated from the internal model. This plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's behavior and personality in general, where teen years are the critical years for their neural restructuring.

The synapses get evaluated and are predicted, leading to the emergence of a decision. Brain's networking model also influences an individual's decision-making and is also responsible for the individual's social skills.

There are two types of networking:

- a) Internal Networking.
- b) External Networking.

There are two sub-networks in the internal networking,

- The craving or the short-term thinking network,
- The impulse control/suppression or the long-term thinking network.

These networks are pitting against each other to win. The craving network wins most of the time as our brain looks for comfort.

Humans are social creatures because of the external networking model: it interacts with other brains. Our brain tries to connect and mirror other people's brains. The brains, or the people who cooperate and are "like-minded," always

find each other and form a group (Ingroup). Multiple outgroups exist for a single ingroup.

#### B. Criminal Personality

Humans with criminal minds have deviating thinking patterns (way of thinking) (Samenow, 2014). Criminals are the product and victims of their improper social environment, and peer pressure is a misconception. People who do not receive a proper social environment are victims of bullying and harassment and are the ones who are most likely to suffer from mental disorders. Individuals with criminal minds are self-centered beings who have unrealistic expectations to behave accordingly. They build their self-image by doing impermissible things. They are loners, and from early on, they reject parenting and education. However, not all criminal minds will refuse it, but they use their status, education, and job to commit crimes. For them, the most important thing is their self-image and power. They can go beyond paths to achieve it. Their lust for power starts at a young age when they fail to control others which they do daily; they live with their never-ending anger. They always target an available and vulnerable person. The criminal personality does not depend upon an individual's gender, family, and educational background.

A terrorist and a criminal have similar thinking patterns. The defense given to their actions is: supporting a cause or a religious belief. The wrongdoers see themselves as good humans and blame others for their destructive actions. They do not regret committing the crime but getting caught. Criminals are intelligent and creative but lose their attention and organization, making it difficult to identify them. They are often misdiagnosed mentally sick but not as a manipulator or a person who willingly choose crime. A criminal carries criminal behavior throughout life even after hitting old age, wears themselves to the shadow, or gets low.

#### C. Thinking Pattern

The thinking pattern of the human brain can change due to genetic, environmental, and social factors. Due to these or a combination of these factors, an individual is at high risk of mental illness (National Institutes of Health (US); Biological Sciences Curriculum Study. NIH Curriculum Supplement Series [Internet]. Bethesda (MD), 2007). Mental illness affects one's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. The exact cause of mental illness is still undiscovered, but scientists believe it is a product of the disturbances in the communication system in the brain.

The disrupted thinking patterns can look like:

- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities.
- Strange or grandiose ideas.
- Excessive anxieties
- Prolonged depression and apathy
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns.
- Suicidal or self-harm thoughts.
- Extreme mood swings
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Excessive anger, hostility, or violent behavior

Disturbances in the thinking pattern can lead to a mental health issue, but an error in the thinking pattern leads to

criminal behavior. American psychologist Stanton Samenow calls criminal behavior an error in their thinking pattern (Samenow, 2014).

The error thinking can look like these:

- The lack of a concept of injury to others
- Claiming to be a victim and blaming others when held accountable
- An ability to shut off conscience
- An extreme sense of entitlement
- A sense of uniqueness
- The lack of a concept of obligation
- Shut off fear.

These changes or errors in thinking patterns and their continuation result in destructive behavior, leading to poor choices and bad decisions and later, suffering grave consequences.

#### D. Decision Making

We think of ourselves as logical beings who make decisions based on processed information: far from the truth (Eagleman, 2015). Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud in 1873 theorized and later proved that "we don't typically know the roots of our own choices." Our unconscious awareness is heavily involved in decision-making. And our conscious awareness has very little to do with it as we know it works slower than the unconscious brain and tells us how it is in control, making us believe that we are in control of our decisions. We make decisions based on experience, present situation, future predictions, and emotions. Our emotions navigate and add liveliness to our lives. Our brains look for comfort and reward, like all living beings. Unlike other creatures, abstract concepts like "good afterlife" and "being valued by the local community" may feel worthwhile to humans. As a result of this biology, humans usually decide that gives them instant satisfying comfort without thinking of any possible appalling consequences. Henceforth, the craving network overpowers the suppressing network. To make better decisions, we need to understand the thinking pattern, algorithm of the networks (craving and suppression), and how choices work in the brain? And train ourselves to make decisions that do not have future consequences.

#### E. Mental Disorders

Pandemic has worsened the already graver condition of mental health. As reported by UNICEF, in 2019, 50 million Indian children suffered from mental disorders, and the majority of the population (80%-90%) remained untreated (UNICEF, 2021). Community-level studies have published that the currency of mental disorders is the same in all genders but different in rural and urban areas (Hossain, 2019). It ranges from 1.06% to 5.84% and, 0.8% to 29.4% respectively. The same study also notes the treatment gap in India that is 88% for depression, 22%-95% for seizure disorders, and 95% for common mental health problems. It results from a lack of awareness, social stigma around mental health, and having poor treatment.

Mental disorders happen when the craving network wins constantly. We get trapped in our cravings and impulses, making it hard to set free from them (Eagleman, 2015). In the book "The Brain," author David Eagleman mentions one such case of Karen: addicted to crack cocaine for over 20 years. In her training, she was given pictures of crack cocaine and asked to crave it and later suppress it. Whichever network wins after the substance offered decides her present actions. The training did not tell her what to do or how to behave? It built her cognitive skills, so she willingly chose to do things rather than end up being a slave of her craving network.

Alike addiction, other mental disorders like anxiety, stress, and depression, can also be dealt with when working on identifying the thoughts and actions and how to change them. Such kind of training is called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy "CBT".

CBT helps identify the automatic generation of negative thoughts like being unlovable, hated, and to get the validation: you always need to please people (Chand SP, 2021). It also highlights your impulses that are making decisions based on your feelings. CBT helps break down the present struggles into small parts and helps respond to those by taking required actions.

For instance, in a mainstream school in Singapore, the CBT program was organized for students with behavioral difficulties. They randomly assigned students to the control group and CBT group (Choi, 2011). As the name suggests (control group), control groups' behavior was controlled (They were told how to behave), whereas CBT groups' skills were built by teaching them how to identify their thoughts and impulses, and later to monitor and manage their behavior, and solve their problems for 12 sessions. The CBT group showed improvement in school and home behavior compared to students of the control group. Sarah Luxford's work also supports the effectiveness of school-based "Explore Feelings" CBT intervention on symptoms of anxiety, social worry, social responsiveness, and attentional difficulties in students aged 11-14 years old who were diagnosed with ASD (Sarah Luxford, 2017). Hence, to help prevent mental disorders in children and adolescents, a school can provide a safe space and a commonplace to get education about mental health and build their cognitive skills as all can find it challenging to get the same at home due to lack of awareness and stigma around it in caregivers (UNICEF, 2021) (Jaggi, 2021).

#### F. Hate Crimes

In the past decade, hate crimes in India have increased drastically. Most of this violence is linked to Cow Protection and inter-faith relationships. From 2015 to 2018, Amnesty International India reported 721 hate crimes (Kumar, 2019). According to NCRB data about Juveniles, in 2020, a total of 1248 riot cases were reported, eight reports of offenses promoting enmity between different groups, and 41 FIRS of Affray (NCRB, 2020). The below statistics also show that there are more victims of hate crimes in Dalits than Muslims and Transgenders.

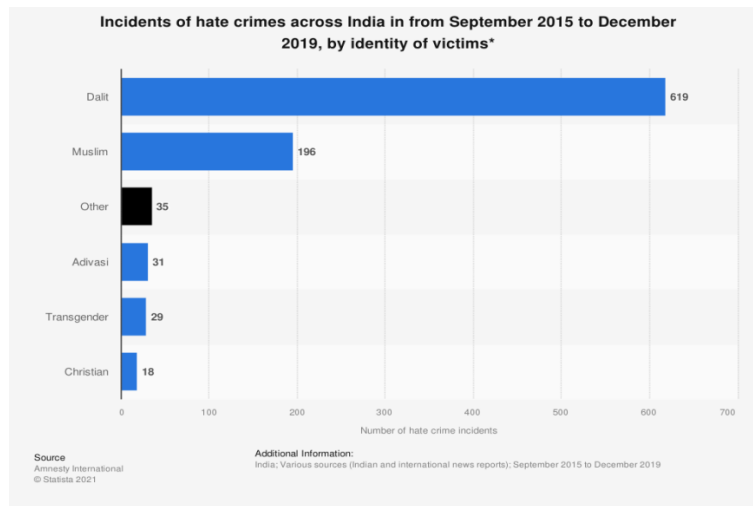


Fig.1: Incidents of hate crimes across India from September 2015 to December 2019, by the identity of victims.

As learned in the earlier section, due to the external networking model of the brain, humans are social beings and find their kind of brain and form a group (ingroup). And for one ingroup, there exist multiple outgroups (Samenow, 2014). Our brains tend to impose violence on the people of the other group even if they are defenseless and harmless. When our brain is manipulated by propaganda, we go beyond reasons to dehumanize other people: manytimes, resulting in hate crimes such as genocideshappening on a massive scale.

In 1968, Ms. Jane Elliott, a small-town school teacher, performed the famous blue-brown-eyed experiment on school kids the day after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. She divided her class into two groups based on their eye color on the first day. Jane told them that brown eyes are better than blue ones and why. She was surprised after noticing behavioral changes in her students. The blue-eyed students started feelinginferior: she marked that academically sound students were performing poorly. And the Brown-eyed students that they should get more advantages than the bluey. Next, Jane reversed the

experiment and observed that the blue-eyed students were less ruthless with brown-eyed ones as they know how it feels to be in that place.

This experiment is considered unethical as it caused negative psychological consequences (Why were the Blue Eyes and Brown Eyes Experiment considered unethical in psychology?). Yet participants of that experiment, in the future, became more sharp-eyed against the discriminatory statements. Hence, when we are put in someone else's position and made to understand their situation, it unlocks the new cognitive paths, making us more liberal, empathetic, and unbiased.

G. Crimes in India

The crime rate of India in 2020 was 314.3, with total IPC cases 42,54,356 (NCRB, 2018-2020), where the rate of crimes committed by juveniles in the same year was 6.7, with 29,768 IPC cases (NCRB, 2018-2020). NCRB's 2020 report also informs us that there was a total of 31,618 juveniles involved in the cognizable crimes 2020.

	BELOW 12 YEARS	12 TO 16 YEARS	16 TO 18 YEARS	TOTAL
BOYS	226	7159	23864	31249
GIRLS	6	70	293	369
TOTAL	232	7229	24157	31618

Table 1.1 NCRB Data of Juvenile Cognizable IPC Crimes (2020) (NCRB, 2020)

	LIVING WITH PARENTS	LIVING WITH GUARDIANS	HOMELESS	TOTAL
METROPOLITAN CITIES	6593	500	382	7475
TOTAL INDIA	29285	3742	2325	35352

Table 1.2 NCRB Data of Juvenile Offenders' Family Background (2020)(NCRB, 2020)

	ILLITERATE	UP TO PRIMARY	PRIMARY TO MATRIC	MATRIC TO HSC	ABOVE HSC	TOTAL
METROPOLITAN CITIES	529	2533	3377	857	179	7475
INDIA	2552	9252	17494	4966	1088	35352

Table 1.3 NCRB Data of Juvenile Offenders' Educational Background (2020)(NCRB, 2020)



Juvenile offenders are sent to reformatory homes and kept under observation for three years. In reformatory homes, they are rehabilitated and reintegrated by participating in exercises like Discipline, Yoga, Meditation, Personality Development, Counselling, Vocational, and Skill Training, Bal Panchayat, and Computer Education (KARTIK, 2017). Juvenile offenders are sent for rehabilitation because they are considered a product of an improper and unfair local environment, but as we have already discovered that, this is not the case. The Law also believes that these juveniles deserve a second chance and should be reformed. Even after going through intensive activities in the reformatory house, there are still relapse examples. NCRB data of Juvenile Recidivism, 2020 shows that there are 30487 cases registered that were apprehended for the first time, 901 cases of juveniles apprehended but not past convicted, and 230 cases of arrested and past convicted (NCRB, 2020). To understand the reason behind the individuals of any age group and their relapse, we need to know how the criminal mind works.

The minds of criminals work differently, as there is an error in their thinking pattern. They lack a concept of injury to others and always blame their victims for their wrongdoings. They go to lengths to fulfill their desire to have power over others (Samenow, 2014). They learn: raping someone is one of the ways of gaining control and power over others. The Criminals start to fancy the power as early as four years. "Even before I knew about sex, I had fascination over seeing girls cry," states one of the offenders in the book "Inside the Criminal Mind." Criminals do not get any satisfaction or excitement with consensual relationships or by following any set of rules. Therefore, to achieve excitement, power, and control over others, an offender always chooses an illegal way to get the job done.

It is almost impossible to change a criminal until he/she/they want to. Criminal behavior doesn't change by suppressing it or giving criminals pills or any traditional form of treatment (Management programs) because they do not have a disrupted thinking or sick mind but erroneous thinking pattern. So, the prisons generally worsen the hope of behavioral change in criminals. It requires paying attention and addressing the core of the criminal personality to bring change in them. Dr. Stanton Samenow and Dr. Samuel Yochelson designed a treatment program for criminals, where criminals are held responsible for their actions. They believe that criminal behavior does not need reformation or rehabilitation but formation and habilitation. In this technique, criminals report their thinking; then, it is monitored. They identify the errors, and later it is corrected. It is a lengthy procedure but gives promising results, as the book's author stated. "Behaviour is a product of thinking" So, to change a criminal's behavior, it needs to change the way they think by teaching them a new way. The main objective of this program is to teach them how to live without causing any harm to others.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The above study highlights the current state of India's increased cases in mental health and crimes. It focuses on

the age group below 18. This research paper is an attempt to understand the reason behind the same.

The study shows the relationship between an individual's thinking patterns and decision-making skills. It describes how the brain generates ideas, feelings, thoughts, choices, and decisions. Furthermore, it affirms that the brain unconsciously makes decisions, and the conscious mind has only 1% to 5% control over human life. The study recognizes the reason behind humans' social nature and connecting with other human brains. This paper also discusses the criminal personality, their thought process, and why their behavior is often mistaken for a mental disorder.

The comparison between a criminal mind and a mentally ill person shows the difference between their thinking patterns and how it affects their decision-making skills.

From the above review, we can divide thinking patterns into three categories,

- Thinking patterns of a mentally ill person: Disrupted thinking patterns.
- Thinking patterns of the people who have/has actively participated in hate crimes: Manipulated thinking patterns.
- Thinking patterns of a criminal: Erroneous thinking patterns.

Later in the study, we learn about the reasons behind the disruption, manipulation of the thinking pattern, the errors in the thinking pattern, and what it looks like. It further points out that the craving network dominates the brain of these people.

Section "Mental Health" reports the state of mental health in children in India. It highlights that 80% to 90% of the population with a mental disorder remains untreated due to the lack of awareness, poor treatment service, and stigma. It further specifies a method to help the patients, called cognitive-behavioral therapy. The CBT teaches to identify the disrupted thinking patterns and correct them. The following example in the section shows the effectiveness of the CBT when conducted in the school for students with behavioral difficulties.

Section "Hate Crimes" shows the data of 2020 of juveniles involved in the increasing hate crimes in India. The external networking model and manipulation of the brain via propaganda lead to hate crimes. There is no dedicated program or way to stop hate crimes apart from making laws stricter and raising awareness, as the person's thinking pattern is manipulated and not disrupted or erroneous. An experiment named "blue-brown-eyed experiment" was performed on school students by Jane Elliott to teach kids about discrimination by putting them into each other's shoes. The students who participated in that experiment later became unbiased and had liberal thoughts, but the experiment was considered unethical. So, it is no longer performed in the school.

Section “Crimes in India” notes the data of juvenile crimes, 2020, and measures taken to prevent them from relapsing. Young offenders; are sent to reformatory houses for three years, where they are rehabilitated. Even after three years of the rehabilitation period, there are reported cases of recidivism because juvenile offenders are not victims but have a criminal personality that they carry throughout their life. An illegal character cannot be changed unless one wants to. The mainstream management, development programs, and pills do not modify the personality. Criminologist Stanton Samenow familiarises that criminals need formation and habilitation as their thinking is different. The technique developed by Dr. Samuel Yochelson gives promising results, where again, the criminals are taught to identify the errors in their thoughts and then correct them.

Therefore, the internal and external networking of the brain, the synapses made according to the processed information of the local surroundings, and the thinking patterns shape our behavior and the choices we make in life. These factors also play a part in shaping our personality, and every individual's personality is different from the other. When the thinking pattern disrupts, it leads to mental disorders, making it hard for an individual to function in their daily life. If there are errors in the thinking pattern or gets manipulated, an individual takes destructive decisions and suffers consequences. In either case, they make poor choices that stop them from living everyday life.

Suppression of thoughts or control of behavior does not solve the problem from the root cause. To recover the changed thinking patterns, it is necessary to recognize them first; before correcting them. The therapies and programs exist but for those diagnosed with the mental illness, identified with a criminal personality, or whose thinking patterns are manipulated. Due to lack of awareness, the early signs of changes in thinking patterns are ignored, and therefore no preventive measures are taken. Hence, rehabilitation is the last stage of the cycle when the thinking pattern has become or is becoming concrete. It is harder to change an established thinking pattern than shape it in the prime years of brain development.

The recovery of changed thinking patterns happens faster in children as their brains are still developing, and during their teen years, it goes through a neural reorganization. The sooner the action is taken, the faster is the recovery rate. The school can provide a safe and commonplace for kids to build their cognitive skills and prepare them to make conscious decisions in life.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In summary, all individuals have different thinking patterns which depend upon their local environment. The shifts in thinking patterns are either present or can happen at any time. When triggered, it can lead an individual to make poor choices in life. On a positive note, the changes in thinking patterns can be retrieved after one learns to identify and correct them. But this step is taken in the end when an individual has difficulty functioning and took some destructive decisions. In my opinion, this should be the first step. A curriculum should be introduced in schools, which

educates them about the brain's networking model and thinking patterns. Moreover, it should train them to monitor and manage their thinking patterns and networking model. Schools should also ethically teach them to correct their shifted thinking pattern when needed. If this education starts at school, it may impact the increasing rate of crime and mental illness in India. As the education and training will be given at the age where their brain is still developing, they will be shaped and trained to make choices willingly and not make destructive decisions.

The future scope of this research is to make a comprehensive curriculum for the age group below 18 to build their cognitive skills in monitoring and managing their thinking patterns and the networking systems.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I take this opportunity to thank my research guide, Ms. Anushi Tiwary, for her kind support and encouragement throughout writing the paper. Her time-to-time guidance has propelled me towards the timely successful completion of the project. This research paper could not have been accomplished without her splendid support.

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