



**The Biological Determinism: Implications of Biological Perspective on Pakhtuns' Criminal and Violent Instinct: A Literary and Empirical Argument**

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**Abstract**

Criminality has been determined and considered as a behavioral deviation of degeneracy having diverse and dynamic patterns integrated and originated from the individual and the social structure. There exists a hot debate among the social scientists and experts in biology pertaining to the patterns behind criminality especially violence. The Lombroso's "born criminal" theory has been heavily debated and confounded by the social researchers, drawing the attention towards social forces influencing criminality. This research is an attempt to understand, diagnose and apply the patterns discussed and elaborated in biological perspective regarding formation of the criminal instincts. The study is framed under the argumentative and library research accumulated with the empirical advents, examples and social facts existing in the very society of Pakhtuns. The study finds that the principles of biological theory especially Lombrosian and Sheldon's approach have marked existence in creation of violent masculinities among Pakhtuns. The article provides an insight about the basic principles of biological theory, along-with criticism of such perspective and contrarily implications of its principles on Pakhtuns' men.

**Keywords:** crime, violence, biology, physical structure, stature & body type, physiognomy and phrenology, Pakhtun-men

**1. Introduction and Background of Biological Determinism on Criminality**

Medical sciences have been found interested in studying crime and deviance through the fields of physiognomy and phrenology, which was an attempt to associate various attributes of mind to the shape of brain, revealing through skull. Physiognomy was primarily founded by Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801), which is the assessment of a person's character or personality from his or her outer appearance, especially the face (Rinzetti & Curran, 2000; Shookman, 1993). Phrenology, a pseudoscience was founded by Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) and Johann K. Spurzheim (1776-1832) primarily focused on measurements of the human skull, based on the concept that brain is the organ of mind, and that certain brain areas have localized specific functions or modules (Colbert, 1997; Fodor, 1983). Such theories attracted the attention because of their societal exculpation and identification of individuals involved in criminality having physical distinction from the non-criminals. In this context, extracts from various biological theories in relevance to the current study are explained as under:

**1.1. Cesare Lombroso's Biological Determinism**

The biological theme was amplified by the Italian School through the writings of Cesare Lombroso (an Italian Criminologist, physician, and founder of the Italian School of Positivist Criminology). His thoughts were brought through the articles and textbooks that attracted the crime experts who expanded his vision of 'biological determinism', which assisted the stimulation of interest in criminal anthropology (Rafter, 1992). Lombroso rejected the established classical school, which was of the view that crime was a trait of human nature. On the contrary, he used the concepts drawn from physiognomy, phrenology, psychiatry, and social Darwinism. Lombroso's theory of anthropological criminology claimed that criminality was inherited, and criminals were throwbacks to primitive, aggressive human types who could be recognized by physical features that distinguish them from the non-criminals (Kornblum, 2011). The theory of 'born criminal' reveals that the anti-social persons can be identified by physical (congenital) defects that can be identified through the physical characteristics associated with degeneracy demonstrating and confirming that criminals were savages or atavistic throwbacks to an earlier evolutionary form (Fleming, 2000; Kornblum, 2011).

Lombroso discusses successively meteorological and climatic influences in the production of crime including the influence of geographical conditions, race, civilization, density of population, alcoholism, education, economic conditions, religion, sex and age, civil status, prisons, and political conditions (Weiner, 1994; Ellwood, 1912). Lombroso's theory has solid biological foundations that elaborate crime as a product of biological or organic conditions, into which, he attempted to incorporate the social and psychological factors that are manifestly concerned in crime causation (Morrison, 2016; Weiner, 1994). Lombroso believed that criminals were basically variant from non-criminals comprising some pathological and atavistic characteristics, while the social causes proved as stimuli for such organic and psychological abnormalities of individuals (Gould, 1981; Ellwood, 1912).

While studying criminals and non-criminals through postmortem and anthropometric dimensions, he was convinced that the '*born criminal*' might be easily identified being characterized by a sloping forehead, ears of unusual size, asymmetry of the face, *prognathism* (asymmetry of both the jaws), excessive length of arms, asymmetry of the

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cranium, shifty eyes, red hair, and other physical stigmata (Kornblum, 2011). He believed that specific criminals including murderers, thieves, and rapists might be differentiated through various (specified) characteristics such as less sensibility to pain and touch, more acute sight, lack of moral sense or absence of repentance, more arrogance, recklessness, maliciousness or malevolence, and ferociousness; and other manifestations like special criminal dialect and intensive use of tattooing (Fleming, 2000).

Lombroso believed that he had found the key to criminal behavior in human evolution. His years of keen investigation of imprisoned person convinced him that the most serious, vicious, and persistent criminals (almost one third all crime committers) were '*born criminals*' (Lombroso-Ferrero, 1911). The born criminal was represented as person of ferocious instinct tracing back to primitive humanity and inferior animals (Stark, 2001). He also believed that because of their genetic makeup, such criminals could not restrain their violent and animalistic urges. He suggested that little or nothing could be done to cure born criminals rather than protection of society through their imprisonment and they ought to be treated decently with dignity (Stark, 2001). Lombroso collected data from 832 Italian inmates specifically focusing on 390 who were the most notorious and depraved. He then compared criminals with non-criminals and drawn his conclusion that there is a physical or biological differentiation between both the classes of humans. Besides the mentioned characteristics, he also revealed that the criminals lacked strength and weight having low intelligence.

### 1.2. Criticism on Lombrosian 'Born Criminal' Conception

Lombroso being the most influential and prominent criminologist of the late nineteenth century with remarkable work in his field of specialization was intensively attacked in French Sociological circles, especially by Gabriel Tarde (1886) and Emile Durkheim (1895) (Stark, 2001). Durkheim added that crime is the product of society that is committed by normal people for reasons beyond their control (Beirne, 1993; Haider & Ali, 2015; Kassem et al., 2019). Later in 1913, Charles Goring (1913) presented immensely influential study naming 'The English convict; A Statistical Study', which was based on the observation of 2,348 male convicts whom he compared with several non-convict persons. Goring approached his study in more scientific manner and gave it a numeric and statistical touch with the help of Karl Pearson (founder of modern statistics) for analyzing the data.

Goring revealed some contrary observations to that of Lombroso by showing that the skull shapes and physiognomy of the criminal did not distinguish the convicts from the others, nor did they differentiate from violent or hazardous offenders. Although Goring instantly rejected Lombroso's elaborations yet traits of inferior stature and weight were reaffirmed in his analysis and marked lack of intelligence among the convicts and declared it as the basic principle in determinants of crime (Stark, 2001; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). On the other hand, the contemporary criminology and crimes' experts reflect the contrary idea and assume that lack of stature and weight are basically caused by dietary deficiencies found immensely among poor segment of the population. In contrast, studies show that the more muscular body types more prone and more likely to commit crimes (Cortes, 1982).

Lombroso's biological positivism has been critically refuted by the modern researchers where the efforts to link physiology with criminality has been destined simultaneously. In 1940s, a prominent psychologist and physician William Sheldon presented that body type was correlated with crime. He divided human beings into three types based on their bodily formation such as *ectomorphs* (thin people), *endomorphs* (people having soft or fat physique) and *mesomorphs* (people with firm, stable and well structured-strong muscles) (Kornblum, 2011; Sheldon *et al.*, 1954). Sheldon proposed that the *mesomorphs* were more inclined to crime due to their muscular physique and the physical strength of their body in comparison to other two types of bodies (Glueck & Glueck, 1950).

Relationally, the biological theories also support and assert that there might be genetic differences between criminals and non-criminals. During the 1960s, researchers discovered that some males have an extra Y chromosome in their cells that make the person more prone towards violence. A prominent geneticist Patricia Jacobs (Jacobs, 1993) reported that small but significant proportion of XYY males were more inclined to criminality, which she studied in a Scottish mental institution (Kornblum, 2011). In this connection, a famous mass murderer Richard Speck was speciously reported as XYY chromosomal person, the theme of congenital criminal persuaded the world. During the coming years hundreds of articles were published on the XYY phenomenon where, on the contrary, medical experts admitted that involvement of XYY chromosomal persons in antisocial behaviors is very much different than that of the non-XYY person having the same socio-economic backgrounds (Glaser, 1979; Borganokar & Shah, 1974). Currently, the medical experts have scarcity of evidence to approve the relation of biology with criminality, whereby the conceptions of Lombrosian thoughts are still ruling the field concerned.

## 2. Implications of Biological Determinism on Pakhtuns

Biological perspective being one of the most influential aspects in the field of criminology and social construction of criminal characters. Simultaneously, such perspective on one hand has provided a baseline to the study of criminal instincts and patterns paving way for more research in terms of criticism by confounding the concepts of physiognomy and phrenology, which has been declared as a source of knowledge production to extend the scope of criminology. On the other hand, researchers from diverse fields such as social sciences (especially sociologists and anthropologists), biological sciences, and the technological fields (especially information technology and bio-technology) have been found interested to study the crime patterns from their relevant backgrounds.

Having immense criticism on biological perspective especially the Lombrosian philosophy, the implications of such perspective have basis and some visible grounds in the present Pakhtuns' settled society. Lombroso has been sufficiently precise to portray that criminals might be distinguished from non-criminal through their physical appearance. This approach comes quite true on Pakhtuns as one of the ancient races. The Pakhtuns' cultural and traditional patterns predominantly appreciate the exhibition of masculinity for its male members and harshly deters the countering traits such as feminine qualities (Khan, 2016). The masculine approach literally entails in and emphasizes over the physical appearance of its male member, which is mandatory to be never resembling with feminine characters. These traits primarily include moustaches, hairy body, muscular physique (confirming the Sheldon's Mesomorphism), talking out loud in a kind of roaring accent, being strong enough, fearless, gallant, chivalrous, risk-taking, reckless, impulsive, and vindictive. To inculcate these traits, one must avoid the feminine characteristics such as emotionality, fearing, chicken-heartedness, compassion, compromising, submissiveness and ectomorphic outlook.

It is widely believed that males having the feminine traits are harshly treated and stigmatized with feminine or immoral attributes such as eunuch (*Khusra, Heejrha*), coward (*dawoos*), and non-adherent to Pakhtunwali (*be-pakhto - recreant, funk, or poltroon*). To avoid such attributes, a Pakhtun male member either willfully or unwillingly indulge himself in behaviors and actions, which reflect the acts of bravery, fearlessness, and valor to ensure the avoidance of counter-ideology of being "*be-Pakhto*". These attributions are not only transmitted through the lifelong process of socialization in family but also the general and localized folk values such as proverbs and *tappas*<sup>5</sup> of the *Pakhto* language also emphasize over masculinity and its perpetuation. The texts of both these correlates masculinity with power and energy (Khan, Bhugio & Naz, 2011) where men are idealized by showing no flexibility rather willfully embrace death as mentioned in a *tappa* as:

*"If you return alive from Maiwand (battlefield), I Pray, that God may keep you alive to taste disgrace* (Enevoldsen, 2004: 34, Shaheen, 1984: 541, Shaheen, 1988-9: 53)."

In addition, men's reflection and recognition is with respect to their masculine characteristics, as it is expressed in a *tappa* as: *"Saray pa num na saray kege (A man is not called a man because of his name), Saray hagma day che ye kaar da saro wena (A man is he who behaves like men)* (Katozai, 2005: 323)."

In short, men are dignified for their masculine traits and features performing acts of heroism, bravery, and showing initiative (Khan, Bhugio & Naz, 2011). Affirming the traits presented by Lombroso, the Pakhtun's apparent makeup is markedly attributed with decency and good looks, whereby the members having criminal and violent instinct might be easily distinguished from non-violent and non-criminals almost in a very first look. The fact is blatant that persons having criminal instincts especially violence, look in a different way than the normal and common people. The major characteristics encompass large and long moustaches (drooping down almost covering the upper lip), hairy body especially hairs on the ears (verified from a local saying that "*hagma pukhtana larha che pa ghwaguno ba ye wekhta wu* – the hairy eared Pakhtuns do not exist anymore"), talking in a roaring tone having heavy pitch of sound (*da zmary pashan ghareegy* – roaring like a lion), having heavy hands (*lasuna ye da sarho pashan drana di* – has heavy hands like men), wide and large eyes (*ghati stargy*). Apart from these, there is also a specific dialect of persons who reflect criminal instinct, which distinguishes them from the non-violent persons in society.

Contrary to these resemblances, an anomaly is found in the biological perspective, which does not match the Pakhtun's makeup i.e., "*traits of inferior stature and weight*". Such quality reflects marginalization of the person rather than being powerful, strong, and influential. As discussed earlier that taller, heavy, and muscular stature is exalted among Pakhtuns, this attribute faces criticism from a Pakhtun's perspective. Another conception of XYY chromosomes by Patricia Jacobs is also validated among Pakhtuns as a trait of dominance, power, criminality, and violence. Although researchers in the current study couldn't find actual research and testing of the Pakhtuns being diagnosed with XYY chromosomes, but traditionally it is believed that people having more male children are XYY or dominant, powerful, and stronger in their biology. Such people are mostly found arrogant, ferocious, dominating, and impulsive when compared to the other. The researchers found numerous examples of such people in their relative society (the details might not be presented because of privacy and ethical limitations) but understood that such philosophy has a dominant role in creation of violent masculinities thus leading to criminals, which is an attribute of "*Biological Determinism*".

### 3. Conclusion

Arguments and discussion from the literary and empirical perspective intend and point our direction to understand that biology plays a pivotal role in shaping, molding, and diverting human behaviors. Although a larger portion of social scientist do not agree with such notions (such as Durkheim and some of the modern researchers) acclaiming the social forces, which are beyond the human control compel them to become criminals, yet this study finds that social forces are not the sole perpetrators of the 'entire criminality' in society. The social forces when accompanied with biological forces (to be understood as the physical power and degeneracy) make it a convenient package for the person to become a solid and violent criminal. It is investigated in the study that people having both the physical and

<sup>5</sup> *tappa* is the earliest and most important genre of *Pakhtu* popular poetry (Katozai, 2005)

social powers (race-based, politics-based, economy-based) have been most chronic and influential of the entire offenders because they fear less and do more. The quality of doing more with less fear has been the generated 'hypothesis' of this study, which might be further addressed and researched.

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## Authors' Contribution

All the authors have equal contribution in framing and conducting the study. The entire idea, methodological patterns, analysis and proofreading of the manuscript have been duly evaluated by the authors to ensure quality of the product.