

Mental Illnesses with Criminal Incidence in The World, Angola and Malanje

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Abstract:

Background: Mental illnesses are conditions that affect a person's thinking, feelings, mood, or behavior. They are also known as mental or psychiatric disorders. The objective of this article is to narratively revisit mental illnesses with criminal incidence, the concepts of Criminal Psychology, causes of mental illnesses, the main illnesses registered in Malanje, contributing factors, impact on crime and necessary interventions. An extensive literature review was carried out in search of empirical evidence that would highlight the importance of Criminal Psychology, which is part of Legal Psychology as a specialty and whose object of study is the criminal behavior of individuals, their motivations and factors that influence criminal practices. Most of the crimes committed by mentally ill individuals are preventable, as long as they are given attention, assistance and treatment. As additional results, some aspects are highlighted regarding which significant dilemmas still exist, indicating possible topics for future studies.

Key words: mental illnesses; criminal psychology; factors; interventions

Introduction

Mental illnesses are conditions that affect a person's thinking, feelings, mood, or behavior. They are also known as mental or psychiatric disorders.

Mental (psychiatric or psychological) disorders include changes in thinking, emotions, and/or behavior. Minor changes in these aspects of life are common, but when these changes cause significant distress to a person and/or interfere with their daily life, they are considered mental illnesses. Cited by Soares, M., & Saboya, R. T. (2019)

Criminal Psychology is a branch of Psychology that is included in Legal Psychology and whose object of study is the criminal behavior of individuals, their motivations and factors that influence criminal practices, as well as the reaction of society to such practices. (Fiorelli & Mangini, 2012).

Valença AM, Nardi AE, Silva AG et al. (2023). In his article, he refers to the concept of "Crime (from the Latin term *crimen*), or offense, is an offense against criminal law. Crime, like any criminal offense, is characterized as the practice of conduct typified by criminal law as illicit. Only conduct practiced by humans is considered a crime."

Plantea » A criminal is an individual who violates a criminal law without justification and in a reprehensible manner, thereby committing a crime«

In this sense Fabiano, R (2021) refers to Criminal Psychology is a sub-area of Legal Psychology that explains criminal behavior, by studying both the offender and the victim, and is related to Criminology.

Although enormous advances have been made in understanding and treating mental illnesses, the stigma surrounding them persists, and access to health care is sometimes not the same as for illnesses in general. For example, people with mental illnesses may feel that they cannot tell anyone about their symptoms or illnesses, or may feel that they are being blamed for their illnesses.

In countries such as the United States, with high homicide rates, the proportion of homicides attributed to mental disorders is lower than in countries such as the United Kingdom, where there are low rates of this type of crime. Machado de Campos, D Genaro F T, (2024).

In Angola, mental illness has been identified as a public health problem with a significant impact on crime. Experts warn that a lack of adequate

attention to mental health could lead to an increase in crime, especially among young people and adolescents, who are particularly vulnerable.

Several studies in the last decade have shown an association between mental disorders and violent behavior. One of the main approaches to studying this relationship is research with homicidal individuals, since homicide is considered a more serious expression of violence. Machado de Campos, D G F T

The daily average number of crimes in Angola is 187 – Luanda, Benguela, Huambo, Malange and Uíge continue to lead the list with the highest crime rates.

The authors believe that research in this area of knowledge contributes to identifying problems that affect the development of health policy in its various components and the causes that determine its greater or lesser success, with the consequent incorporation of new innovative and improved interventions, in order to prevent the risk of illness, protect life, and promote self-care among the population.

The province of Malange is not exempt from this health problem. During the research process, the authors obtained information derived from the Health Situation Analysis and Criminal Registry, on high rates of mental illnesses that have a significant relationship with crime, highlighting them as a public health problem, which motivated the updated review on the topic.

An extensive literature review was carried out in search of empirical evidence that would highlight the importance of Criminal Psychology, which is part of Legal Psychology as a specialty and whose object of study is the criminal behavior of individuals, their motivations and factors that influence criminal practices.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki. It is stated that this research is justified by a reasonable possibility that the public will benefit from its results. These results will only be subsequently disseminated in publications, colloquia, and scientific forums, while maintaining the anonymity of the patients. The ethical principles of confidentiality of these data were taken into account, and professional secrecy was maintained.

Development

For society, people who commit atrocious crimes are “crazy” because they think that a normal human being cannot commit such cruel acts. However, the reality is that there are normal people, or at least people who are not mentally ill, who commit crimes with apparently senseless cruelty, but for which there is usually motivation.

Most crimes committed by mentally ill people are preventable, as long as they are given attention, assistance and treatment.

Several studies have investigated specific groups of patients with mental disorders, with the aim of establishing correlations between violent or homicidal behavior and sociodemographic and psychopathological variables. Without a doubt, schizophrenia is the most well-studied mental disorder in this regard.

Beschizza, A. (2023) plantea , Mental illnesses can be caused by a number of factors, such as genetics, stress, substance abuse, and trauma. The most common symptoms include anxiety, depression, mood disorders, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.5

Causes of mental illness

Mental illness is now considered to be caused by a complex interaction of factors, including:

- Genetic

- Biological (physical factors)
- Psychological
- Environmental (including social and cultural factors)

Research has shown that genetic factors influence many mental health conditions. Mental illness often occurs in people whose genetic makeup makes them vulnerable to it. This vulnerability, coupled with life stressors, such as family or work-related problems, can lead to the development of mental illness. First, M B. (2024)

Because criminal incidents are closely related to

Cultural questions and other factors specific to each context, conclusions about the influence of spatial factors must be considered with caution. However, it is understood that similar results in different contexts indicate a greater probability of generalization, including to Brazilian cities.

The main mental illnesses recorded in Angola include:

In Angola, more than two hundred thousand people suffer from mental illnesses and there are increasingly more occurrences associated with substance abuse, with the age group between 24 and 49 years old being the most affected by mental disorders, according to the national coordinator of Mental Health, Vigário M. (2024).

The review carried out on the subject highlights some of the mental illnesses that are related to crime in the Province of Estúdio:

Depression: One of the most common disorders, mainly affecting people between 24 and 49 years old, but also adolescents and older adults

Anxiety: Common in various age groups, especially among young people and adults of working age

Schizophrenia: Often associated with the consumption of psychoactive substances, such as alcohol and drugs, and also identified as one of the main causes of serious mental disorders

Bipolar Affective Disorder: Another significant condition, which affects mood and behavior, with cases recorded in different age groups

Substance Use Disorders: The abuse of alcohol and drugs, such as marijuana, cocaine and crack, has been an important factor in the development of mental disorders, especially among young people

Epilepsy: Although it is a neurological condition, it is often associated with mental disorders, especially in contexts of poverty and lack of access to adequate treatments

Intellectual Disability and Developmental Disorders: Also recorded, although in a smaller proportion compared to the other disorders mentioned.

These diseases have a significant impact on the population, contributing to social problems such as violence, suicide and drug addiction, highlighting the need for robust public policies and more accessible mental health services.

A study carried out in Malanje by Criminal Psychologist, De Lemos, (2022) refers to the Angolan Penal Code, which provides the following in its article; (Non-imputability due to mental anomaly).

1. Anyone who, due to a mental anomaly, is incapable, at the time of committing the act, of assessing its unlawfulness or of determining themselves in accordance with such assessment, is non-imputable.

There are certain mental illnesses that, in their manifestations, may have some criminal impact and lead Law Operators to request the assistance and collaboration of specialists in the area of Criminal Psychology, and they are:

1. Dissociative disorders:

Dissociative identity disorder; Psychogenic or dissociative amnesia; Psychogenic or dissociative fugue; Trance states and possession; Kleptomania; Pyromania; Coprophilia.

2. Schizophrenia

The symptoms are acute disturbances of thought, perception and emotion, which affect relationships with others, combined with a disturbed feeling about oneself and a loss of the sense of reality that impairs social adaptation. Common characteristics of these disorders are disorganized thought and language, as well as perceptive, emotional and motor alterations (Beristain, 2000).

Incomprehensibility and unpredictability; Violence; Affective indifference

3. Delusional ideas - Mystical Delusion; Persecution Delusion; Celotypic Delusions, Erotomaniac Delusion, Hypochondriac Delusion and Megalomaniac Delusion.

4. Transtornos de personalidade - Por Transtorno pode entender-se, segundo o DSM-VTR, umas pautas inflexíveis de comportamento, que se apartam das expectativas culturais do sujeito e que se manifestam de uma forma peculiar de perceber a si mesmo, aos demais e o seu entorno, bem como pela presença de alterações afectivas, que afecta a actividade interpessoal e o controlo dos impulsos. -

Transtorno paranóide de Personalidade; Transtorno Esquizotípico de Personalidade; Transtorno Anti-Social de Personalidade (Psicopatia e Sociopatia)

An assessment made by the study's authors shares the criterion that the most vulnerable population is:

Young people, women of working age and prisoners are identified as the groups most likely to suffer from mental disorders and, consequently, to become involved in criminal activities.

According to studies carried out by Mendes C, & Contreiras, G (2020). Regarding the disorders caused by COVID-19, they were anxiety, stress, depression, panic, suicide, excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, domestic violence and sexual disorders.

It is therefore related to the concern present in the literature and shared by the authors with a view to making research an instrument that is useful to those directly responsible for the programs.

Main Contributing Factors:

Alcohol and Drug Consumption: The abuse of psychoactive substances is one of the main factors that contribute to the development of mental disorders and, consequently, to crime.

Manuel, F. (2024). refers to the consumption of alcoholic beverages among Angolan and Czech university students. Citation in the article M. Molmila referred to the damage caused by alcohol at the family level, which They are, as we all know, the core of society. These include economic problems, conflicts, physical, verbal and psychological violence, abandonment or family abandonment, jealousy pathology, sexual problems, social isolation, stigmatization, personality change. Impacto negativo de um membro da família beber excessivamente, alterando o estilo de vida familiar. Relaciona-se, portanto, à preocupação presente na literatura e compartilhada pelos autores.

Social Exclusion: Many mentally ill people are socially excluded and imprisoned within their families, without access to adequate treatment, which can worsen their conditions and increase the risk of criminal behavior.

According to Agostinho (2022, p. 12), he understands that "the way in which an individual or group sees and recognizes itself determines the

way in which we look at others, and with the colonial heritage of the population.

Angolan society is (re)creating itself, thus influencing the change in social structures and the way in which the "Angolan" recognizes itself.

Authors M. Eliopoulos, E, describe their focus on the harsh realities that persisted for the black population. Itzigsohn and Brown (2020) have contributed an invaluable work that sociologists and anyone interested in an inclusive society should critically analyze.

In the health field, research has acquired increasing relevance given the advantages and benefits derived from its application to advance the management and continuous improvement of public programs and policies implemented by government institutions. This is reflected in the commitment to develop more frequent and far-reaching research actions in the various areas of national life.

It is also an indispensable mechanism for the proper management of health services, as it provides valuable information and knowledge to guide decision-making and the rational use of resources allocated for this purpose. Therefore, we consider it important to know about the topic.

Impact on Crime:

Domestic and Sexual Violence: Mental health problems are often associated with cases of domestic and sexual violence, contributing to the increase in crime.

Aggressive Behaviors: Individuals with severe mental disorders, such as schizophrenia and dementia, may exhibit aggressive behavior, putting public safety at risk.

Suicide: Suicide cases have been on the rise, with more than 2,015 cases recorded in the last three years, many of which are related to untreated mental disorders

Prison system: The prison system faces significant challenges, with a high number of inmates per psychologist (126 inmates for one psychologist), which makes mental rehabilitation and social reintegration difficult

In this sense, the authors consider the relevance of other criteria and the necessary interventions:

Specialized Care Centers: The reopening of mental health centers, such as the Cahala center, and the construction of new infrastructures are essential for the treatment and social reintegration of these individuals.

Public Policies: It is urgent to implement public policies that address mental health in an integrated manner, including suicide prevention and the reduction of crime associated with mental disorders.

The relationship between mental illness and crime in the world, Angola and Malanje is complex, requiring a multidisciplinary approach to face current and future challenges.

Integrating mental patients into society focuses on community and recovery approaches, promoting the active participation of people with mental health problems.

1. **Creation of adapted community services:** It seeks to provide a range of mental health services that can adapt to the needs of people at different stages of life, avoiding involuntary and long-term hospitalization.

2. **Deinstitutionalization:** Proposing the transition from seclusion in psychiatric hospitals to dignified and quality care in the community, promoting the autonomy and legal capacity of patients.

3. **Empowerment and Participation:** Emphasis is placed on supporting people to manage their own lives, develop self-esteem, resilience, and establish healthy relationships. This includes supported decision-making and the creation of advance care plans.

4. Intersectoral Coordination: Coordinated work is carried out across the health, education, protection, and justice sectors to ensure access to education, employment, housing, and social benefits, thereby addressing the social determinants of mental health.

5. Awareness Raising and Combating Stigma: Awareness raising among the general population is promoted and stigma in mental health is combated, promoting positive practices in human rights and mental health.

6. Construction of Specialized Infrastructure: Work is underway to create a shelter for the collection and internment of patients with mental disorders, which will include prevention services, psychiatric treatment, and social assistance.

7. Involvement of professionals and the community: Capacity building in human rights and mental health among key stakeholders involved in social and health services is encouraged, and the participation of clinical psychologists and educators in the care of these patients is promoted.

These solutions seek not only to improve care for mentally ill patients but also to fully integrate them into society, promoting their well-being and active participation in the community.

Most crimes committed by mentally ill individuals are preventable, provided they are given attention, assistance and treatment.

Final Considerations

- ✓ Early identification of individuals at risk and provision of appropriate treatment are essential to reduce the incidence of crimes related to mental disorders.
- ✓ The relationship between mental illness and crime in the world, Angola and Malanje is complex and multifactorial, involving psychological, social and legal aspects, requiring a multidisciplinary approach to face current and future challenges.

- ✓ Most crimes committed by mentally ill individuals are preventable, provided they are given attention, assistance and treatment.

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