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## **Modern Methods of Criminological Study of the Personality of Selfish Criminals: A Critical Review and Comparative Analysis**

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**Abstract:** The study's relevance lies in the fact that the main reason for the impact of all the negative factors observed in society and generating mercenary crimes is the social maladjustment of the offender's personality. This is the quality of his socialisation, in which he acquires negative experiences, leading to his unlawful acts in the future. In the process of such "adaptation" to the environment, not without the direct "participation" of negative aspects of the micro-level, the mercenary-violent orientation of the offender's personality is formed. The purpose of the study is to analyse the processes and phenomena occurring in society and leading to the formation of the main subjective cause of criminal behaviour - the criminogenic-oriented consciousness and psychology of the offender to use violence against another person's personality to satisfy their selfish needs. As part of the study, a bibliometric analysis of contemporary methods in criminological research on the personality of selfish criminals was conducted based on the PRISMA approach. The literature search was performed on the Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and PubMed databases, and 61 relevant scientific papers were selected after applying inclusion and exclusion criteria. The main results of the study are the argumentation of the position that if we follow dialectical concepts in reflecting the picture of the development of social life, the shortcomings and miscalculations of the macro level of social life can act as determinants of specific criminal manifestations, find their continuation and growth in phenomena attributed to the micro level of personality socialisation. The study's main conclusions are that the dynamic relationship and interdependence of the conditions of life and social situation of a person's development, which generally affect their adaptation to the environment, are considered essential in

determining the determinants of offences. The further direction of scientific research is to study the personality of a mercenary criminal from the perspective of criminology and also to make a criminological analysis of the personal characteristics of a mercenary criminal.

**Keywords:** personality of a mercenary-violent criminal, determination of mercenary-violent crime, criminal behaviour, criminogenic-oriented consciousness, criminology.

## **Introduction**

Modern crime prevention practice is based on the results of systematic scientific research into the causes and conditions that contribute to the emergence of criminal behaviour and the objects of relevant social relations. At the same time, the personality of the offender plays a central role both in the research process and in practical activities.

The need for a comprehensive study of the individual as a phenomenon unique in its qualities, a subject and object of social relations, a functional and role-based "system of systems" capable of self-regulation, conscious and free choice, cannot but be realised in criminological practice.

The problem of studying the personality of a mercenary criminal, its comprehensive psychological, social, and criminological study, is one of the most pressing in the relevant fields of science: psychology and criminology. This is due to the following factors: necessity:

- to provide the most effective psycho-corrective influence on a person in prison;
- theoretical development and practical application of original methods of overcoming negative behavioural stereotypes and socio-psychological attitudes of both individuals who have committed mercenary crimes and identified individuals from marginalised groups who are potentially ready to commit an offence and implement a mercenary motive;
- to define the objects of preventive influence as fully and clearly as possible, while enabling prevention actors to concentrate their efforts in fairly specific areas of preventive influence;
- to actively use the data obtained as a result of theoretical research in criminological forecasting of prevention and combating of acquisitive crime, as well as planning of such activities.

## **Research Problem**

It is known that the fight against criminal behaviour is carried out, among other things, through the resocialisation of the offender through appropriate educational programmes. It is quite obvious that the development of an effective strategy for the re-education of a convicted offender for mercenary crimes involves individualisation of the measures taken, based on the results of a thorough study of his or her personal characteristics.

## **Research Focus**

The vector of research that has emerged in modern criminology, on the one hand, is aimed at studying the essence of personality and its structure, and on the other hand, at differentiating the types of crimes committed by a person and correlating them with the basic personal characteristics involved in the formation of the mechanism of criminal behaviour.

## **Research Aim and Research Questions**

The study of modern research in the field of criminology, in particular, the analysis of criminological approaches to understanding the essence of personality in the structure of these scientific studies shows that it (personality) appears as one unidirectional, rigid, frozen phenomenon, in which each of the characteristics under study is "isolated", crystallised from the whole, which does

not allow reconciling the multiplicity of the mental life of a person with empirical data, which, in turn, is a serious methodological miscalculation.

In accordance with the above, the purpose of the study is to examine a set of interrelated issues: 1) characterisation of the properties and states of the criminal's personality; 2) methods of studying the criminal's personality; 3) ways of influencing the personality with a view to preventing crimes based on the analysis of modern criminological research.

## **Literature Review**

At the present stage, there is no comprehensive criminological research on the study of the mercenary offender. Some aspects of this issue have been studied in the following scientific works.

The study of the offender's personality is devoted to the works of Boduszek et al. (2021), who notes that criminal social identity (CSI) is a factor of criminal behaviour. Accordingly, the scholar notes that CSI should be the goal of intervention strategies aimed at reducing the risk of reoffending. However, according to Boduszek et al. (2021), there is currently limited knowledge about how CSI is expressed among individuals with different criminal histories, which undermines efforts to develop and target appropriate rehabilitation strategies.

Among the gaps in the study of offender personality from the perspective of criminology, Liu and Bachman (2021) identify the fact that, compared to the large number of studies that examine the role of structural forces in deterring crime, such as stable employment, family support, and neighbourhood environment, relatively fewer research efforts have been directed at studying the role of human will in the process of desistance. The researcher also notes that the respondents she interviewed who had been sanctioned in the past were able to begin the desistance process because they had constructed their prosocial identity. Their prosocial identity, as Liu and Bachman (2021) note, not only directly inhibited recidivism, but also increased the effect of employment and socialisation programmes.

According to Kyprianides et al. (2021), social identity is a key aspect of the theory of procedural justice, which assumes that fair treatment by those in authority, such as the police, expresses, communicates, and generates a sense of status and belonging to the main social categories. In addition, the researcher notes that identification with the police and identification as a law-abiding citizen mediated a certain relationship between procedural justice and legitimacy, and both were stronger predictors of cooperation than legitimacy. This reasoned theory can be used for effective preventive methods in the fight against crime and its prevention.

It is also worth noting the study by Hickert et al. (2020), in which he notes that scholars often characterise imprisonment as a possible turning point in criminal activity. According to Hickert et al. (2020), this process involves two stages, namely: 1) a change in the life cycle mechanisms of imprisonment and re-entry leads to 2) further changes in criminal activity in relation to previous imprisonment. The researcher also notes that although life cycle mechanisms often correspond to changes in criminal activity at the same time, identifying individual changes that are precursors to subsequent changes in criminal offending remains elusive.

Crime is influenced by various factors, including scientific and technological progress. For example, Prasetyo et al. (2020) notes that in the digital age, along with the development of information technology, traditional types of crime are also evolving with the emergence of cybercrime. The researcher notes that many criminals target an individual as the key to accessing someone's personal accounts, such as bank accounts, credit cards, and other accounts. Thus, it can be concluded that a new type of criminal personality has emerged in the digital age.

According to Shih et al. (2019), criminal activity has always been a part of human society, and even today, in a world of extremely advanced surveillance and police capabilities, many different types of crime are still committed in almost every social environment. As the scholar notes, since the

perpetrators of crimes are not representative of the majority of their community, members of these communities tend to want to report crimes when they see them; however, they are often reluctant to do so because they fear for their own safety if the people they report them to recognise them. As noted by Shih et al. (2019), a large number of crimes go unreported for this reason, and investigations are unable to obtain key evidence from witnesses, which only contributes to an environment in which criminal activity is more likely to occur.

As Azumah et al. (2019) notes in his research, the police rely heavily on community members to fight crime. According to the scholar, the relationship between the police and community members is necessary for the police to continue to rely on citizens for information about crime. Moreover, as Azumah et al. (2019) emphasises, this principle of crime fighting is widespread in many parts of the developed world: studies have shown that in order to be able to fight crime effectively, it is necessary to make a lot of efforts, including cooperation with citizens, to identify lawbreakers.

The works of Golovin (2021) are also devoted to the study of the offender's identity as an element of the forensic characterisation of crimes. Thus, the scientist tries to identify the main characteristics of a criminal who commits a crime, with the main focus on building his forensic portrait. It has been established that by identifying the characteristics of the offender, it becomes possible to build forensic versions during the investigation to apply specific tactical techniques during procedural actions.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***General Background***

To conduct a bibliometric analysis of contemporary methods in criminological research on the personality of selfish criminals, a systematic search strategy was employed across leading databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and PubMed. The search covered the period from 2015 to 2022 to ensure a comprehensive review of recent literature.

### ***Search Strategy***

Keywords and search phrases were formulated considering the research topic's specifics and included the following terms: "selfish criminals" OR "economic crimes" OR "white-collar criminals" OR "financial offenders," "criminological personality study" OR "criminological profile" OR "criminological analysis," "modern criminological methods" OR "criminological approaches" OR "criminology." Both general and specialised keywords were used to capture the maximum number of relevant articles.

### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) criteria were applied to ensure a structured and transparent literature selection process.

Inclusion criteria:

- Publications focused on the study of the personality of selfish criminals or related criminological aspects;
- Articles that employed modern criminological research methods;
- Works published in English;
- Articles including empirical data, theoretical analysis, or literature review.

Exclusion criteria:

- Publications not related to the criminological analysis of criminals' personalities;
- Works that focused exclusively on other types of crimes (violent crimes, cybercrimes, etc.);

- Publications not meeting methodological quality standards, such as a lack of data or modern analytical methods;
- Duplicate studies.

### ***Data Analysis***

The database search resulted in 873 potentially relevant articles. After removing duplicates, 751 articles remained for further review. Based on the analysis of titles and abstracts, 413 articles were excluded as they did not align with the research topic. The full text of 338 articles was reviewed, with 277 publications excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria—the final sample comprised 61 articles used for the bibliometric analysis.

### **Research Results**

A crime in its social and psychological content is a complex type of specific activity, since it, as in any form of activity, always manifests the dialectic of the intertransition of external factors into internal ones, and then their objectification in an act. As it is rightly noted in the specialised literature, the surrounding macro- and micro-conditions of an individual's life determine the content of his or her spiritual world, and internal traits, qualities, and properties are embodied in activities that actively influence the conditions surrounding him or her. However, criminological research often either avoids questions of causality and explanation altogether (e.g., the risk factor approach) or is based on research designs that provide very partial explanations (e.g., experimental work focused on the crime scene) (Chaplynska, 2019).

This difficult-to-understand mechanism of interaction between various factors of real reality, the continuation of which is the behavioural activity of a certain orientation, is understood in the knowledge of criminological problems of crime determination. At the same time, without appropriate knowledge of the determinants of crime, it is impossible to create an effective system of crime prevention, in particular, mercenary and violent crime. During criminal proceedings, a significant part of the activities of law enforcement officers and the court is aimed at identifying the person who committed a socially dangerous act, as well as communicating and conducting a number of investigative (search) and procedural actions with the suspect, accused, and defendant, respectively (Wikström & Kroneberg, 2022).

As the monitoring of criminological literature shows, the problem of crime, including its mercenary and violent segment, is addressed quite often. Theoretical material has already been accumulated on the nature of the causes and conditions of criminal behaviour, which should be the basis for modern approaches to the organisation and implementation of relevant work in the field of crime prevention by prevention actors. Theoretically, people who commit crimes face different social and economic incentives to commit crimes than other people, or they evaluate the costs and benefits of crime differently because they have different perceptions of it (Epper et al., 2022).

However, researchers, addressing the issue of crime in general, have always focused on the peculiarities of forming mercenary motivation and choosing an aggressive violent way of seizing someone else's property in the unity of complex psychological mechanisms, which are influenced primarily by social conditions of the so-called macro-environmental nature. Therefore, this gap requires a detailed study, taking into account the existing experience and current trends in the development of crime. For example, criminogenic risk factors are largely unrelated to the disclosure of personal digital offences among perpetrators; however, peer disclosure on the Internet is related to self-reported offences, regardless of the reaction triggered by perceived information about peer offending (McCuddy, 2022).

In order to choose an appropriate model for understanding the origin of mercenary violent crime, it is necessary to adequately explain the endless cycle of a new and new production of violent criminal

behaviour in modern society, which is associated with the seizure of other people's material assets, from the perspective of the influence of the surrounding social situation.

By studying crime and societal responses to it, criminology is an interdisciplinary field of study that brings together scientists, clinicians, and other professionals from all kinds of disciplines to seek to understand some of the criminal behaviours that have profound and widespread consequences for society (Brazil & Whittingham, 2019).

At the present stage, there is an obvious proposed structure of personality and diagnostic simplicity that ensures its more complete understanding by researchers. However, the model of a criminal's personality created on this methodological platform is not much different from a law-abiding person, and the identified individual psychological features have little evidence to support their attribution to typical characteristics of criminals. Psychologists link personality to criminal behaviour, and they study the specific traits of a criminal or a certain cluster of traits that drive them to criminal behaviour (Brazil & Whittingham, 2019). Practice shows that this is a typical complex consisting of 20-25 features of a person's socio-demographic, socio-role, moral, and psychological characteristics.

In this regard, it seems expedient to study the issue of personality structure in the context of the correlation of substantive tendencies, as they are implemented in various activities related to living conditions that arise from basic relations, that is, aspirations, requirements, principles, and needs. It should be noted that a great scientific potential for research and explanation of the deep aspects of consciousness and factors of personality development is concentrated in the context of analytical and humanistic psychology. However, these studies are few and far between.

As the history of criminology shows, it is the personality of the offender that is the subject of heated debate, and even at the present stage, no general methodological approach has been formulated. At the same time, it is obvious that the very formation of such an approach also includes the solution of logically interrelated issues: what is the personality of a criminal; what properties and states constitute its content; what is their role in committing a crime; what intrapersonal aspects should be influenced in order to prevent a crime. For example, it is necessary to take into account that corruption is similar to bribery, but it has its own characteristics, in particular, the concept of complicity in corruption and liability for it (Burlakov, 2020).

It should be noted that all these issues are of great practical importance. In the analysed aspect, in the overall set of traits, features, attitudes that characterise the personality of a criminal, obviously, first of all, the central one should be the complex of negative attitudes, beliefs, habits, properties of this person, which, refracted through the conditions of life, can cause criminal behaviour and, which, if preserved, can again trigger the mechanism of criminal behaviour in the future. In turn, this whole complex is commonly referred to in the scientific literature as the anti-social orientation of a personality. It is worth noting that the achievements of other sciences, in particular medicine, are also helpful in the criminological study of the offender's personality. For example, analyses have shown that prenatal testosterone levels are not associated with non-violent criminal activity, violent criminal activity, psychopathic personality traits, arrest, and imprisonment (Joyner & Beaver, 2020).

The latter is a part of the social and moral orientation of a personality, precisely the part of it that should be destroyed and (or) replaced by a new attitude in the process of re-education of those convicted of mercenary crimes. In practice, it is not enough to state the mere fact of the existence of an anti-social attitude in the mind of a criminal. It is valuable to understand the conditions, factors, and mechanisms of its formation. Thus, violent extremism emerges against the background of a certain social situation, in particular, its emergence is facilitated by: 1) low effectiveness of social policy; 2) isolation of a person from civil society institutions and state structures; 3) a person's desperate desire for self-realisation, which is opposed to general indifference to the problems of the individual (Kirilenko & Alekseev, 2019).

According to the content and nature, there are three types of anti-social attitudes (Table 1):

**Table 1**

*Types of Anti-social Attitudes of a Person*

Title	Characteristics
General, “abstract” anti-social attitude of the individual	A person can commit, depending on the specific conditions, any crime or any of a fairly wide range of crimes of various kinds. This is the most dangerous type of attitude and the most difficult to devalue; carriers of such an anti-social attitude are highly characterised by pronounced situational behaviour, lack of an internal moral core, and strong moral foundations.
Narrower anti-social attitude of the individual	It is capable of generating an intention to commit a particular type of crime, such as property crimes, but not crimes against the person.
The narrowest anti-social attitude of the individual	The content of an anti-social attitude can be such that a person is capable of committing only a specific crime, such as rape or a mercenary crime.

*Source:* author's elaboration.

Closely related to these types is the difference in anti-social attitudes in terms of their scope, the proportion of attitudes that relate to the whole complex of views, beliefs, and habits of a person. From the point of view of depth and stability, one usually distinguishes between, on the one hand, stable and entrenched, and, on the other hand, weak, shallow, superficial anti-social attitudes. For example, scientists have found that the cause of cybercrime is a complex of arbitrariness and illusions, which covers the stages from the formation of intent under the influence of a number of circumstances to the actual commission of a cybercrime (Kharytonenko, 2023).

It would certainly be wrong, or at least insufficient, to assess the depth and persistence of anti-social attitudes in general and to limit ourselves to this when studying the personality of the offender. Various factors influence crime and the personality of the offender. For example, the growing global shortage of natural resources is increasingly attracting transnational criminal organisations and contributing to the growth of borderless crime (van Uhm & Nijman, 2020). In order to determine the true degree of social danger of the perpetrator, to follow the correct and effective ways and methods of his correction and re-education, to decide on the degree of achievement of the result of educational work with the convicted person, it is necessary to take a differentiated approach to the assessment of individual views, beliefs, habits that are the content of the person's anti-social attitude.

It has long been an axiom in science that every act and all human behaviour is motivated in some way. The motives are needs of various kinds, ranging from vital to self-actualisation needs. Therefore, in order to understand human behaviour, including criminal behaviour, it is necessary to understand what motivates it, that is, it is necessary to study human needs, since they are what motivate a person to act and act as motives for behaviour. For example, the coronavirus pandemic has also affected the crime rate. In 1 week after the quarantine in March 2020, all reported crimes decreased by 41%, with the following differences: shoplifting (-62%), burglary (-52%), domestic violence (-45%), theft from a car (-43%), robbery (-36%), residential (-25%) and non-residential burglary (-25%) (Halford et al., 2020).

It is obvious that the origins of crime are often not related to the peculiarities of the will but to the peculiarities of the formed moral and other needs. At the same time, the modern digital society is changing the activities of organised crime and organised criminal groups (Di Nicola, 2022). In order to

exclude possible misinterpretation of the concept of “needs”, it is necessary to at least briefly explain its content. It is incorrect to limit needs to the basic ones and to mean needs for food, clothing, shelter, and sexual needs. It is necessary to take into account not only organic and material needs, but also complex social needs expressed in interests, beliefs, ideals, and moral aspirations. Such motives are socially conditioned, that is, they depend on living conditions and upbringing.

Modern criminological research typically uses data on age, marital status, employment, and the number of criminal convictions, but this information has low explanatory power. However, it is well known that explanation is the main function of science, which makes it practically significant. It seems necessary to use in criminological research a wider range of scientific methods of cognition of social and legal phenomena, which are undoubtedly opposed to the simplest methods of everyday cognition based on life-empirical observation and common sense. It is the methods of scientific cognition that can serve as a specific means of obtaining reliable, systematic, and controlled information that ensures the reproducibility of scientific knowledge. We cannot ignore the requirements for methods of scientific knowledge, the main of which are: theoretical validity; validity, in which one of the sources is the philosophical concept of truth as a corresponding reality or useful thought, which involves assessing the adequacy of the method's definition of what it is intended to measure and is expressed in the “putting under stress” in the course of research, in particular, the mental property declared in the description of the offender's personality; reliability; objectivity, understood as the independence of the obtained

The following factors have a direct impact on the characteristics of both offences and perpetrators of the offences: The following factors have a direct impact on the characteristics of both acquisitive crimes and their perpetrators: 1) socio-economic; 2) socio-political; 3) socio-psychological factors. Accordingly, the criminological portrait of persons who commit mercenary crimes is characterised by four groups of features: 1) demographic, 2) socio-role, 3) psychological, and 4) criminal law. The psychological characteristics of a personality of a mercenary offender include the following:

- *stability of mercenary attitude (orientation)* is the degree of stability of psychological readiness to commit crimes related to illicit enrichment; the level of readiness for violent means of realising the mercenary motive of crimes;

In accordance with this criterion, six types of personality of self-interested criminals are distinguished: 1) potentially safe - who first committed a mercenary crime of minor or moderate gravity with the threat of violence, without danger to the victim's health; 2) potentially dangerous - who first committed a mercenary crime with the threat of violence dangerous to the victim's health; 3) potentially especially dangerous - who first committed a mercenary crime with the threat of violence dangerous to the victim's life; 4) safe - who committed a crime with the use of violence that is not dangerous to the victim's health; 5) dangerous - who committed a mercenary crime with the use of violence that is dangerous to the victim's health; 6) especially dangerous - who committed a mercenary crime with the use of violence that is dangerous to the victim's life.

- *the nature of the motivation* that stimulates the emergence of a self-serving attitude or its implementation;

In accordance with this criterion, five types of personality of self-serving criminals can be distinguished: 1) assertive - using illicit enrichment for self-assertion; 2) maladaptive - committing mercenary crimes to adapt to the environment or survive; 3) alcohol and drug addicted - committing mercenary crimes to satisfy an irresistible craving for alcohol or drugs; 4) gambling - committing mercenary crimes to satisfy the need for acute emotional experiences associated with risk; 5) family - committing mercenary crimes for the benefit of the family.

- attitude to moral and legal standards in the sphere of property turnover and, in particular, to criminal law prohibitions on committing mercenary crimes.

The attitude to the observance of moral and legal (including criminal law) standards in the sphere of property turnover is characterised by a number of indicators, as well as the degree of solidarity with these standards and even the degree of readiness to comply with them. The most common types of mercenary crimes against property are characterised by a very low level of solidarity with the relevant moral and legal prohibitions.

Thus, based on the above classifications, the criminal law features that characterise a person who has committed a mercenary crime can be conditionally divided into two groups: 1) direct; 2) indirect. The first group includes: a) special official status, which determines the commission of a certain type of mercenary crime; b) type of accomplice; c) unexpunged or outstanding criminal record, etc. The second group of criminal law features includes: a) gravity of the crime committed; b) form of intent, an indication of mercenary purpose or interest as mandatory features of the subjective side of the *corpus delicti* of the relevant crime; c) type and variety of multiple crimes committed (aggregate, repeated, recidivism, including dangerous and especially dangerous); d) form of complicity, etc.

The socio-criminological characteristics of the personality of a mercenary offender include his/her socio-demographic characteristics and peculiarities of its formation. The demographic characteristics of a person who has committed mercenary crimes include: gender, age, level of education, place of residence, degree of settlement, and standard of living. In addition, the concentration of crime is unevenly distributed in cities compared to rural areas, and in some regions, cities themselves have a much higher concentration of crime (Prieto Curiel, 2021). Recent studies using methods such as the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CCHI), which assesses the harmful effects of crime on society and identifies areas in a city with truly high crime rates by distinguishing between more and less serious crimes, confirm the importance of this factor (Ohyama et al., 2022). While the socio-psychological characteristics of the personality of a self-serving criminal take into account the motivation for committing illegal behaviour, including an assessment of the level of knowledge of relevant criminal law prohibitions; attitude to them and attitude to their observance; subjectively perceived risk of being caught in a crime; attitude to punishment.

Accordingly, the motives for criminal behaviour consist of two levels: 1) substantive - it performs the function of direct satisfaction of primary needs, in particular, the desire to take possession of someone else's property and thereby increase one's own well-being; 2) substantive, when motivation arises, develops and is implemented, including at the unconscious level, and its content is usually a constant assertion of one's self, protection of one's biological and social existence. For example, as Hoehn-Velasco et al. (2021) note, research shows that child support violations, sexual assault, and domestic violence significantly increase the risk of committing acquisitive crimes. Being closely intertwined, interacting, and mutually reinforcing, these levels reinforce each other and powerfully determine criminal behaviour. Emphasising the fact that there is a constant relationship between objective (external) and subjective (internal) regulators, we believe it is important to emphasise the following: first, the creator of most of the external regulators, including the transformed surrounding reality, is a person with his or her subjective, inner world.

The interconnection and interdependence of all phenomena and processes existing in social life allows us to identify the types of determination of socially dangerous manifestations of human activity, which are called causes and conditions. Undoubtedly, crime is influenced by various phenomena and conditions in their entirety, which are commonly referred to as crime factors. At the same time, only those factors that directly cause certain consequences and without which the relevant consequences do not occur can be called causes. The conditions of crime do not serve as the basis for committing crimes, do not genetically generate them, but their presence ensures the possibility of causes and, accordingly, contributes to the commission of unlawful acts. As Albanese (2022) rightly notes, organised crime is a special type of crime, it is a financial crime, as its purpose is to make a profit or other material benefit. In turn, acquisitive crimes are determined by the same causes and conditions that give rise to crime as

a negative social phenomenon, as well as by the causes and conditions that determine acquisitive crime in its broadest sense.

When analysing the socio-psychological factors that influence the personality of a mercenary criminal, it should be noted that the criteria of values have changed dramatically in modern society. If earlier labour was the value to be guided by, nowadays material well-being, regardless of how it is achieved, determines the value of a person much more than his or her labour. In this case, there are also individual psychological factors at play, such as an unconscious urge to gamble (for example, in pickpockets and burglars, bribe-takers) and becoming psychologically dependent on one's own behaviour (in pickpockets). The socio-psychological conditions for committing mercenary crimes also include the following:

- low level of public solidarity with criminal law prohibitions;
- disregard for possible criminal prosecution for committing a mercenary crime;
- low level of legal knowledge among the population about the limits of liability for mercenary crimes.

It follows that the so-called "human factor" is initially included in the system of determinants of social behaviour of a person; secondly, in the understanding of the dialectic of external and internal regulators, the dialectical-materialist principle of determinism is specifically implemented. It is as a result of the dialectical interaction of external and internal regulators that a complex psychological process of formation and further development of those socio-psychological properties of a personality which are the root cause of his/her criminal behaviour and, therefore, are subject to detection takes place. It is for this reason, as Bondy et al. (2020) note, that many empirical studies have examined various determinants of crime. Obviously, clarifying these signs can help to clarify the other "parameters" of anti-social attitudes mentioned above, thereby correctly presenting the socio-psychological portrait of the convict.

The existence of a person and society is impossible without property, property goods. Their production, acquisition, and distribution are accompanied by benefits. This complex phenomenon, which is characteristic of all mankind, plays a dual role in its history. On the one hand, it is a motivation for progressive movement forward; on the other hand, under certain conditions, it is a negative element of social psychology. One cannot but agree with the conclusions that the properties of the psyche that cause criminogenic behaviour are manifested in a mosaic combination. The scientific community often raises the question of excessive psychologisation in criminological research. Without entering into a debate on this issue within the framework of the study, we emphasise that criminology as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge should be based on practical experience and focus on obtaining comprehensive knowledge necessary to improve the effectiveness of crime fighting. That is why, as Chainey & Alonso Berbotto (2021) note, crime scenario analysis is increasingly being used as an approach to the study of organised crime.

Obviously, in order to develop effectively planned measures to prevent crime, to identify and subsequently eliminate the actual causes and sources of harmful influences, it is necessary to conduct more detailed criminological research than is currently available. In general, research is limited to the processing of statistical data, and when studying the personality of a criminal, at best, it is indicated that the reasons for his or her anti-social behaviour are related to defects in school, family, cultural and other upbringing, and almost never the causes and conditions specific to a particular person are identified. As Dziwornu (2021) notes, this may be consistent with the perspective of everyday activities, if crime opportunities and economic development increase in parallel, followed by a decrease in crime, reflecting increased security measures or other changes in the economy of a particular country.

Of course, a person is unique as an individual. The forces that cause his or her actions are as individual as fingerprints. That is why it is necessary to investigate each offender, but the research must also take into account the sphere of a person's life, his or her environment, and public interests. It is necessary to conduct research on a broader scale and study the impact of economic, sociological, cultural, social and psychological, and everyday factors on crime prevention. The need for such a study is due, as Safat et al. (2021) notes, to the fact that first of all, crime and offences pose a threat to justice, so they need to be controlled.

The analysis of the scientific literature also shows that the current focus is on the study of special prevention measures rather than general measures, while a deeper study of the latter would help to positively address the issue of crime prevention. We believe that researchers should pay more attention to analysing the effectiveness of various means of influence used in crime prevention. Nevertheless, as Buil-Gil (2022) note, crimes that are already known to the police are subject to biased selection caused by underreporting. Summarising the above, we can state that in order to successfully organise, in particular, the process of re-education of self-serving criminals on a scientific basis, it is necessary to move from general considerations of studying the personality of criminals to its actual study, based on the achievements of a whole range of modern sciences. As Ippolito and Lozano (2020) correctly notes, it is the prediction of crimes before they occur that can save the lives of citizens and the loss of their property.

On the one hand, we should talk about scientific and theoretical developments. Their purpose is a deep, comprehensive analysis of both the personality and the state of crime itself over a long period of time, forecasting its trends, and assessing the effectiveness of general and special measures to combat it. Thus, it is important to take into account the socio-economic situation in the country with the ratio of growth or decrease in acquisitive crimes: this opinion is supported by van Koppen et al. (2020), who note that employment helps offenders to refrain from committing a crime. On the other hand, we are talking about specific issues of scientific and practical research that are an integral part of law enforcement activities and are conducted with the advisory and other assistance of researchers. Their purpose is to help assess the effectiveness of the work of the relevant agency and its bodies and to develop evidence-based proposals for further improvement.

The results indicate that African and Latin American countries suffer from the highest levels of various types of crime across the board, followed by Asian countries. Countries in Europe, North America, and Australia, in turn, have average or relatively low levels of most types of crime (van Dijk et al., 2021). Accordingly, the task of scientists is to take full account of proposals for further research development, bringing it as close as possible to the needs of practice, and expanding joint research conducted by scientific institutions and practical bodies at the request of the latter. In this regard, the developed systems of conceptual and applied recommendations for improving the prevention of mercenary crime and property crimes in modern conditions could play a role.

In law, the category of benefit is used in a narrow sense - as a purposeful desire to obtain gratuitous unlawful property benefits. Self-interested crimes have both signs of mercenary crime and their own features, the combination of which allows them to be considered as a specific type of crime. The main criteria for classifying crimes as mercenary are:

- mercenary motivation, which includes a selfish motive and purpose, expressed in the desire to obtain material benefits for oneself or others in an unlawful manner;
- the possibility of using a violent method to commit the crime, including various forms of physical and mental violence;
- object of a criminal act, which includes property relations protected by law, as well as life, health, and physical freedom of a person.

Let us analyse in more detail what exactly causes the formation of the main subjective cause of criminal behaviour - criminogenically oriented consciousness and psychology to use violence against the personality of another person to satisfy one's own mercenary needs. First of all, it is necessary to consider a set of determinants of the national scale (i.e., the level referred to as the macro-environment) that determine the formation of criminally oriented consciousness and psychology of individuals to enrich themselves through criminal violence against the personality of another person. For example, we should agree with the opinion of Schweppe (2021) that the term hate crime is instinctively understood in different areas of policy and practice but is defined differently depending on the context itself.

This complex is traditionally represented by such spheres of society as socio-economic, political, moral and psychological, and legal. Crime is influenced and determined by social, often contradictory processes and phenomena that exist in society. Therefore, such studies should be carefully planned and have appropriate and effective tools. As Lu et al. (2019) rightly point out, studies that were based on relatively weak analytical frameworks without contextualisation and relevant comparisons were unable to determine whether marijuana legalisation increased or decreased crime. The specificity of robberies and assaults can also be observed in the fact that most of them are situational, mostly group-based, and associated with alcohol and drug abuse. This is most true for robberies, and less true for robberies.

A special group among mercenary criminals are minors. When determining the causes of their criminality, it is necessary to remember that a juvenile offender does not become such a criminal suddenly, at the moment of committing a crime. Often, antisocial features of their personality are formed gradually, and the commission of a crime by such a person is already a consequence of such formation. At the same time, as noted in the specialised literature, there are numerous explanations for children's delinquent behaviour, embodied in the relevant theories. Most of these theories focus on certain components of the microenvironment that have a negative impact on the process of socialisation of minors.

The social positions and behaviour of adolescents are adversely affected by their low social and legal protection. Violations of constitutional guarantees of the rights of minors to the main social institutions of their life are increasingly being revealed, which not only actually causes neglect to develop into homelessness, but also becomes one of the most common causes of illegal behaviour by adolescents. On the other hand, public participation in crime prevention, witness, and crime reporting has had a negative impact on property crime. In addition, unemployment, family background, education level, age, time, season, and police patrolling determine the occurrence of property crime events (Yigzaw et al., 2023).

Indeed, among the most significant socio-economic problems that impede the normal socialisation of young people and significantly affect the standard and quality of life are contradictions in education, labour, and employment, and housing. Crime is difficult to predict; it is random and can happen anywhere at any time, which is a challenge for any society (Khan et al., 2022). But once again, we emphasise that the catalyst, a kind of primary basis for all other aspects of successful socialisation, its external sphere, is the tension that exists in families (internal socialisation). At the same time, there is an interconnection between the process of involving an underage person in the generally accepted standards and parameters of the social context of society. Anti-crime policies often do not respond to crime reduction (Gingerich & Scartascini, 2022).

Insufficient competitiveness and low educational and qualification levels determine the greatest social vulnerability in the youth labour market among the younger age group, whose representatives account for almost half of the robbers, extortionists, and murderers for profit. Finally, the results confirm the thesis that hate crimes, like other forms of crime, have a message effect (Hagerlid, 2020).

This situation leads to an increase in socio-political tensions in a society in which an individual citizen may believe that his or her political and social rights are being violated and always threatens

with a surge in criminal behaviour, and an increase in attempts to solve urgent problems by illegal means, including the use of violence against the individual in the seizure of other people's property. At the same time, the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies and the diversity of communication networks have been significant factors in expanding the scope of such technologies (Al Qatawneh et al., 2023).

Of course, the scientific position that the formation of a juvenile's personality is determined by both the micro and macro environment is methodologically sound: minors are always influenced by their immediate environment - parents, educators, friends, neighbours, as well as by the whole society and the state, which is carried out through the relevant educational and training institutions, the media, public organisations, etc. In this aspect, juvenile delinquency is a consequence of both family dysfunction and the negative influence of the immediate environment, as well as certain features of the socio-economic and political development of society in a transitional period. Therefore, if we test the effectiveness of algorithms for deep learning the causes of juvenile delinquency in the area of acquisitive crime, as Stalidis et al. (2021) notes, recommendations for the development and training of deep learning systems for predicting crime areas using open data from police reports would be appropriate.

As is rightly noted in the specialised literature, the loss of the former social status, the decline in living standards of a huge part of the population, and the progressive growth of unemployment means that more and more people, feeling uncertain about the future and unable to find a job in their speciality, are forced to focus on a lifestyle associated with violations of the norms of morality and law. Among the existing socio-economic trends, the most alarming is social stratification - the stratification of society with signs of growing inequality, falling living standards, and progressive impoverishment, especially of families with children. These factors create social and criminal tensions in society. To this should be added a decline in the quality of life of the majority of the country's population and a high level of professional unemployment.

In the difficult socio-economic situation resulting from the crisis transformations of the transition period, most people have not been able to adapt to the new socio-economic conditions, which are dominated by fierce competition, economic inequality, the pursuit of profit, unemployment, and social insecurity. In such an environment, criminal violence is becoming a common phenomenon, which is increasingly being presented as a kind of struggle for survival, more or less decent living conditions in modern society. Moreover, such "survival" means committing crimes for mercenary reasons as a way of "earning money". Therefore, crime prediction using machine and deep learning has attracted considerable research attention in recent years, focusing on identifying patterns and trends in crime (Mandalapu et al., 2023).

In addition, the socio-economic determinants of crime, in particular mercenary and violent crime, in a market economy include the problems of employment and employment of young people of all categories: graduates and those expelled from educational institutions for failing to perform, those returning from places of deprivation of liberty and special educational institutions, and those on preventive registration with the internal affairs agencies for offences. For example, the failure of the state to provide social guarantees for getting a first job creates scepticism among certain segments of young people about the need to continue their education after graduation. In fact, criminal networks are diverse (Wyatt et al., 2020), as are the reasons that influence the formation of criminal behaviour in individuals.

Understanding who commits crime and for what reason is a key topic in the social sciences and is important for developing crime prevention policies (Epper et al., 2022). It is criminal violence as a socially determined phenomenon that primarily "reacts" to significant negative changes in the political and social life of the country, deteriorating economic conditions, and crisis phenomena of a general social nature. However, the criminological literature has not covered this issue, and the new policies and

programmes that have been created to address this problem have not been well-grounded in criminological thinking (Grant, 2021).

This phenomenon can be explained from the point of view that definitions and terms in science are evolving and often fail to catch up with the actions in life that they are trying to describe (Ruggiero, 2023). Therefore, in the future, there is a need for further development of criminological scientific and theoretical research and further implementation of scientific methods of analysing the state and causes of crime in order to combat it more successfully, and educational programmes for training new personnel for law enforcement agencies and for the scientific and educational sphere cannot be ignored. In this scenario, policymakers can use education and investment (domestic and foreign) to minimise crime (Sugiharti et al., 2023).

Thus, the problem of combating mercenary crime is urgent. This type of crime has the largest quantitative indicators compared to other types of crime, and it should be borne in mind that there are unrecorded unreported crimes. Efforts to combat this type of crime will only be effective if they are based on the results of a solid scientific foundation built on the study of the effectiveness of criminal law enforcement and the prevention of property crimes, including the study of the personality of a mercenary criminal.

## **Discussion**

Characterisation of the properties and states of the offender's personality, as well as effective preventive influence on offenders by law enforcement agencies cannot be successfully implemented without taking into account the typology and classification of the offender's personality. It is necessary to distinguish classification from typology since classification has the lowest level of generalisation. It is a stable set of objects under study according to their individual, inherent characteristics. In this case, the objects should always be delimited on the same basis. In turn, typology is the highest level of generalisation. It allows us to explain the personality of the offender with its individual characteristics, while the classification only describes it. Although criminology has accumulated considerable experience in developing typologies of offender personality, there is no universal typology of its own. Criminological science helps to distinguish the most characteristic types of actions of persons committing criminal acts from the entire array of crimes.

However, as it was found in this study and confirmed by Chaplynska (2019), criminological research on the personality of the offender does not meet the requirements of the time, as it does not take into account all the specifics of its formation. The imperfection of criminological research is also pointed out by Wikström and Kroneberg (2022), who note that, first of all, the imperfection of such research is caused by gaps in the practical activities of law enforcement agencies that do not pay sufficient attention to the study of the offender's personality. The conclusion of this study regarding the need to develop a universal typology of the offender's personality also coincides with the opinion of Brazil and Whittingham (2019). These researchers believe that the solution to this problem lies in the use of all possible tools of criminology, which is an interdisciplinary science by its nature, and has links with both legal and non-legal sciences that can be helpful in studying the personality of the offender.

The methodology of the criminological study of the offender's personality is described in detail in criminological and other specialised literature. The choice of the methodology for the criminological study of the criminal's personality is determined by its objectives. According to the results of the study, they are: 1) establishing his/her individual psychological characteristics which manifested themselves in the commission of a crime; 2) identifying his/her special properties which can be used in organising individual work on crime prevention at the stage of execution of sentence. However, Kyprianides et al. (2021) came to a different conclusion and found that the main method should be one that is preventive in nature, i.e., provides for the prevention of crime in the future. Instead, Burlakov (2020) suggests that

when choosing a method for studying the personality of an offender, the type of crime he or she committed should also be taken into account.

A person's life is determined by objective economic and social factors that influence the choice of positive or negative motivation for human activity. Social consciousness, with its diversity of views, moral and ethical norms, national and cultural traditions, has a certain degree of influence on the individual. For example, there is a well-known definition that everything in society is permitted that is not expressly prohibited by law. However, we should not forget about socio-psychological factors and subjective circumstances. They also influence the choice of criminal behaviour through the prism of consciousness. A person's actions are also influenced by previous social experience and behavioural skills that are manifested in other life conditions. These factors of influence on the personality should be taken into account in the analysis of modern criminological research, as well as in practical activities for crime prevention. This argument is supported by Yigzaw et al. (2023), who also note that there are stable factors that provoke a person to engage in illegal behaviour. The opposite view is held by Epper et al. (2022), who argue that under the same social or other conditions, different people have different degrees of predisposition to criminal behaviour.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The following conclusions were drawn as a result of the study:

1. The author identifies the following properties and states of the offender's personality: social, psychological, demographic properties and their corresponding states as factors of the offender's personality formation. The individual properties of a criminal's personality are determined by socio-cultural and psychophysiological factors and are expressed in criminal behaviour.

2. To study the personality of a criminal, methods should be used that involve the study of the following factors: 1) socio-demographic characteristics of the criminal personality (gender, age, place of residence, marital status, nationality, profession); 2) intellectual characteristics of the criminal personality (mental development, education); 3) moral and psychological characteristics (character traits, values, aspirations, interests, habits); 4) medical and biological characteristics (health status, physiological characteristics); 5) criminal law characteristics (criminal record).

3. The analysis of modern criminological research has made it possible to provide the following recommendations on ways to influence the personality of the offender in order to prevent crime. A full study of the offender's personality should not be limited to the identification of only certain general features that often superficially characterise the personality. A more detailed scheme of studying the personality of the offender should be built, including the biography of the person, criminal law information, social, moral, mental, and biological characteristics.

The study has achieved its goal, and it has been established that a comprehensive study of the criminal's personality is impossible without identifying its specific types, which together constitute a criminological portrait of the criminal's personality. The study examines some of them: depending on the stability of criminogenic qualities, the direction of criminal behaviour, the degree of public danger, and the factor of formation of the criminal's personality. Accordingly, this issue requires further scientific research.

### ***Suggestions for Future Research***

It should be noted that in some criminological studies, there are attempts to build a model of a criminal person by identifying individual peculiarities of temperament, will, character characteristics, and on this basis to include them in the causal complex of both violent and mercenary types of criminal behaviour. Similarly, more complex characteristics are used to form personality profiles. At the same time, it is unclear which theory is the basis for understanding the phenomenon of personality and explaining its originality.

It is necessary to note the lack of research in the field of penitentiary problems of the personality of convicted criminals. At the same time, it is essential to use various methods of researching the personality and behaviour of criminals. We should proceed from the fact that it is impossible to achieve the goals of punishment and achieve correction of personality and behaviour if we do not rely on psychological data. It is impossible to understand a person and their behaviour, including criminal behaviour, without an in-depth study of their socio-demographic, moral, and psychological characteristics.

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