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## **The robber personality: characteristics and formation**

*The importance of the scientific research of the personality of an offender for developing certain types of prevention and suppression of crime is stated in the article. Modern scientific views on this issue have been reviewed and the conceptual provisions of social psychological theory of the personality of an offender are presented. The content and structural elements of the robber personality are outlined. The basic socio-demographic and moral and psychological traits of a robber have been analyzed. The generalized social image of an average modern robber has been created owing to this information.*

**Keywords:** personality, offender, robber, socio-demographic characteristics, moral and psychological characteristics, robber's portrait.

**T**he problem of the personality of an offender rightly belongs to the most important problems of different areas of knowledge (criminology, sociology, psychology, etc.), and at the same time it is the most difficult subject of scientific knowledge. Findings of scientific studies of the personality of criminals are important for the development of specific measures of precautions, prevention and cessation of crime in general, as well as certain types of crime in particular. As Yu. Antonian noted: «successful crime prevention is possible only in case when attention will be focused on the personality of an offender, as the personality is a medium of the causes of their commission» [1, p. 11].

However, the scientific community has not managed to develop a unified approach to its solution. Thus, one group of scientists opposes the use of the concept of «the personality of an offender», as, in their view, it does not reflect significant qualitative differences from law-abiding citizens, and therefore it is quite enough to limit oneself to the study of the person who committed a crime, that is the

subject of the offense. Some authors claim that it is possible to speak about the existence of the personality of an offender only in timescales determined by law: from the entry into force of the judgement to serving a sentence and the cancellation of the conviction. Other authors stress the need of a comprehensive study of not only prisoners, but also the actual criminals, as the most mature and dangerous criminals often avoid criminal liability.

Abstracting from many points of view, controversial statements and ambiguous assessments, we will try to lay out the conceptual provisions of psychological and criminological studies of the personality of an offender, which to a greater or lesser extent, are shared by the overwhelming part of scientists: 1) the personality of an offender is different from the personality of a non-offender by a set of typical distinguishing features; 2) antisocial orientation of the personality of an offender, his/her attitude to society, social norms, criminal law prohibitions are expressed in a crime; 3) antisocial orientation of the personality is formed at the pre-criminal stage in the process of deviant behaviors and, having reached a certain degree (depth), causes an increased willingness to commit a crime. These ideas are developed by the following scholars in their works: Yu. Antonian, H. Avanesov, P. Dahel, I. Danshyn, O. Dzhuzha, V. Filimonov, K. Ihoshev, O. Kalman, V. Luneiev, A. Ratinov, A. Sakharov, V. Shakun, A. Zakaliuk, etc.

Being followers of the aforementioned provisions, V. Androsiuk, L. Kazmirenko, Ya. Kondratiev and others offer the following definition: the personality of an offender is a conscious entity, endowed with a set of biologically conditioned and socially determined properties and qualities, whose behavior is defined by the antisocial orientation arising from the influence of certain socio-political, economic and social-cultural conditions [2, p. 193]. We share understanding of the given concept of «the personality of an offender» and take it as the basis for conducting the study of the robber personality.

Solving the research task is achieved by the structural analysis of the robber personality. Without going into a detailed analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of various schemes for structuring the personality of an offender, we will limit ourselves to the traditional for criminological studies approach, according to which the general characteristics of the personality of an offender is

reconstructed in the aggregate of socio-demographic, moral and psychological and criminal law traits.

Following the above mentioned approach, we believe that the most significant socio-demographic traits of the structural analysis of the robber personality are the following: gender, age, education, employment and academic employment, financial situation, marital status. The listed traits in their correlation define robbers' social status, indirectly reflect the degree of their social adaptation. Moral and psychological traits include data on the conditions of personal development, features of family upbringing, attitude to learning, the tendency to use alcoholic beverages, drugs and psychotropic substances, value orientations and legal consciousness, pre-criminal way of life being a member of a small social group, as well as individual psychological traits (intellectual and emotional-volitional ones), indicators of mental health. The data given reflect typical features of socialization of the personality of an offender, the specifics of negative influence, formation of the criminogenic orientation and motivation for committing robberies. Criminal law factors cover the information about the personality of an offender (convictions, mental state at the time of committing a crime), as well as the data on the specifics of criminal behavior (motives, way, premeditation, complicity) and punishment awarded. With the help of this information the orientation of the personality of an offender is characterized, the social danger of his/her behavior is assessed.

Therefore, the study of social-demographic traits of the personality of robbers has shown the following. Taking into account gender, the absolute majority of robbers are males (94–95 %). The proportion of women is small and fluctuates within the limits of 5–6 %. The stability of these indicators is confirmed by criminological researches of many years, it indicates the permanence of the structural ratio of men and women. The feature discovered is explained by the incomparably higher physical capacity of men to overcome possible resistance of victims during the criminal assault, as well as gender differences, according to which men try to express themselves through the deviant behavior much more often than women, they are capable to conformism related to the violation of criminal prohibitions.

By the age, 14–17-year-old (16 %), 18–24-year-old (51 %) and 25–29-year-old (17 %) age groups are notably distinguished. According to the law of Ukraine «On the assistance to the social self-

realization and development of young people in Ukraine», dated February 5, 1993 Ukrainian citizens aged from 14 to 35 years, belong to the age category «youth». Thus, modern robbery has a distinct youth character, as on average 90 % of all criminal manifestations of this type of crime are committed by young people of the above mentioned age period.

In this sense, the constituent of young people in the total population of Ukraine (27,8 %) is significant [3, p. 6], that only emphasizes the age specificity of robbers.

18–24-year-old age group of young people is distinguished by the highest criminal activity with respect to committing robberies. This period of life has the high-sounding title «youth» in the sociological theory.

In our opinion, the social status of youth in general can be characterized as transitive, and a state of consciousness conditioned by it is prone to violations of any social and legal norms. Young people have self-centered worldview, categorical judgments and maximalism of requirements, the inclination to risky and hasty actions. Probably, we are talking about the most vulnerable to crime risks period of the person's life, that is explained by the rapid physical development on the background of the emotional instability of the psyche, lack of life experience, sensitive perception of their own «Ego», aggressive response to social injustice in the distribution of material goods. The dramatic expansion of the role range and contradictory entering into new statuses are likely to lead to a «crash» in the mechanism of socialization, non-mastering of officially declared standards of conduct and means of achieving the objectives of life.

We can observe a certain connection between committing robberies and criminals' educational level. Studies have shown that 68,7 % of robbers had basic or completed secondary education at the time of committing the offense, 20,1 % had vocational education. In addition, 3,7 % of robbers had higher education and 7,5 % of robbers had primary school education or did not have any education at all. Analyzing these characteristics, we reach a conclusion about the low level of education of the majority of robbers, their low intellectual abilities, limited knowledge and horizons, low cultural level, different from the commonly accepted life values and priorities.

However, the fundamental problem concerning the connection between low educational qualifications and unlawful behavior has not

been unequivocally solved by scholars. If considering the low level of education isolated from other factors, so to speak in itself, then it is hardly indicative of the tendency of the personality to unlawful conduct. Though, if we consider criminals' education lag from their peers as a consequence of failing to learn the curriculum, the violation of educational discipline, constant conflicts with teachers, regular absenteeism that caused grade repetition, repeated transferring to various educational institutions, expulsion from school, then such connection still exists and it means the violation of normal forms of social adaptation.

Low employment rate of offenders is closely related to the level of education. Many young people having finished school or having prematurely given up studying, did not worked a single day before committing a crime. Contradicting active age opportunities, robbers take the position of disengagement from social production of material goods; they have acquired the status of the unemployed, not included in the system of social relations, that are considered a social norm at this stage of socialization. It is established that at the time of committing an offense 74,8 % of robbers were unemployed. The feature determined convincingly proves the persistent parasitic aiming of this part of youth, unreasoned absenteeism at the labor market. A characteristic feature of such people is a state of uncertainty of relations with surrounding people, intermediate state in the structure of social groups. For comparison: according to the data of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, almost 87 % of modern 14–35-year-old young people belong to the category of persons employed or occupied in educational activities [3, p. 54].

There is a particular interest in the information about robbers' financial situation, as well as their sources of income. The study of this issue has shown that on average only 28,1 % of robbers had a steady job and a stable income. The results given indicate that the majority of criminals did not have stable sources of income. We should take into account that at that time most of them were undertaking the most difficult period of personal development – the phase of growing up overloaded with contradictions, the expansion of the role range. That period was characterised by the aggravation of the conflict between progressive material requirements and lack of sufficient financial opportunities for their support, as the majority of offenders felt a lack of funds even for everyday personal needs. We can note the following possible sources of earnings of robbers: a

single contractual work, part-time job, certain services, sale of personal belongings, scrap trade.

The unsustainable financial situation becomes an obstacle to the acquisition of the marital status of the overwhelming part of criminals. At the time of committing a robbery only 15,5 % of the individuals were married, 78 % were not married, 4,1 % were divorced.

Moral and psychological traits occupy the important place in the structure of the personality of an offender. A group of psychologists under the leadership of O. Ratinov, as well as criminologists led by Yu. Antonian, have proven the existence of statistically significant differences between offenders and non-offenders on the large empirical array, as a result it has been concluded that various types of criminal behavior correspond to a specific range of psychological traits and properties of the personality of an offender. In particular, robbers have a negative attitude to property of other people, the rejection of the inviolability of proprietary rights and immunity of the subject of property [4, p. 171], high level of aggressiveness and impulsiveness, social alienation and hostile aiming for others [1, p. 12–13].

The research of moral and psychological traits has significant value for the explanation of the formation of criminogenic focus of the personality on the illegal possession of property of other people. First, the subjects of our analysis is conditions for personal development and features of family upbringing.

The author of the psychological theory of the formation of the personality Professor L. Bozhovych in due time experimentally proved that the formation of sufficiently defined, relatively stable orientation of the personality is observed at the age of 12–15 years because at that time the society core values, moral norms and legal prohibitions have been already adopted, dominant motives have been formed [5, p. 168–169]. Leaning on this statement we can assume that the initial formation of a mercenary orientation of the majority of robbers occurred before their reaching adulthood as a result of the negative impact of a troubled family, the gaps in upbringing, inheritance of the examples of previously convicted family members, that appropriately directed juvenile criminals to learning family values and selecting the line of conduct.

The presence or absence of troubles in families may be indicated by the relationships of juvenile robbers with their parents or persons substituting them, the information about the quality of parenthood, as well as data on family members' convictions. We find

the confirmation of display of troubles in juvenile robbers' families in the results of the study conducted by D. Petrov. The majority of juvenile robbers (46,7 %) noted that parents had constantly spelled things out (had conflicted), so they had not had time for upbringing, almost one in four (24,4 %) called such cause parents' alcohol or drug abuse, more than every fifth (22,2 %) talked about permanent involvement in work, every 14<sup>th</sup> (6,7 %) said their parents tried to arrange their personal lives [6, p. 69]. The formal participation of parents in upbringing their children and overseeing their behavior has big risks of early alcohol and drug abuse, joining spontaneous, informal groups of criminogenic orientation, whose life goes in the streets, in yards and in other public places.

The data on family members' convictions of juvenile offenders may indirectly indicate the likely criminogenic impact. It is quite revealing that 48,9 % of robbers interviewed in the penal colony reported the presence of previously convicted persons among their family members. The juveniles by reason of age-related features of socialization adopt philosophical ideas, cultural values, copy style and manners of conduct, including inheritance of the example of criminal ways of solving life's problems. Family members' criminogenic impact may be in the involvement of minors in criminal activity, as well as their indulging in criminal manifestations.

It is not surprising that the described factors of personal development constituted a negative attitude towards the leading juvenile activity – learning. According to the study conducted by D. Petrov, only 28,9 % of respondents had a positive attitude to learning, 46,7 % expressed a negative attitude towards learning and therefore formally attended school, 20 % had an extremely negative attitude and actual termination of studying, 4 % admitted that they had not studied at all [6, p. 70].

As a rule, the absence of necessary psychological relationships in the family and at school is compensated by establishing them in informal small groups. If the group consists of people focused on the illegal acquisition of wealth, then the desire to identify with them, to gain membership in such groups, their norms and values are accumulated relatively quickly and easily by the person, that explains the choice of mercenary criminal actions as a way of obtaining material values.

Most of robbers before committing a crime used to be members of informal groups of criminogenic orientation, where they turned to

crime once and for all. The study of the way of life of small social groups allows us to establish the connection between typical occupation of members of informal criminogenic groups and committing robberies, as well as between traditional places where such groups spend their leisure time and places where they commit these crimes.

Therefore, the study of the occupation of an informal criminogenic group has revealed the following: the use of alcoholic beverages and drugs, thefts, fights with «outsiders», robbing passers-by, money extortion. The criminal behavior is mastered in criminogenic groups by learning criminal standards of thinking and behavioral patterns, rationalization of criminal actions. As a result, a favorable attitude to violations of penal prohibitions is formed, which further determines the priority focus of the personality and his/her behavior.

Another, not less important research objective is to link places where criminogenic groups spend their leisure time and places where they commit robberies. Robbers tend to commit crimes not far from the place of residence and within the territory of spending their leisure time as members of criminogenic groups. The places of concentration of criminogenic groups focused on robberies are the following: courtyards, back streets, alleys, the area around multistoried buildings (including entrances), sports and playgrounds within this area, parks, gardens, places of entertainment, public transport stops, etc. The places listed are covered by the notion «public places», confirming the regularity of committing robberies in such places.

Through the study of the problem of robbers' attitude to alcohol, as well as drugs and psychotropic substances, it was determined that most robbers periodically consumed alcoholic drinks; every fifth did it constantly. At the same time, nearly a quarter of robbers tried drugs, 8 % used them constantly. It should also be taken into account that robbers, who use psychoactive substances, constantly face the problem of obtaining money for their purchase. In fact, robbery in many cases is committed for the purchase of alcoholic beverages or drugs.

Starting from noncontributory conditions of personal development of the vast majority of robbers, under the influence of which a proper system of values and standards of behavior were formed, we will move on to the analysis of their value orientations and legal consciousness. Value orientations characterize the moral

side of consciousness of the personality and are a set of views of the personality about life activity objectives and means of their achievement. In their majority robbers focus on consumerism lifestyle and complete freedom of action, high-paid job, material security and wealth. For the sake of taking possession of the prestigious things or even petty profit they are ready to commit a crime according to the known formula «the end justifies the means».

Robbers' legal consciousness reflects their attitude to property rights and their protection by criminal law. Contemporary criminological studies confirm that robbers are well aware of the protection of property relations by criminal law, they formally agree with that, however, they do not perceive it as indestructible taboo, and thus, it is quite normal for them to take possession of other people property in an illegal way.

The next element of the moral and psychological characteristics of robbers is to analyze their individual psychological traits that reflect intellectual and emotional-volitional features affecting the wrongful behavior. The first thing, which is marked by criminologists who characterize robbers using the methodology of the many-sided study of the personality is relatively higher homogeneity of typical psychological traits of the personality, their resistance (44,4 % compared to 25 % in thieves) [1, p. 67].

Intellectual features of mercenary and mercenary-violent offenders are as follows. According to B. Holovkin, robbers have low intellect, lack of abstract thinking and concentration on current events [7, p. 158]. Taking into account the previously determined low educational qualifications and low efficiency of teaching offenders, this result looks quite logical. Yu. Antonian, V. Holubiev, Yu. Kudriakov link robbers' low intellectual facilities with a failure of the conduct regulation.

Statistically significant emotional-volitional feature of many robbers is an increased need for self-affirmation through impulsive aggression reaction, a fixed aim at the violent model of achieving the goal. Committing many violent robberies is connected to aggression. Aggression is seen in psychology as the behavior or action aimed at causing physical or mental damage or destroying a human being. The willingness of the individual to aggression is determined as a negative side – aggressiveness. Violent crimes have evil, destructive nature and pursue the goal to cause damage to the victim. Hostility and thirst for destruction are at the heart of criminal aggression.

The study of the personality of robbers has allowed to determine their typical socio-demographic, moral and psychological and criminal features, on the basis of which a generalized social image was created. Therefore, the contingent of robbers is practically composed of men (94–95 %) with basic secondary education and completed secondary education, who belong to socially unsettled young people aged 14–35 years. 18–24-year-old (51 %) and 25–29-year-old (17 %) age groups are notable for the highest criminal activity. Most of them are able to work, however, they are out of work and, accordingly, without a stable source of income. Their turn to committing mercenary and mercenary-violent crimes occurred gradually, according to desocialization and the formation of dominant moral and psychological feature – a mercenary orientation of the criminal manifestation.

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