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Criminals have smaller brain size, says study – 21st February, 2020

Level 0

Antisocial people could have smaller areas of the brain. Criminals' brains are different from the brains of non-criminals. Researchers looked at 672 people aged seven to 26. At the age of 45, the researchers scanned their brains. Eighty of them were antisocial from their early teens. Areas of their brain were smaller.

The research could help doctors understand antisocial behaviour. People may behave badly because of their brain size. A researcher said it was a kind of disability and we needed to be kinder to these people. Another researcher said doctors could help to stop antisocial behaviour. She said these people needed more support.

Level 1

A study found that antisocial people could have smaller areas of the brain. It said criminals' brains had a different structure to the brains of non-criminals. Researchers looked at records of 672 people aged between seven and 26. At the age of 45, the researchers scanned their brains. Eighty of them were antisocial from their early teens. The areas of their brain that were linked to emotions, motivation and behaviour control were smaller in these people.

The research could help doctors understand long-term antisocial behaviour. Antisocial people may behave badly because of their brain structure. A researcher said: "They are operating under some disability at the level of the brain." She added that we needed to be kinder to these people. Another researcher said: "Differences in brain structure...may prevent them from engaging in antisocial behaviour. These people could benefit from more support."

Level 2

A study published in the journal "Lancet Psychiatry" found that antisocial people could have smaller areas of the brain. It said criminals' brains had a different structure to the brains of people who followed the law. Researchers looked at records of 672 people between the ages of seven and 26. At the age of 45, the researchers scanned the people's brains. Eighty of them had a history of antisocial behaviour from their early teens. The areas of their brain that were linked to emotions, motivation and behaviour control were smaller in the long-term criminals.

A co-author of the research said it could help doctors understand long-term antisocial behaviour. She said antisocial people may behave badly because of their brain structure. She said: "They are operating under some disability at the level of the brain." She added that we needed to care for these people in a kinder way. The lead author said: "Differences in brain structure might make it difficult for people to develop social skills. This may prevent them from engaging in antisocial behaviour. These people could benefit from more support throughout their lives."

Level 3

A new study has found that antisocial people are more likely to have smaller areas of their brain. Researchers said criminals' brains had a different structure to the brains of people who followed the law. The study is published in the journal "Lancet Psychiatry". Researchers used data from 672 people born in 1972-73. They looked at records of the people's antisocial behaviour between the ages of seven and 26. At the age 45, the researchers scanned the people's brains. Eighty of the people had a history of criminal and antisocial behaviour from being early teenagers. Researchers found that the areas of the brain linked to emotions, motivation and behaviour control were smaller in the long-term criminals' brains.

Professor Terrie Moffitt, a co-author of the research, said the research could help doctors understand what is behind long-term antisocial behaviour. She said the antisocial people in the study may have behaved badly because of their brain structure. She said: "They are actually operating under some [disability] at the level of the brain." She added that because of this, we needed to care for these people in a kinder way. Lead author Dr Christina Carlisi said: "Differences in brain structure might make it difficult for people to develop social skills. This may prevent them from engaging in antisocial behaviour. These people could benefit from more support throughout their lives."

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