

The Psychological Gavel: Analyzing The Impact of Forensic Psychology on Criminal Investigations and Trials in India

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Abstract:

Forensic psychology the application of psychological principles to legal and criminal contexts is a rapidly emerging discipline in India, bridging the gap between psychology and the justice system. It encompasses roles such as criminal profiling, suspect and witness assessment, and offender rehabilitation. Although well-established in Western countries, forensic psychology in India has grown only in the past few decades. This paper reviews its historical evolution in India and examines its current scope across criminal investigations, legal proceedings, corrections, and mental-health assessments. It highlights recent developments including technology and research, examines the legal and institutional framework, and presents notable case studies involving forensic psychology. Finally, it discusses the contributions of Indian academic and forensic institutions and outlines challenges and prospects for the field.

Keywords: Forensic Science, Psychology, Criminal Investigations, Mental Health, Criminal Trail

1. Introduction

Forensic psychology mainly deals with the application of the principles of psychological science to resolve legal matters and has become an established specialty in several nations. Its origin dates to late 19th century Europe. The first psychologist expert witness was Albert Von Schrenck-Notzing in a British killing trial of 1896.¹ Pioneering researchers such as Wundt, Cattell, Stern tested witness evidence, and names like Hugo Munsterberg in 1908 defended the use of psychology in court.² During the 20th century, every nation incorporated this branch into its laws and organizations at various points and through various mechanisms.

Modern forensic psychology in India traces its roots to the late 20th century. In 1968, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) established the country's first lie-detection division at its Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Delhi. This division initially operated with limited training in polygraphy lie detector based largely on Western expertise. Under the leadership of Dr. S. L. Vaya, who is often regarded as India's first practicing forensic psychologist, CFSL-

¹ Brown, David A., *Psychiatry, Psychology and Crime: Historical and Current Aspects* (LSE Research Online, 2016), available at: <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/64340/1/Psychiatry%20psychology%20and%20crime.pdf> (accessed 12 August 2025).

² Cherry, Kendra, *A Brief History of Forensic Psychology* (Verywell Mind, June 2025), available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/history-of-forensic-psychology-2795254> (accessed 12 August 2025).

Ahmedabad set up a formal Forensic Psychology Division in 1988, the first of its kind in India.³ This unit pioneered the use of techniques like narcoanalysis and brain fingerprinting.

The Supreme Court's historic decision in *Selvi v. State of Karnataka*⁴ in 2010 brought clarity to the legal standing of such tests. The Court held that such test cannot be administered by coercion against unwilling suspects. They can be administered only after informed consent from the suspects. The Court also decided that the outcome of these tests can be received only as corroborative, and not decisive, evidence. The judgment celebrated the potential of forensic psychology instruments in India, even as it outlined the moral constraints of the discipline in the country.

2. Scope and Applications in the Criminal Justice System

Indian forensic psychology in the contemporary era covers various spheres of the criminal justice system. The practitioners collaborate with investigators and police, appear as expert witnesses in courts, consult in correctional centers, and perform mental-health assessments pertaining to legal issues.

2.1. Criminal Investigations and Law Enforcement

Forensic psychologists also aid detectives by studying the psychological processes of crime. Key activities are criminal profiling, suspect evaluation, detection of lies, and victim assistance.⁵ Criminal profiling refers to the reconstruction of an offender's likely characteristics e.g. motives, behaviors from the crime scene evidence.⁶ Interviews and standardized tests are conducted by psychologists to investigate the mental condition of a suspect such as, the testing of personality disorders or intellectual deficit.⁷ They also guide the detection of lies through systematic interview and verbal and non-verbal communication scrutiny.⁸ After the commission of crimes, forensic psychologists may also engage victims, providing them with trauma counseling in cases of rape or assault and preparing them for court-testifying. These roles have been used in high-profile inquiries. In the 2020 Hathras gang rape, CBI consultants administered psychological tests including consent narcoanalysis to examine suspects' testimony and previously in the 2008 Noida double murder case of Aarushi Talwar.⁹ In 2022, the CBI also brought in a psychologist to

³ Dr. S. L. Vaya, *Pioneer of Forensic Psychology in India* (ForensicEvents.com), available at: <https://www.forensicevents.com/team-details/479> (accessed 12 August 2025).

⁴ *Selvi v. State of Karnataka*, (2010) 7 SCC 263.

⁵ Banerjee, Tamaghna, *Forensic Psychologists to Aid CBI Probe* (Times of India, 3 April 2022), available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/forensic-psychologists-to-aid-cbi-probe/articleshow/90616631.cms> (accessed 12 August 2025).

⁶ Banerjee, Tamaghna, *Forensic Psychologists to Aid CBI Probe* (Times of India, 3 April 2022), available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/forensic-psychologists-to-aid-cbi-probe/articleshow/90616631.cms> (accessed 12 August 2025).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Supra* note 5.

join in the interrogation of an accused in the Sippy Sidhu gunshot killing, hoping to decipher her body movements and responsiveness.¹⁰

Forensic psychologists are also expert witnesses. Section 39 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA 2023) specifically permits the testimony of “persons especially skilled in foreign law, science or art.” Consequently, professional psychologists may offer court observations about behavioral patterns, memory reliability, or the danger of recidivism.¹¹ Post-conviction, psychologists often assist with sentencing decisions by conducting risk assessments. They evaluate whether an offender is likely to reoffend, guiding judicial discretion on parole or rehabilitation.¹² Such assessments are increasingly requested in serious cases to inform parole boards or judges about offender management. Through these courtroom roles from evidence evaluation to direct testimony forensic psychology helps the legal system account for human behavior complexities that are beyond traditional legal expertise.

2.2. Correctional Settings

Forensic psychologists are also essential figures within prison and juvenile centers. They treat inmates' mental health issues and develop rehabilitation plans. One such aim involves the lowering of recidivism through the treatment of root causes like anger issues, alcoholism, or prior trauma.¹³ More generally, correctional psychologists perform intake assessments, monitor inmates' progress, and counsel individualized plans of action to treat criminogenic needs.¹⁴ They also train prison officials in mental health, first aid and suicide awareness. Overall, through the infusion of evidence-based assessments and therapies, forensic psychologists endeavor to change the correction system of India from punishment to reformation.

2.3. Mental Health Assessments

A key aspect of forensic psychology overlaps with forensic psychiatry, conducting court-ordered mental health examinations. Courts may require evaluations of defendants' fitness to stand trial or sanity at the time of offense, for example under BNS section 47 and BNSS section 353. Forensic psychologists assist psychiatrists by administering psychological tests and interviews. They also evaluate competency to give testimony, voluntariness of confessions, and consent capacity especially in juveniles or those with cognitive impairments. Under the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017, provisions for involuntary admission hinge on nuanced mental status assessments which forensic experts help perform. While forensic psychiatrists conduct medical diagnoses, psychologists contribute expertise in psychological testing for instance, using intelligence scales or personality inventories to determine if a defendant understands legal proceedings. In sum, forensic psychology provides structured methods to solving criminal investigations and legal questions involving human behavior.¹⁵

¹⁰ Dogra, Shailee, *Sippy murder case: Kalyani questioned in front of forensic psychologist* (Hindustan Times, 21 June 2022), available at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/sippy-murder-case-kalyani-questioned-in-front-of-forensic-psychologist-101655756683078.html> (accessed 12 August 2025).

¹¹ *Supra* note 6.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

3. Recent Developments in Forensic Psychology

Indian forensic psychology also witnesses rapid advances in technology, education, and research. The recent advances are the following:

3.1. Technological Tools

Application of scientific techniques has extended beyond polygraphy test. India's labs are now equipped with advanced technologies like Brain Electrical Oscillation Signature (BEOS) to detect guilty intention. Also operational are the eye-trackers, voice-stress analyzers, and functional Near-Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS) sophisticated equipment stored in specialized labs. For instance, NFSU's School of Forensic Psychology prides itself on possessing a state-of-the-art lab equipped with sophisticated apparatus like BEOS, SDS for Voice Analysis, polygraph, fNIRS, eye trackers to create investigative psychology.

Also, India explores the application in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), and data analytics to advance in forensic investigations. Emerging research discusses using machine learning to analyze crime data, social media, and digital footprints for offender profiling and predictive risk modeling for example, building automated systems to flag high-risk offenders.¹⁶ Though still in early stages, such tools promise to augment human expertise. Simultaneously, virtual reality simulations and computer-aided training modules are being piloted to train police officers in cognitive interview techniques.

3.2. Integration with Law Enforcement

Police agencies are gradually incorporating forensic psychologists into their teams. Experts have recommended creating specialized Behavioral Analysis Units within police departments to apply profiling techniques to serious crime, as well as deploying psychologists in every large police station. In the courtroom and corrections, too, demands are increasing judges and prison authorities are seeking psychological evaluation and treatment services as part of their case management.

3.3. Legal and Institutional Frameworks

India currently has no separate legal code or licensing system specifically for forensic psychology. Instead, the field operates under existing laws and institutions. Sections 39-45 of Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA 2023) outline the admissibility of expert testimony, the relevance of the facts forming the basis of their opinions, and the qualifications of an expert. Section 39 explicitly allows expert testimony by qualified individuals “Art, Science, or foreign law”, which by extension covers forensic psychologists. This provision gives psychological experts a statutory footing to advise courts on matters like insanity, witness reliability, and behavioral analysis.

Criminal statutes refer indirectly to psychological expertise. For instance, Section 22 of BNS the insanity defense and Section 395 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to investigate accused's mental soundness necessitate psychiatric/psychological evaluations in certain cases. Likewise, Juvenile Justice statutes call for psychosocial assessments of children in conflict with law. However, these laws focus on mental illness rather than specialized forensic practice; accordingly, psychiatrists often lead such evaluations, with psychologists assisting.

¹⁶ IGMPI (Centre for Health Management and Research), *Post Graduate Diploma / Executive Diploma in Forensic Psychology* (IGMPI), available at: <https://igmpi.ac.in/forensic-psychology> (accessed 12 August 2025).

The Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 emphasizes patient rights and oversight (Mental Health Review Boards), and it requires mental health professionals to be involved in decisions about involuntary admission and capacity. Forensic psychologists contribute to these processes by assessing capacity and risk. The Act does not expressly address forensic roles, but it underscores the importance of credible mental health evaluation in legal contexts.

3.4. Professional Bodies and Accreditation

No single Indian board certifies forensic psychologists. General psychologists in India are regulated by the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) under the Clinical and Counseling Psychology streams, but forensic specialization falls outside its specific remit. However, many practitioners hold RCI licensures as clinical or counseling psychologists and then pursue forensic training. Institutions like the National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science (NICFS) and forensic labs (under the Ministry of Home Affairs) set forensic-science standards but are focused on physical forensics rather than psychological practice.

3.5. Institutional Support

On the policy side, the government has taken steps to foster forensic education. The Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) advertises forensic psychology internships and has discussed integrating psychology into police work. Prisons have started collaborating with NGOs to introduce psychological programs as in Gujarat's Samarath Initiative.¹⁷

4. Notable Case Studies

Several high-profile Indian cases illustrate the impact of forensic psychology:

4.1. Noida Double Murder (Aarushi Talwar case, 2008)¹⁸

In this notorious case, a 13-year-old girl and a household help were murdered. The parents Rajesh and Nupur Talwar became suspects. During the CBI investigation, forensic psychologist Dr. S. L. Vaya led a team conducting polygraph and brain fingerprinting tests on them. According to press reports, Dr. Vaya's tests found "*no deception*", implying the parents were truthful.¹⁹ Although the court did not admit this evidence at trial but years later, the parents were acquitted by the Allahabad High Court. This case demonstrates both the utility and limitations of forensic psychology in court. It can generate leads and conclusions, but Indian courts remain cautious about unconventional forensic techniques.

4.2. Nithari Serial Murders²⁰ (2006–2007)

A series of child murders in Noida and a village called Nithari was investigated in 2006. Gujarat psychologist Dr. S. L. Vaya was instrumental in providing insights that helped the investigation.

¹⁷ Sharma, Reena, *Transforming Lives Behind Bars: The Samarath Initiative—Psychological Intervention for Prisoners* (The Mind Practice, 26 February 2024), available at: <https://www.themindpractice.in/post/transforming-lives-behind-bars-the-samarath-psychological-intervention-for-prisoners> (accessed 12 August 2025).

¹⁸ *Dr. (Smt.) Nupur Talwar v. CBI*, (2012) 11 SCC 465.

¹⁹ Express News Service, *Aarushi Murder Case Verdict: 'Forensic tests showed Talwars were innocent'* (Indian Express, 13 October 2017), available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/aarushi-murder-case-verdict-tests-part-of-cbi-probe-4887811> (accessed 15 August 2025).

²⁰ *Surendra Koli v. State of U.P.*, (2011) 4 SCC 80.

She used her expertise in narcoanalysis and behavior analysis during interrogations of the suspect Surinder Koli. Dr. Vaya's contributions in that case are noted in media accounts, which credit her with "vital links" in solving the crime.²¹

4.3. Sukhmanpreet "Sippy" Sidhu Murder²² (Chandigarh, 2015)

In 2022, the murder of former IPS officer Sukhmanpreet Singh Sidhu drew forensic psychology into the spotlight. His friend's daughter, Kalyani, was a suspect, and investigators described her behavior as "non-responsive" under questioning. For the first time in a Chandigarh case, the CBI brought a forensic psychologist to the interview. The psychologist from Hyderabad evaluated Kalyani's body language and statements to assess her cooperation.²³ The Sippy case is ongoing, but the use of psychological interviewing techniques signifies growing trust in the field.

4.4. Hathras Gang-Rape Case²⁴ (Uttar Pradesh, 2020)

In this brutal case, a young Dalit woman died after being gang-raped and assaulted. During the investigation, the CBI asked forensic psychologists to analyze the accused man's statements. Reports indicated the suspect underwent narcoanalysis and that psychological assessments were used to gauge his involvement.²⁵

5. Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite progress, forensic psychology in India faces notable challenges:

5.1. Shortage of Trained Professionals

The field has far fewer experts than needed. In 2018, there were only a handful of psychologists with formal forensic training, all concentrated in a few states.²⁶ The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports thousands of police stations nationwide, but forensic psychology positions are rare.

5.2. Lack of Standardized Protocols

There are no universally accepted guidelines in India for forensic psychological procedures as exist in some Western countries. Forensic assessments and lie detection techniques vary by practitioner. There is a dire need for "standardized operating procedures" for psychological tests used by law enforcement. Without standard protocols, results can be inconsistent and are often

²¹ Shastri, Parth, *Decoding the Mind of a Killer* (Times of India, 6 January 2011), available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/decoding-the-mind-of-a-killer/articleshow/7232125.cms> (accessed 12 August 2025).

²² Central Bureau of Investigation v. Kalyani Singh, *CBI Court, Chandigarh*, (Sukhmanpreet "Sippy" Sidhu Murder Case, Sessions Trial No. ___ of 2015)

²³ *Supra* note 10.

²⁴ *Sandeep v. State of Uttar Pradesh*, Special Judge (SC/ST Act), Hathras, Judgment dated 2 March 2023, Criminal Case No. 349 of 2021.

²⁵ *Supra* note 5.

²⁶ *Supra* note 3.

challenged in court.²⁷ The Supreme Court in *Selvi* case²⁸ noted the potential for abuse of narcoanalysis and polygraphs, highlighting the ethical necessity of informed consent and safeguards. Developing clear ethical codes, akin to those for psychiatrists, will be crucial.

5.3. Institutional and Resource Constraints

Many forensic laboratories lack psychological testing facilities. Prisons are overcrowded and underfunded for rehabilitation. Unlike forensic medicine, which has dedicated hospital wings and funding, forensic psychology relies on general mental health budgets. Cultural stigma around mental illness can also impede funding and policy attention. Moreover, police attitudes can be a barrier, some officers remain skeptical of “soft science” approaches, favoring tangible evidence. Changing such mindsets requires leadership and documented successes.

5.4. Legal and Ethical Complexities

India’s legal system is still adapting to scientific advances. The *Selvi* ruling curtails involuntary psychological procedures, reflecting human-rights concerns. Balancing investigative needs with civil liberties will be an ongoing debate. As new tools like AI profiling or brain imaging emerge, courts will require new admissibility criteria. Forensic psychologists themselves must navigate confidentiality, informed consent, and cross-examination. Establishing professional ethics will be important to guide practice.

5.5. Research And Cultural Specificity

Much forensic psychology knowledge comes from Western research. In India, social, cultural, and legal contexts differ for example, perceptions of crime, the impact of joint families on witness behavior, or community attitudes toward sex crimes. There is limited indigenous research on Indian offenders’ psychological profiles, on effective treatment models in Indian prisons, or on local patterns of eyewitness testimony. Expanding empirical studies in these areas is vital. Journals and conferences should promote India-specific research to make forensic psychology more relevant and persuasive in courts.

6. Improving Forensic Psychology Practice in India: Comprehensive Recommendations

Forensic psychology in India remains an emerging discipline with great potential to strengthen the criminal justice system. Current shortfalls such as limited legal recognition, few specialized programs, outdated facilities, and ad hoc procedures have been widely noted.²⁹ Building a robust forensic psychology framework will require multifaceted reforms.

6.1. Statutory Recognition of Forensic Psychology

²⁷ Hyderabadwalla, Havovi, *Forensic Psychology in India – Where Are We and Where Are We Going* (Indian Journal of Mental Health, 2018, Vol 5(2), pp 256–259), available at: <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/64340/1/Psychiatry%20psychology%20and%20crime.pdf> (accessed 13 August 2025).

²⁸ *Selvi & Ors. v. State of Karnataka*, AIR 2010 SC 1974, (2010) 7 SCC 263.

²⁹ Karandikar, Sampada, *The Case of India’s Missing Forensic Psychologists* (Monk Prayogshala, 22 January 2018; originally published in Live Mint, 18 June 2017), available at: <https://www.monkprayogshala.in/blog/2018/1/19/the-case-of-indias-missing-forensic-psychologists> (accessed 13 August 2025).

There is a need to explicitly incorporate forensic psychological expertise into Indian law. For example, incorporating relevant provisions to recognize forensic psychologists as *scientific experts* and empower courts to appoint them for assessments of sanity, competency, victim support, etc. The new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 moves in this direction. Section 22 codifies the “defense of unsoundness of mind” and essentially requires psychological evaluation, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 permits expert testimony including “forensic psychological analysis”³⁰ However, terms like “unsoundness of mind” remain stigmatizing.³¹ It is suggested to employ the language of precision like “mental impairment” or “mental health condition” and specific reference to psychologists, so that the matters related to mental health automatically lead to qualified examination.

Emerging research discusses using machine learning to analyze crime data, social media, and digital footprints for offender profiling and predictive risk modeling for example, building automated systems to flag high-risk offenders. Though still in early stages, such tools promise to augment human expertise. Simultaneously, virtual reality simulations and computer-aided training modules are being piloted to train police officers in cognitive interview techniques.

6.2. Establish Court-Mandated Evaluations

It is important to enact legal provisions for mandatory forensic examination in significant instances. For example, require certified forensic psychologists or forensic psychiatrists to interview defendants in rape, terrorism, juvenile, and workplace violence to determine fitness to stand trial and state of mind during the commission of offense. Also, mandate psychological screening of susceptible witnesses like children, survivors of rape by trained specialists prior to giving testimony. Such change in legislation reflects foreign practices and supports victim protection laws enacted by India.³² Secondary victimization would be minimized, and witness credibility evaluated by the court, as forensic psychologists are in a position to identify suggestibility or symptoms of PTSD.³³

6.3. Safeguard Rights in Interrogation

Establishing and imposing code of conduct and ethics for investigation methods. The Supreme Court held in *Selvi v. State of Karnataka*³⁴ (2010) the administration of nonconsensual narco-analysis, polygraph and brain-mapping tests to be unconstitutional violations of Articles

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hegde, Prakayath Ravindranath, Yogender Malik, Channaveerachari Naveen Kumar & Suresh Bada Math, *The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Act (BNSA) 2023: Implications for Forensic Psychiatry in India* (Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, 3 October 2024), available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11572553> (accessed 13 August 2025).

³² Witness Protection Scheme, 2018, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Policy and Guidelines for the Establishment of Forensic Science Laboratories* (2019). Available at: https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-08/Documents_PolNGuide_finalWPS_08072019%5B1%5D.pdf (last visited Aug. 19, 2025).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Selvi v. State of Karnataka*, (2010) 7 SCC 263.

20(3) and 21.³⁵ The law should be reformed to incorporate these principles, requiring any psychological examination of suspects to be voluntary and scientifically proven.

Consent procedures must be standardized informed by forensic-ethics guidelines, and any forensic-psychology participation must protect the accused's rights. For instance, forensic psychologists involved in "brain fingerprinting" should document consent and focus on guiding investigations by analysis of voluntary confessions rather than as literal evidence of guilt.³⁶

6.4. Judicial And Legislative Initiatives for Alternatives

Promote community-based and rehabilitative sentencing that leverages psychology. Internationally, jurisdictions like Singapore have introduced community service orders tied to offender rehabilitation like requiring attempted-suicide offenders to perform mental health awareness work.³⁷ In India, Parliament and state legislatures could empower judges to impose psychologically informed alternatives. For example, instead of prison for minor or first-time offenders, courts might direct psychiatric counseling, anger-management programs, or supervised community service with a mental-health component. Such reforms would integrate forensic psychological insights into sentencing policy, addressing root causes and reducing recidivism. Section 23 of BNS 2023 introduces community service.³⁸

6.5. Institutionalize Forensic Psychology Services

Amendment of rules are recommended so that every Central and State forensic science laboratory and major court complex has a forensic-psychology unit. These units would offer evaluations like competency and risk assessments, aid in profiler services, and support judges with expert reports. The Mental Healthcare Act 2017 already mandates mental health establishments in prisons, and the Model Prison Manual (2016) calls for at least one psychologist per 500 inmates.³⁹ Similar mandates should apply to police stations and courts. Juvenile Justice Act 2015 and NCRB guidelines can be updated to require child psychologists on Juvenile Justice Boards and in child-care institutions.

6.6. Professional Certification and Career Pathways

Introduce formal certification for forensic psychologists to ensure uniform competence. A national body (under RCI or Dept. of Justice) could set qualification standards and a licensing exam. By distinguishing forensics as a specialty, this encourages quality training. Moreover, clearly defined career tracks must be created in government service.⁴⁰ The idea is to establish posts for at least one "*forensic psychologist*" per large police district, crime branch unit, and

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Pathak, Sidharth Kumar, *Forensic Science's Impact: DNA Tests and Narco-Analysis Evidentiary Relevance* (JusCorpus Law Journal, Vol. 2 Issue 2, February 2022), available at: <https://www.juscorpus.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/106.-Sidharth-Kumar-Pathak.pdf> (accessed 13 August 2025).

³⁷ *Supra* note 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Paliath, Shreehari, *The Brewing Mental Health Crisis in Indian Prisons* (IndiaSpend, 1 August 2025), available at: <https://www.indiaspend.com/governance/the-brewing-mental-health-crisis-in-indian-prisons-963116> (accessed 13 August 2025).

⁴⁰ *Supra* note 27.

State Intelligence Bureau. Security forces (CRPF, CISF, Army) and prison departments should also recruit dedicated psychologists. Such institutional jobs would encourage graduates to enter the field rather than emigrate or remain in academia alone.⁴¹

6.7. Continuing Education for Professionals

Introduce mandatory forensic training for related professionals. Police officers, prosecutors, judges, and correctional staff should receive regular in-service workshops on psychological aspects of crime. The Ministry of Home Affairs has begun such initiatives for forensic science by providing training to more than 32,000 investigators and prosecutors in DNA evidence collection;⁴² a similar program can include forensic psychology i.e. workshops on interviewing techniques, recognizing mental illness, handling vulnerable victims. Academic and practice exchange programs by initiating visiting lectureships of psychologists at law academies and vice versa will promote cross-disciplinary literacy. Distance-learning certificate courses like online diplomas in forensic psychology can expand reach, especially for rural or in-service practitioners. International faculty exchange with universities or agencies in the US, UK, Australia, etc. can help India adopt cutting-edge methods while adapting them culturally.⁴³

6.8. Modernize Forensic Laboratories

Upgrading physical and technological infrastructure in forensic science labs, with attention to psychological testing capabilities. Recent government initiatives like National Forensic Infrastructure Enhancement Scheme are adding CFSs and equipment,⁴⁴ but few facilities include a psychological testing lab. Each major forensic lab should have secure interview rooms and equipment like polygraphs, lie-detection software, fMRI or EEG suites for optional use in investigations. Importantly, accreditation manuals and working procedures now being issued for science labs⁴⁵ should be extended to forensic-psychology operations. Standardized protocols for administering psychometric tests or stress interviews must be published. Courts could also create *Forensic Interview Units* like special witness booths equipped for audio/video recording of victim or suspect statements under psychological guidance.

6.9. Improved Correctional Facilities.

Prisons urgently need mental-health infrastructure. As of 2022 there were only 25 psychiatrists/psychologists for over 570,000 inmates, about one per 23,000 prisoners,⁴⁶ far below

⁴¹ Shah, Anamika, *The Case of India's Missing Forensic Psychologists* (Monk Prayogshala, 22 January 2018), available at: <https://www.monkprayogshala.in/blog/2018/1/19/the-case-of-indias-missing-forensic-psychologists> (accessed 14 August 2025).

⁴² Ministry of Home Affairs, *Time Taken by Forensic Laboratories to Deliver DNA and Viscera Reports* (Press Information Bureau, 18 December 2024), available at: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2085694> (accessed 14 August 2025).

⁴³ Nilendu, Debesh, *Enhancing Forensic Education: Exploring the Importance and Implementation of Evidence-Based Education System* (Egyptian Journal of Forensic Sciences, vol. 14, art. 6, 10 January 2024), available at: <https://ejfs.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41935-023-00375-w> (accessed 14 August 2025).

⁴⁴ *Supra* note 42.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Supra* note 39.

the Model Prison Manual's recommendation of 1 per 500. Vacancies routinely exceed 50%.⁴⁷ States should allocate budgets to hire psychologists and psychiatrists in every jail. Ideally, each large prison would have a *Mental Health Unit* with beds for psychiatric evaluation. Regular screening on admission as per NHRC's June 2023 advisory⁴⁸ and MHCA 2017 should be implemented with clinical psychologists playing a central role. Correctional facilities should also have group-therapy rooms and cognitive-behavioral treatment programs. Central and state governments can invest in building "forensic psychiatry wings" as mandated by MHCA 2017 in existing prisons, ensuring at least one trained psychologist in each facility.

6.10. Accountability and Quality Control

Institute mechanisms to monitor forensic psychology services should be set up. For example, the Directorate of Forensic Science Services' accreditation guidelines (ISO17025, NABL)⁴⁹ can inspire similar audit standards for psychological services. All forensic-psychology units should maintain case logs, types of assessments conducted, background factors, outcomes for quality review. National oversight bodies like NFSU or National Commission of Forensic Science could require annual reporting on forensic psychological capacity, number of practitioners, trainings, pending evaluations. This data-driven approach would highlight gaps and justify further resource allocation.

6.11. Develop A National Code of Ethics

Forensic psychology in India should be guided by clear professional standards adapted to local culture. The Rehabilitation Council of India already enforces ethical conduct for clinical psychologists, but forensic practice raises unique issues like dual roles, custody of data, legal privilege. Either a specialized "Indian Code of Forensic Psychology Ethics" is recommended or an official expansion of the existing RCI/ICPR code to address legal settings. This code should cover consent to testing, limits of confidentiality, competence, and avoidance of cultural bias. Key principles like impartiality, accuracy, informed consent, no undue influence by investigating agencies can draw on the American Psychological Association's Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology. Crucially, the code must reflect Indian societal norms for example, guidelines on handling cases involving family or community pressures, issues of caste or religious sensitivity, and managing honor-related violence.

6.12. Judiciary–Psychology Liaison

Create formal forums for dialogue between judges/lawyers and psychologists. National conferences or continuing education programs should include forensic psychology panels. Judicial officers need to understand the limits and strengths of psychological evidence; conversely, psychologists must understand case law and courtroom procedure. Closer ties between bar associations and psychology societies would foster mutual respect and effective use of expertise.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Supra* note 42

In summary, strengthening forensic psychology in India demands coordinated reform. Legal amendments should formally enshrine psychologists' roles in evidence and mental-health laws.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, investment in human capital through new academic programs, professional training, and institutional positions is vital.⁵¹ Facilities at labs, courts, and prisons must be upgraded to support psychological services.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Supra* note 6.

⁵¹ *Supra* note 29.

⁵² *Supra* note 42.