Criminal

A criminal should be understood as a person who has violated the criminal law of the land and has been found guilty by a court of law and punished accordingly. This is the legal phenomenon of the definition of criminal. Another perspective, however, argues that anyone who violates the criminal law should be deemed a criminal, regardless of whether or not they are apprehended, tried, and punished by a court of law. This argument is based on the fact that many acts defined by the criminal law as crimes e .g .murder, robbery, arson, and car-theft are committed daily. A good number of these criminals are not known or reported to the police.

Those who are reported may escape police prosecution or conviction by the courts on account of corruption or incompetence on the part of the police and court officials. Those who are prosecuted may escape conviction as a result of procedural and other legal technicalities. Yet, such persons have violated the criminal law by engaging in murder, robbery, arson or car- theft, as the case may be. These are what Kora and McCorkle have referred to as ‘offenders –infact as differs from ‘criminals by adjudication’. The latter are persons who have been tried and convicted for particular offences by courts of competent jurisdiction, whether or not they committed the offences alleged.It must be noted that some persons may be convicted in error just as many people who should be convicted escape the long arms of the law for whatever reason.