



Sociological analysis of crime rates among women compared to males in Kuwait from 1999 to 2018

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aimed to examine the social analysis of crime rates among women compared to men in Kuwait in the period from 1999 to 2018. **Method:** Using secondary data, this study adopted a qualitative approach by analyzing crime rates in Kuwait with a focus on women's involvement in crime. Considering the theories of modernization, globalization, and feminism, we used official data published from 1999 to 2018. **Results:** This study concluded that Kuwaiti men committed more crimes (felonies and misdemeanors) than Kuwaiti women and non-Kuwaitis (both men and women). Kuwaiti women committed more misdemeanors than felonies. Physical body injuries, defamation, and insults are the highest misdemeanors committed by Kuwaiti women followed by property-related crimes. In contrast, non-Kuwaiti women committed property-related misdemeanors, followed by physical body injuries, defamation, and insults. Public interest offences are the least committed crimes by all women. The number of Kuwaiti imprisoned women reached 51 from 1999 to 2018, compared to the number of non-Kuwaiti imprisoned women, that is, 229. A

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social analysis of these results was presented in light of the theories of modernization, globalization, and feminism. **Conclusion:** Due to limited research, the study recommends carrying out more scientific studies on female criminality in Kuwait and the Gulf countries. Results have implications for planning and social policy.

Keywords: crime, crime rates, gender, modernization and globalization approach, feminist theory

التحليل الاجتماعي لمعدلات الجريمة لدى النساء مقارنة بالذكور في الكويت إبان الفترة من 1999 إلى 2018

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ملخص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التحليل الاجتماعي لمعدلات الجريمة لدى النساء مقارنة بالرجال في الكويت في الفترة من 1999 إلى 2018. **المنهج:** اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج النوعي من خلال استخدام البيانات الثانوية لتحليل معدلات الجريمة في الكويت مع التركيز على انخراط المرأة في الجريمة على ضوء نظرية التحديث والعولمة والنظرية النسوية، وذلك باستخدام بيانات رسمية قد نشرت من سنة 1999 إلى 2018. **النتائج:** خلصت نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن الكويتيين الذكور أكثر ارتكاباً للجريمة (الجنايات أو الجنح) مقارنة بالإناث الكويتيات أو غير الكويتيين ذكوراً وإناثاً. وكان ارتكاب الكويتيات لجرائم الجنح أكثر من جرائم الجنايات. ومن أكثر جرائم الجنح التي ارتكبتها الكويتيات هي الجرائم الواقعة على النفس، والجرائم الواقعة على العرض والسمعة، تليها الجرائم الواقعة على المال. وعلى عكس ذلك وجدت الدراسة أن أكثر جرائم الجنح التي ارتكبت من قبل غير الكويتيات هي الجرائم الواقعة على المال، تليها الجرائم الواقعة على النفس، والجرائم الواقعة على العرض والسمعة. أما الجرائم الضارة بالمصلحة العامة؛ فقد كانت الأقل ارتكاباً عند جميع الإناث كويتيات وغير كويتيات. وقد بلغ عدد المسجونات الكويتيات 51 في الفترة من 1999 إلى 2018 مقارنة بعدد المسجونين غير الكويتيات

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229. وقَدَّم تحليل اجتماعي لهذه النتائج في ضوء نظرية التحديث والعولة والنظرية النسوية. **الخاتمة:** خلصت الدراسة إلى أهمية العمل لمزيد من الدراسات حول جرائم المرأة وبطرح بعض التوصيات ذات المضامين التي تتعلق بالتخطيط والسياسة الاجتماعية لمواجهة هذه المشكلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجريمة، معدلات الجريمة، النوع الاجتماعي، نظرية التحديث والعولة، النظرية النسوية

Introduction

Previous studies show that gender gap in crime rates is one of the most consistent and documented patterns in social sciences (Abu-khashbah & Rouibah, 2020; Althaqib, 1986; Beaton et al., 2018; Carvalho et al., 2023; Kruttschnitt, 2016; Lu et al., 2023; Mallicoat, 2022; Painter & Farrington, 2004; Santos-Hermoso et al., 2023; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996; Wang & Stamatel, 2019). There are plenty of explanations for the processes behind this pattern, such as different structures of opportunities for males and females, differential influence of deviant peers, different cognitive and emotional tendencies, and even biologically oriented explanations, linking differences in crime to hormonal differences (Kruttschnitt, 2013). Female crimes have become a global concern in recent decades. Not only have the number and proportion of women's crimes sharply increased, but the characteristics or patterns of female crime have also changed. Below is a literature review from Kuwait and other nations.

In a descriptive, comparative study between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaiti expatriates in terms of their frequencies and crime types committed in Kuwait, Abu-Khashbah and Rouibah (2020) found that crime rates of Kuwaiti men and women were higher than the crime rates of expatriates during the period of 1992–2018. In addition, crime rates of Arab expatriates, especially Iraqis, stateless individuals (Bidun), Syrians, and Egyptians, are higher than those of non-Arab expatriates such as Indians and Filipinos. According to the 2012 Chinese Statistical Yearbook, the proportion of female prisoners in prisons out of the total female inmates increased from 4.85% to 5.62% on an annual basis. The total growth rate of women prisoners in prisons is 30.53% from 2004 to 2011, which is much higher than

the overall growth rate of the total proportion of female prisoners, that is, 7.16%. It should be noted that the Chinese government did not disclose the exact number of women detained in prisons; that is, the relatively systematic national statistics are not comprehensive. However, it is still reasonable to conclude that the number of female offenders in prisons should show an increasing trend according to the number of female prisoners in prisons in general (Montgomery & Zeng, 2016). In the United States, at year-end 2021, persons sentenced to more than 1 year under the legal authority of state correctional officials accounted for 97% (1,019,200) of the total state prison population (1,047,000). Females accounted for almost 7% of all sentenced prisoners at year-end 2021 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2022). The World Prison Brief hosted by the Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research (ICPR) issued a report in December 2021 about the status of male and female prisoners worldwide. The report included data on female prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population) in the Gulf countries. Data revealed the rates for each country as follows: United Arab Emirates 11.7, Kuwait 5.8, Bahrain 4.7, Qatar 4.6, Oman 4.5, and Saudi Arabia 1.9 (<https://www.prisonstudies.org/map/middle-east>).

Kuwait: A Socioeconomic Background

Kuwait, a small country once defined by its traditional society, has transformed into a modern nation following the discovery of rich oil deposits and subsequent exports from 1946 onward. Since then, it has been undergoing profound sociocultural transformations. In the 1960s, the total population of Kuwait was as low as 269,000; by the end of 2023, it had grown to an estimated 4.7 million, comprising roughly 1.5 million Kuwaiti citizens and 3.3 million expatriates. The number of Kuwaiti females is 772,838, while that of males is

744,238, making females roughly half the population. The population is mostly urban, with about 83% living in the capital, Kuwait City. High immigration rates and heavy dependence on foreign labor have formed a large working-age population (aged 15 to 64 years), accounting for about 68% of the total population (Central Statistical Bureau, 2023). Some studies indicated that this high immigration rate has a negative societal implication in terms of national security and high crime rates (Al-Enezi, 2008; Al-Fadhalah, 2018; Rahman & Al-Azm, 2023). The job opportunities that opened have altered traditional gender roles, providing women with more economic autonomy and shifting society toward individuation. Along with other oil producing Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar), Kuwait has witnessed a change in the family structure from extended to nuclear families, an increase in the number of heterogamous marriages, anomie, and changes in societal values, and other psychological, cultural, social, and financial factors (Al-Kandari, 2010; Rahman & Al-Azm, 2023). Furthermore, Kuwaiti society has been moving towards both modernization and urbanization. These rapid social changes have negatively affected the family structure in Kuwait, as well as the other Gulf countries, where divorce rates have increased drastically. In 2021, estimates showed about 77,800 divorce cases in Gulf countries compared to 76,300 cases in 2017, with a divorce rate of 1.8 per 1000 persons (15 years old and above). Data showed that there is an average of 213 divorce cases daily. Compared to other Gulf countries, Kuwait has the highest divorce rate (GCC-STAT, 2020). These social changes have also resulted in a variety of challenges, including weakened family support systems, the need for legal reforms, and a new awareness of gender rights and duties (Al-Kazi, 2010). Cultural and structural values have been disrupted, causing social disorganization,

high involvement in criminal behavior, high juvenile delinquency, and female crimes committed by both citizens and non-citizens. Historically, males commit more crimes than females, especially in traditional societies with prescribed statuses and roles. Female criminality has emerged as a new phenomenon where the number of women involved in criminal behavior has increased. Althaqeb (1986; 2016) analyzed the drastic societal change in Kuwait and stressed out the status of female criminality in different scholarly works. He indicated that the female crime rate gradually increased, exceeding expected figures related to families and society, hence becoming an important factor influencing social stability and family harmony. The number of female prisoners reported in 2015 was 218 (63 Kuwaitis vs. 155 non-Kuwaitis) (Annual Statistical Abstract, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the scope of crimes committed by males and females in Kuwait with a particular focus on female criminality, taking the distribution of types of offences (public interest, physical body, defamation and insult, and property crime) among Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti female offenders into consideration. The analysis was based on the availability of official data from 1999 to 2018. The study also attempted to analyze female criminality considering the modernization/globalization approach.

Study Questions

We established the following study questions:

- Q1. What are the rates of felonies and misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis by Gender (1999–2018)?
- Q2. What are the numbers of female prisoners by nationality (1999–2016)?

Q3. What is the social analysis of the differences between females and males in crime rates in Kuwait considering the theories of modernization and globalization along with feminism?

Study Concepts

This study revolves around the core concepts of crime and crime rates. The definition of a crime varies across countries, and what might be socially acceptable in one nation could be considered a serious offense in another. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia (2023), a crime is the intentional commission of an act deemed socially harmful or dangerous, specifically defined, prohibited, and subject to punishment under criminal law. The U.S. Department of Justice has its own definition of crime, stating that a crime must be (A) prohibited, (B) public, and (C) punishable (The U.S. Department of Justice, 1978). As per the Kuwaiti Penal Code (Criminal Code) 16/1960, Article 1 emphasizes that an act is not considered a crime and may not be punished unless specified by law. Article 2 classifies offenses into two types, that is, felonies and misdemeanors (AlSulaili, 2023). The methodology section will delve into a more detailed explanation of these terms.

A crime rate is a measure of change in recorded crime, over a given period of time, based on official statistics for offences or offender rates. It enables comparison of variations across offences or areas and can be produced for selected offences (such as car theft), or as a general measure. Recorded rates are open to criticism as being unreliable, reflecting personal and institutional biases, changes in law and police practice, and distortion caused by moral panic about mugging for example (Hall et al., 1978).

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Modernization, globalization, and feminism are interrelated theoretical approaches used in this study. Modernization theory is used to explain the process of modernization within societies. The "classical" 1950s and 1960s theories of modernization drew on sociological analyses of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and a partial reading of Max Weber and were strongly influenced by the writings of Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons (Andrew, 1986). The feminist approach is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. It examines women's and men's social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, such as anthropology and sociology, communication, media studies, and psychoanalysis (Chodorow, 1991).

Criminologists have usually focused on male criminality. However, given the social changes and the dominance of globalized economy, female criminality has become an issue. Both the actual number and the relative ratio of female crimes have increased in recent decades (Al-Juwair, 2017; Althaqeb, 2016; Carvalho, et al., 2023; Islam et al., 2014; Montgomery & Zeng, 2016; Smart, 2012). Kuwait is no exception to this social reality.

Increased education and income, women's enrollment in schools, involvement in labor force, in-migration and urbanization, exposure to social media, and cultural communication between western nations have affected the traditional values of Kuwaiti citizens. The oil revenues have improved living standards but have brought about disruptive tendencies. Increased international migration and the country's integration into the global capitalist economy initiated a conflict between traditional and modern values, undermining the

functioning of traditional institutions (Abu-khashbah & Rouibah, 2020; Al-Enezi, 2008; Al-Fadhalah, 2018; Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997). The era is marked by cultural changes, individualism, and conspicuous consumption of luxury commodities, and the pursuit of self-interest, anomie, attraction to monetary rewards, and competition, relative to the values of traditional institutions (Bernburg, 2002; Passas, 2000).

The Structural Strain Theory developed by Robert Merton and Agnew's modified General Strain Theory (GST) emphasizes that, in a class-oriented society, opportunities to get material comforts are not equally distributed within the societal setup. It is argued that deviant behavior is an outcome of a structural deficiency, where there are two fundamental elements: (1) cultural goals that people believe are worth striving for, and (2) institutionalized means to attain the desired goals. Disparity between goals and means engenders frustration that leads to strain and anomie (Althaqeb, 2016; Attoh, 2012; Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Zenati & Talal, 2022). Bernburg (2002) elaborated on the GST theory, linking social structure and social change with crime. He emphasized that social strain and anomic reality are more evident in societies experiencing social change and weakening of traditional social values in a free market economy. He argued that anomic pressures arise with a nexus of reinforcing cultural patterns being developed, producing an overemphasis on the market ethic and underpinning the regulatory power of social norms due to the weakening of the regulatory function of the family, the education system, and the political system. As a result, individuals feel an overriding pressure to achieve and, at the same time, have weak normative restraints on legitimate means to achieve.

Female crimes mostly include those related to drugs, property, fraud, human trafficking, prostitution, and violent crimes.

Additionally, female offenders with higher education and holding high positions are likely to be involved in embezzlement and bribery. Some women are even the principal criminals in gangs and directly commit both violent and not-violent crimes themselves (Adler, 1975; Al-Juwair, 2017; Althaqeb, 1986; 2021; Carvalho, et al., 2023; Cherian, 2015; Montgomery & Zeng, 2016; Wang & Stamatel, 2019; Zenati & Talal, 2022).

Causes of female criminality are diverse, based on the socioeconomic structure of each society. Different criminological theories have explained female criminality from a variety of aspects including some classical approaches, such as the biological explanation introduced by Lombroso in the 18th century and the psychological explanation included in Freud's "The Psychoanalytic School of Thought" in the 19th century, as well as that of Pollak in 1950 (Islam et al., 2014; Montgomery & Zeng, 2016). More approaches that emerged in the late 20th century focused on social structural factors related to masculinization of women (Adler, 1975) and economic factors in terms of available opportunities (Simon, 1976) or marginalization (Chesney-Lind, 1986). Feminist-derived theories, such as the pathways perspective, also focused on the role of victimization, along with other factors such as delinquency, violence, substance use, and mental health problems as important contributors to female-specific pathways to crime. The link between victimization and offending is well established in the literature, particularly among females (Asscher et al., 2015; DeLong & Reichert, 2019; Farrell & Zimmerman, 2018; Peterson et al., 2019).

Together with the globalization and modernization theoretical frameworks, there are other factors such as gender inequality and discrimination, and marginalization that have been highlighted by the feminist criminologists such as Adler (1975), Simon (1975), Chesney-

Lind (1986), and Smart (2012), which may contribute to the increase in female criminality. According to the feminist approach, women compete with men who are ahead of them due to the patriarchal system. They seek parity with their male counterparts using any means. Society perceives them as less aggressive and unable to match the ability, strength, and courage of men; they challenge this inequality by conducting illegal activities. Adler's theory (1975) of masculinization explains this, where equally empowered women in a higher social class commit more violent crimes to gain material possessions through criminal activities. Gender inequality is evident both in developing nations and in developed nations. Economic factors, whether based on economic opportunities or marginalization of women in the job market, may also be the cause of criminality. Simon (1975) argued that increasing job opportunities for women decreased the rates of their violent crimes but increased property crimes. On the other hand, Chesney-Lind (1986) believes that marginality in terms of low salaries, inadequate jobs, lower class position, and family victimization of a woman may increase criminality in modernized societies.

Several studies on some Arab countries verified the significance of the economic problems as a leading factor in female criminality, such as the study of Abu-Sulb & Mahadin (2020) in Jordan; Aljuwair (2021) in Saudi Arabia; Mohammad (2022) in Egypt; and Sadawi et al. (2020) in Algeria. Additionally, this approach has been found relatively valid in Kuwait, especially when Kuwaiti females received lower salaries than Kuwaiti males, and when non-Kuwaiti expatriates (males and females) usually received lower salaries in government and private sector jobs compared to Kuwaiti citizens. Alshal's report, published in Arab Times (11/08/2019), reported the average monthly wage of Kuwaiti male workers in the public sector to be about 1,807 Kuwaiti Dinar (KD), while the average monthly

wage of Kuwaiti females was KD 1,279, a difference of 41.3% in favor of men's wages. The monthly salary average of non-Kuwaiti males in the public sector was KD 726, while that for non-Kuwaiti females was KD 666, with a 9.1% difference in favor of males. The gender gap is more equitable in the case of non-Kuwaitis, but their salaries are much lower than those of Kuwaiti citizens. The average monthly wage for Kuwaitis of both genders in the private sector is KD 1,497, whereas the average for non-Kuwaitis is KD 697, with the Kuwaitis earning 114.9% more (note: (\$1= .302 KD)).

In general, Kuwait has witnessed a rise in the number of female criminal activities in recent years. Data shows this increment in female crimes in all types of offences. However, these crime rates are below those of the developed nations' average. It is thus important to understand the rising criminality among women so that remedial steps could be taken.

Methodology

Using secondary data, this study adopted the qualitative descriptive approach by analyzing crime rates in Kuwait, with a focus on females' involvement in crime. Considering the theories of modernization and globalization, as well as the feminist approach, the study used crime rates by dividing the number of crimes committed by males and females for each type of crime by the total population of each gender in a particular year multiplied by 100,000. Additionally, averages and standard deviations were calculated to reflect the overall picture of the data for two decades.

Official data has classified crimes into two types of offences: felonies and misdemeanors. The difference between felony and misdemeanor, according to articles 2 and 5 of the Kuwaiti criminal justice law legislated in 1960, is that felonies are the most serious

crimes a person can commit and have long jail or temporary prison sentence that may exceed three years, or a fine that exceeds 3,000 Indian rupees, or both penalties (note: in 1960, the Indian Rupee was the national currency in Kuwait). Article 5 of the law defined misdemeanors as less serious than a felony, where a person could have a short prison sentence not to exceed 3 years, or a fine that should not exceed 3,000 rupees, but both penalties could not be given (<https://www.lawyerq8.com>).

These two offences were further classified into four categories. According to the Annual Statistical Abstract publications, the classification of felonies is as follows: 1) Crimes harming public interest (bribery, embezzlement, false statements, election felonies, fights or resisting employees on the job, abetment of accused, or prisoners for escape, personification of another person, and employees' misconduct towards public). 2) Physical body offences (homicide/manslaughter, attempted murder, aggravated assault, house trespass, kidnapping, personal injuries caused by shooting, suicide/ attempted suicide, abortion, and illegal possession of arms and ammunition). 3) Defamation and insults (acts of disgrace/ humiliation, sexual intercourse, adultery, inducement to sins and evils, drugs, and alcohol). 4) Property crimes (robbery and attempted robbery, aggravated robbery, arson, vandalism, and forging of official documents). The misdemeanors are also classified into four similar categories: 1) Crimes harming public interest (contempt of public servants, negligence in guarding prisoners-escape, job personification, misuse of position, wrong propaganda, breach of religious sanctity, prevention of evidence, trespassing, and providing prohibited objects to prisoners). 2) Physical body offences (unstamped accidental murder, accidental injury, assault, confinement of personal freedom, negligence toward the public, house trespass with criminal

intent, all forms of threat, and suicide attempts). 3) Defamation and insult (sexual intercourse with consent, gambling, inducement to sin, telephone harassment, drunkenness and alcohol, and insulting). 4) Property Crimes (breach of trust, embezzlement and deception, counterfeiting, accidental fire, vandalism, robbery and attempt, and issuing of dud cheques).

Results and Discussion

Q1. What are the rates of felonies and misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis by Gender (1999–2018)?

Tables 1–4 summarize the responses to the first question. The primary focus of the study was to study the scope and nature of criminal activity among women. It also took the number and nature of crimes committed by men and women into consideration. Further, it compared the nature of crimes committed by Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women. Tables 1 and 2 show the rates of felony offences and misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis by gender. They provide an overall picture of crime rate in Kuwait within the past two decades, emphasizing the differences between males and females among both Kuwaiti citizens and non-Kuwaitis.

As shown in Table 1, felonies were higher for Kuwaiti males than females from 1999 till 2004, and then they decreased gradually and remained relatively stable. Though felony rates fluctuate from year to year, the average felony rates for Kuwaiti males in 20 years (1999–2018) were 687 offences per each 100,000, and 55 per each 100,000 for Kuwaiti females. On the other hand, non-Kuwaiti males committed fewer felonies (368 offences per each 100,000) than Kuwaitis. The felony rate of both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti females is very similar (55 vs. 59/100,000).

Table 1

Rate of Felonies for Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaitis by Gender (1999–2018)

Year	Overall felonies by Kuwaitis		Overall felonies by non-Kuwaitis	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
1999	67.5	1040	115	442
2000	75.3	1138	101.4	841.1
2001	95.2	1176.2	78	520
2002	82.3	1183.4	89.4	533
2003	83	1074.4	76.1	476.3
2004	48	578	77.2	327
2005	48.3	533.1	60	346.3
2006	39.4	602	63	428.5
2007	50	542	77.2	442
2008	55	559.2	65.8	383.7
2009	50.3	566	64	351
2010	44	530	53.3	337.3
2011	43	475	49.1	272.4
2012	44.7	509	34.2	284.3
2013	42	584.1	30.4	289.3
2014	48.3	620.1	33.4	132
2015	49.6	598.2	37	287.5
2016	50	507.3	27	230
2017	42.5	458.4	22.3	186
2018	47.1	475.1	26	195
<i>Average Rate</i>	55.3	687.4	59.0	368.2
<i>(S.D.)</i>	<i>(16.1)</i>	<i>(262.8)</i>	<i>(26.6)</i>	<i>(157.4)</i>

Source. Annual Statistical Abstract. Ministry of Interior, Research & Studies Center – Statistics Department, Vol. No., 1999 – 2018.

Likewise, Table 2 shows misdemeanors committed by Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti males and females. Data reveals that, generally, more misdemeanors are committed than felonies. Kuwaiti males committed an average of 949 misdemeanors per 100,000 that is higher than Kuwaiti females (210.7/100,000), and non-Kuwaiti males (445.4/100,000) and females (149/100,000). The Kuwaiti women's misdemeanors are higher than their felony crimes. Non-Kuwaiti females committed the lowest rate of misdemeanors (149/100,000).

Table 2

Rate of Misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaitis by Gender (1999–2018)

Year	Overall misdemeanors by Kuwaitis		Overall misdemeanors by non-Kuwaitis	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1999	252.9	1544.1	252.4	664.5
2000	407.3	1526	278.3	659
2001	280.5	1143.5	215.3	513
2002	152	789	128.5	388
2003	141	739	125	379.1
2004	152	705	137.5	397
2005	164	769	128.3	478
2006	188.3	812	172.2	57.2
2007	194.4	837.3	165.3	574.4
2008	167.5	966.5	171	641.6
2009	197	1027	146	599.4
2010	204	1044	147.4	572.2
2011	197.5	918	134	488

Cont. Table 2

Rate of Misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaitis by Gender (1999–2018)

Year	Overall misdemeanors by Kuwaitis		Overall misdemeanors by non-Kuwaitis	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
2012	216	939.2	135.5	466.1
2013	224	907	119.1	194.1
2014	212.4	900.3	114.5	344
2015	235.6	930.6	117	573
2016	191	742.1	93	285.5
2017	202	804	72	289.4
2018	234.5	936	129	344.5
Average Rate	210.7	949.0	149.0	445.4
(S.D.)	(58.1)	(229.7)	(50.0)	(163.3)

Source. Annual Statistical Abstract. Ministry of Interior, Research & Studies Center – Statistics Department, Vol. no., 1999 – 2018.

Table 3 describes and compares the types of felonies committed by Kuwaiti (55.3/100,000) and non-Kuwaiti (59/100,000) women. Kuwaiti women committed the most property-related felonies (27.4/100,000), followed by physical body injuries (21.3/100,000), defamations and insults (11.7/100,000), and lastly public interest crimes (2.4/100,000). Non-Kuwaiti women committed more defamation crimes with an average of 20.3/100,000, physical body injuries (19.5/100,000), property-related crimes (18.9/100,000), and 0.93/100,000 public interest crimes.

Table 3

Rate of Felonies for Kuwaiti and Non-Kuwaiti Females (1999–2018)

Year	Overall felonies		Property crimes		Defamations and insult		Physical body		Public interest	
	<i>Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Non-Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Non-Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Non-Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Non-Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Kuwaiti</i>	<i>Non-Kuwaiti</i>
1999	67.5	115	43.7	28	13.7	58	9.08	28.3	0.98	1.2
2000	75.3	101.4	48	38.1	12.8	37.2	12.1	24	2.4	2.5
2001	95.2	78	66	26.4	15.4	32	13.3	18.3	0.46	1.3
2002	82.3	89.4	52	35.2	13	27.3	15.1	25	2.4	2
2003	83	76.1	55	22.4	13.4	25	13.1	28	1.07	1.3
2004	48	77.2	22.2	23	10.7	27	11.5	27	1.7	1
2005	48.3	60	20.1	17	11.8	19	156.4	23	0.81	2
2006	39.4	63	19.4	19	6	24	14	19.3	0.4	0.4
2007	50	77.2	20.4	24	9.4	23	18	28.5	2	2
2008	55	65.8	18.2	19.5	11.1	20.1	14	25.5	11.7	0.8
2009	50.3	64	18	20	12.3	23.1	19	20.3	1.1	1
2010	44	53.3	21	17.1	8.2	14.2	14	22	1	0.3
2011	43	49.1	19	18	10	13.5	14	17.2	0.2	0.5
2012	44.7	34.2	18	10	10	8.5	16	16	12.3	0.3
2013	42	30.4	13.2	8.5	13.5	10.3	14	11.5	1.4	0.1
2014	48.3	33.4	18	18	14.5	14.5	16	16	0.2	0.2
2015	49.6	37	23.4	12.5	13.5	12	12	11.6	1	1
2016	50	27	23	9	12	1	11.8	9	3	0.2
2017	42.5	22.3	14	4.4	12.4	10	14	8.1	2.3	0.2
2018	47.1	26	16.2	8.2	11	7	19.1	10.4	1.2	0.3
Average	55.3	59.0	27.4	18.9	11.7	20.3	21.3	19.5	2.4	.93
(S.D.)	(16.1)	(26.6)	(15.8)	(8.9)	(2.2)	(12.7)	(31.9)	(6.8)	(3.4)	(.73)

Source. Annual Statistical Abstract. Ministry of Interior, Research & Studies Center – Statistics Department, Vol. No., 1999 – 2018.

Table 4 compares the overall average rate of misdemeanors committed by Kuwaiti (210.7/100,000) and non-Kuwaiti (149/100,000) women along with the average rates of the type of misdemeanors. Kuwaiti women committed more physical body injury crimes (86.6/100,000), followed by defamation and insults (57.9/100,000), property-related crimes (46.4/100,000), and lastly public interest (20/100,000) misdemeanors. Non-Kuwaiti women, on the other hand, committed the most property-related misdemeanors (98.95/100,000), followed by physical body injuries (52.2/100,000), defamation and insults (26.4/100,000), and the least public interest offences (8.7/100,000).

Table 4

Misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaiti Females (1999–2018)

Year	Overall misdemeanors		Property crimes		Defamation and insults		Physical body		Public interest	
	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti
1999	252.9	252.4	41.7	100	44.4	33.3	137.9	108	28.9	11.4
2000	407.3	278.3	101	111	67.2	33	222.9	128	16.1	7
2001	280.5	215.3	57	75.3	36	25	171.3	110.5	17	4.7
2002	152	128.5	33.4	52.5	17.1	17.5	85.5	52	16	7
2003	141	125	27	53.3	20.3	18.5	80	48	14	5.3
2004	152	137.5	40	57.4	17.4	18	79.5	59	15.1	4
2005	164	128.3	35.1	59	18.5	18.3	96.5	46.3	13.6	5.1
2006	188.3	172.2	41	715	63	39.1	65.2	55.1	20	65.2
2007	194.4	165.3	33	65	69.4	36	74.3	58	17.5	7
2008	167.5	171	33.1	75.4	59	38.5	58.2	48.4	17.4	8.7
2009	197	146	49.1	66	64.5	33	57	40	26	7.6
2010	204	147.4	38	65	72.1	33.3	72	44	22.4	6

Cont. Table 4

Misdemeanors for Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaiti Females (1999–2018)

Year	Overall misdemeanors		Property crimes		Defamation and insults		Physical body		Public interest	
	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti
2011	197.5	134	36	63.1	73	28.1	70.4	38.2	18.3	4.3
2012	216	135.5	43	70	78.5	26.2	70	34.4	25	5.2
2013	224	119.1	46.4	57.2	83.2	29.2	72.3	29	22	4
2014	212.4	114.5	44.4	56.6	78	21	67	32.2	23.6	5
2015	235.6	117.0	56.5	62.2	91	25.4	64.5	30.4	24	5
2016	191	93	56	48.5	53	15	62.5	26	20	3.5
2017	202	72	57.1	54.4	64.1	16.2	61.8	28.2	20	4
2018	234.5	129	58.4	72	89.2	24	64	28.5	23	4.6
Average	210.7	149.0	46.4	98.95	57.9	26.4	86.6	52.2	20.0	8.7
(S.D.)	(58.0)	(50.0)	(16.0)	(145.8)	(24.3)	(7.7)	(42.6)	(29.4)	(4.3)	(13.4)

Source. Annual Statistical Abstract. Ministry of Interior, Research & Studies Center – Statistics Department, Vol. No., 1999 – 2018.

Tables 3 and 4 revealed that the average rate of crimes committed by Kuwaiti females was 55.3/100,000 for felonies and 210.7/100,000 for misdemeanors in the past 20 years (1999–2018). The average rate of felonies of non-Kuwaiti females was 59/100,000 and 149/100,000 for misdemeanors. The two groups have relatively similar felony rates, but they differ sharply in the average misdemeanor rates. Data showed that non-Kuwaiti women committed more property-related misdemeanors than Kuwaiti women. Kuwaiti women, on the other hand, have higher average rates of three types of misdemeanors, namely, physical body injuries, defamations and insults, and public interest.

The results of the first question of the study indicate that the Kuwaiti society has witnessed an escalating number of crimes in recent years. Crime rates for males were significantly higher than those for females. Evidence of delinquency has been observed among youth in primary and high schools. According to reports from the Social and Psychological Services Administration in the Ministry of Education, incidents of violent assaults in Kuwaiti schools have witnessed an increase, indicating that the problem is percolating down to teens. In 2018, violent assault incidents (verbal and physical) were 35,393 in public schools, with males committing 19,281 acts and females 16,112 (Alhammadi, 2019). There is a lack of scholarly information on the growing female criminality, highlighting the importance of continued research, except few studies (Abu-khashbah & Rouibah, 2020; Al-Waheeb & Al-Kandary, 2015). Both studies compared crime rates by gender and nationality. Abu-khashbah & Rouibah (2020) found that female criminality rate is higher among Kuwaiti females followed by Arab females and then by non-Arab females. Al-Waheeb & Al-Kandary (2015) focused on suicide rates as a criminal act in Kuwait and other Gulf countries. They found that the suicide rate has increased from 3.2/100,000 in 2002 to 6.1 in 2010. Most suicides were committed by women working in households.

Assessing the magnitude, trends, and types of female criminality is worthy of study, and it is important for the well-being of the Kuwaiti family, especially when women constitute half the population. Cherian (2015) argues that females are the foundation of social norms, traditions, customs, and morality. They play an indispensable role in maintaining the stability of marriage and family. Accordingly, unless the extent and the reasons behind increasing female criminality are not studied, it cannot be effectively curbed, or prevented. This would negatively affect the well-being of future generation of Kuwaiti society.

Q2. What are the numbers of female prisoners by nationality (1999–2016)?

The primary focus of the study was to study the rise of criminal activity among Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women. Table 5 summarizes the responses to the second question: What is the number of female prisoners by nationality (1999–2016)? In general, the imprisonment rate had increased from 65/100,000 in 2009 to 139/100,000 in 2013 (Annual Statistical Abstract, 2010; 2013). Male prisoners were 1005 (Kuwaitis 537 vs. 468 non-Kuwaitis). The number of female prisoners, on the other hand, was 237 (Kuwaitis 63 vs. 174 non-Kuwaitis) (Annual Statistical Abstract, 2016).

Table 5

Number of Female Prisoners by Nationality (1999–2016)

Year	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Total
1999	54	277	331
2000	47	331	378
2001	53	231	284
2002	57	259	316
2003	56	227	283
2004	73	264	337
2005	75	267	342
2006	40	210	250
2007	48	245	293
2008	40	279	319
2009	43	258	301
2010	34	252	286
2011	31	215	246

Cont. Table 5*Number of Female Prisoners by Nationality (1999–2016)*

Year	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Total
2012	35	184	219
2013	47	138	185
2014	50	157	207
2015	63	155	218
2016	63	174	237
Average	50.5	229.0	279.6
(S.D.)	(12.6)	(51.4)	(53.5)

Source. Annual Statistical Abstract. Ministry of Interior, Research & Studies Center – Statistics Department, Vol. No., 1999–2016.

Table 5 shows that an approximate average number of females who were convicted and imprisoned from 1999 to 2016 was about 280 cases. It revealed a large difference between Kuwaiti (51) and non-Kuwaiti women (229) imprisoned for the same period.

There is no doubt that women fall into delinquency, crime, and imprisonment as a punishment for this act that opposes the values and principles of society, and this has great effects on the imprisoned woman from various psychological and social aspects (Al-Jourani & Shehada, 2023). These effects may be greater on non-Kuwaiti prisoners due to the lack of social support. Unlike non-Kuwaiti females, Kuwaiti females are privileged to have a strong social support as well as a more lenient criminal justice system.

Q3. What is the social analysis of the differences between females and males in crime rates in Kuwait in the light of the theories of modernization and globalization along with the feminist approach?

The oil revenues from the fifties of the 20th century initiated a conflict between traditional and modern values, disrupting the functioning of traditional institutions. The era is marked by cultural change, individualism, and conspicuous consumption. The consequences were gradual social disorganization as manifested in increasing crime rates. The dominance of globalized economic values led to the pursuit of self-interest, intense individualism, anomie, attraction to monetary rewards, and competition relative to the values of traditional institutions (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1997). The oil revenues also brought about international migration and integration of the country into the global capitalist economy.

Earlier, the crime rate was extremely low as the lifestyle in this traditional society was simple, and the economy had limited division of labor. Nowadays, deviant behavior has become a phenomenon amongst the new generation (Alhammadi, 2019) as well as immigrants. Tables 1–4 showed a fluctuation in crime rates for both genders. However, crime increment has been observed in some types of crimes, particularly in physical body injuries and property crimes. Aggravated assaults, kidnapping, and suicide/attempted suicides are also steadily on the rise, indicative of a change in the moral and value structure in the society (Al-Waheeb & Al-Kandary, 2015).

The study examined and compared the trends in crime with a particular focus on the criminal behavior of women. Both types of offences, felonies and misdemeanors (public interest, physical body, defamation and insult, and property) among Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women, were studied. To get a complete picture, we looked at gender differences, nationality (Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis), job

opportunities, salary gap, arrests, and jail time for Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti females. The modernization and globalization approaches along with the feminist approach were used to guide the analysis.

Males committed more felonies than females; however, the felony rate of non-Kuwaiti males was lower than of their counterparts. Overall, the number of felonies committed by both resident and non-resident women was about the same. However, there was a difference between the types of felonies committed. Kuwaiti women committed more property-related felonies, followed by physical body injuries. Non-Kuwaiti women committed more defamation crimes and physical body injuries. Public interest crimes were the least among all women, with the lowest being among the expatriates. These discrepancies may be understood in terms of their citizenship status and investment in the sociopolitical climate of the country towards women in general.

Data revealed that, in general, more misdemeanors are committed than felonies as the criminal justice system considers misdemeanors to be less serious, and offenders get lower penalties. This may explain why misdemeanors are higher. Kuwaiti males committed the highest number of misdemeanors, followed by non-Kuwaiti males, and Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women. The misdemeanors committed by Kuwaiti women are more than the felony crimes.

An in-depth analysis revealed that Kuwaiti females committed more physical injuries crimes, followed by defamations and insults and property-related crimes. Non-Kuwaiti women committed fewer felonies and misdemeanors than Kuwaiti women; however, they committed the most property-related misdemeanors, followed by physical body injuries and defamations and insults. Property-related crimes are the leading crime amongst non-Kuwaitis. These

expatriates come to Kuwait with low education and little professional skills for better job opportunities, but they receive low wages. Given the high living standards in Kuwait, many of them try to increase their income through illegal means. Theft in residential houses and apartments generally go unreported. Rita Simon (1996) argues that increasing work opportunities for women reduces violent crimes but increases property crimes. Interestingly, there are few cases of injuries reported, implying that the sole purpose of residential thefts is financial gain, supporting the opportunity theory. The cause of other crimes such as murder and robbery by women employed in residence could be due to oppression, beating, or denial of salaries.

Public interest felonies and misdemeanors are the lowest in both groups of women. It is understandable that non-Kuwaiti women should commit the least amount of public interest felonies and misdemeanors, as they are not citizens and not involved in State politics, while for immigrants, they are more careful to follow the laws of society. Given the huge discrepancy in salaries between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, the high cost of living in Kuwait, and the dire economic needs of expatriates to meet their commitments to their families abroad and domestically, it is likely that some may resort to property or public interest crimes to accommodate their financial needs. As proposed by the feminist marginalization approach of Chesney-Lind (1986), women are historically marginalized in the family and in patriarchal societies, and when society marginalizes a segment of the population, crimes are perpetrated.

Public interest crimes like bribery and embezzlement were higher among Kuwaiti women. Apparently, they feel they have more clout in the system and have more job security than the non-Kuwaitis. Non-Kuwaiti women are employed on contract and are subject to deportation for any legal violation. More violent crimes

are committed by empowered women exhibiting masculine behavior supporting the classic feminist work “masculinization approach” by Freda Adler (1975) that women depicting masculine behavior are more likely to commit crimes of public interest as they are more empowered with knowledge and technological skills.

The causes of female crimes are generally different from those of males even though the crimes may be similar in nature. These are classified into three major groups: personal, familial, and social causes. Personal causes include the level of education. Most of the women involved in crime have a low level of education and little understanding of law (Althaqeb, 2016). This study did not analyze criminality through the lens of education, and further research may incorporate this variable. Furthermore, and as indicated earlier, victimization may instigate crime, resulting in either violence or murder. For example, women suffering from domestic violence such as beating or mistreatment from their husbands, fathers, relatives, or close friends might take hit out at their abusers (Asscher, et al., 2015; DeLong & Reichert, 2019; Farrell & Zimmerman, 2018; Peterson, et al., 2019).

Discrimination in equal pay and job quality may also instigate women to commit crimes. This is more valid for non-Kuwaiti citizens who receive lower salaries in government and private sector jobs. Kuwaiti citizens, on the other hand, have better job security and higher salaries. Alshal (2019) reported that, in both public and private sectors, all women, both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti, earned less than their male counterparts. The gender gap is more equitable in the case of non-Kuwaitis. The overall wage average is higher for Kuwaiti citizens than that of the expatriates. Despite this, the crime rate of all the expatriates is lower than that of the Kuwaiti citizens. The fear of deportation and discrimination makes them more careful and law-abiding.

Despite criminality being approximately the same amongst women, the number of non-Kuwaiti women prisoners reported in 2015 was much higher than that of Kuwaiti women. Over the years, the number of female prisoners fluctuates, perhaps due to governmental pardon or shortened period of imprisonment. This could be due to the chivalrous treatment expected from police authorities, the criminal justice system, and the Kuwaiti conservative culture that does not tolerate the notion of keeping women in jail (Althaqeb, 2016; Grabe et al., 2006). Except for serious crimes, like murder and inflection of harm on others, Kuwaiti females, due to cultural sensitivity, were privileged and had support from key stakeholders in the society and either were not penalized or had a shorter stay in prison. It is apparent that the criminal justice system is lenient toward Kuwaiti women, despite their involvement in criminality (felonies and misdemeanors) in the past 20 years. The chivalry hypothesis has been studied and verified in different old cultures and still exists in developing societies (Althaqeb, 2016; Grabe et al., 2006). However, this does not extend to immigrants who lack social support in Kuwaiti society and are more easily convicted and jailed.

Finally, the analysis of this study relied mainly on official data, indicating that there may be much that goes unrecorded, especially offences committed by women. Female criminality and police arrest or imprisonment are socially sensitive issues in Kuwait. The police authority, criminal justice system, and key stakeholders in a society that contains both traditional and tribal concepts of female roles faced with emerging modern values tend to be lenient in penalizing female offenders.

Conclusion

Kuwait is a transitional society from traditional to modernized. It was a traditional society with prescribed statuses and roles. Dramatic social changes resulted in a variety of contradictions

and challenges, social disorganization, including weakened family support systems, the need for legal reforms, and a new awareness of gender rights and duties (Al-Kazi, 2010; Rahman & Al-Azm, 2023; Sadawi et al., 2020). Using official data from 1999 to 2018 in Kuwait, it has been found that Kuwaiti men committed higher crimes (felonies and misdemeanors) than Kuwaiti women and non-Kuwaitis (both men and women). Female criminality has emerged as a growing phenomenon where the number of women involved in criminal activities gradually increased exceeding that of the expected figures, hence becoming an important factor influencing social stability and family harmony. In a nutshell, the rate of crimes in Kuwait has been fluctuating, but female criminality for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis has been on a steady rise, with offences varying from public interest, physical body, defamation and insult, and property-related crimes. Kuwaiti women committed more misdemeanors than felonies. Physical body injuries defamation and insults are the highest misdemeanors committed by Kuwaiti women, followed by property-related crimes. In contrast, non-Kuwaiti women committed property-related misdemeanors, followed by physical body injuries and defamation and insults. Public interest offences are the least committed crimes by all women. The number of Kuwaiti imprisoned women reached an average of 51 cases from 1999 to 2018, compared to the number of non-Kuwaiti imprisoned women, that is, 229 cases.

Female criminal behavior has been classified from a gender perspective to explore the cause of crimes committed by females as explained by the modernization and globalization approaches as well as the feminist approach highlighting economic factors, opportunity, discrimination, and victimization. This should entail solutions and policies to see whether crimes can be reduced. Many factors affecting females' involvement in crime have been in play like limited and

inadequate working opportunities, modernization, social change and globalization, and change in social roles, leaving them exposed, especially the empowered, as explained by the feminist theory (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975; 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1986; Smart, 2012). This situation of change, as indicated by Simon (1996), suggests that if more opportunities and empowerment were provided to women, it may reduce female criminality. This can only be solved by education and equality in job opportunities and salaries together with greater empowerment of women in both home and work sector.

Limitation of the Study

A significant constraint in this study lies in its reliance on secondary data. Utilizing intersectional or longitudinal studies involving a sample of female criminals could offer more robust information and enhance sociological analyses to comprehend the underlying factors influencing female criminal behavior. Adopting such research approaches would enable the customization of interventions and policies based on specific demographics and needs. Therefore, there is a pressing need for additional scientific research on female criminality and gender-based discrimination within the criminal justice system, particularly in Kuwait and other Gulf countries.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and to reduce female involvement in criminal activities, it is recommended to address this phenomenon in multifaceted aspects such as societal, legal, economic, educational, and psychological factors as follows:

- Establish community-based programs that provide support and mentorship for at-risk women.
- Advocate for gender-sensitive legal reforms that address discriminatory practices, and implement alternatives to incarceration,

such as rehabilitation programs and restorative justice approaches (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

- Promote gender equality through awareness campaigns and education, and encourage policies that empower women in decision-making roles and leadership positions.
- Promote equal access to education and vocational training for females, and ensure equal pay for equal work to reduce economic disparities (World Bank Group, 2023).
- Increase awareness and access to mental health resources, especially focusing on issues such as trauma, depression, and substance abuse; additionally, implement programs that reduce stigma around mental health, and encourage women to seek help.

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