

Female Criminality in Kollam District: An Analysis of Public Perception and Police Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This research paper will discuss the issue of female criminality in Kollam District, Kerala, and especially the practical experiences, as well as, professional attitude of the police officers, not to mention the way people are perceiving the crimes committed by women. There are two main components in which the study is based. The former is a set of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 25 police officers who have more than eight years of service experience and have handled cases involving women as the accused persons. The main basis of this research is the firsthand observations they had and this has provided them with realistic information concerning the nature, causes, and trends of crimes against women. The second aspect of the study is a survey among 106 people (males and females) over the age of 18 that will help to comprehend the attitudes of the society and the overall impressions of female crimes and criminality in general. The research provides a balanced and holistic insight into the problem because of the combination of professional views of law enforcement with the ones of the community. The results show that criminality of females in Kollam District is not very high and is mostly situational and not habitual. The most are non violence in nature like theft, cheating, and family conflicts. Violent crime committed by women are comparatively rare associated with criminal intent but long-term domestic violence, emotional turmoil, financial situation, and social pressures. The police observations also point out the indirect role inflicted by substance abuse and marital discord and economic deprivation in causing crime among women. In order to support these results, the official reports on the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB) have been analysed to trace the rates and trends of the crime along with the analysis of the female involvement rates during the period of 2020-2025. The paper concludes by finding that the issue of female criminality needs to be established in a wider social and emotional framework. It places significant focus on rehabilitative programs, psychological counselling, economic empowerment programs, and gender sensitive policing as prerequisite programs to prevent crime as well as successful re-socialization of female offenders.

Keywords: Female Criminality, Kollam District, Public Perception, Police Perspectives, Crime Trends, Rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

Crime is a complex social phenomenon influenced by structural, economic, cultural, and psychological factors. Traditionally, criminological research has focused on male offenders, while female criminality has

received comparatively less attention. However, recent socio-economic changes, urbanization, and shifting gender roles have increased the need to understand the nature and causes of crimes committed by women.

Although the rate of female criminality remains lower than that of men, it has distinct characteristics shaped by factors such as domestic conflict, financial instability, emotional stress, and social pressures. These gender-specific influences highlight the importance of studying female criminal behaviour independently rather than as a variation of male crime. This study focuses on female criminality in Kollam District by integrating primary data from police officers, public perception, and official crime statistics from the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB). Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines qualitative insights from police interviews with quantitative analysis of public responses and crime trends. The study is significant as it bridges the gap between official crime data and real-life experiences, offering a comprehensive understanding of the causes, patterns, and social context of female criminality. It also contributes to criminological research by emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive approaches, including prevention strategies, rehabilitation, and policy development, rather than purely punitive measures.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Feminist criminology emerged in the 1960s and 1970s to address the neglect of women in traditional criminological studies. Early research primarily focused on male offenders and explained crime in terms of social inequality and masculinity, with little attention to female offending. Scholars such as Frances Heidensohn highlighted that women's deviance was largely ignored in academic discourse. Similarly, Carol Smart argued that women were excluded due to their lower social and legal status, while Ngaire Naffine pointed out the male-centred bias in criminology that led to stereotyping and underrepresentation of women.

Although feminist criminology expanded during the 1980s and 1990s, recent research has again shifted towards women as victims rather than offenders. Contemporary studies also examine how media representation influences public perception of female criminality. Overall, the field continues to highlight the need for focused research on women as active participants in crime.

1. Robert Agnew (1992) – General Strain Theory

General Strain Theory explains crime as a response to negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and depression caused by strain. Agnew identified key factors that increase the likelihood of crime, including perceived injustice, intensity of strain, lack of social support, and available opportunities. Although the theory is broad and inclusive, it is criticized for being difficult to test empirically and for lacking gender-specific analysis.

2. Albert K. Cohen (1955) – Delinquent Subculture Theory

Cohen explained delinquency as a response to failure in achieving socially accepted goals, particularly among working-class youth. He suggested that boys form delinquent subcultures due to frustration. However, his view that girls experience less strain has been criticized as gender-biased and based on stereotypes. Later studies showed that female delinquency is also influenced by social inequality and environmental stress.

3. Harrison et al. (2015) – Female Serial Offenders

This quantitative study analyzed female serial offenders using secondary data. It found that many offenders appeared socially normal and some had mental health issues. While the study had a large sample size, it relied on secondary sources and lacked methodological clarity, limiting the reliability of its findings.

4. Islam et al. (2015) – Theories of Female Criminality

This study reviewed theories such as masculinization, opportunity, marginalization, and chivalry theories. Although it provided a strong theoretical foundation, the lack of a standardized comparison method and reliance on secondary data made the conclusions somewhat subjective.

RESEARCH GAP

- The literature on female criminality primarily views the issue under the national or state level.
- There are very limited studies that examine female criminality in the district level jointly with police experience, public perception, and official crime statistics. Specifically, not much research is conducted on Kollam District.
- The majority of past experiences are based on the statistical data without providing the expertise of police officers who deal directly with criminal cases that involve women. On the same note, the local level has not adequately been addressed concerning the perception of female criminality.
- Thus, the proposed study is aimed to seal this gap with the help of the mixed-method approach, i.e., focusing on female criminality in the Kollam District, the study combines the experience of the police, the way the population sees the issue, and the official crime statistics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM (SHORT VERSION)

Female criminality, though lower than male criminality, remains an important social issue that requires detailed study. Official crime statistics provide numerical data but do not fully explain the underlying social, psychological, and economic causes of women's involvement in crime. There is also a gap between public perception, often influenced by media, and the practical understanding of police officers based on investigative experience. Therefore, this study aims to analyse female criminality in Kollam District by integrating police perspectives, public opinion, and official data from the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB).

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on female criminality in Kollam District, Kerala. It examines the nature of crimes committed by women, the underlying causes, and societal responses toward women offenders. The study also analyses official crime data obtained from the District Crime Records Bureau (DCRB) to identify trends over the past five years.

The findings of the study are limited to Kollam District and may not be generalized to other regions.

3. UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY

The universe of the study consists of police officers working in various police stations within Kollam District, who are directly involved in registering, investigating, and handling cases related to female offenders. The study also includes members of the public to understand societal perceptions.

A qualitative approach is used to analyse the professional experiences of police officers, as female criminality is influenced by social, psychological, and familial factors that cannot be fully explained through numerical data alone.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the nature and trends of crimes involving women in Kollam District
- To identify the social, economic, and psychological causes of female criminality
- To examine police officers' perspectives on crimes committed by women

- To study public perception of female criminal behaviour
- To analyse official crime statistics related to women offenders in Kollam District

5. SAMPLE SIZE

25 police officers with more than eight years of experience in criminal investigation

106 adult respondents (above 18 years) from the general public

Police officers were selected due to their professional experience in handling cases involving female offenders. Public respondents were included to understand societal perceptions of female criminality.

6. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Purposive sampling was used to select police officers with relevant experience in criminal investigations involving women. Convenience sampling was used for selecting public respondents who were willing to participate in the study.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to Kollam District and cannot be generalized to other regions

Time constraints restricted the number of police officers interviewed

Some responses may be subjective and based on personal perceptions

The study relies mainly on reported crimes and may not include unreported cases

8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and no sensitive information related to ongoing investigations was disclosed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

INTRODUCTION

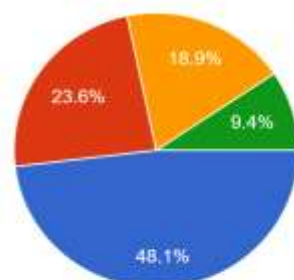
This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of primary data collected from 106 public respondents and 25 police officers. The data includes public perceptions and police experiences regarding female criminality. The analysis focuses on identifying key factors such as economic pressure, family conflict, and psychological stress. Interpretation helps explain these patterns in a broader social context

DATA ANALYSIS

A questionnaire was administered to 106 respondents to understand public perception of female criminality. The analysis covers factors such as causes of crime, social influence, and media impact. The data is presented using percentage distribution through tables and charts for clarity.

1. Do you think crimes committed by women are increasing in recent years?

106 responses



- A. Crimes by women appear to be rising due to social and economic pressures.
- B. The increase is noticeable mainly in urban and semi-urban areas.
- C. The rate seems stable, but media coverage makes it look higher.
- D. There is no significant increase in crimes committed by women.

Opinion	Percentage (%)	Number of Respondents
Crimes by women appear to be rising due to social and economic pressures	48.1%	51
The increase is moderate mainly in urban and semi-urban areas	23.6%	25
Crimes seem stable but media coverage makes it look higher	18.9%	20
No significant increase	9.4%	10
Total	100%	106

Interpretation: Most of the respondents (48.1 percent) are of the opinion that crimes perpetrated by women are on the rise and this is mainly as a result of social and economical pressures. This indicates that the public perceives the increase in female crime to be related to structural causes like financial stress, social change and domestic burdens. Further, 23.6% noted that the growth is medium-sized with a focus in urban and semi-urban regions which has a geographical effect. Nevertheless, 18.9% of people think that the media portrayal can possibly overstate the idea of the growth, and only 9.4% of the respondents think that there is no considerable rise. Comprehensively, the results indicate that female offence is seen as on the rise but this is mainly due to socio-economic strains and not criminal tendencies.

3. Do social changes contribute to variations in female crime rates?

106 responses



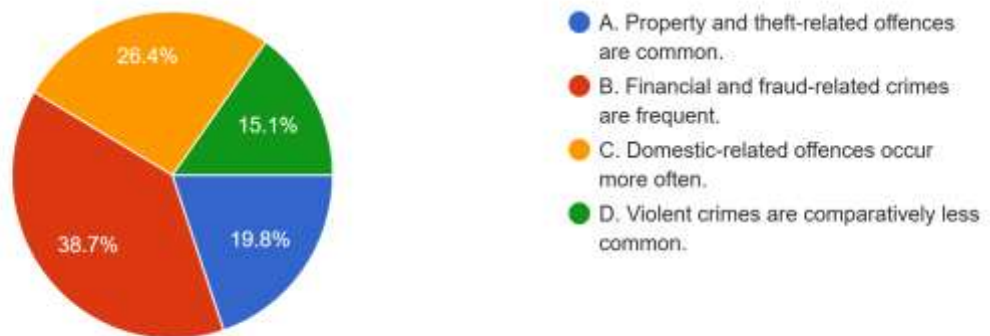
Opinion	Percentage (%)	Number of Respondents
Social change affects some crimes but not all	37.7%	40
Changing lifestyles strongly influence crime patterns	32.1%	34
Economic factors matter more than social changes	21.7%	23
Social changes have little impact	8.5%	9
Total	100%	106

Interpretation: Most of the respondents (37.7%) have the view that social changes do not influence all forms of crime in a homogeneous manner. This implies a discriminative impact of modernization and

change of lifestyle. Only a small percentage of 32.1% believe that lifestyle change is a key factor in the patterns of female crime with the implication that urbanization and mobility could be important in effecting behaviour change. Nevertheless, 21.7 percent attach greater importance to economic factors than social change, with financial stress noted as being a stronger predictor. The proportion of those that thought social change has minimal impact is only 8.5%. On the whole, the results prove that social change is seen as a significant but not the only reason affecting female criminality.

6. What type of crime is most commonly committed by women?

106 responses

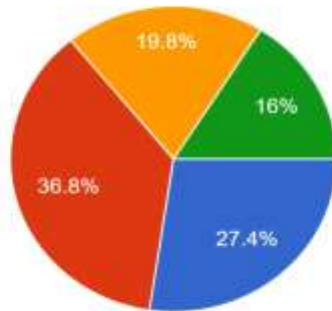


Opinion	Percentage (%)	Number of Respondents
Financial and fraud-related crimes	38.7%	41
Domestic-related offences	26.4%	28
Property and theft-related offences	19.8%	21
Violent crimes are comparatively less common	15.1%	16
Total	100%	106

Interpretation: The highest percentage (38.7) is by stating that women are committing financial and fraud-related crimes appears to be the most commonly associated offences. This brings about economic motives as one of the key determinants of female criminality. Women are also more associated with domestic related offences at 26.4% hence family conflicts are another major field. The real property crimes rank 18.9 and only 16% of violent crimes are prevalent. This distribution proves that the female criminal activity is not violent most of the time and tends to be associated with economic or social problems.

8. Are domestic or family-related offences frequently associated with women offenders?

106 responses



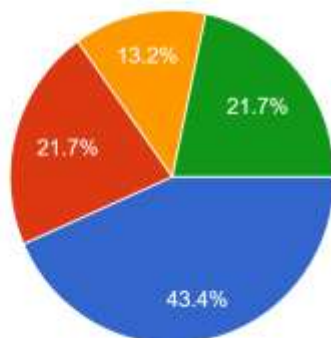
- A. Domestic conflicts often lead to offences.
- B. Family pressure contributes to criminal behaviour.
- C. Such offences are limited to specific cases.
- D. Domestic offences are not strongly linked to women.

Opinion	Percentage (%)	Number of Respondents
Family pressure contributes significantly	36.8%	39
Domestic conflicts often lead to offences	27.4%	29
Such offences are limited to specific cases	19.8%	21
Domestic offences are not strongly linked to women	16%	17
Total	100%	106

Interpretation: Most of the respondents (36.8) feel that family pressure is a major contributor to female related offences. Also, 27.4 per cent point out that domestic disputes often turn in to criminal cases. This implies that interpersonal and family conflicts constitute a significant part of criminal participation among females. Nevertheless, 19.8% believe such offences to be restricted to particular instances, and 16% do not find domestic crime particularly related to women. The results emphasize the primary role of domestic setting in the formation of female criminal behaviour.

26. How do increased government reservations, concessions, and women-empowerment laws influence patterns of female criminality and allegations against others?

106 responses



- A. Government reservations and empowerment laws have improved women's social position, but misuse b...
- B. Legal protections and concessions empower women positively, though weak monitoring can sometimes allow...
- C. Most women use empowerment laws responsibly, but isolated misuse affect...
- D. Empowerment policies aim to protect women, yet improper application can...

Opinion	Percentage (%)	Number of Respondents
Government reservations and empowerment laws have improved women’s social position, but misuse may occur	43.4%	46
Legal protections and concessions empower women positively, though weak monitoring can sometimes allow misuse	21.7%	23
Empowerment policies aim to protect women, yet improper application can create complications	21.7%	23
Most women use empowerment laws responsibly, but isolated misuse affects perception	13.2%	14
Total	100%	106

Interpretation: The highest number of respondents (43.4) feel that the government reservations and empowerment laws have greatly enhanced the social status of women, but also have the potential of being abused in some instances. This shows a moderate vision that acknowledges the positive and the difficulties. A corresponding 21.7% report that women are empowered with legal protections, but there are possible indications of legal protection mechanisms being weak thus allowing misuse in some cases. A further 21.7% also highlight the fact that empowerment policies are essentially protective in nature, but when not done correctly may cause procedural problems. Only a lower percentage (13.2) considers that the majority of women take empowerment laws responsibly and that abuse occurs in isolated cases. In general, the results indicate that the respondents find the empowerment laws to be viewed as advantageous and socially progressive, but they acknowledge the necessity to implement and control the laws so that they are not abused and misused.

POLICE INTERVIEW

In addition to the public survey, primary data was collected from 25 police officers with experience in criminal investigations. Their professional insights provide a practical understanding of the nature, causes, and patterns of female criminality. This section presents the key findings based on their observations and experiences.

1) Section A: Psychological and Social Factors Influencing Female Criminality

This section examines the role of psychological stress, social pressure, and living conditions in influencing female criminal behaviour.

Sl.no	Response Category	Officers	Percentage
01	Psychological stress and emotional pressure influence crimes	18	72%
02	Stable and well-supported women rarely commit violent crimes	20	80%
03	Domestic abuse and prolonged suffering can push women into crime	17	68%

Interpretation:

Most officers stated that female criminal behaviour is influenced by psychological stress, family conflicts, and social pressure. Crimes are usually reactions to prolonged emotional distress rather than planned actions.

2) Nature and Pattern of Crimes

This section analyses the general trends and types of crimes committed by women based on police experience.

Sl.no	Response Category	Officers	Percentage
01	Female criminality is much lower than male criminalit	22	88%
02	Most crimes by women are non-violent (theft, cheating, disputes)	19	76%
03	Independent violent crimes by women are rare	18	72%

Interpretation:

Female criminality is significantly lower than male criminality and is mostly non-violent. Women are commonly involved in theft, cheating, and domestic-related offences rather than serious violent crimes.

3) Legal and Procedural Issues

This section focuses on legal provisions related to women and the challenges faced by police during investigation.

Sl.no	Response Category	Officers	Percentage
01	Laws mainly protect women as complainants	16	64%
02	Police must register FIR when women file complaints	21	84%
03	Some laws like 498A may be misused in family disputes	13	52%

Interpretation:

Police officers highlighted that laws mainly protect women as complainants, and FIR registration is mandatory. However, some legal provisions may be misused in family disputes, creating challenges in investigation.

4) Recidivism and Rehabilitation

This section examines whether women reoffend after punishment and the role of rehabilitation in preventing repeat crimes.

Sl.no	Response Category	Officers	Percentage
01	Most women offenders do not repeat crimes	16	64%
02	Social stigma affects reintegration	14	56%
03	Rehabilitation programmes reduce reoffending	18	72%

Interpretation:

Most women do not reoffend after punishment. Proper rehabilitation, counseling, and social support play a major role in reducing repeat offences, though social stigma affects reintegration.

5) Economic Factors

This section analyses the impact of financial conditions on female criminal behaviour.

Sl.no	Response Category	Officers	Percentage
01	Financial hardship contributes to female criminal behaviour	17	68%
02	Financial independence reduces criminal involvement	20	80%

Interpretation:

Financial hardship is a major cause of female criminality. Economic independence and employment opportunities can significantly reduce women’s involvement in crime.

Conclusion

The analysis of interviews with police officers reveals that female criminality is significantly lower than male criminality and is mostly limited to non-violent offences such as theft, cheating, and domestic-related conflicts. The findings indicate that women’s involvement in crime is largely situational and influenced by socio-economic, psychological, and family-related factors rather than inherent criminal tendencies. Economic hardship, financial dependency, domestic conflicts, and emotional stress were identified as the major causes of female criminal behaviour. Women from stable and supportive backgrounds are less likely to engage in crime, highlighting the importance of family support and social stability. The study also emphasizes that education, employment opportunities, and financial independence play a crucial role in preventing crime and aiding rehabilitation.

Although legal provisions aim to protect women, they also create challenges for police during investigation, especially in family-related cases. Rehabilitation and reintegration were found to be essential, as most women offenders do not reoffend when provided with proper support. However, social stigma remains a major barrier to successful reintegration.

Overall, the study concludes that female criminality should be understood within a broader socio-economic and psychological context. Effective prevention requires a holistic approach focusing on economic empowerment, family support, mental health awareness, and rehabilitation rather than purely punitive measures.

COMPARISON OF PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE AND POLICE OFFICERS’ PERSPECTIVE ON FEMALE CRIMINALITY

To gain a comprehensive understanding of female criminality, it is important to compare the perspectives of both the general public and police officers. Public perception reflects societal attitudes and beliefs regarding women involved in crime, whereas police perspectives are based on professional experience and direct interaction with offenders during investigation and law enforcement. Comparing these viewpoints helps identify differences in understanding the causes, nature, and prevention of female criminality. The following table presents a comparative analysis of public opinion and police perspectives based on the data collected in this study.

Sl.no	Aspect	Public Perspective	Police Officers Perspective
1	Causes of Female Criminality	Many people believe women commit crimes mainly due to poverty, family problems, and social pressure.	Police officers reported that economic hardship, influence of partners, and family conflicts are

			major reasons for women’s involvement in crime.
2	Nature of Crimes	The public generally thinks women are mostly involved in minor crimes such as theft or cheating.	Police officers confirmed that most female offenders are involved in theft, fraud, and occasionally drug-related offences.
3	Influence of family	Society believes broken families, domestic violence, and lack of support lead women into criminal activities.	Police officers also observed that domestic abuse, marital conflicts, and family neglect play a significant role in female criminal behaviour.
4	Social Factors	Public opinion often connects female crime with social inequality and lack of opportunities for women.	Police officers indicated that lack of education, unemployment, and peer influence contribute to criminal involvement.
5	Psychological Factors	The public sometimes associates female crime with emotional stress and personal crises.	Police officers stated that psychological stress, trauma, and relationship problems are common among female offenders.
6	Public and Police Attitude	The public tends to view female offenders with sympathy, considering them victims of circumstances.	Police officers approach the issue from a law enforcement perspective but also acknowledge the need for rehabilitation.
7	Prevention Measures	The public believes better education, employment opportunities, and social awareness can reduce female crime.	Police officers suggested stronger social support systems, counselling, and community policing to prevent female criminality

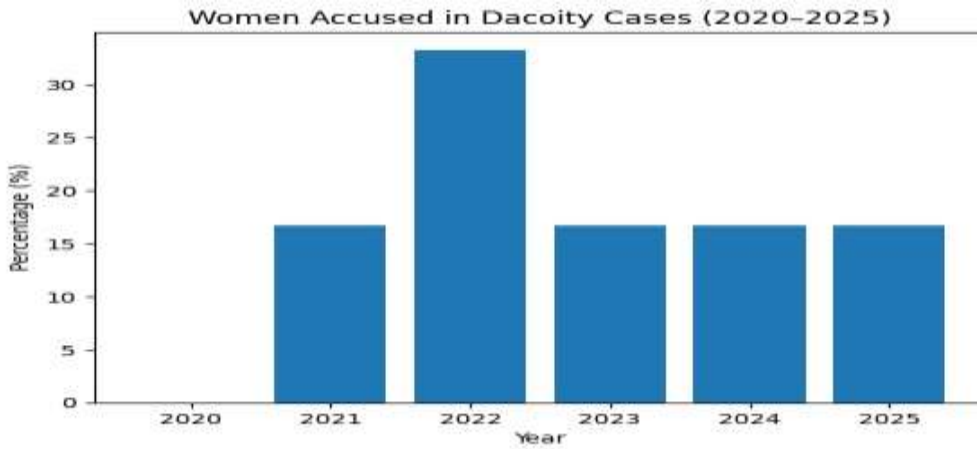
SECONDARY DATA

Graphical Analysis of Crime Trends in Kollam District (2020–2025)

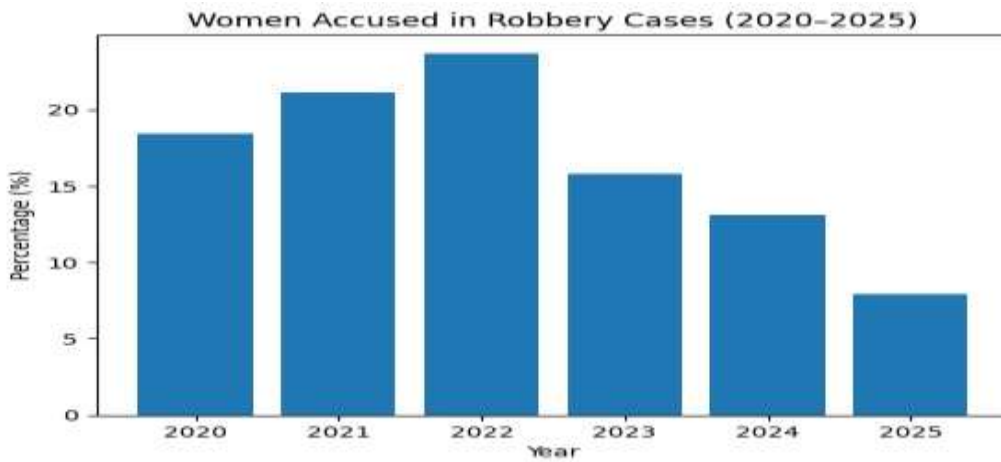
Graphical representations are used in this study to present district-level crime data in a clear and systematic manner. Secondary data were collected from the district crime records bureau (dcrb) to understand the number of cases reported during the last five years and to identify the major categories of crimes recorded in the study area. Based on this data, bar charts were prepared to illustrate year-wise trends and variations in crime reporting. The use of graphical representation helps in simplifying numerical information, facilitates easy comparison across different years, and enhances the interpretation of crime patterns. These visual representations support the analytical discussion by providing a clearer understanding of district-level crime trends in relation to the objectives of the study.

Graphs : Representing percentage of crimes

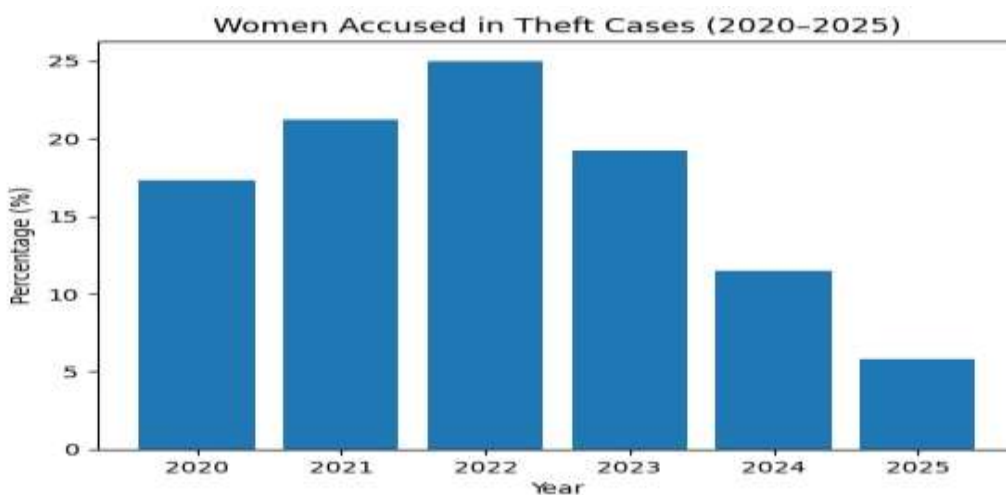
1. Dacoity



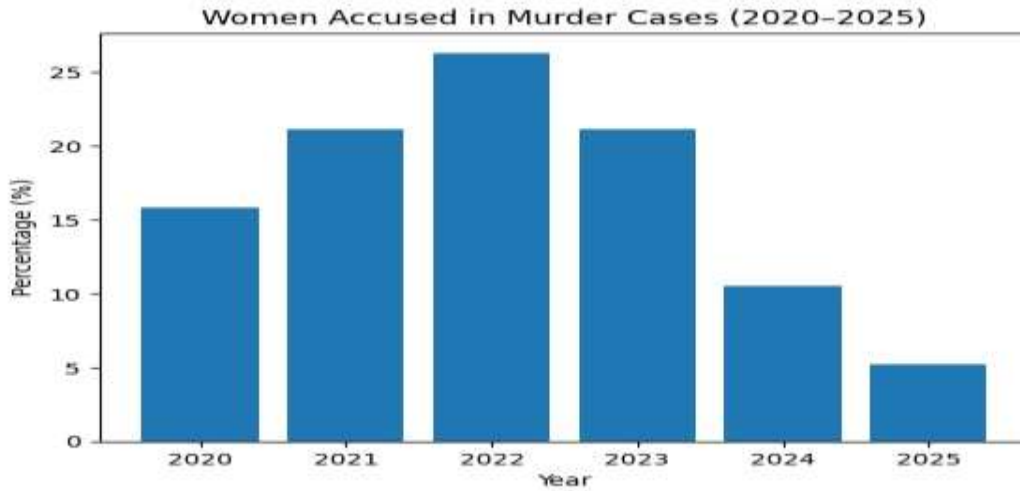
2. Robbery



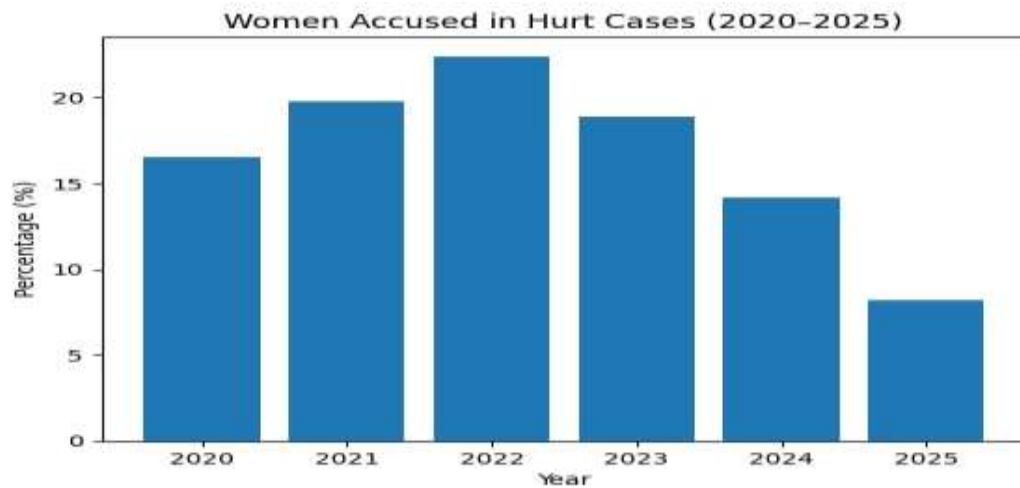
3. Theft



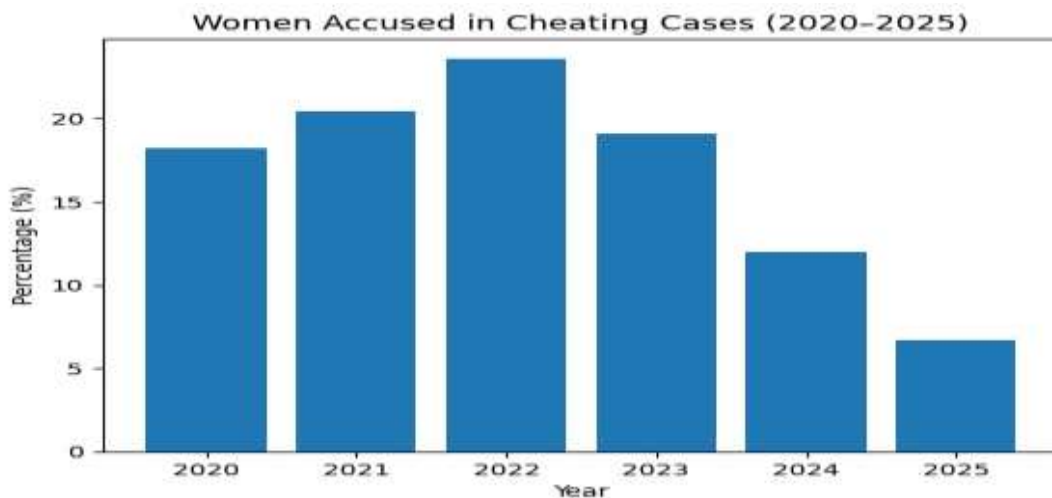
4. Murder



5. Hurt



6. Cheating



Analysis

- The analysis shows that property-related crimes, particularly theft, were reported more frequently than other types of offences during the study period. Theft cases increased gradually from 2020, peaked around 2022, and then declined after 2023, indicating a mid-period rise followed by a decrease.

- A similar trend was observed in cheating cases, which increased during the early and middle years, reaching a peak in 2021–2022, and then declined in later years. This suggests the influence of economic and situational factors during that period.
- Violent crimes such as murder remained consistently low throughout the five years, with only minor fluctuations and no steady increase. Robbery cases showed moderate levels initially, increased during 2021–2022, and declined after 2023. Dacoity remained the least reported crime, indicating that organized violent crimes were rare in the study area.
- Minor and interpersonal offences showed slight increases during 2021–2022 but declined afterward, suggesting their situational and domestic nature.
- Overall, the analysis indicates that crime levels were higher during 2021–2022 and showed a general decline in the later years. Property-related and minor offences were more common than serious violent crimes, and no crime category showed a consistent upward trend throughout the study period.

Sl.no.	Crime category	Overall trend	Peak period	Lowest period	Analytical observation
01	Theft	Initially increased, then declined	2021-22	2024-25	Theft showed higher occurrence during the middle years of the study, followed by a reduction in recent years.
02	Cheating	Gradual increase and later decrease	2021-22	2023-25	Cheating cases were more prominent during the early and middle period and declined thereafter.
03	Robbery	Moderate increase followed by decline	2021-22	2024-25	Robbery incidents reduced steadily after a brief increase in the middle years.
04	Murder	Consistently low with minor fluctuation	2022	2020,2024-25	Serious violent crime remained limited without any continuous upward trend.
05	Dacoity	Very low and stable	-	All years	Organised violent offences were rare throughout the study period.
06	Hurt/interpersonl offence	Relatively stable, slight decline	2021-22	2024-25	Mostly associated with interpersonal or domestic disputes rather than organised crime.
07	Other petty Offence	Fluctuating with declining trend	2021-22	2024-25	Minor offences showed reduction in recent years, indicating improved

					control or reporting patterns.
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FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Findings

1. Female criminality is perceived to be increasing, but this is mainly due to better reporting, awareness, and media visibility rather than an actual rise in crime.
2. Economic pressure is a major factor, with financial stress, unemployment, and survival needs leading women to commit crimes such as theft and fraud.
3. Family conflicts and domestic issues significantly influence female criminal behaviour, with most offences occurring within familiar settings.
4. Psychological and emotional stress plays a key role, with many crimes being situational responses rather than planned actions.
5. Most crimes committed by women are non-violent in nature, while serious violent crimes are rare and linked to extreme circumstances.
6. Female criminal behaviour is largely situational, influenced by life conditions rather than habitual criminal tendencies.
7. Social change and urbanization have increased pressures and opportunities that may influence women’s involvement in crime.
8. Women have limited involvement in organized crime and are more likely to act individually or within family contexts.
9. Substance abuse contributes in some cases but is not a primary factor.
10. Education, awareness, and social support play a crucial role in preventing crime and reducing reoffending.

Recommendations

- **Mental Health & Counseling:** Promote awareness, reduce stigma, and provide counseling support at police and community levels.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Encourage skill development, employment, and self-employment opportunities for women.
- **Family & Youth Support:** Strengthen parenting awareness, school counseling, and youth programs to prevent early risk factors.
- **Police & Legal Awareness:** Ensure gender-sensitive policing, proper use of laws, and increased public awareness of legal rights.
- **Rehabilitation & Reintegration:** Improve rehabilitation programs, reduce social stigma, and support reintegration of women offenders.

Conclusion

Female criminality is a complex issue influenced by economic, social, and psychological factors. Although women’s involvement in crime is lower than men, it requires focused attention due to its unique nature. The study reveals that most crimes committed by women are situational, arising from financial difficulties, domestic conflicts, and emotional stress rather than criminal intent.

A holistic approach is essential to address female criminality effectively. Strategies should focus on economic empowerment, family support, mental health awareness, and rehabilitation rather than purely punitive measures. Understanding these underlying factors can help develop more effective and gender-sensitive criminal justice policies, ultimately contributing to both crime prevention and social reintegration.

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