

Perception on Crime: Knowledge and Awareness among Males and Females in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Government of Malaysia has put forward various efforts and policies in reducing crime consistently with the national development process in order to enhance the quality of life of citizens. The establishment of Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) in the year 1993 has geared government efforts towards crime prevention. Malaysia government aims to reduce the crime index by five percent annually during the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (11MP) period of 2016 to 2020 and increase the perception of feeling safe to 60 percent in 2020. Females are said to demonstrate lower arrest rates than males for many crimes involved except prostitution. This is true in all countries for which data are available for all racial and ethnic groups, and for every historical period. Prior research has consistently shown that women are more afraid of crime than men. Statistics have been consistent in reporting that men commit more criminal acts than women. However, recent trend claim that crime committed by women are increasingly faster than male, as measured by the percentage of female arrests in certain countries. Hence, relevant knowledge and awareness on crime must be disseminated widely to reduce an increment in crime statistic be it among perpetrator or victim. This study tried to look at perception among male and female youths in terms of their knowledge and awareness of crime in Malaysia.

Keywords: crime; awareness on crime; knowledge on crime and gender.

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INTRODUCTION

Public security is one of the vital pillars towards becoming an advanced nation by 2020. A secure environment has a major contribution to robust as well as sustained economic wellbeing and growth of the society. As stated by Datuk Mohammad Mentek, Secretary General Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government of Malaysia in his speech in October 2016, Malaysia is on her track to support and achieve the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development. Crime may have negative effects on communities and society as a whole in ways that go beyond the residents of the community in which the crime occurs. Crime can be thought as an act committed in violation of law forbidding or commanding it whereby, punishment is executed upon conviction. It is a serious and growing international problem. The question need to be posed is do male and female youths differ in their perception on involvement in crime activities? This article will explore their perception on crime and also their awareness and knowledge on crime. The survey was conducted among male and female respondents to know their differences on knowledge and awareness on crime. Findings based on the study will be further discussed.

Definitions of Crime

Scholars defined crimes as violent and property crimes (Habibullah, Baharom, and Tan, 2013). The definition is based on the basis of entity where the crime is committed. Usually, violent crime is related to crimes committed towards human beings and the brute manner in which it might harm to a person, his personality as well as damage property. Habibullah et al. (2013) in his definition stated that violent crime is a criminal activity that involved an act of brute force engaged in taking of either property or a person's life. As stated by Dambazau (2007), violent crime is an act of forcible taking of property from a victim that might lead to injury or loss of life. According to Ajaegbu (2012), violent crime can be considered as the most 'inhumane' crime that can plague the societies thus leading to bloodshed and economic setbacks. Generally, violent crime is significant in causing hurt (Amar, 2005). The examples of violent crimes include robbery, rape, kidnapping, serious assault, terrorism, murder and homicide (Dambazau, 2007; Habibullah *et al.*, 2013). Another type of crime which is property crime, can be viewed as those offences committed on properties without force in taking or stealing property. This definition is aligned to definition by Amar (2005) who defined property crimes as those offences relating to loss of property. However, some scholars emphasized that property crimes are offences on property either with or without violence force. Those with violent are to include robbery, snatch theft, pilfering, pick-pocketing and many more while property crime without violence are to include burglary, theft, crash, robbery, stealing, house breaking, and vehicle theft (Habibullah et al., 2013; Dambazau, 2007a; Ajaegbu, 2012).

Problem Statement

Crime rates are on the rise in Malaysia. The overall index crime rate increased from 746 reported crimes per 100,000 people in 2006 to 767 in 2007, a rise of nearly 3%. Even though index crimes remained stable in 2008 and 2009 as reported by Performance Management and Delivery Unit (*PEMANDU*), compared to the statistics for 2012 in 6 months (January- June), there was 76,247 cases. This dropped by 2,120 cases or 2.85% to 74,127 in 2013 (Sukumaran, 2013).

According to Royal Malaysian Police, Selangor has the highest rate of crime compared to other states. The number of cases regarding violent crime in Selangor is 2471 cases in 2015. The number of crime increased to 3109 cases in 2016. The statistic on property crime in Selangor also increased from 10398 cases in 2015 and 11545 in this year. Kelantan has the fewest number of violent crime with 288 cases reported in 2015 and 233 cases in 2016. Sabah was recorded as the lowest number of property crime cases with 1545 cases in 2015 and 1913 cases in 2016. Although Kelantan and Sabah have the lowest number of crime but the figure in both states showed an increasing trend. The general crime index until May for year 2016 for Johor, Kedah and Sarawak is 5164, 2948 and 2715 cases respectively.

Crime rates and gender have produced numerous justifications in various ways. Denno (1994) stated that genders can be considered as predictors of crimes where male are frequently expected to be more aggressive than female. Research done by Scottish Prison Service in 2002 had proved that males committed more crimes compared to females since they involved in criminal activity more than women “always and everywhere” (Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990:145). Males are naturally rewarded for facing risks in childhood (Bowen 2009) and typically receive a higher payoff from the crimes that they commit (Bowen, 2009), thus makes them more motivated to commit crime. However, in certain areas of criminality such as theft and fraud, female offence rates seem to be growing faster compared to males (Steffensmeir & Allan, 1996). Widom (1989) stated that the probability of neglected or abused girls is twice as likely to have an adult criminal record. Research carried out by Box & Hale (1983) also resulted a similar explanation for increases in female criminality. According to them, both recession and economic marginality of women could be the reason for increase in female crime but still remains their role. The statement was aligned with another scholar, Steffensmeir & Allen (1996) who claimed that like male offenders, females tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds are less educated and often unemployed. Rhee & Waldman (2002) in her studied has revealed that the magnitude of genetic and environmental effects on antisocial behavior was similar for both male and female. In other words, Rhee and friend have found that there is no difference between the rate of crime and gender. Another factor that can be used to support statement by Rhee and friend is the gender has no effect on the antisocial and crime behavior due to another factor which is the criminal’s age. Previous research has revealed that the rate of crime was affected by the age of the criminals.

Nonetheless, according to Abdul Rasheed et.al (2016), gender is a salient predictor of criminal conduct. Both men and women commit crime but vary in their crime rates. The gap in the crime rate of men and women can be said to be sheer and significant in virtually all known human societies- primitive, modern, developed, developing and underdeveloped- and for most crime groups. In other words, most criminal justice and safety specialists as well as most of the people involved in the criminal justice system are

men. This comes as a result of the stereotypical opinion that men commit much more severe criminal violations than women, and that most women's crimes are spontaneous and unintentional. However, prevention on crime involvement can be enhanced among male and female, especially youths if they have better knowledge and awareness about their involvement in crime activities. Therefore, there is a need to conduct the survey among male and female respondents about their perception on crime by focusing on their knowledge and awareness on crime in Malaysia. The finding will help relevant policy stakeholders to further take proper action plan.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative method by using a set of questionnaire. The usage of questionnaire will help researchers to measure the differences between gender. It is because quantitative data can be measured through the measurement process and requires measurement tools such as questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is on the respondent's demographic background such as gender, religion, race, state and age while the second part focus on to identifying respondents' knowledge on crimes by asking whether certain behaviors are considered as crime or otherwise. The last part of the instrument targets to explore the awareness of crimes among men and women. There were 953 set of questionnaires has been distributed to respondents covered states in Malaysia. Out of the 953 sets of questionnaire distributed, 883 questionnaires were completed and returned.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part will discuss the findings of the survey conducted. It will begin with respondent's demographic information, followed by their knowledge on crime behaviors and their sources of information regarding crime. Apart from that, awareness on crime will also be discussed to comprehend whether men or women are more concern of crime.

Table 1

Demographic Background

No.	Variable	<i>f</i>	%
1	Gender		
	<i>Male</i>	358	40.6
	<i>Female</i>	524	59.4
	Total	882	100.0

No.	Variable	<i>f</i>	%
	<i>Missing</i>	1	□
2	Religion		
	<i>Islam</i>	774	87.8
	<i>Buddha</i>	41	4.6
	<i>Hindu</i>	21	2.4
	<i>Christian</i>	44	5.0
	<i>Others</i>	2	.2
	Total	882	100.0
	<i>Missing</i>	1	□
3	Ethnic		
	<i>Malay</i>	739	84.2
	<i>Chinese</i>	52	5.9
	<i>Indian</i>	23	2.6
	<i>Others</i>	64	7.3
	Total	878	100.0
	<i>Missing</i>	5	□
4	State		
	<i>Perlis</i>	1	.1
	<i>Kedah</i>	216	24.5
	<i>Pulau Pinang</i>	3	.3
	<i>Perak</i>	4	.5
	<i>Selangor</i>	70	7.9
	<i>Kuala Lumpur</i>	3	.3
	<i>Negeri Sembilan</i>	1	.1
	<i>Sarawak</i>	70	7.9
	<i>Melaka</i>	3	.3
	<i>Johor</i>	209	23.7
	<i>Pahang</i>	27	3.1
	<i>Terengganu</i>	2	.2
	<i>Kelantan</i>	200	22.7
	<i>Sabah</i>	71	8.0
	<i>Labuan</i>	3	.3

No.	Variable	f	%
	Total	883	100.0
5	Age		
	15 to 20	119	13.5
	21 to 25	480	54.6
	26 to 30	148	16.8
	31 to 35	76	8.6
	36 to 40	56	6.4
	Total	879	100.0
	Missing	4	□

The results of the above demographic table (Table 1) show that most of the respondents are female with 59.4 percent (n=524) while male respondents represent 40.6 percent (n=358). The finding of the analysis showed that dominant respondents are Muslims (87.7 percent, n=773) which is the highest percentage. This figure followed by members of Christianity (5.0 percent, n=44), then, Buddha respondents (4.7 percent, n=41) and Hindu with (2.4 percent, n=21). Others recorded the lowest number of respondents with only 0.2 percent (n=2). Majority of female and male respondents were Muslim with 52.1 percent (n=459) and 35.6 percent (n= 314) respectively.

Similarly, there are four different races of respondents which are Malay, Chinese, Indian and others. Malay recorded the highest number of respondents with 84.2 percent (n=739), followed by others with 7.3 percent (n=64). Chinese respondents recorded the total number of 5.9 percent (n=52) while Indian recorded the lowest number of respondents with only 2.6 percent (n=23). Majority of female and male respondents were Malay with 50 percent (n=438) and 34.2 percent (n= 300) respectively.

The respondents are from 13 (thirteen) states of Malaysia; Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan, Sarawak, Johor, Terengganu, Kelantan, Sabah and Labuan. Among the states, Kedah recorded the highest number of respondents with 24.4 percent (n=215) while both Perlis and Negeri Sembilan recorded the least percentage number of respondents with only 0.1 percent (n=1) respectively. Majority of male respondents were from Johor with 9.4 percent (n=83) and majority of female respondent were from Kedah with 16 percent (n=141).

The range of respondents' age are categorized into seven (7) age groups including 15 -20 years old, 21-25 years old, 26-30 years old, 31-35 years old, and 36-40 years old. Majority of the respondents' age are within 21-25 years' old which are equal to 54.6 percent (n=479) followed by respondents in the range of 26-30 years old with 16.8 percent (n=148).

Respondents in the age between 36-40 years old are seen to have the least percentage of respondents with 6.4 percent (n=56). There are 4 (four) missing data identified in this variable. Majority of female and male respondents were among 21-25 years old with 36.8 percent (n=323) and 17.7 percent (n=156) respectively.

Knowledge on Crime

One of the sections in the questionnaire asks respondents about their knowledge on crime. The respondents have to identify whether the behaviors listed can be considered as crime or otherwise.

Table 2

Knowledge on Crime

	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Bullying	296 (82.7%)	62 (17.3%)	392 (74.8%)	132 (25.2%)
<i>Merempit</i>	260 (72.6%)	98 (27.4%)	345 (65.8%)	179 (34.2%)
Rape	341 (95.3%)	17 (4.7%)	496 (94.7%)	28 (5.3%)
Loitering	94 (26.3%)	264 (73.7%)	109 (20.8%)	415 (79.2%)
Bribery	311 (86.9%)	47 (13.1%)	454 (86.6%)	70 (13.4%)
Gambling	248 (69.3%)	110 (30.7%)	336 (64.1%)	188 (35.9%)
Drug Addiction	323 (90.2%)	35 (9.8%)	470 (89.7%)	54 (10.3%)
Glue/Kratom Addiction	261 (72.9%)	97 (27.1%)	367 (70.0%)	157 (30.0%)
Vaping/Smoking	99 (27.7%)	259 (72.3%)	137 (26.1%)	387 (73.9%)
Pornography	158 (44.1%)	200 (55.9%)	221 (42.2%)	302 (57.6%)
Extra marital Affairs	212 (59.2%)	146 (40.8%)	321 (61.3%)	203 (38.7%)
Involvement in Gangs	263 (73.5%)	95 (26.5%)	351 (66.9%)	173 (33.1%)
Illegal Car/Motorcycle Racing	291 (55.5%)	67 (44.5%)	413 (78.8%)	111 (21.2%)

Table 2 unfolds the results on the respondents' knowledge of crime. The first question is about respondents' knowledge on crime of killing. Out of total number of respondents, 74.8 percent (n=392) of female and 82.7 percent (n=296) of male agreed that bullying is part of crime. When asked about illegal fast driving (*merempit*), out of all respondents, 72.6 percent (n=345) of female and 65.8 percent (n=260) of male agreed that it is part of crime. With regard to drug addiction and bribery, again both genders had consistently viewed them high as crimes at approximately 90 and 86 percent. Meanwhile, among the 13 activities listed, the bottom three actions that were

not regarded as crimes by both genders include loitering (highest negative response) at an average of 75 percent, vaping/smoking at 72 percent, and pornography at 56 percent.

Sources of Crime

Another section of the questionnaire asked respondents' view on sources of crime. Table 3 shows the summary of the findings.

Table 3

Sources of Crime Information

	Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Social Media	317 (88.5%)	41 (11.5%)	490 (93.5%)	34 (6.5%)
Friends	210 (58.7%)	148 (41.3%)	286 (54.6%)	238 (45.4%)
Residents	166 (46.4%)	192 (53.6%)	212 (40.5%)	312 (59.5%)
Internet	217 (60.6%)	141 (39.4%)	353 (67.4%)	171 (32.6%)
Newspaper/magazine	139 (38.8%)	219 (61.2%)	213 (40.6%)	311 (59.4%)
Gadget (WhatsApp/ wechat)	251 (70.1%)	105 (29.3%)	351 (67.0%)	173 (33.0%)

Based on Table 3, most of the respondents in this study obtain their sources of crime information from social media regardless of gender where men recorded 88.5% while women scored higher with a percentage of 93.5%. This is followed by gadget and internet sources which amounted between 60-70% for both male and female respondents as sources of crime information. Newspaper or magazine and residents are the least medium use to obtain information on crime for both gender. This proved that proliferation of modern and complex information communication technology (ICT) including the borderless connectivity of the World Wide Web (www) have expressively transformed the way nation states deals with their security, political, economic and social issues. Hence, crime prevention measures and awareness should be promoted using ICT as well to obtain wider accessibility (Chika, 2014).

Awareness on Crimes

Table 4 demonstrate respondents' awareness on crime as shown below based on feedback from 882 participants.

Table 4*Awareness on Crime*

	Level of Awareness					Total
	Not Very concern	Not Concern	Neutral	Concern	Very Concern	
Male	3 (0.8%)	9 (2.5%)	24 (6.7%)	200 (55.9%)	122 (34.1%)	358
Female	7 (1.3%)	12 (2.3%)	29 (5.5%)	326 (62.2%)	150 (28.6%)	524
	10	21	53	526	272	882

In completing this analysis, the respondents were asked to identify their level of sensitivity and awareness on crimes. Five (5) scales were given to measure their sensitivity. The scales include very not concern, not concern, neutral, concern and very concern. Majority of male respondents or 90 percent indicated they were concerned on crime, with 55.9 percent (n=200) who answered concern and 34.1 percent (n=122) who answered very concerned. This figure is aligned with female respondents' answers, in which 91 percent or 476 respondents indicated that they were concerned on any related to crime issues or activities. 62.2 percent (n=326) of them responded concern, while 28.6 percent (n=150) responded very concerned on crime awareness. Further to this scenario about the sensitivity or awareness on crimes issues and activities, only about 3 percent (n=12) of male respondents and about 4 percent (n=19) of female respondents are not concerned or aware on any related to crime issues and activities. Besides, approximately 6 percent of all respondents (n=53) were clueless or neutral (no feedback) on crime issues and activities since they answered neutral. In other words, the level of awareness on crime among men and women are approximately identical. It means there is no concrete and proven evidence that reveals the inherent personality tendency of female and is quite different from that of male (Abdul Rasheed et.al, 2016).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, crime has been defined by scholars in different ways and commonly referred to as violent committed towards human beings. Besides, violent is brute manner in which it might harm a person, his personality as well as damage property. The prevalence of crime in the world today is a cause for serious concern for all and sundry. It undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security. Crime impacts on society in a variety of ways according to the nature and extent of crime committed. It constitutes a problem when its incidence is as rampant in the society as to constitute a threat to the security of persons and property, as well as social

order and solidarity (Onoge, 1998). By learning why women commit less crime than men can help illuminate the underlying causes of crime and how it might better be controlled. The relationship between gender and crime is intense and persistent. Both women and men commit and are victims of crime, but their perspectives, understanding, and interpretation of the crime are likely to be different. However, this research has been conducted to get some information whether females do differ with males in terms of knowledge on crime, sources of crime and awareness on crime. Knowledge on crime shows that there is not much difference among male and female respondents. Majority of the respondents tends to view the listed activities as crime. Surprisingly, both female and male respondents agreed that loitering and vaping is not crime even though government has specific law to cater those activities. In terms of sources of information on crime, majority male and female respondents get the information from social media followed by internet and gadget that they have immediate access on it. The finding suggests that usage of social media is a good source of information to enhance their knowledge on crime. However, there is a different between male and female respondents towards awareness on crime. The finding indicates that male respondents are more concerned on crime as opposed to female respondents. This can be associated with Geraghty (2015) argument, that the different methods of socialization of males and females could account for the differences in crime committed by men and women.

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