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Understanding the Concept of Crime and the Typology of Offenders in the Holy Qur'an with Reference to Criminal Sciences

1. Tahereh. Bornaki ¹: Department of Qur'anic Sciences and Hadith, SR.C., Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
2. Ali. Nasiri ^{2*}: Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran
3. Mahdi. Momeni ³: Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

*corresponding author's email: Na25915@iust.ac.ir

ABSTRACT

The Holy Qur'an refers to violations of divine commands using expressions such as *ithm* (sin), *ma'siyah* (disobedience), *munkar* (wrongdoing), *khaṭī'ah* (fault), and similar terms, and introduces various worldly and otherworldly punishments as enforcement mechanisms for failing to comply with religious obligations and divine injunctions. In Islam, criminalization and the imposition of punishment outside the framework of divine law are considered illegitimate. In criminological science, relying on human legislative criteria, the term crime or offense is applied to any act or omission deemed dangerous to the majority of society. Between the religious concept of sin and the legal-criminological concept of crime, there exists a relationship of partial overlap. The primary characteristic of crime in criminology and criminal sciences is the existence of penal sanctions. Therefore, equating these two concepts and extending punishment to all prohibited acts is incorrect. The principal basis for the classification of offenders in both the Holy Qur'an and criminological science is largely related to the psychological and personality conditions of individuals as well as the acts they commit. Criminology refers to this condition as the "dangerous state." Similarly, in the Holy Qur'an, hypocrisy, disbelief, polytheism, and the conscious denial of truth are regarded as characteristics of offenders who, due to eternal punishment, are classified among the most dangerous criminals. Accordingly, the Holy Qur'an does not treat all offenders uniformly but recognizes their classification. In criminal sciences, the classification of offenders is considered a fundamental strategy in determining social responses to criminal phenomena—a strategy that, through engagement with Qur'anic teachings, may contribute to the transformation of criminal justice systems in Islamic countries.

Keywords: *Holy Qur'an, Criminology, Criminal Sciences, Classification, Crime, Offender.*

Introduction

Social relations within any society reflect the level of its cultural growth and development. Therefore, in an advanced society, the relationship between social and cultural interactions and adherence to social laws and norms is undeniable and unquestionable. Among social phenomena, crime occupies a distinctive position, because it threatens social security as well as individuals' beliefs, life, property, and honor, which constitute the foundations of social existence. It is evident that collective human life, in order to preserve itself, inherently requires a set of rules



and regulations through whose observance the rights of individuals and different social groups are protected and guaranteed; violation of these rules consequently gives rise to penal sanctions (1, 2).

At this point, concepts such as “crime,” “offense,” “offender,” and consequently “punishment” emerge. Laws are formulated and implemented. Human intellectual schools and divine religions have each presented definitions of crime, offender, and forms of punishment in various ways and have subsequently established structured legal systems and codified regulations. Within the Islamic divine system, deviation from the straight path and disobedience of divine commands, as well as any inclination toward falsehood and violation of rights, are condemned. In general, whatever God has prohibited and attached worldly or otherworldly punishment to is regarded as sin and crime. For this reason, criminology is more closely connected than many other branches of law with the religious and theological culture of Islamic societies (3, 4).

The central issue of the present study is the clarification of the concept of crime and offender and the determination of their instances within the Holy Qur’an and criminal sciences. This involves examining the nature of criminal phenomena, the emergence of criminal behavior, the causes of crime, and the various forms through which crime manifests itself. The foundation of most discussions in criminal sciences concerns the nature of crime itself. Clarifying this nature plays a significant role in identifying criminal instances and in the classification of crimes and offenders. The importance of this fundamental research—particularly within our judicial and legal system—is undeniable, because crime in Islamic law has not been defined in the same manner as in modern positive law. Islamic jurists and scholars, instead of providing a precise definition of crime, have generally limited themselves to classifying crimes based on the type of punishment prescribed (5, 6).

In order to understand the concept of crime, scholars have relied on linguistic meanings, lexical derivatives appearing in Qur’anic verses, and related concepts such as *dhanb* (sin), *ithm* (transgression), and *khaṭī’ah* (fault). By examining legal rulings and textual evidence concerning certain crimes and punishments mentioned in the Qur’an and prophetic traditions, as well as interpretations offered by Islamic jurists, a jurisprudential and Qur’anic conception of crime has been inferred (7-9).

The present research seeks to define and delineate the boundaries of the nature of crime and offender and to determine their examples. Acts declared prohibited in the Holy Qur’an are examined on the basis that Qur’anic prohibition is equivalent to criminality, and their religious consequences include worldly or otherworldly punishment. The legal and religious implications of various terms used in the Qur’an to denote prohibited acts are analyzed and compared with criminological knowledge. A general examination of the Qur’an reveals that God does not treat all offenders identically; rather, distinctions are made among them. Some offenders are considered unforgivable, whereas others—provided repentance occurs and persistence in disobedience ceases—are deemed deserving of forgiveness and even divine reward. Accordingly, the classification of offenders in the Qur’an represents a relatively neglected subject. A precise and comprehensive clarification of this classification may open new perspectives in criminology and criminal sciences within a Qur’anic framework and enhance the integration of this scientific discipline into Qur’anic studies and the national legal system (10, 11).

Research Method

This study is fundamental in nature. Data were collected through library research and systematic note-taking and subsequently analyzed using a descriptive analytical method. Initially, the term “crime” and related expressions conveying similar meanings were examined through conceptual analysis. In this regard, all Qur’anic verses and

contexts related to crime and offenders—amounting to 881 verses—were subjected to thematic examination, after which conceptual findings were organized and formulated. Subsequently, the results were analyzed using both Shi'i and Sunni Qur'anic commentaries alongside criminological sources. Finally, the classification of offenders and the concepts of crime and offender in criminology were analyzed comparatively, and their similarities and differences were evaluated through a comparative analytical approach (12, 13).

The Lexical Meaning of Crime

The word “crime” (*jurm*) derives from the trilateral Arabic root *j-r-m* with an initial *fathah* (open vowel). Its verbal noun (*maṣdar*) is *jarm*, meaning “to cut.” The original lexical meaning of *jarm* in Arabic refers to cutting, severing, detaching, or harvesting fruit from a tree (9, 14). The noun *jurm* (with a dammah on the first letter) signifies error, offense, or sin (15). Its English equivalent corresponds to *offence* or *crime*, and it also conveys the meaning of transgression and the verbal sense of *dhanb*—that is, committing sin or engaging in an act accompanied by wrongdoing. Its plural forms include *ijrām* and *jurūm*, referring to the commission of wrongdoing or the acquisition of blameworthy acts, where the acquisition of reprehensible conduct implies disobedience (7).

The term *jarīmah* (penalty or crime) is derived from the same root, and expressions such as *ajrama* and *ijtaram* have likewise been used in this semantic field (16). Additionally, the expression *jarama yajrim jaraman* has also been used in the sense of determining or fixing a time associated with cutting or separation, as reflected in Qur'anic usage and classical exegetical discussions (17).

The Use of the Term *Jurm* (Crime) in the Qur'an

The word *jurm* (جُرْم) does not appear in the Holy Qur'an in its nominal form; however, its derivatives from the root *j-r-m* occur 66 times across 36 Qur'anic chapters. The number of verses relating to crime and offenders in the Qur'an—like those relating to believers and the God-fearing—is very large. In counting the terms connected to this root (*j-r-m*), the total number of verses directly containing the derivatives reaches 65, and when the relevant contexts are included, the number expands to 881 verses concerning crime and the offender (as shown in a table appended at the end of the thesis). At this point, for a clearer understanding of the lexical sense reflected in Qur'anic language regarding *jurm* and its derivatives, the following points are noteworthy.

The expression *lā jarama* (لاجرم) appears in five places in the Qur'an. (18)

Lā jarama means “without doubt” and “inevitably,” and in its original sense conveys “certainly,” “necessarily,” “unavoidably,” and “invariably.” Due to frequent usage, it has also been used with the sense of an oath and conveys the meaning of “truly/indeed.” (14, 16, 19)

In grammatical terms, *lā* here is *lā nāfiyah li'l-jins* (the genus-negating *lā*), and *jarm* is a noun built on *fath* (indeclinable with a final *fathah*). (20, 21)

Moreover, *jarama* and *jurm(a)* can also carry the meaning of “but/however” specifically in this construction after *lā*. The Qur'anic use of *lā jarama* functions as an alert and warning that there is no injustice in the consequence: if the fire becomes their lot, it is because they have themselves acquired punishment through their deeds and what they have committed—pointing to the same meaning expressed in the verse, “...and whoever does evil, it is against himself...”. (9)

The term *al-mujrimīn* (the offenders) appears 34 times in the Holy Qur'an. (7)

By *mujrimīn* is meant those characterized by *jurm*—those who possess a criminal/offending trait and are wrongdoers. The *mujrim* is also described as one who drives others into *جرم* (i.e., draws others into wrongdoing). (22)

Among these 34 occurrences, 19 instances appear as *al-mujrimīn*—the active participle derived from *ajrama*. (7)

In combination with prepositions, it occurs a total of five times: *ka'l-mujrimīn* (like the offenders) appears twice; *li'l-mujrimīn* appears twice; and *bi'l-mujrimīn* appears in Qur'anic usage as prepositional constructions. It also appears as an adjectival masculine sound plural (*mujrimīn*) a total of ten times. (7, 8, 22, 23)

It appears once in the imperfect verb form *tujrimūn* (تُجرمون), and once in the perfect first-person plural *ajramnā* (أَجْرَمْنَا). Likewise, *al-mujrim* (المُجرم)—meaning a sinner/offender, one who commits *جرم*—occurs once in the Qur'an. The form *ijrāmī* is treated as an analogical verbal noun connected to *ajrama*, and the plural of *jurm* is also reported as occurring once. (23)

The expression *akābir mujrimīhā* (the greatest offenders thereof), meaning the major offenders and great wrongdoers, also appears once in the Holy Qur'an. (7)

The word *mujriman* (مجرماً), which occurs once in the Qur'an, has been interpreted as meaning the agent of *jurm*, sin, and wrongdoing, and its grammatical status is a circumstantial accusative (*ḥāl maṣṣūb*). (22)

In three locations of the Qur'an, the form *lā yajrimannakum* (لا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ) appears with the meaning “let it not cause/drive you [to do something].” (22)

It is an imperfect verb built on *fath*, and it has been explained—depending on vocalization and grammatical school—as conveying nuances such as “not to bring about,” “not to reach you,” or “not to incite you,” with discussion of how certain Basran grammarians treat its vocalization. (9, 23)

The phrase *lā yajrimannakum* is also treated as a prohibition related to *jurm* in the sense of “bearing/attributing sin,” and it has also been interpreted with reference to unbelief in certain readings, and likewise taken to mean “let it not carry you” or “let it not make you acquire [wrongdoing].” (8, 20, 24)

In view of the lexical meaning of *jurm* and what is derived from the three cited verses, it may be concluded that *jurm* and *jarīmah* (crime/penal wrongdoing) in the lexicon denote the commission of ugly, blameworthy acts contrary to truth and justice. (9, 19)

The forms *mujrimūn* and *al-mujrimūn* are cited as active subject forms (and related participial usages) 15 times in the Holy Qur'an. (25)

In the Holy Qur'an, the verb form *ajramū* (أَجْرَمُوا) is mentioned three times. (19)

It is also discussed that in contexts of “acquiring” an increase in sin, *ajrama* is used, whereas in other cases *jurm* appears—an issue treated within grammatical/exegetical analysis. (23)

Considering the totality of verses related to *jurm* and its derivatives in the Holy Qur'an, it can be said that a direct, explicit definition of “crime” is not presented in the Qur'an; rather, a definition must be inferred from the broad set of concepts and instances for which the Qur'an employs this term-family. The term *jurm* in the Qur'an is general and includes criminal behavior as well as deviant beliefs and moral deviations. (26)

This meaning can also be extended to terms such as *ithm*, *ma'ṣiyah*, and *khaṭī'ah*, which—within this inferred definition—share a single underlying nature: disobedience to God, defiance of His commands and prohibitions, abandonment of what He has ordered, and commission of what He has forbidden, in a manner that results in liability to punishment. (25)

That is, in the Qur'anic conception, crime is an act or omission that removes a person from the straight path that God has delineated in various verses and renders him deserving of Hell. (4)

Therefore, from the Islamic viewpoint, “crime” and “sin” in the general sense refer to disobedience to commands and prohibitions issued from the Divine Lordship—conduct that leads to the corruption of both individual and society—because, in Islamic law, legislative authority belongs to God, and the determination of interests and harms and the rules of believers’ worldly life lies with Him. (1)

Qur'anic Terms Analogous to *Jurm* (Crime)

The concept derived from the term *jurm* in Arabic lexicon, Qur'anic discourse, and the Sharī'ah—discussed in the preceding sections—also appears, to varying degrees, in other Qur'anic words and expressions. Attention to these terms, which are technically referred to as “analogues” (*naẓā'ir*), is essential for the conceptual analysis of the term *jurm*. These Qur'anic terms that function as equivalents or near-equivalents to *jurm* include:

“Ithm, dhanb, sayyi'ah, khaṭī'ah, junāḥ, sharr, fujūr, fisq, fasād, ḥinth, lamam, thiql, wizr, 'anat, faḥshā', ḥarām, munkar ...”.

The following table presents a list of verses containing the word-family of *jurm*, *mujrim*, and their derivatives, as well as the contextual ranges (*siyāq*) that constitute the primary corpus of the thematic study of crime and the offender from the Qur'anic perspective. This compilation was prepared by consulting *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*. The verses were arranged according to the numbering of their sūrahs from the end of the Qur'an to the beginning. In listing the Qur'anic references, the focal term is reproduced exactly as it appears in the verse so that each verse can retain a clear “identity record” throughout the study, enabling recognition of variations in usage across different passages and determination of the keyword's syntactic/semantic position within each verse. In preparing the contextual list, the starting and ending verse numbers of each relevant context were specified, and the number of verses encompassed by each context was recorded in the final column. With these clarifications in view, please refer to the following table. (20)

Table 1. Verses Containing the Term-Family of *Jurm/Mujrim* and Their Derivatives in the Qur'an (19)

Row	Sūrah (No.)	Verse	Exact word in verse	Context start verse / context end verse	Number of verses in each context
1	al-Muṭaffifin (83)	29	أَخْرَجُوا	1 to 36	36
2	al-Mursalāt (77)	46	مجرمون	41 to 50	10
3	al-Mursalāt (77)	18	بالمُجرمين	1 to 40	40
4	al-Muddaththir (74)	41	المُجرمين	32 to 56	25
5	al-Ma'ārij (70)	11	المُجرم	1 to 35	35
6	al-Qalam (68)	35	كالمُجرمين	34 to 52	19
7	al-Raḥmān (55)	43	المُجرمون	26 to 45	20
8	al-Raḥmān (55)	41	المُجرمون	26 to 45	—
9	al-Qamar (54)	47	المُجرمين	41 to 55	15
10	al-Dhāriyāt (51)	32	مُجرمين	24 to 46	23
11	al-Aḥqāf (46)	25	المُجرمين	21 to 26	6
12	al-Jāthiyah (45)	31	مُجرمين	27 to 37	11
13	al-Dukhān (44)	37	مُجرمين	30 to 42	13
14	al-Dukhān (44)	22	مُجرمون	1 to 29	29
15	al-Zukhruf (43)	74	المُجرمين	68 to 89	22
16	Ghāfir (40)	43	لأجْرَم	38 to 50	13
17	al-Ṣāffāt (37)	34	بالمُجرمين	22 to 74	53
18	Yā Sīn (36)	59	المُجرْمون	51 to 67	17
19	Saba' (34)	32	مُجرمين	31 to 36	6
20	Saba' (34)	25	أَخْرَجْنَا	22 to 30	9

21	al-Sajdah (32)	22	المُجْرِمِينَ	23 to 30	8
22	al-Sajdah (32)	12	المُجْرِمُونَ	12 to 22	11
23	al-Rūm (30)	55	المُجْرِمُونَ	54 to 60	7
24	al-Rūm (30)	47	أَجْرَمُوا	41 to 53	13
25	al-Rūm (30)	12	المُجْرِمُونَ	11 to 19	9
26	al-Qaṣaṣ (28)	78	المُجْرِمُونَ	76 to 82	8
27	al-Qaṣaṣ (28)	17	لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ	14 to 21	7
28	al-Naml (27)	69	المُجْرِمِينَ	67 to 82	16
29	al-Shu'arā' (26)	200	المُجْرِمِينَ	192 to 227	36
30	al-Shu'arā' (26)	99	المُجْرِمُونَ	69 to 104	36
31	al-Furqān (25)	31	المُجْرِمِينَ	21 to 34	14
32	al-Furqān (25)	22	لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ	21 to 34	—
33	Ṭā Hā (20)	102	المُجْرِمِينَ	90 to 104	15
34	Ṭā Hā (20)	74	مُجْرِمًا	55 to 76	22
35	Maryam (19)	86	المُجْرِمِينَ	83 to 98	16
36	al-Kahf (18)	53	المُجْرِمُونَ	50 to 53	4
37	al-Kahf (18)	49	المُجْرِمِينَ	45 to 49	5
38	al-Naḥl (16)	109	لَا جَزْمَ	101 to 110	10
39	al-Naḥl (16)	62	لَا جَزْمَ	61 to 65	5
40	al-Naḥl (16)	23	لَا جَزْمَ	41 to 50	10
41	al-Hijr (15)	58	مُجْرِمِينَ	45 to 60	16
42	al-Hijr (15)	12	المُجْرِمِينَ	1 to 15	15
43	Ibrāhīm (14)	49	المُجْرِمِينَ	42 to 52	11
44	Yūsuf (12)	110	المُجْرِمِينَ	105 to 111	7
45	Hūd (11)	116	مُجْرِمِينَ	110 to 123	14
46	Hūd (11)	89	يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ	84 to 95	12
47	Hūd (11)	52	مُجْرِمِينَ	50 to 60	11
48	Hūd (11)	35	أَجْزَامِي - تُجْرِمُونَ	25 to 35	11
49	Hūd (11)	22	لَا جَزْمَ	9 to 24	16
50	Yūnus (10)	82	المُجْرِمُونَ	71 to 82	12
51	Yūnus (10)	75	مُجْرِمِينَ	71 to 82	—
52	Yūnus (10)	50	المُجْرِمُونَ	41 to 53	13
53	Yūnus (10)	17	المُجْرِمُونَ	11 to 20	10
54	Yūnus (10)	13	المُجْرِمِينَ	11 to 20	—
55	al-Tawbah (9)	66	مُجْرِمِينَ	60 to 66	7
56	al-Anfāl (8)	8	المُجْرِمُونَ	1 to 10	10
57	al-A'rāf (7)	133	مُجْرِمِينَ	130 to 141	12
58	al-A'rāf (7)	84	المُجْرِمِينَ	73 to 84	12
59	al-A'rāf (7)	40	المُجْرِمِينَ	40 to 47	8
60	al-An'ām (6)	147	المُجْرِمِينَ	145 to 150	6
61	al-An'ām (6)	124	أَجْرَمُوا	122 to 129	8
62	al-An'ām (6)	123	مُجْرِمِيهَا	122 to 129	—
63	al-An'ām (6)	55	المُجْرِمِينَ	51 to 55	5
64	al-Mā'idah (5)	8	يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ	6 to 11	6
65	al-Mā'idah (5)	2	يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ	1 to 5	5
Total verses (with contexts)					881

The Concept and Nature of Crime in Criminological Science

The term *criminology* corresponds to the Italian word *criminologia*, derived from two components: *crimen*, which originally meant accusation and later came to denote crime, and *logos*, meaning knowledge or science. Accordingly, the literal definition of this discipline is the study and identification of crime; in other words, it may be described as the science concerned with the examination and understanding of criminal behavior. (6)

Criminology, or the science of criminal behavior, is a branch of criminal sciences that investigates criminogenic factors, conditions, and circumstances—individual, environmental, and social—that influence the emergence of

criminal conduct, the causes of crime, the diverse forms of offending, and both quantitative and qualitative aspects of criminal phenomena through objective and scientific methods. By drawing upon various scientific specializations, criminology seeks to discover methods for crime prevention, treatment, reform, and rehabilitation of offenders or individuals who, under the influence of personal, environmental, or social criminogenic factors, have deviated from social norms and require reintegration into society and the social order. (10)

Thus, criminology may also be regarded as the science of preventing crimes and risks. It attempts to suppress crime at its inception and focuses on the treatment and rescue of offenders. Another aim of criminology is therefore moral and social renewal—a new beginning for offenders through ethical reconstruction and reintegration into society. In this sense, criminology strives to realize the divine command of justice and benevolence as essential foundations of social life and to promote an advanced society grounded in moral values and social well-being. (10)

The subject matter and objectives of criminology have led to numerous classifications within this scientific field.

Definition of Crime in Criminological Science

Crime is not comparable to a mathematical rule or a physical law possessing a fixed and immutable meaning. Rather, its definition varies across societies, legal systems, social schools of thought, and even religious traditions. (25)

These variations arise because perceptions, interpretations, and understandings regarding the constituent elements of criminality are continually evolving. What constitutes criminal behavior changes over time, reflecting transformations in social values and human understanding. Since each individual's conception of crime depends upon personal worldview, interests, and intellectual orientation, both crime and criminology remain inherently non-absolute concepts. This becomes clearer when examining the diverse definitions proposed for crime. Consequently, multiple perspectives on crime exist, largely because crime has always been understood as a social construct.

This characteristic raises important debates, including whether crime must always be defined exclusively by law or whether it may—or should—also be defined based on socio-moral concepts such as social harm. Accordingly, diverse theoretical approaches have produced multiple definitions of crime, each offering different explanations regarding the causes of criminal behavior. (27)

Crime constitutes both a human and a social reality. It is a human reality because it is committed by a human being possessing psychological and physical characteristics; and it is a social reality because crime typically occurs within society. In this sense, crime attracts the attention of criminologists, sociologists, and biologists alike.

Crime may also be described as a public wrong, since society as a whole is affected by its commission. Society is threatened or harmed through crime. For example, sexual assault produces consequences beyond harm to the individual victim; it generates collective insecurity because the offender may reoffend, thereby threatening public safety. For this reason, society does not merely leave compensation to the victim but considers collective intervention necessary. (28)

From a social perspective, crime refers to those deviant acts regarded as dangerous by dominant social groups. Deviation from norms and values exists in every society; however, certain deviations are considered so harmful to collective security that governing groups deem punishment necessary and believe that punishment or its threat can prevent such behaviors. (5)

Sociologists maintain that crime is a natural and enduring phenomenon occurring across all times and places. Although social transformations may alter its manifestations, crime remains behavior viewed as reprehensible by

collective conscience and capable of affecting social sentiments. Accordingly, sociological theory defines crime as conduct contrary to the fundamental interests of society, regardless of whether it has been formally criminalized by law. Crime is thus a natural social phenomenon arising from culture, civilization, and social interaction, and any act that offends collective conscience may be regarded as criminal. (29)

From this perspective, crime fundamentally consists of conduct that disturbs social order and for which punishment is determined by law. Therefore, within criminal law, the formal and legal definition of crime constitutes the decisive criterion: crime is an act or omission for which the legislator prescribes punishment and which is committed by a legally responsible person.

In criminal law, efforts are made to define crime in a manner enabling the legislator to translate it into enforceable legal rules. The responsibility for determining which acts or omissions harm social values, disrupt social order, and cause societal damage rests with the legislator. Nevertheless, lawmakers cannot disregard the diverse scientific views expressed by specialists regarding social phenomena—including crime itself.

Definitions of Crime in Schools of Criminal Law

Different schools of criminal law have proposed various definitions of crime:

- In the **Absolute Justice School**, punishment is regarded as the restoration of the moral order disrupted by crime (sin). According to this theory, any violation of moral rules is considered punishable. (1)
- In the **Positivist School**, crime is viewed as the result of forces and factors beyond the direct control of individuals. Human behavior is therefore interpreted as a reflection of particular influences acting upon the individual, whether biological, psychological, or social in nature. (27)
- In the **legal definition**, crime is an act or omission attributable to its perpetrator that has been legally prescribed and is punishable by criminal sanction. (26)

Some legal scholars maintain that the violation of a country's law through an external act constitutes a crime whenever neither duty nor legal necessity justifies the conduct and the act is punishable. (30)

In Iranian criminal law, any act or omission that is punishable under statutory law or requires security or corrective measures is considered a crime, and no conduct may be regarded as criminal unless punishment or corrective measures have been prescribed by law.

However, the Islamic Penal Code (enacted in 1991) adopted this definition with a significant modification. According to Article 2 of that law, "any act or omission for which punishment is prescribed by law shall be considered a crime." The removal of preventive and security measures from the legal definition appears neither beneficial nor necessary. (5)

With these preliminary definitions in mind, discussion now turns to the definition of crime within criminological science.

Definition of Crime in Criminology

From a criminological perspective, providing a precise definition of crime is extremely difficult. Criminologists themselves acknowledge that throughout legal and criminological terminology, no word is more complex in meaning than the term *crime* or *offense*. (13)

The word *offz* (offense) has historically been associated with sin or wrongdoing, equivalent in Arabic to *athim* (sinner). (9)

Criminologists define crime based on criminological principles. (29)

From their viewpoint, crime generally refers to all antisocial acts or tensions that harm society, whether their causes are psychological or social. In this framework, emphasis is placed on the individual's "dangerous state" as an indicator of antisocial tendencies or pathological conditions. Consequently, treatment through preventive and security measures is recommended. Criminology often relies on the legal definition of crime but extends its study to offenses defined in criminal law as well as broader social behaviors. (5, 10)

Criminologists frequently describe social maladjustment as antisocial conduct or criminal behavior, and some scholars consider aggression against the conditions of social life itself to constitute antisocial action.

In criminology, crime is not limited to acts or omissions punishable by law; rather, any conduct harmful to social order may be examined—even where criminal statutes prescribe no punishment. (1, 10)

Several illustrative definitions may be noted:

- Social maladjustment has been described as antisocial conduct.
- Any act causing harm to the rights or interests of individuals is regarded as antisocial and therefore criminal behavior.
- Crime has also been defined broadly as any act contrary to morality and justice. (26)
- Generally, criminologists hold that any act or omission dangerous to the majority of members of a society should be considered a crime. (2)

In criminology, the concept of crime is closely connected to the idea of social defense—implemented through punishment, exclusion, reform, and treatment of offenders. Consequently, criminological analysis moves beyond strictly legal conditions of criminal liability and focuses primarily on individual and social circumstances preceding criminal conduct, as well as the real causes of offending behavior. Through empirical observation and scientific experience, criminology seeks to identify antisocial behaviors in order to ensure effective protection of society. (29)

For criminologists, therefore, not only legally defined crimes but all antisocial behaviors may fall within the concept of crime, even if no formal punishment exists. The frequent overlap between the notions of crime and antisocial behavior demonstrates that the scope of criminology is considerably broader than that of criminal law. As noted, concepts such as the individual's dangerous state and antisocial disposition, regardless of formal legal criminalization, occupy a central position in criminological analysis. (5)

Accordingly, the concept of crime in criminology may be grounded either in formal legal definitions or in criminological interpretations. Because the scope of criminal phenomena in criminology encompasses both crime and deviation, comparison between criminality and social deviance becomes necessary. Criminologists frequently employ concepts such as deviance and social isolation to describe behaviors that diverge from common social conduct even when such behaviors have not been formally criminalized, thereby expanding analytical understanding of human behavior within society. (31)

Comparison Between the Qur'anic Concept of Crime and Its Concept in Criminology

Considering the examination of the concept of crime and deviance in criminal law and criminology, as well as the various expressions used in the Holy Qur'an to denote violations of divine norms—analyzed throughout this study—

it becomes evident that the meaning of crime in the Qur'an is comprehensive and inclusive. It encompasses criminal behavior, deviant beliefs, and moral deviations. In the Qur'anic perspective, deviation represents a broad concept that includes both the legal notion of crime in criminal law and the concept of deviance recognized in criminology.

In essence, deviation refers to a tendency or departure from the straight path toward distortion or misguidance. From the Qur'anic viewpoint, deviation may sometimes relate primarily to the individual rather than society; the human soul and psyche, influenced by satanic temptations, may commit wrongdoing independently of social interaction. Such deviation constitutes obedience to Satan and violation of the divine covenant. The Qur'an presents these deviations in various forms, including disbelief, polytheism, unchecked desires, illicit sexual conduct, arrogance, extravagance, backbiting, self-conceit, pride, miserliness, false accusation, murder, theft, armed rebellion (*muḥārabah*), adultery, consumption of intoxicants, bodily injury, sodomy, apostasy, and similar acts. Based on Qur'anic teachings and juristic foundations, such behaviors are regarded as crimes.

By contrast, crime in criminal law and criminology generally arises from social life. Crime emerges when an individual disrupts social order and violates legally binding norms supported by penal sanctions. Overall, comparison of the concept of crime from these two perspectives reveals several important observations:

- From the standpoint of criminal law, if criminality depends solely on statutory legislation, certain behaviors—such as suicide, backbiting, or envy—are not considered crimes because no legal punishment has been prescribed for them. Criminal law crime therefore entails worldly punishment, whereas crime in the Qur'anic sense may involve both worldly and otherworldly punishment. Nevertheless, such behaviors remain within the scope of criminological analysis and discussion.

- The point of convergence between criminology and the Qur'anic perspective lies in the breadth of the concept of crime. In both approaches, criminality is not limited exclusively to conduct subject to worldly penal sanctions. However, in criminal law, the scope of crime is narrower, and the existence of penal sanction constitutes an essential condition.

- Crime in the Qur'anic conception possesses stability and constancy. Concepts such as disbelief, arrogance, polytheism, injustice, disobedience to God and His Messenger, and corruption on earth are not relative notions. In contrast, certain crimes defined by criminal law—based on legislative commands and prohibitions—may be relative and subject to social change. In the domain of *natural crimes* (*fitrī crimes*), however, the two perspectives largely coincide, distinguishing them from *conventional crimes*.

Conventional crime refers to conduct that does not retain its criminal character across all times and places. In other words, a relative crime may either have lacked criminal status at the formation of societies or may have lost its criminal character over time or transformed into a different category altogether. (32)

- The Qur'an does not provide an explicit formal definition of crime; rather, it presents examples of prohibited acts that, through social development, have later entered legal systems and been recognized as crimes within criminal law and criminology. In criminal law, however, regardless of theoretical foundations, explicit definitions of crime are formulated. Fundamentally, the Qur'anic approach does not prioritize criminalization itself; instead, its primary objective is moral education and human cultivation based on a benevolent outlook, aiming at reform and prevention of deviation rather than mere punishment.

Accordingly, crime in the Qur'anic sense is broad and comprehensive: every act of disobedience to God, abandonment of divine commands, or commission of prohibited acts constitutes crime. As Islamic legal theorists explain in defining the category of the forbidden (*ḥarām*), prohibition signifies disobedience to the Divine Legislator,

whose consequence is punishment or retribution. Such punishment may be worldly, otherworldly, or both. Certain prohibited acts entail worldly punishment, such as theft; others involve primarily otherworldly punishment, such as apostasy; and some acts incur both forms of punishment, such as *muḥārabah*. In some cases, the Qur'an merely declares prohibition without specifying a particular punishment—for example, showing disrespect toward parents—yet repeated and deliberate disobedience of divine commands is generally considered deserving of punishment.

Therefore, the defining characteristic of crime in the Qur'an is its association with punishment. An act is considered criminal insofar as its commission results in deprivation of divine mercy. On this basis, all sins accompanied by worldly or otherworldly punishment may be regarded as crimes. Furthermore, the Qur'anic concept of crime varies in intensity and severity, applying to different behaviors according to their degree of seriousness, the offender's intent, and individual circumstances—issues that were previously discussed within the framework of the Qur'anic concept of crime.

Conclusion

The issue of crime and the offender constitutes a shared subject between the Holy Qur'an and the science of criminology. In this study, an effort was made to identify the concept and nature of crime in both the Qur'anic framework and criminological knowledge through analysis of terminology, semantic components, conceptual boundaries, meaning-oriented interpretation, and examination of synonymous and related expressions. By comparing Qur'anic terminology with criminological discourse, the concept of crime and its manifestations were analyzed. An important finding of this research is that reflection and inquiry into this subject remain open-ended; many aspects still require further investigation, and future studies may extend this line of inquiry to uncover additional insights. Based on the overall discussion presented in this work, the following conclusions may be drawn.

Crime is an act strongly prohibited by God. The word *jurm* and its derivatives (such as *mujrimīn*, *ajramū*, *yajrimannakum*, and others), derived from the root *j-r-m*, appear sixty-six times within sixty-five verses across thirty-six Qur'anic chapters. When their broader textual contexts are considered, references related to crime and offenders encompass a total of 881 verses in the Holy Qur'an. This demonstrates that the Qur'an addresses the issue of crime and the offender in a comprehensive and extensive manner.

Linguistically, the term *jurm* originally conveys the meaning of cutting or severing and later came to signify the acquisition or commission of blameworthy and reprehensible acts. In the Qur'anic perspective, the meaning of crime is broad and inclusive, encompassing criminal behavior as well as deviant beliefs and moral corruption. From the Qur'anic viewpoint, not every sin is identical in degree; rather, sins are categorized according to their intensity, intention, and contextual circumstances under various titles such as *ithm*, *sayyi'ah*, *khaṭī'ah*, and *dhanb*. Despite terminological differences, these categories share a common essence: disobedience to divine commands and prohibitions, the commission of forbidden acts, and the abandonment of obligatory duties, all of which entail liability to punishment. The harmful consequences of such conduct affect both the individual and society, and therefore acts or omissions may result in worldly or otherworldly punishment.

The study further demonstrated that the concept of crime in the Qur'an differs from its meaning in criminal law and criminology, although all three ultimately pursue a similar objective—protection of human life and social order. In criminal law and criminology, crime is generally defined as any act or omission for which punishment has been prescribed by law. However, when comparing these legal and criminological definitions with Qur'anic responses to wrongdoing, criminology appears closer to the Qur'anic approach than positive criminal law. It may be argued that

Islamic teachings reflect many of the fundamental concerns of criminology, including prevention, reform, rehabilitation, and respect for the rights of offenders. The Qur'an presents comprehensive principles concerning the correction and education of offenders, emphasizing moral reform and reintegration, including non-penal mechanisms such as repentance.

The historical progression of Qur'anic revelation also indicates that, in the early stages, prohibitive guidance preceded the prescription of punishment. Accordingly, although the Qur'anic concept of crime shares certain elements with criminal law and criminology—particularly the necessity of accountability when social norms are violated—it is grounded in broader moral and spiritual foundations that distinguish it from purely legal definitions.

From the Qur'anic perspective, examination of the concepts of crime and sin reveals a close and nearly inseparable relationship between them. Based on the definitions and examples discussed, each criminal act may be regarded as a form of sin. The existence of both worldly and otherworldly punishments for certain offenses, such as intentional homicide and adultery, supports this conclusion and demonstrates the integrated moral, legal, and spiritual dimensions of crime within the Qur'anic worldview.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

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The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

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Transparency of Data

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