

ROLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A MAJOR CAUSE IN SHAPING WOMEN'S CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR IN FAISALABAD, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

¹Nabila Niaz, ²Dr. Asma Islam*

¹M.Phil. Research scholar, Riphah International University (Faisalabad Campus), Punjab, Pakistan

²Assistant Professor of Sociology, Riphah International University (Faisalabad Campus), Punjab, Pakistan

asma.islam@riphahfsd.edu.pk

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Corresponding Author: *

Dr. Asma Islam*

Abstract

This study explores the socioeconomic and behavioral causes underlying women's involvement in criminal activities, with a focus on incarcerated women in District Jail Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Existing literature suggests that many women engage in criminal acts either in self-defense or as a result of impulsive reactions to prolonged domestic abuse and social injustice. To investigate these factors, an in-depth qualitative study was conducted using a structured interview schedule. A purposive sample of 10 female inmates was selected for the research. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and root causes. The findings reveal that cumulative social, psychological, and economic pressures significantly influence women's pathways to criminality. This study highlights the urgent need for policy interventions addressing gender-based violence and systemic inequalities that contribute to female criminal behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Women's criminal behavior and their paths through the criminal justice system are greatly influenced by psychological vulnerabilities, trauma, abuse, mental health conditions, and substance abuse. These elements frequently combine to form a complicated web of issues that affect women's involvement in criminal activity. According to feminist criminology, women's criminal behavior stems from the unequal distribution of power between men and women. The ability to select a spouse is one of the most fundamental rights denied to women in Pakistan. Women commit crimes and deviance due to social factors such as ingratitude, loneliness, helplessness, and despair. Criminal behavior is influenced by a variety of factors, including early life experiences, psychological disorders, social learning, cognitive processes, and socioeconomic factors. Deviant behavior is primarily the result of a variety of adverse social, economic, cultural and family conditions (Shuja & Abbas, 2022).

Several socio demographic factors including marital status, education, and economic status may influence the behavior of female offenders. Women who are divorced or who experience financial and social problems may be more likely to engage in criminal behavior. Early puberty, combined with stressors such as conflict with parents and relationships with delinquent peers, are unique risk factors for women. Lack of family supervision and control has been shown to be causally related to crime, but ineffective parenting, family conflict, growing up in poverty, lack of stable caregivers, and frequent household moves can all play a role. Crime statistics in Pakistan show that, like other countries around the world, the number of reported crimes increases rapidly over time. This is mainly due to high unemployment, high poverty, high inflation and urbanization. Several other non-economic factors are also responsible (Gulo, 2024).

Numerous factors, such as genetics, environment, personality traits, and social influences, can have an impact on criminal behavior. Criminal behavior is

influenced by genetic factors, and studies indicate that some genes may be linked to a propensity for criminal behavior. Economic factors, such as average income, poverty levels, and job opportunities, are major contributors to crime. cultural elements as well as traits related to education, leisure, and religion. family circumstances related to cohesion and divorce. The theory of female crime holds that as women's opportunities, abilities, and social relationships increase, the female crime rate will also increase. The major risk factors for crime and incarceration are family dysfunction, trauma, mental health, substance abuse problems, and interactions with deviant peers. The crime triangle identifies three factors that lead to criminal offending. The offender's desire to commit the crime; the object of the offender's desire; and the opportunity to commit the crime. Poverty, neglect, low self-esteem, and alcohol and drug abuse are some of the causes of crime that may have something to do with why people break the law. Some people's circumstances put them at risk for crime (Shala, 2024).

Because modern perspectives on crime were gendered, early criminological and historical research initially took a similar path. The prevalent perceptions of women's victimization, passivity, and innocence were frequently expressed by researchers when they eventually turned their attention to the problem of crime in relation to women. There are still criminology scholarly publications that assert that the rates of crime among women are undergoing "seismic historical shifts." In order to comprehend crime among women, history and criminology must acknowledge women as potential criminals, look into how gender influences criminal behavior, and

not be afraid to point out the limitations of this category of analysis (Nyen & Ejue, 2022).

In the diverse cultural patterns of the developing world, where social, economic, religious, regional, environmental, and familial concerns are multifaceted, criminology among women is a relatively recent phenomenon. Because there are fewer women than men who interact with law enforcement, there has been less focus on the problems facing female offenders. The current study will be the first academic attempt in this specific social framework. Additionally, this will try to close the knowledge gap in academic and scientific research. Quantitative data was frequently the foundation of early research on female criminality. For many years, criminologists and historians believed that women were typically less likely than men to commit crimes and that the gender gap in recorded crime remained consistent over time (Einat & Ben-Moshe, 2022).

According to numerous studies on women and crime in England, France, and the Netherlands, women made up a far larger portion of the criminal population upto 50% at times. Additionally, investigations have shown notable disparities between rural and urban areas: women's crime rates were significantly higher in cities. Historians are reconsidering stereotypes about women's involvement in crime in light of evidence of higher rates of female criminality in the past. Some interest existed in categorizing crime by gender prior to the historical breakthrough of gender as a category of analysis. Women who have committed or been convicted of crimes have been characterized in numerous English and Dutch studies as cooperative, shy, submissive, passive, less direct, less open, and less confrontational with the victim (Krakowski & Czobor, 2004).

A similar perspective was taken by criminologists in the latter half of the 20th century. Because victimhood discourse was ingrained in early feminist criminology, women were also seen as weak and frequently portrayed as victims. But the last 20 years

have provided fresh insight into how women have contributed to crime throughout history. The volume provides illuminating new methods for studying the history of female crime while summarizing earlier historiography based on women's history. They attempt to move beyond the confines of nation-state crime to the larger framework of social control and changes in prosecution policies by combining research from multiple European nations. Numerous studies have examined early crimes that reflect patriarchal relationships in order to analyze women's crime from a top-down perspective (Mansoor et al., 2022).

Women Criminality Overall World

Across the world, multiple factors such as low education, early marriage, family breakdown, frustration, ignorance, low educational attainment, illiteracy, poverty, late marriage and class conflict contribute to women's crime. Under the pressure of these factors, women have participated in various criminal acts such as theft, kidnapping, murder, infanticide, child trafficking, suicide, drug crimes, prostitution, etc. In Pakistani society, women from lower socioeconomic classes are involved in crime. In developing countries, illiteracy and low technical skills are common factors that push or force women to engage in illegal activities and earn income. When women in developing countries face obstacles in achieving their goals, they engage in illegal activities (Peacock, 2022).

In Pakistani society, women strive to balance social and family life but are sometimes tricked into committing crimes by their close relatives. The study said, "A quantitative study and analysis of 167 female offenders found that more than 88% of them were involved in murder cases; therefore, this means that the victims knew each other. In the murder cases, the female offenders had been victims of domestic violence; in the murder cases, the female offenders had been victims of domestic violence; In their defense, they committed murder and participated in the crime. Therefore, the

factors (social, cultural and economic) that motivate women to engage in illegal and criminal activities are increasing. This study explores the factors that influence and shape women's participation in criminal activities (Martin et al., 2022).

Women's active participation in a variety of legal activities has gained recognition in recent years, despite the conventional belief that men are the primary criminals. The goal of this article is to expose the intricate web of factors that influence women's criminal behavior, on social and personal aspects. The study's main goal is to investigate socioeconomic factors that play a major role in women's criminal activity. Women are frequently forced to participate in illegal activities in order to survive or increase their economic influence due to economic disparity, limited employment opportunities, and financial hardship. The relationship between economic stability and criminal participation is also highlighted, as is the effect of income level, work status, and educational background on women's susceptibility to crime. This study also examines the economic factors that contribute to women's involvement in criminal activity, elements related to psychology. Crime is facilitated by psychological weaknesses brought on by trauma, abuse, mental illness, and drug misuse. The impact of negative childhood experiences, mental health issues, and criminal trajectories are also examined in research articles, which also emphasize the connection between criminal tendencies and mental health. Furthermore, the role of social and familial influences in determining women's criminal paths is investigated (Alyana et al., 2023).

Social pressures, exposure to criminal role models, and dysfunctional families all have a big impact on a person's propensity to commit crimes. The intricacy of social networks, family structures, and community settings are examined, as well as their significant impact on how women's attitudes, decisions, and actions toward crime evolve. Methodological and legal aspects are also examined, with a focus on institutions. How prejudice, discriminatory actions, and insufficient support networks affect women's

criminal activity. The role of the criminal justice system, law enforcement tactics, and legal resource accessibility in deterring or encouraging criminal activity among women is critically assessed. This study attempts to obtain a thorough grasp of the elements that affect women's participation in criminal activity by offering a thorough examination of the various elements that affect women's criminal activity. Policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders can create strategies, support networks, and interventions to address women's criminal behavior by elucidating these intricate factors (Heilbrun et al., 2022).

Changes in the form and scale of female crime are associated with increased opportunities for equal participation in the development mainstream and changes in other social and economic conditions. In some developing countries, the influx of foreign customs inconsistent with local customs is said to have a negative impact on women's behavioral patterns and encourage crime. The experience of some developed countries shows that when the development process and equal opportunities for women reach a relatively stable stage, the level of female crime also tends to be stable but will not decline. There has also been a sharp increase in juvenile female crime. This also seems to be related to the changing role of women in society. Although the proportion of crimes committed against women that came to the attention of authorities was relatively small, it was still concerning (Chaturvedi et al., 2022).

In some developing countries that are still undergoing rapid transformation, it is considered a new or emerging phenomenon, while in some developed countries it has become a known phenomenon and has taken on new and more sophisticated forms. Serious scale. In many countries, crimes such as child murder, child abuse, adultery, abortion, shoplifting and other petty theft, prostitution, moral crimes, etc. are listed as traditional crimes committed by women; however, other countries are increasingly targeting women

We express serious concern over the involvement in particularly serious acts in many places, especially drug trafficking and acts of violence, including terrorism, often on an international scale. In some countries in particular, women are reported to be involved in drug trafficking at all levels, from high-level criminal associations to quasi-familial activities, such as supplying food to drug lords. This trend has become particularly severe in many countries. It is reported that terrorist activities are a serious phenomenon in some countries, and in this regard, women's participation in terrorism has become a common feature of this phenomenon (Lee et al., 2024).

Table 1.1: Women Criminality Overall World

Rank	Country	Crime Index	Safety Index
1	Venezuela	80.9	19.1
2	Papua New Guinea	80.1	19.9
3	Haiti	78.7	21.3
4	Afghanistan	75.7	24.3
5	South Africa	74.8	25.2
6	Honduras	72.7	27.3
7	Trinidad And Tobago	70.7	29.3
8	Syria	68.6	31.4
9	Jamaica	67.5	32.5
10	Peru	67.3	32.7
11	Nigeria	66.7	33.3
12	Guyana	66.3	33.7
13	Yemen	66.2	33.8
14	Angola	66.1	33.9
15	Somalia	65.9	34.1
16	Brazil	65.1	34.9
17	Bolivia	64.9	35.1
18	Cameroon	64.9	35.1
19	Argentina	63.8	36.2
20	Namibia	63.7	36.3
21	Mozambique	63.6	36.4
22	Ecuador	62.4	37.6
23	Puerto Rico	61.8	38.2

Women's Criminality Rate in Pakistan

According to data, Pakistan's crime rate in 2021 is 3.98, up 6.48% from 2020. The field of female criminology is extremely broad and encompasses

Pakistan's social, public, intellectual, financial, and opinion environments. Women in Pakistan are motivated to commit crimes by socioeconomic and cultural factors, such as patriarchy, economic dependence, and low levels of education. However, women and men are similar in that they are compelled to use violence for a variety of reasons, including money, power, compensation, etc. In Pakistan, the number of women involved in criminal activity is rising at a startling rate. Statistics on violence against women have significantly increased as a result of the alarming level of involvement, which has compelled many responsible academics to look for the underlying causes of female crime (Hussain, 2023).

Many sociologists and criminologists think that women's liberation is a major factor in the rise in female criminality; working women now face more economic challenges and urban chaos than women who work from home. Female crime is also a result of cheating and phony marriages. 101 million of Pakistan's 207 million citizens are women, whose living circumstances may shield their crimes from being identified and brought to justice. The social factors that motivate women to commit crimes in Pakistan include deprivation of their right to choose their partners, loneliness, ingratitude, helplessness, despair, and excessive sexual relations. Thus, a more thorough examination of the causal relationships is necessary in light of the notable rise in female crime in the Pakistani state of Punjab. Stereotypes about Pakistani culture and male dominance have led to the hidden cultural problem of viewing women as criminals in Pakistan (Islam et al., 2019).

The report states that approximately 22 cases of crimes under local and special laws, 1,070 theft cases, 325 fraud cases, and 35 drug and other drug cases resulted in the arrest of female criminals. About 360 cases of illicit relations against women, 29 cases of kidnapping for retaliation, 235 cases of family and dowry disputes, 15 cases of romance, over 70 cases of old enmity, 115 cases of minor

assault, 12 cases of financial disputes, and 35 cases of marital disputes and nikah are also documented in official records. Approximately 115 cases have been filed against women who argue with their husbands. According to the report, data indicates that since 1985, the number of women incarcerated has increased from 209 to 404, nearly twice as quickly as the number of men. Prison in the State (29%) For violent crimes, men are less likely to be imprisoned (35% vs. 53%). Crimes against women demand greater attention and investigative curiosity than ever before, as the current situation shows (Warraich & Farooq, 2015).

Many researchers focus on cognitive differences between men and women, while also emphasizing social conditions that limit the scope of women's activities as the cause of these differences. Women are often involved in killing their husbands, brothers, sons, etc. Her frustration with intimacy. Leading to this extreme behavior is the common belief that women are more likely to kill their partners if they are "battered women", unlike men, who are more likely to do so in a safe and easily accessible place, such as their own. Women are more likely to kill family members (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Significance of research:

Crime is a breach of the law that is perpetrated by lawbreakers in the community. Physical harm to people or non-human life, such as suffering, injury, death, damage, or destruction, are among the many crimes that are committed worldwide. According to most studies, gender inequality, a lack of social and economic possibilities, and the destabilizing impact of conflict between women as opposed to men are the main factors influencing women's involvement in crime. Reducing female criminality requires addressing these issues.

Research Methodology:

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences of female inmates in the District Jail, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. The research technique employed a contextual analysis, enabling an in-depth

understanding of the participants' perspectives. A standardized interview guide was used as the primary tool for data collection, enabling the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility for participants to express themselves freely.

A total of ten female inmates, all aged above eighteen, were purposively selected from the prison population based on specific inclusion criteria. Due to population constraints, the sample size was limited to ten participants. The selection process was carried out using simple random sampling to ensure a fair representation within the given limitations.

Data collection was conducted face-to-face by the researcher herself in November 2024, ensuring direct engagement and building rapport with the participants. Necessary permissions were obtained from the Inspector General (I.G.) of Prisons, Punjab, Pakistan, and the data collection process was conducted under the supervision of the Lady Superintendent of the District Jail, Faisalabad.

The interviews were guided by the prepared interview schedule and were aimed at exploring themes relevant to the lived experiences of incarcerated women. Upon completion of the interviews, the collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

This research approach enabled a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter and provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of the participants within the correctional facility.

Results and discussion:

Case study:

Case Description.

Name ; XYZ

Residency ; Toba Tak Singh.

Section ; 302 Murder.

My name is XYZ, wife of ABC, from Toba Tak Singh. I'm 26 years old and live in a slum area, and I live with my in-laws and my religion is Islam. I

have no formal education, similar to my parents. I was married at 17 in an arranged marriage that lasted nine years. My husband was a gambler but not abusive. We had four children. I was financially unstable, relying on external support, usually through income generated from gambling. Sometimes, we had to borrow money. As a housewife, I didn't have a business or occupation. My husband, the primary earner, was a gambler and had been imprisoned. This led to economic hardship, poverty, and unemployment. My husband's family, including three brothers, worked on daily wages. His illiteracy and our financial instability affected my temperament. We faced constant economic difficulties. I grew up in poverty and hardship due to my parents' and in-laws' financial struggles. My childhood experiences shaped my perspective on crime rates. Thankfully, I didn't face financial pressure, responsibility, or physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Economic necessities drive crime, motivating individuals. In my view, economic factors contribute to women's criminality. I experienced financial instability and poverty. Our neighborhood was unsafe, with high crime rates. My in-laws were habitual gamblers and drinkers, contrasting with my noble and kind family background. My parental upbringing was emotionally challenging. I had no history of criminal behavior, and my family was supportive and strong. Living in an Islamic area, I followed cultural customs. I had a male friend before marriage. Our extended family had 22 members, with my mother-in-law and elder brother-in-law making decisions. My childhood family environment was stable, despite emotional challenges. I had no criminal history, and my family was supportive.

Living in an Islamic area, I followed cultural customs. A pre-marriage male friendship existed. Our 22-member extended family was decision-driven by my mother-in-law and elder brother-in-law. Childhood family life was stable despite emotional struggles. My husband's professional absence and father's contracting work likely contributed to my undiagnosed mental health issues – depression and

anxiety. Before jail, I was mentally disturbed, experiencing anxiety and depression. My self-esteem was average. I struggled with mental health issues and managing anger; when overwhelmed, I'd become violent, even harming my children. My temperament was highly irritable. I believe social circles and friends weren't involved in criminal activities. After and before committing the crime, I was extremely stressed, falsely accused of murder. My husband committed suicide, and I was wrongly blamed. Poverty is a significant risk factor for women committing crimes, driven by social and economic factors. My cultural background is rural, and I didn't commit the crime, yet I was accused and spent three and a half years. I wasn't involved in criminal activities. My husband committed suicide, and I was falsely accused. Key reasons for criminal involvement include substance abuse, family issues, but I didn't commit any crime. No one motivated me, and economic necessities didn't drive me to crime since I didn't commit murder. I was in a relationship for six to ten years, and my husband's drinking and gambling caused financial instability, anxiety, stress, depression, and feelings of isolation. We lost significant income to gambling, and his addictions left me without support or access to counseling services.

My husband frequently fought with me, and physically abused me. Despite our troubled relationship, I didn't commit any crime. He committed suicide by consuming pills, and I was wrongly accused. We didn't have access to social media, TV, or other applications. I didn't use any weapon or commit a crime. My husband's gambling and drinking habits led to financial instability.

During my cousin's wedding, my husband lost money gambling and asked me to get money from my mother. He said he lost the motorcycle in a bet. I refused, saying my mother had already spent a lot on the wedding. That night, he came home and vomited. My brother, sister-in-law, and I took him to the local doctor, who suspected poisoning. We

rushed him to the government hospital, informing his family beforehand. My in-laws refused to take him to a better hospital, and he passed away at 3 am. They then handed me over to the police, and I was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The judge told me that my husband had called his family, which was recorded, leading to my conviction. The judge offered to pardon me if I married him, but my mother refused. I'm now imprisoned in Faisalabad's District jail, convicted of a crime I didn't commit.

Findings: lack of Access to Resources,

Sattar et al. (2022) studied that women's crime is one of the major problems in Pakistan. The increasing rate of crimes committed by women across the country has become a matter of grave concern. It is common to associate criminal behavior with poor physical, psychological, social and economic conditions of the poor section of the population. Poverty, unemployment, and corruption are the major factors of crime in Pakistan. Keeping all these facts in mind, the main objective of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the criminal behavior of women in Punjab, Pakistan

Mental Health Issues, False Accusation and Wrongful Conviction, high poverty and illiteracy, Domestic Violence and Abuse.

Women crime falls largely under a similar socio-economic profile and exhibits that socio economic factors largely contribute to rising woman crime (Entorf and Spengler, 2000). The Social Disorganization Theory makes a similar claim that assailants tend to commit crime due to the social environment they live in, which largely includes their age, income, family status, and background. (Islam, Farooq and Mahmood, 2019)

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