



## Community Perception Towards Criminal Women: A Case Study of District Swabi



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**Abstract:** Women who engage in criminal activities often face a complex set of challenges that go beyond the legal consequences of their actions. Society's perception of criminal women is often harsher than that of their male counterparts, as women are traditionally viewed as caregivers and nurturers rather than as criminals. This perception is shaped by cultural and social norms, media representation, and individual biases. In this essay, we will explore the community's perception towards criminal women and the factors that influence it. These representations contribute to the stigmatization of criminal women, making it more difficult for them to reintegrate into society after serving their sentences. In this research, it is discussed how women in society are forced to commit a crime and what are the factors which make them do so. One of the factors that shape community perception towards criminal women is the nature of their offences. Women who engage in violent crimes are often viewed as more dangerous and threatening than those who commit non-violent offences.

**Key Words:** Community, Perception, Crime, Women

### Introduction

Women's offending behaviour has been a topic of interest and concern for researchers, policymakers, and the general public. Although women are generally less likely to commit crimes than men, their involvement in criminal activities has been on the rise in recent years. Women's offending behaviour is often different from men's, with a higher prevalence of non-violent and property crimes. This difference is partly due to the social and cultural expectations placed on women, as well as the structural barriers that they face in society. Women's offending behaviour is also influenced by their mental health, substance use, and trauma experiences, which can increase their risk of involvement in criminal activities. Understanding women's offending behaviour

is crucial for developing effective interventions that address the root causes of their criminal behaviour and promote their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. It is important to recognize that women who engage in criminal activities are not a homogenous group and that their experiences and motivations are diverse and complex. By addressing the underlying factors that contribute to women's offending behaviour, we can create a more just and equitable criminal justice system that supports the rehabilitation and well-being of all individuals (Holland, Clare).

The ideal woman is supposed to be soft, tender, loving, and of course, desirable, to add spice she must also be docile, subservient and obedient. Her entire interest is expected to be homebound, her duties to serve and please her man (her lord and master), to conceive,

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give birth to and rear children and of course perform the unpaid and unattractive role of housekeeper, waitress and maid-servant in general. If she is condemned to the social and economic spheres of the poor or unfortunate, she must also supplement the income by providing convenient and/or cheap labour. Her rewards are to live her whole life as a second-class citizen to a first-class man and die. She must expect to be less well-fed, clad and cared for than her male counterpart. She may be an object of lust, wrath or compassion but never a human being, while her productive potential will be exploited more than his. She is considered as bad luck or evil by many. She must therefore hide herself from view, be ignorant of the outside world, be morally conservative and law-abiding and socially careful. Even a minor slip from the confines of the norms of society is considered a grievous crime and severely punished by society and the law-enforcing authorities. Thus, we have women "shielded" and protected from the "Big World". As a result, she is innocent and ignorant of the ways of the world, exploited, easily misled innocence leading her astray and ignorance depressing any pretension of equality. The result of all these efforts ends in the successful recreation of the myth, as lack of stimulation of any budding pretensions leaves women as men desire her to be, mentally and physically Weak, wholly dependent upon and subservient to "Him" and thus the vicious cycle is completed, the myth is proved as a reality. The only way a woman survives this reality can express herself like a shadow through the medium of her man as history stands witness that behind each great man, there was a great woman, advising, consoling, applauding and remaining out of the limelight forever holding him up. Although women in more developed countries are claiming equality and independence even there few women are truly successful, many are only being humoured and the few who have found success in this "Man's World" are considered to be hard and Mannish or unnaturally masculine. "There is ample evidence in the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet that the religion of Islam showed special concern to the down-trodden status to which women had been relegated for centuries They were

given rights which had been denied to them before, and in many ways were made active participants in areas where their genius and capabilities entitled them to be". Violent behaviour plays only a very secondary, role in women's life. A woman who is biologically adapted to the role of mother is also usually psychologically and emotionally so adapted. The result is that women are basically gentler than more in actual control of their emotions. But, when a woman's home, family, or children are concerned, she is able undoubtedly to break all the bonds and bounds as any man at anything that may be distributing or endangering her own world (Schiebinger, 1991; Campbell, Muncer, Bibel, 2001; Mallicoat & Ireland, 2013; Yang, & Coid, 2007).

"Ian Marsh further explains the biological argument that women are naturally averse to crime and that female criminals are in some way maladjusted has never been fully abandoned. A number of studies, conducted predominantly by men, have asserted that female biology determines their temperaments or personalities, making women more passive and timid. The court still accepts the argument that female offenders have biological problems, with menopause, pregnancy, pre-menstrual tension, etc., being frequently cited as explanations or justifications for their criminal behaviour.

### Nature of Female Crime

It has been empirically tested that a much smaller number of women committed crimes than men. Sutherland and Cresses (1970) observe. "The crimes rate for men is greatly in excess of the rate for women in all nations, all communities within a nation, all age groups, all periods or history for which organized statistics are available, and for all types of crimes except those peculiar to women such as infanticide and abortion".

### Female Crime

- a. Sex-specific crimes
- b. Sex-related crimes
- c. Crimes common to both sexes

## **A. Sex-specific**

Those crimes committed by women which are peculiar to them because of sex are termed sex-specific crimes. They are those crimes which by definition exclude the opposite sex. Examples are prostitution and infanticide.

## **B. Sex-related Crimes**

Those offences which can be committed by either sex but are more frequent in a particular sex are termed sex-related crimes. An example is shoplifting, which is predominantly committed by women.

## **C. Crimes Common to Both Sexes**

These include the larger number of offences committed by women, such as murder, drug trafficking, zina, espionage, snatching of valuables etc. difference in crimes rate between the two sexes are very evident (Sutherland and Cressey) as well as in the role played by women in violent crimes as that of:

1. **Conspirator:** who instigates or has knowledge of the crimes but who does not participate in committing the criminal act itself;
2. **Accessory:** who plays a secondary role in committing the crime, acting as lookout, driving a getaway car, carrying weapons, tools to the proceeds of robberies and burglaries;
3. **Partner:** who participates equally in all aspects of the crimes (Berger, et al., 2009; Pilote et al., 2007)
4. **And finally:** the women who act as the sole perpetrator of crimes”.

## **Factors Associated with Female Criminality**

Factors resulting in the causes of female crime are of different natures but the researcher could investigate into the following causes due to which women usually commit crimes. Women committing crimes due to ethnic problems are predominantly common in the U.S.A. Black and immigrant women commit more crimes than white women, but such propositions are of given areas and not of the general population. It also

varies according to the nature of the crime committed. In Pakistan crimes committed by women are not usually caused because of ethnic reasons. But on the whole pathan women are said to be more aggressive, female population and more inclined to commit crimes of violence i.e of murder. Likewise, available texts on crimes have indicated that women of low I.Q easily deflect towards criminality more than women of high I.Q. "The I.Q. scores of women in the 1968 sample tended to be concentrated at the low end of the scale only one in six scored in the above average range, and two out of six scored below average. Women with low I.Q tend to commit violent crimes of homicide and assault with a high frequency than non-violent crimes like property crimes i.e. smuggling of cloth, narcotics, and other items, which is usually done by women of some intelligence. Besides, according to investigations on crimes and the understudy of female criminality in particular, women from the economically underprivileged class have a greater tendency to become deviant. Poverty is a physical want or lack of essentials of a civilized life depending upon the level of substance or the standard of particular people in particular communities and neighbourhoods. Many crimes i.e. sex offences (prostitution), and property crimes (smuggling, robberies and decoities, thefts), even offences against the person (assaults), are a result of poverty. It was only because of the fact that the habitants of the tribal areas had no source of livelihood that they restored to smuggling of goods and so on. Prostitution is more prevalent among women of low social status. A line has to be drawn higher than the level of actual physical need. "There are many who would advance to the very threshold of starvation rather than commit a crime. But for others, many of the so-called "conventional necessities" would have to be included". The crime of abortion, although not poverty-oriented can come under the category of economically motivated crimes, in such cases where abortionists collect large fees. Unemployment is another factor of economically motivated high crime rate but it is more commonly prevalent among men than women in our society. On the other hand, criminality is very much existent

among the economically self-sufficient class of society also but a larger proportion of the poorer offenders find their way into the criminal records than the richer ones. Women who have been convicted in the past are more liable to commit crimes in future. Some women are professional criminals for instance prostitutes and therefore, have a long history of crime. Women who have once been jailed lose their respectability in society, meet up with other criminals, and frequently after release are liable to commit crimes again. Criminal associations formed in prison play a large role in making habitual criminals of women, who may have been convicted of trivial crimes. Alcoholism and narcotics addiction may be termed a crime or may be a constituent factor in crime (e.g. drunk driving). "Medical and later psychiatric opinion was enlisted to show that even moderate drinking caused the physical and mental breakdown, as well as of course, criminality. Due to prohibition, drinking liquor is a crime in our country for men and women alike while addiction to alcohol and narcotics is not so common among the female population of our society. Moreover, drunkard or drug addict parents are bound to have a harmful effect on the stability and happiness of the family and play a major role in the character-building and personality development of a child. Crime is more frequently committed by those women who are illiterate. Very few educated convicts are found in jails in Swabi. In the Western countries, since the pattern is totally different, with education compulsory for all it is usually the school dropouts or not very highly educated women who resort to criminality. The impact of the media on crime is now considered to be an important factor. The sensational portrayal of sex, violence and vulgarity influences the cinema-going crowd, which consists largely of young people and lower-class workers. The recent widespread introductions of VCRs in homes have added a new dimension to media-related crime. A much larger audience consisting now of home-staying people is exposed to Western and Indian films, frequently based on sex and violence. Such media sensationalism is largely responsible for the growing moral corruption among the youth. Television is a major

influence in Western countries. Most of the audience consists of people with free time. Boredom is an important factor in sensation-related crimes. Such people are most vulnerable to media-related crimes (Bhosle, 2009; Davidson, 2015; Klein, 1973; Makarios, 2007; Mann, 1984; Naffine, 2015; Rizvi et al., 2008; Widom & Ames, 1988).

## The Focus of the Present Study

The problem at hand is the negative perception of the community towards women's offending behaviour. Women who engage in criminal activities often face stigmatization and social exclusion, which can make it difficult for them to reintegrate into society after serving their sentences. This negative perception is influenced by cultural and social norms, media representation, and individual biases. The stigma and negative perception of criminal women can have significant consequences, including limiting their access to education, employment, and housing, as well as their ability to build positive relationships and social support networks. This can create a cycle of disadvantage and social exclusion, which can lead to further involvement in criminal activities. Understanding the community's perception towards women's offending behaviour is crucial for developing effective interventions that address the root causes of their criminal behaviour and promote their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. By challenging the negative perception and promoting a more compassionate and nuanced understanding of women's experiences and motivations, we can create a more just and equitable society that supports the well-being of all individuals. Keeping in view the above empirical studies the present study was carried out under the following objectives

## Objectives

- To seek the opinion of the community on the criminal women in the study area
- To know the perception of the sampled people on various causes behind the criminality of women.

## Methodology

This study deals with community perception towards criminal women. District Swabi has been chosen as the universe for the study. The main theme of this study was to know the opinion of the community towards criminal women in Swabi and to know about the causes and eradication of the problem under investigation. In the current study, data were collected through a simple random sampling technique. An interview schedule was used

for data collection. The interview schedule comprised closed-ended questions. While local people of the Swabi were respondents of the present study. Moreover, to remove any ambiguity the interview schedule was pre-tested before the data collection phase. Moreover, for this purpose first-hand information was obtained from the study respondents through face-to-face interviews. The collected data was entered in SPSS and for analysis of data simple frequencies and percentages, distribution was applied.

## Result and Discussion

Table 1

*shows the Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Questions*

S. No	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Percentages
1	Are you in favour of female education	44(95.65%)	1(2.17%)	1(2.17%)	46(100%)
1	Do you think that gender inequality has a positive role in promoting women's crime?	43(94.47%)	1(2.17%)	2(4.34%)	46(100%)
4	Are you in favour of counselling centres for women criminals	42(91.30%)	1(2.17%)	3(6.52%)	46(100%)
4	Do you think that the government is taking proper measures to control women's crimes?	10(21.73%)	35(76.08%)	1(2.17%)	46(100%)
5	In your opinion, can proper socialisation reduce the crime rate?	40(86.95%)	4(8.69%)	2(4.34%)	46(100%)
6	Lack of understanding between husband and wife in your society causes crime.	36(78.26%)	2(4.34%)	8(17.39%)	46(100%)
7	Do you have any sympathy for criminal women	22(47.82%)	16(34.78%)	8(17.39%)	46(100%)

The findings of the study show that almost all of the respondents (95.65%) strongly agreed with the statement that we are in favour of female education. Female education is very important for the community because a woman with an education cannot be exploited as easily because she is aware of her individuality and rights. She will be difficult to subdue. Women's education can also aid in the eradication of numerous social ills, such as the dowry problems that plague all parents, unemployment, and others. Maximum respondents (94.47%) strongly agreed with the statement that as well that gender

discrimination causes play a positive role in promoting women's crime. Inequality encountered by girls can begin at birth and continue throughout their lives. In some nations, girls do not have access to adequate health care or nutrition, resulting in a higher mortality rate. As females enter adolescence, gender disparities exacerbate. Considerably more girls than boys are impacted by child marriage and it leads to women's crimes. 86.95% of respondents strongly agreed that proper socialization will reduce the crime ratio in women as well as men. Socialization prepares individuals for membership in a



social group by instructing them on its rules and expectations. Socialization has three basic objectives: teaching impulse control and building a conscience, educating individuals to perform certain social tasks, and cultivating shared meaning and value. Socialization encompasses the notion that everyone has the potential to commit a crime. They felt that factors such as familial relationships, peer group associations, educational experiences, and contacts with authority people can influence an individual's criminal behaviour, as well as 78.26% of respondents, strongly agree that understanding between husband and wife also reduces the crime ratio. Results also show that 47.82% of respondents do not have any sympathy for criminal women and this leads towards more and more crimes in women. It needs to spread awareness and seminars should be arranged to show sympathy towards criminal women to reduce the ratio of women in crimes. 76.08% of respondents disagreed and said that the government is not taking proper measures to control women's crimes.

In short, community perception towards criminal women is shaped by a complex set of factors, including stereotypes, media representation, socioeconomic status, and gender bias in the criminal justice system. To reduce the stigma and negative perception of criminal women, it is essential to challenge these underlying factors and promote a more nuanced and compassionate understanding of women's experiences and motivations.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The role of Women is crucial to socioeconomic growth. Regrettably, women in underdeveloped nations are denied their developmental rights. Several factors made women commit crimes. This study investigated women's crime causes. The study found that women were more likely to commit crimes due to lack of education, drug trafficking, poverty, lack of resources, reduced freedom compared to men, family

disputes, earnings, and psychological issues. Education is one of the most important components in promoting peace and stability in any society or country, but the research respondents reported that patriarchal structures deprive women of this basic right, which makes them dependent on men. According to human nature, males take advantage of their dependency on them and deny them property rights and prohibit them from speaking out. Women sacrifice for their families and fall behind males in society due to dependency. They are often stereotyped as promiscuous, violent, and lacking in morality. This perception is reinforced by media representations of criminal women, which often portray them as deviant and immoral. These representations contribute to the stigmatization of criminal women, making it more difficult for them to reintegrate into society after serving their sentences. One of the factors that shape community perception towards criminal women is the nature of their offences. Women who engage in violent crimes are often viewed as more dangerous and threatening than those who commit non-violent offences. This perception is based on the assumption that women are not capable of violent behaviour and that when they do engage in such behaviour, they must be mentally unstable or morally corrupt. This stereotype reinforces the idea that women should be passive and submissive, which can make it difficult for them to receive fair treatment in the criminal justice system. Another factor that influences community perception towards criminal women is their socioeconomic status. Women from marginalized communities, such as low-income neighbourhoods and racial or ethnic minorities, are often viewed as more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. This perception is based on the assumption that these women lack the resources and opportunities to lead law-abiding lives. However, this stereotype ignores the systemic barriers that these women face, such as discrimination and lack of access to education and employment opportunities.

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