

## The integrative explanation of woman's criminality

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### **Abstract:**

In reality, a woman's criminality is the result of the interaction of a set of external (i.e., environmental) and internal (i.e., individual) forces. If we assume that the various aspects of environmental forces are the equation (A+B+C) and that the set of individual anthropological forces is represented by the element (D), then the criminal behavior of a woman appears in the new equation, which is the result of two types of individual and environmental forces, represented by:  $D(A+B+C)$ .

This can be simplified by considering that  $D(A+B+C)$  is the formula that represents the interaction of environmental forces with individual forces, because crime, through this methodology, is committed when factors stemming from the individual himself or from society combine to create a criminal situation that serves as the driving force for other factors. It is not certain or inevitable that if these factors combine again, they will result in new criminal behavior or lead to another crime that is more serious and graver than the previous one.

In this context, and through an integrated interpretation of women's criminality, we will focus on explaining the reasons and factors that lead women to commit crimes, knowing that if we look at the different types of crimes committed by women, we will inevitably notice that their factors and causes differ according to the different types of these crimes.

**Keywords:** Crime, integrative interpretation, criminal behavior, female criminality, economic factors, impact of urban and rural environment, impact of work environment, impact of neighborhood environment

### **First: Reasons for women's criminal behavior:**

#### **1- To reinforce the biological and psychological explanation of women's criminality:**

Biological and psychological explanations of women's criminality, while often considered archaic or overly deterministic, provide foundational insights into the gendered nature of criminal behavior by focusing on innate or individualistic factors. Historically, Cesare Lombroso's biological perspective, specifically in *The Female Offender* (1895), argued that female criminals were "atavistic," exhibiting fewer, yet more brutal, primitive traits compared to their male counterparts, suggesting a biological anomaly rather than just environmental influence<sup>1</sup>. Modern biological arguments have evolved to consider hormonal factors, such as the impact of the menstrual cycle on emotional stability, which some

studies link to increased susceptibility to irritability or impulsive criminal actions<sup>2</sup>. Concurrently, psychological theories often center on personality disorders or psychosexual development. Early theorists suggested that female criminals are often "masculinized," behaving in ways that contradict traditional gender roles, while subsequent psychological studies emphasize that high levels of trauma, such as childhood abuse, lead to emotional regulation difficulties and mental health issues (e.g., PTSD, depression) that significantly contribute to the development of criminogenic behavior in women<sup>3</sup>.

Research into the causes of criminal behavior has long been a focus of criminologists. Initially, these studies focused on biological factors, based on the prevailing belief that humans, as living beings, should be subjected to the laws of biology, just like other living beings<sup>4</sup>.

This is the direction of many biological trends and those who say that the disruption of glandular secretions has an effect. There are those who believe that man, although he is a living being, nevertheless reflects the characteristics of his socio-cultural environment, which led to the crystallization of social trends that were concerned with the class affiliation of the individual and cultural conflict... It is noted that most of the theories that appeared in the late 19th century and until the 20th century focused their attention on the crimes of men, although there was a small group that was concerned with the crime of women and attributed its causes to biological and psychological factors. It is noteworthy that since the 1960s, and as a result of rising rates of female crime, economic, social, and political conditions have begun to be considered in explaining this behavior. The study conducted by Lombroso and others in 1895 is considered a pioneering work in this field. In his study of women, he found some degenerate characteristics, particularly among prostitutes. However, the descriptions of the majority of the sample did not match his theory of genetic regression<sup>5</sup>.

He attributed the rarity of female crime to biological factors, arguing that female psychology is more dependent on its biological makeup than male psychology. He believed that most women are more likely to possess criminal traits by chance than by birth, and that they become involved in crimes as a result of male instigation or overwhelming, irresistible desires.

As for the few women who resemble criminals by birth, they surpass men in every respect, in addition to their cunning and deceit. In his view, when a woman is bad, she is worse than a man.

SMART (1976) argues that, in light of this thinking, women are socially condemned not only for breaking the law but also for being considered sexually and physically deviant. Social reactions to women who commit violent crimes differ from those to men. These responses view women in a negative and derogatory manner.

Lombroso was perhaps clear when he pointed to the influence of environment on behavior, and while those who came after him were influenced by his views, their focus was on psychological and social factors rather than biological ones.

Thomas (1907), unlike Lombroso, argued that no individual is inherently predisposed to crime, but rather that social institutions can reform the behavior of individuals who might be prone to deviance. He indicated that sexual desires are the driving force behind girls' delinquency, and that they may even be driven by a desire for arousal, as well as the need to imitate, attract attention, and gain freedom in society. He asserted that girls do not seek sexual relationships to satisfy sexual desires, but rather to fulfill other desires. He concluded that economic factors do not play a significant role in criminal behavior.

Such girls do not deviate for economic reasons but for psychological ones. Klein (1973) criticizes this view, deeming it extremely strange in a time of widespread famine and disease. SMART argues that

women have not had equal opportunities with men to earn an income that would allow them to purchase what they need, and that sexual bargaining is a common characteristic among all women as long as they are economically dependent on men.

Pollack (1950) believes that there are three reasons that explain the low rates of women's crimes. The first reason is that women's crimes are rarely reported to the police. The second is due to the difficulty of detecting violations by women. The third appears to be the leniency of the law enforcement agencies, the police and the judiciary, towards women who violate the law. He believes that the woman is the instigator rather than the perpetrator of the criminal act. He also concludes that the victims of women's crimes, such as husbands, sons, and lovers, do not inform the police of what happened. He believes that men have deceived themselves with what prevails among them, that women are easy to control and need protection. Therefore, they imagine that the possibility of a woman committing a crime is remote, and therefore they hesitate to report women who violate the law.

It is noteworthy that the second generation of writers, which emerged during the 1960s, was influenced by the ideas of earlier pioneers who focused on deviant female behavior.

Konopka (1966) argues that the motivations behind girls' deviance stem from a psychological factor: a woman's feelings of loneliness and need for dependence on others. SMART, however, believes that the need for reinforcement or dependence is an innate need, not a culturally imposed one.

KONOPKA sees, through exposure to the nature of the social system that has placed women in a position of dependency and reliance on others, that women are necessarily forced to seek psychological and material support as a result of their limited opportunity to achieve self-reliance and independence. SMART points out - a methodological objection - when KONOPKA took the girls of institutions as representing all girls who violate the law, and concluded that all deviants come from broken homes in addition to the lack of parental supervision and the low level of education.

Among the studies that adopted the traditions of the biological school of thought is that of Slater and Cowit (1968), who emphasized biological differences between men and women as the primary reason for the difference in the nature and rates of crime committed by the sexes. They believed that girls are more prone to delinquency due to biological abnormalities, such as poor health, central nervous system dysfunction, and lower intelligence, along with lesser abnormalities like laziness and obesity<sup>6</sup>.

If these traits are combined with stressful environmental factors, they can lead to delinquency in these girls. Therefore, biological factors play a major role in girls' delinquency, and the lower rates of female involvement in violent crimes, embezzlement, and robbery are explained by the chromosomal and hormonal systems and their effects on the female body.

SMART, however, attributes women's involvement in these types of crimes to the availability of illicit opportunities and the severity of social control over women, rather than biological factors. It believes that these commonly cited abnormalities are prevalent among certain social groups, particularly the poor, due to their diet and lack of access to healthcare.

The obvious problem with that study is its authors' acceptance of the legal and cultural definition of behavior. They then address the problem of girls' delinquency in isolation from all social institutions by focusing on the family, which distorts the phenomenon and excludes certain institutions that have contributed to creating delinquency, such as the police, courts, and social workers.

During the 1970s, the trend towards interpreting women's crime took an interpretation that did not focus solely on biological factors, and began to look for other reasons such as social reasons. We note that

MANTE-HOFFMAN-BUSTA (1973) points to the importance of socialization methods and their differences between boys and girls, which in turn are reflected in behavior.

Therefore, it is expected that women will not resort to violence due to a lack of predisposition or experience. Consequently, they do not commit violent crimes or armed robbery, and even if they do participate in violent crimes, they resort to methods that reflect their social upbringing and gender role.

## **2- Reinforcing the social interpretation of female criminality within the context of the women's liberation movement:**

criminological thought, moving away from biological determinism toward a social interpretation of female criminality. Scholars argued that as women achieved greater economic and social independence, their criminal opportunities and behaviors began to converge with men's, often resulting in increased arrests for property and white-collar crimes<sup>7</sup>. However, this "liberation thesis" was criticized for neglecting how marginalization-rather than empowerment-drives many women into crime. Feminists, including Meda Chesney-Lind, highlighted that marginalized women, particularly the poor and minorities, face systemic exclusion, family poverty, and victimization, which are key drivers of their involvement in the criminal justice system. Therefore, the social interpretation suggests that rather than "liberation" encouraging crime, it is the inequality and economic disadvantages persistent in society that push women into marginal positions, resulting in criminal behavior as a survival strategy<sup>8</sup>.

Reckeles (1961) argues that understanding women's crimes through their social roles confirms Pollack's assertion that female deviance is widespread, extending beyond our perception of women's roles. Consequently, theories differ in discussing the methods women use to commit crimes, with behavior often interpreted as a result of socialization disorders or failures, or as stemming from frustrations that hinder the fulfillment of role expectations. Thus, the previous theory lacks a holistic perspective for an integrated explanation of female criminality.

ADLET (1975) points out that the women's liberation movement has led to an increase in the rate of women's crimes, and has pushed larger numbers of girls to engage in drinking alcohol, committing theft, fighting, and joining gangs. The researcher goes further, concluding that the narrower the social and economic differences between the sexes, the more the rate of women's crimes increases steadily. We observe this in the United States, Western Europe, and New Zealand as a result of equality with men. Researcher SMART (1976) points out that studies on male crime have progressed greatly in terms of comprehensiveness and complexity, while the theory of explaining female crime is still narrow and we attribute it to a simple and single cause. Therefore, some have turned to searching for other reasons and found them in the women's liberation movement. WEIS (1976) points out that official statistics and field research show that the statistics on modern female criminals are not a field reality, and that the assumption of a relationship between the women's liberation movement and crime is a false perception. It is believed that the increase in property crime rates originated from economic recession and unemployment, especially among women.

James and Thornton (1980) suggest that increased opportunities and weakened social control can lead to an increase in women's crimes. However, evidence indicates that crime rates among liberated women are similar to or lower than those among traditional women. Velimesis (1975) argues that the nature of American society has created tension and pressure on the poor and minorities, leading some women to defiance and lawbreaking. There is no evidence to suggest that changing women's status or the multiplicity of roles they play has driven women to crime, and the women most affected by these changes

are those of the middle class. Female prisoners, on the other hand, are from the poor and are far removed from the women's liberation movement.

Second: Factors that drive women to commit crimes:

The factors that drive women to commit crimes are numerous. Some of them lie in the personality of the female criminal and are expressed as internal factors, while others lie in the natural and human environment surrounding her<sup>9</sup>, which are called external factors. Also, a woman, through her contact with female criminals, may develop a predisposition to crime, whether alone or with members of the modern society to which she now belongs. In our study, we will address the most important factors that we see as most distinctive in driving women to crime in a clear manner, and we have divided them into four sub-factors as follows: psychological factors, social factors, environmental factors, and economic factors.

### **1- Psychological factors:**

Investigating the psychological factors that drive women to crime is difficult to fully grasp in order to understand the reality of these factors. In the view of the psychologist, there is no reason for crime except what was created in the criminal's soul at an early age in terms of repression, deprivation, and rejection... But research in reality confirms many different factors, and we will address the most important of these factors<sup>10</sup>.

#### **1-1- Ignoring Women's Psychological Needs:**

It often happens in many families that women are neglected and most of their rights are overlooked, whether by the parents or by the husband. Therefore, she becomes a victim of loneliness and constant emptiness at home. Generally, women do not receive this aspect of care and attention, especially in primitive societies and remote villages where excessive neglect of women prevails. This leads to internal repression and deprivation of the simplest things, causing them to resort to other means of compensation, such as running away from home or going out secretly. Here, they become more vulnerable to negative behaviors from the outside world, which contribute to violating their sanctity and leading them to deviance and criminal behavior that satisfies their psychological needs<sup>11</sup>.

#### **1-2- Absence of one parent:**

The absence of a parent due to death or divorce negatively affects a woman's psyche, especially if she had a very close relationship with her parents. Losing one of them creates deficiencies that she cannot bear (psychological crises, internal repression, emotional deprivation, etc.). All these deficiencies later translate into other behaviors that may be hostile to those around her. Consequently, losing parental affection and tenderness means losing the care and supervision she enjoyed from her parents. The breakdown of the strong relationship with her parents means a collapse in her psychological state, and thus she may be easily led to crime and to commit ugly and despicable acts, considering that she has lost something of great importance in her life before losing her parents' care.

Thus, the absence of one parent, particularly the father, is a significant structural factor in the development of juvenile delinquency, including female criminal behavior. Children raised in single-parent homes are, on average, more likely to be involved in criminal activity compared to those in two-parent families, partly due to reduced supervision, economic strain, and emotional distress<sup>12</sup>. Studies indicate that the absence of a father figure can lead to increased behavioral problems and a higher likelihood of incarceration, as this situation may deprive children of a stable nurturing structure. While both male and female violence rates can increase, the impact of such disruptions on girls often manifests through

delinquency linked to high-risk environments and lack of monitoring<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, research has shown that the younger a child is when a single-parent family forms, the higher the risk of engaging in criminal behavior. However, it is not solely the absence of a parent that drives this, but also the resulting economic insecurity and potential for maladjustment within the household. A supportive environment, even with one parent, can mitigate some of these risks, but the loss of a parent remains a robust predictor of antisocial behavior<sup>14</sup>.

### **1-3- The need for freedom and social appreciation:**

It is common in many societies that a large percentage of women do not receive enough appreciation and respect to continue their mission of supervising generations and raising children properly.

We often observe that women are always met with deterrence and pressure from society and even the family to abandon their noble and lofty mission, and are deprived of their full freedom to express their rights and demands. This generates setbacks and traumas in their psyche and creates obstacles in their lives, which pushes them to prove themselves in other illegitimate ways and paves the way for their entry into the world of intentional crime in order to take revenge on society. In this case, a woman may commit a crime by going against social standards and values, and by turning to drug and alcohol addiction, giving birth through illegitimate means, embezzlement, and other crimes that she sees as appropriate to prove the ability to compensate for the self that society has lost.

Female criminality is often rooted in the intersection of structural inequality and the intense need for freedom and social appreciation. Studies indicate that many women commit crimes as a desperate survival strategy, driven by economic marginalization, lack of education, and restricted opportunities to achieve legitimate social recognition<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, when traditional social roles-centered on being a wife or mother-are restrictive, female criminal behavior can emerge as a form of defiance or a coping mechanism to escape familial constraints<sup>16</sup>. This is amplified in marginalized communities where women, lacking agency and appreciation, may feel forced to use illicit means to support their families or secure their own autonomy (Islam and Khatun, 2013). Research highlights that, unlike men, a significant portion of women's offenses are survival-based, such as theft or drug trafficking, rather than violent ones. The lack of social support and patriarchal discrimination within society frequently marginalizes these women, driving them towards crime as a last resort. Consequently, addressing female criminality necessitates enhancing education, providing genuine economic opportunities, and fostering social inclusion to replace the need for "deviant freedom" with productive freedom (The Problem with Female Criminality<sup>17</sup>

### **1-4- Early exit from school:**

Early exit from school is a factor of great importance in clarifying the impact that remains on the psyche of the girl who leaves school at an early age, as she becomes a victim of the home, spending all her time managing household chores. Not allowing her to go out and depriving her of her freedom creates a gloomy atmosphere that destroys the direction of the correct life path for her, so she becomes vulnerable to the media and deviant television programs, which gives her other new ideas that she absorbs to complete her journey, and this is either by running away from home permanently and following bad companions. Thus, she escapes the complete control exercised by her family, and she becomes a criminal, engaging in prostitution and street harassment. She may also develop feelings of inferiority towards her peers who have completed their studies, leading her to prove her superiority through deviant means such as drug trafficking, theft, or other activities that could potentially culminate in murder.

### **1-5- Mental Illnesses:**

Many crimes committed by women of all kinds are not punished much because it is later proven that they suffer from psychological illnesses. Women often suffer from anxiety accompanied by fear, lack of confidence, poor memory, and increased sensitivity. This may lead to crimes of assault against property, due to their lack of self-confidence and fear of the future. Sometimes, women suffer from another psychological illness, which is mental fatigue (exhaustion), accompanied by tension, mental distress, and obsessive thoughts, along with a feeling of delusion and extreme exhaustion, in which they are unable to solve even simple problems. The danger of the illness lies in the fact that the patient knows that her actions are the source of obsessive thoughts, yet she cannot break free from them, and this may drive her to suicide in some cases<sup>18</sup>.

### **1-6- The Woman's Position Within the Family:**

According to popular belief -a negative one- the only daughter in the family is viewed with suspicion both in her parents' home and in her husband's. She is considered difficult and unbearable, having grown accustomed to being spoiled and unwilling to accept anyone who refuses her demands. Furthermore, she is seen as sharp-tongued and incompetent in her work. Therefore, she is considered a prime candidate for delinquency, particularly in crimes such as slander, defamation, and perjury. However, in reality, this belief is far removed from an objective explanation of the reasons behind female criminality. It should be noted that there is direct familial responsibility for shaping a woman's positive or negative behavior. Therefore, this position will be no more than the actual position the family has created for the girl born within it, or the woman accepted as a new member into this new social environment, where new forms of conflict will begin, potentially ending with the dominance of the most influential<sup>19</sup>.

### **1-7- The Impact of Adolescence on Women's Crimes:**

Adolescence in girls has a special aspect, which is those crises and burdens that make the girl more resilient and less self-controlled. Her crimes during this period appear to be theft, impulsivity, sexual misconduct, and other related deviations such as staying out late. This stage may be accompanied by violent behavior and threats of murder or suicide. These things happen in particular if the girl has been exposed to a severe emotional shock such as disappointment in love or failure in marriage.

Adolescence serves as a critical developmental period that significantly impacts the trajectory of female criminality, often acting as a bridge between early adverse experiences and later criminal behavior. During these formative years, delinquent females frequently experience higher levels of stressful life events, including increased exposure to abusive or dysfunctional family environments, compared to males. Furthermore, the onset of puberty, particularly if it occurs early, increases vulnerability to delinquent peers and deviant lifestyles, which acts as a potent risk factor for girls' involvement in criminal activities<sup>20</sup>. Socialization with delinquent peers during this time often serves to fulfill developmental needs for independence, which unfortunately can manifest in antisocial behaviors such as theft and assault. As females mature through adolescence, they face greater sensitivity to home-based stressors, which can aggravate mental health issues like anxiety and depression, further pushing them toward criminal acts<sup>21</sup>. The shift in women's roles and increased freedom can sometimes lead to a rise in juvenile delinquency, which often sets the stage for recidivism in adulthood. Furthermore, the lack of secure school attachments and effective parental supervision during these years significantly increases the probability of engaging in criminal activities, leading to a "late-onset" trajectory of delinquency for many young women<sup>22</sup>.

This was discovered among high school students in the USA (Kandel research 1976). This occurs when the time of supervising adolescence ends in both the home and the school, thus beginning a new stage of liberation from any controlling authority. It became clear for England that the number of serious crimes in particular are committed by female juveniles aged (14-18). In many statistical sources, statistics indicate that a large percentage of crimes are committed by female juveniles aged between (10-11) years. The same is true for Germany and Italy, where studies proved that those aged (12-15) commit vagrancy, those aged (14) commit begging, and those aged 16 to less than 20 years commit indecent assault crimes<sup>23</sup>.

In addition to these factors, the nature of women and their inherent cowardice and shyness influence the type of crimes they commit. Women's crimes tend to be non-violent, and therefore we find women inclined to commit crimes of moderate severity that do not require great physical effort, such as petty theft, fraud, breach of trust, slander, and insults. Even in the case of committing murder, they tend to use a non-violent means, such as poison, for example<sup>24</sup>.

There are crimes directly related to the nature of women, such that they cannot be imagined to occur except from them, such as abortion and infanticide. Also, physiological phases are often a factor in crime. During menstruation, she suffers from emotional crises or mood swings and a tendency towards wrong actions. Statistics have shown that 63% of women who committed shoplifting were all menstruating.

Through the study of psychological factors, it is understood that there are psychological motives that make women commit crimes in different ways and types. However, we find in-depth research that has shown a deficiency in the theory of psychological factors, as a defect in the body or a deficiency that a woman suffers from does not necessarily lead to crime. There are no statistics for this, in addition to the fact that there is no clear and agreed-upon measure in defining the defect that drives crime in women. An objective view of society shows that some women who committed crimes were distinguished by their good character, beauty, and good appearance. Thus, crimes related to rape, seduction, fraud, and deception are sometimes explained by such indicators<sup>25</sup>.

## **2- Social factors:**

We have observed from the above that women's criminality is caused by purely psychological factors surrounding women, which ultimately lead them to commit various crimes. However, if we look at women's criminality from a social perspective, social scientists do not underestimate the importance of social factors, which are considered among the most significant factors that make women susceptible to crime. We find that their criminality varies according to the different nature of these factors, because once a criminal woman accepts living under the weight of her growing tendencies towards committing crime, she becomes antisocial, especially in a society where the woman who commits a crime is ostracized in ways and methods more violent than men are<sup>26</sup>.

### **2-1- Parental Deviance or Moral Corruption:**

If the parents are themselves criminals, it is highly probable that their children will deviate from the right path by imitating them, especially daughters who do not find positive role models in their mothers or fathers. The influence of parents through imitation is well-known. A woman who steals because her parents steal, who cheats because they cheat, and who commits adultery and immorality because they do so, does not commit crimes by imitating society, but rather by imitating her parents. Furthermore, this phenomenon demonstrates that the daughters of criminals in such circles do not abandon one another; rather, they support each other, even if it leads to perjury and false testimony.

In Algeria, we find that this phenomenon is correct in terms of diagnosing its causes, as what we observe is that the daughters of those addicted to alcohol and drugs are more than others prone to trafficking in alcohol and drugs and acts of violence that are hereditary in some families, and the girl's behavior is usually measured by the behavior of her mother, so when she is influenced by her behavior, she may grow up to obey the law and religion or to go against them and disregard them, according to what she finds her parents doing. The Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, says in this regard, "The child is born on the natural disposition, then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian".

### **2-2- Family Breakdown:**

This refers to the parents' misunderstanding, the breakdown of the marital bond between them, or the absence of one of them due to death or work. The idea of misunderstanding may be used to express trivial matters, but this does not preclude the fact that misunderstanding between spouses may be of great seriousness. It may mean the husband's abuse of his marital rights and his failure to perform his family duties as a result of his drinking and squandering of his money. It may mean, for the wife, her failure to perform her duties and her neglect of her household affairs...and that misunderstanding, if it reaches this level, will soon threaten the family unit and be an indirect or direct cause of crime.

A woman may have thoughts that a man never has in committing various crimes as a result of his neglect, insults, and indifference towards her and her children. She may feel that her home is fragmented and that married life has no meaning, and this may drive her to compensate outside the family by searching for someone who understands and appreciates her unconditionally. This is the beginning of engaging in crimes of sexual assault and prostitution to restore her dignity. Studies have confirmed that most female criminals belong to broken families due to misunderstandings between spouses. There is also a significant responsibility on the part of society and the family for women's criminality, especially when their basic needs are not met within various social institutions, especially the family. Economic fluctuations also negatively affect women's behavior, especially in societies where legal and social protection for them is limited<sup>27</sup>.

### **2-3- Divorce:**

Divorce is the inevitable end of misunderstandings between spouses. Divorce has an undeniable impact on children's behavior, especially girls who do not find anyone to care for them or give them attention. The girl then finds nothing in her life but anxiety and personality disturbances, and she is overcome by a feeling of being wronged by people, so she resents them and rebels. Crime may be her clearest expression of satisfaction with her society. A girl may not deviate from her society as a result of the divorce between her parents, especially if she finds someone to embrace her and compensate her for what she was deprived of from her parents in terms of affection, tranquility, love, etc.

Divorce is a complex social phenomenon, acting as the final dissolution of a marriage due to various, often cumulative, reasons. Common causes include lack of commitment, infidelity, excessive conflict, and financial strain, which often leave partners feeling unhappy and trapped. Modern studies indicate that marriages are particularly fragile within the first four years, with rising divorce rates frequently observed in urbanized areas<sup>28</sup>. Beyond the spouses, the psychological and behavioral impact on children is profound, leading to issues such as lower academic performance, attachment problems, and increased anxiety in addition to emotional distress, research confirms that children from divorced families are more likely to experience social maladjustment and economic instability compared to those from intact families<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, the long-term effects can extend into adulthood, potentially impacting the self-

esteem and relational skills of those who experienced parental separation<sup>30</sup>. Although divorce is sometimes seen as a relief from a high-conflict home, it fundamentally changes family roles and parenting styles<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, divorce is not merely a personal failure but a public health issue that requires adequate support systems for both parents and children<sup>32</sup>.

But what she never forgets is witnessing the tension and arguments that her parents lived through in her sight and hearing, exchanging insults and curses, and one of them might resort to lying and evasion to justify his position towards the other. The girl is aware of these things from time to time, and what we conclude is that the ideal model that she was unconsciously seeking in her parents does not exist. Rather, ideals, virtuous morals, frankness, and honesty are merely formal expressions that do not exist in reality if she does not find them in her parents. Consequently, her committing some crimes that are contrary to social values, such as insults, slander, perjury, and even other crimes that are more serious, is considered by her to be normal actions as long as she has lost the ideals and perfect model that she was supposed to have found in her parents<sup>33</sup>.

#### **2-4- Wars and the decline in living standards:**

It is obvious that wars have a clear impact on the phenomenon of crime among women, especially the resulting deterioration in social conditions and the decline in living standards. This leads to an increase in the percentage of women involved in crime. This can be explained by saying that during wartime, men are conscripted to defend their country, and women take their place in factories and shops to fill the void. Therefore, women are exposed to the same temptations of crime and fraud that men were exposed to before them.

Thus, during wartime, women enter the world of crime with full force, engaging in it just as men do, adding their own specific crimes such as adultery, abortion, and infanticide<sup>34</sup>.

This was observed in European countries during World War I and was confirmed during World War II, where female crime rates tripled compared to wartime levels.

#### **2.4. The Impact of Poverty on Female Crime:**

The deteriorating economic situation within the family leads to cases of poverty, homelessness and begging for women, resulting in multiple crimes such as prostitution and theft... These crimes, in most of their forms, are clearly linked to poverty and need... etc. The poverty leads to an increase in women's criminality, especially when care for them declines, as families neglect their needs in favor of meeting the needs of males<sup>35</sup>.

Scholars have differed on the role of poverty and its relationship to women's criminal behavior. Some deny that poverty has any role in women's criminality and that it is not a motive for crime except incidentally, and that many poor women do not generally resort to crime no matter how severe their poverty is. Studies and statistics have confirmed that there is a minority of well-off juvenile females in prison alongside poor females. This means that, in addition to the factor of poverty, there are other factors that have an effect that ends with pushing poor women to commit crime<sup>36</sup>.

#### **2-5- Customs and Traditions:**

Traditions and customs are mostly unwritten and are passed down orally and practically from generation to generation. However, they have a powerful influence on shaping people's will. One of the most important customs and traditions, especially those that drive women to crime, is the concept of revenge, a widespread phenomenon in our country. In our rural areas, no one is surprised by a woman who responds to aggression with aggression and violence with violence. The desire for revenge is a feeling

shared by all members of her family. For example, a mother whose husband has been killed instills the idea of revenge in her sons, and one of her sons will carry out the revenge if she is unable to do so herself. Thus, customs and traditions play a significant role in shaping female criminality, often acting as both a catalyst for crime and a determinant of the type of offenses committed. In many patriarchal societies, strict gender roles limit women's opportunities, yet simultaneously subject them to intense domestic pressure, which can drive them towards crimes of survival or violence against intimate partners<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, traditional expectations often render women vulnerable to coercion, resulting in their involvement in drug trafficking or financial crimes as pawns of men<sup>38</sup>. When women deviate from these prescribed cultural norms, they face severe social condemnation, which can exacerbate their criminalization and reduce their access to legal protection. Additionally, "honor" systems in certain cultures can trigger violent reactions from women to defend family reputations, or conversely, make them victims of "honor killings"<sup>39</sup>. Consequently, female criminal acts are frequently misinterpreted, overlooking the underlying socioeconomic and traditional pressures that force them into conflict with the law<sup>40</sup>.

We also find extravagant wedding customs and a love of displaying wealth and luxury. Women often flaunt their extravagant clothing and jewelry, which can drive them to steal or incite their husbands to embezzle in order to acquire these luxurious possessions. These and other customs can push women toward crime to achieve personal goals and gain recognition.

#### **2-6 Ignorance and Illiteracy:**

Ignorance and illiteracy are among the most significant factors that lead women to commit crimes, often unintentionally. Various studies have shown that illiterate women tend to be more cruel and violent, exhibiting traits such as killing newborns and stealing.

What we observe in reality is that the war in our country created poverty, ignorance, and widowhood, leaving more than 550,000 women widowed or divorced. In this regard, one researcher mentions that, through visits to rehabilitation centers in Constantine, Annaba, Skikda, Tiaret, Algiers, and Oran, the crimes committed by women in the 1960s and early 1970s were primarily morality crimes, such as soliciting in public, abortion, and infanticide. These were followed by crimes of theft, fraud, and breach of trust. As for the origins of these female criminals and the reasons for their crimes, he adds that it is striking that the majority of those arrested were uneducated, unemployed women who had migrated from rural areas in search of better living conditions<sup>41</sup>.

In a country like Algeria, ignorance and illiteracy have no bearing on a woman's life, leading her to commit criminal acts without realizing the consequences, such as failing to vaccinate children against deadly diseases, or providing unhealthy meals that often result in death, and other crimes stemming from women's ignorance of many things, whether directly or indirectly.

#### **2-7- Keeping Pace with Social Development:**

The status and position of women in the society in which they live does not prevent them from participating in social affairs, and even from leaving the house and being given freedoms...including physical freedom, which opens up a wide field for them to engage in the field of crime of all kinds, since the inclusion of women in society, as much as it is considered a victory for them, educating them improves their social status and enables them to work and be active in general in all social and economic fields, so that they become a person with a salary and a postal account, and then the opportunity is available to commit crimes of forgery and issuing a check without sufficient funds, as well as crimes of

embezzlement and bribery...On the other hand, women, by virtue of their liberation, have started to drive cars and commit crimes of injury and manslaughter, as well as using the car without a license and not observing the traffic law<sup>42</sup>.

These crimes, regardless of their severity, are often committed by liberated and progressive women who hold positions of influence in society, and it is inconceivable that they could be committed by anyone else.

Cultural media also play a role in pushing women towards crime (newspapers, books, publications, radio, television, cinema, etc.). Women see on television images that demonstrate a disregard for morality and ideals in matters of sexuality. They may also see clothing and advertisements that offer them entertainment and gratification, which often leads them to criminal acts. This can manifest as engaging in illicit relationships with young men and blindly imitating what they see in films and read in newspapers. According to some scholars, witnessing a crime can awaken in a woman a propensity to commit crimes, especially if she is vulnerable and unable to control herself, thus driving her to commit crimes unconsciously.

In reality, a female criminal can only commit her crime within society. Without a human gathering, we cannot conceive of crime, which is a violation of a law to which members of society adhere. Society is the natural framework for the criminal's activity and the true source of the reasons for her crime. Indeed, a woman only resorts to crime when a suitable social circumstance arises. This stems from within herself and is derived from society. In this regard, it can be said that a person is born with an innate inclination towards goodness, but it is society that corrupts them.

American scientists, however, hardly acknowledge crime except in relation to social factors. Women's crime has been steadily increasing in all societies without exception and across all age groups. Some do not hold women fully responsible for their criminal behavior, because their crimes are usually connected to other partners, and the percentage of individual crime for women compared to group crime is very low compared to men's crime.<sup>16</sup> Although scientists agree that social factors are paramount in women committing crimes, there are other factors that lead them to crime. They also acknowledge that these factors play only a secondary role, such as economic, cultural, and environmental factors. There are also other factors related to the nature of women that are compatible with the crime they commit.

### **3- Environmental Factors:**

By environmental factors, we mean those surrounding a woman that led her to commit crimes in stressful environments, pushing her towards criminality directly or indirectly. We will discuss different environments, which we will review as follows:

#### **3-1- The Family Environment:**

The influence of the family environment is evident in the formation of a woman's personality from childhood, on the development of her psychological capabilities, and on the direction of her future. If the family is characterized by excessive authoritarianism and harshness, the woman receives her first experiences, traditions, and beliefs within her family, derived from the concept of learning through trial and error.

The family environment can instill in a woman feeling of deprivation, jealousy, and other personality disorders that drive her to violence, theft, homelessness, and running away from home. Thus, the loss of a family atmosphere, a decline in living standards, poor environmental role models, rigid parental behavior, harmful customs, weak religious faith, and flawed upbringing often push women to commit

many immoral acts, including murder, theft, and sexual offenses. This is because females are more affected by family conflicts than males, who are generally more resilient and tougher in the face of such family disputes.

### **3-2- The Influence of the Neighborhood Environment:**

Many criminologists in Italy, America, and France acknowledge the role of the neighborhood in delinquency and crime. For example, some interpret women's criminal behavior based on their living conditions, which force them into the street or neighborhood, thus shaping their behavior. If the living space is cramped relative to the number of family members, a woman-especially one newly integrated into the family-may prefer to leave home and stay outside, or even run away, to find recreation, only to encounter the unforgiving street and be led down a path of ruin.

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Indeed, women in some situations may be distressed and seek comfort and reassurance in an environment unfamiliar to them. However, they soon find themselves led down a path fraught with vice by bad companions who have already engaged in crime, using them as commodities for exploitation, whether by pushing them into prostitution or involving them in drug trafficking gangs. Studies have confirmed that most women who resort to the streets suffer from emotional and moral emptiness, blatant neglect, and deprivation of everything.

Women often perceive the same psychological state as other women in their neighborhood and therefore see integration into that environment as a more merciful way to alleviate their suffering. Thus, due to the housing crisis, the street becomes almost a second home, imposing its own new rules, systems, and traditions on every woman who seeks refuge there. This, in turn, encourages various forms of crime, particularly adultery, theft, or other offenses committed under pressure from the surrounding community. However, a woman's descent into crime is not necessarily driven by a housing crisis or overcrowding. Some women may suffer from overcrowding and significant family pressures, yet they do not resort to crime despite the presence of female criminals in their neighborhoods.

### **3-3- The impact of the school environment:**

The school is the environment that follows the family environment. The girl enters the school to add to the legacy of her parents. Although the school is the ground from which the girl starts to acquire what is appropriate to correct her behavior, refine her character, and raise her level, the school cannot be absolved of all the behaviors that some girls resort to during the school period or in later periods. The school is responsible, if not directly, then indirectly, for the delinquency and criminality of some girls<sup>43</sup>.

Experience has shown that one of the reasons a girl may struggle to adapt to school, leading to absenteeism, disobedience, and a lack of harmony and adjustment, is the overall school environment and, in particular, her relationship with her teacher.

Unfair treatment, the use of harmful punishments such as physical injury or beating, and a teacher's indifference and mockery towards the classroom can all drive some girls to recklessness and disruptive

behavior. Furthermore, a teacher's marginalization of a girl due to weakness in certain subjects, poor appearance, or a physical disability can create psychological complexes, leading her to dislike school and develop a desire to assert herself in other, non-academic ways. This, in turn, can lead to drug use and instill in her a spirit of revenge and aggression.

A girl's running away from school is itself a first step towards crime. If she leaves school, it's not to be alone, but to find more receptive companions, and she'll only find them among her peers at school. Their reactions might include attention-grabbing behaviors as a way to compensate for their own feelings, and this could certainly be a gateway to committing a crime.

From the above, we observe that the school contributes to women's crime through seemingly trivial things that, at their core, carry dangerous meanings and motivations. Teachers can reduce some of the crimes that might occur in the future, but only if they truly value what they say and do in the classroom. This requires them to examine their own behavior and interactions with students, especially girls, who are sensitive to the smallest things. This can ruin their future; instead of shaping them into good women, it can push them towards becoming criminals.

#### **3-4- The impact of the work environment:**

It is noted that women's criminality increases when they become involved in work and social life to cope with difficult life conditions in the absence of men, especially during times of war and famine. This is observed in the increased crime rate among unmarried women, with the possibility of the absence of the man who used to manage the needs, requirements, and problems of the family. because life has become more complex in our time, women, as they commute to their workplaces, are exposed to difficulties, harassment, and abuse, especially if their work is far from their homes. They may unknowingly participate in crimes daily, such as neglecting their professional duties and failing to perform certain work-related tasks. Sometimes, they are involved in bribery, forgery, and embezzlement, perhaps with the help of those around them at work. Thus, we find that the work environment contributes to creating conditions conducive to crime, or at least suggestive of it. Women are less likely to resist these temptations and are more likely to commit crimes they wouldn't if the act were committed outside their workplace. For example, embezzlement is a crime more likely for women working in accounting, and abortions are more likely to be performed by female specialists in obstetrics and gynecology... etc<sup>44</sup>.

However, the presence of a female criminal in her workplace is not always a motive for crime. Many working women may find themselves in circumstances conducive to crime, yet they never succumb to such temptations, because the most beautiful quality that distinguishes a woman is her chastity and her aversion to all that is base and trivial.

#### **3-5- The Influence of Urban and Rural Environments:**

Most researchers in this field agree that urban and rural crime differs in scale and form among women. The high population density in cities and the opportunities they provide for women to interact create numerous opportunities for committing crimes, unlike in rural areas. We observe that both urban and rural women are involved in crime at a low rate, though they may share similarities in crimes such as abortion and adultery.

The influence of environmental settings on female criminality is significant, with urban and rural areas presenting distinct risk factors and types of offending<sup>45</sup>. Urban environments, characterized by high population density and social disorganization, often increase female participation in property and drug-related crimes due to economic strain and anonymity, offering more opportunities for deviant.

Conversely, rural environments frequently witness higher rates of intimate partner violence and homicide, where social isolation and limited access to support systems exacerbate victimization. Despite higher anonymity in cities, rural women often face extreme stigmatization, which silences reporting<sup>46</sup>. Furthermore, urban settings can offer greater, albeit precarious, opportunities for economic independence, contrasting with the structural marginalization in rural areas where women might be trapped in abusive relationships due to dependency<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, the "place" of residence acts as a key determinant in both the frequency and nature of crimes committed by or against women.

Life is initially difficult, requiring women to work hard and persevere to support their husbands. This often leads them to commit various crimes, such as fighting, verbal abuse, physical assault, and sometimes even murder, in defense of property and crops. Confrontations are typically between women. As for the urban woman, due to the development of her home, we find her playing an instigating role in many crimes such as assault and battery, especially theft and embezzlement of public funds. It has been proven that the urban woman's entry into the world of crime is closely linked to her social status; her involvement in crime increases as her social standing improves<sup>48</sup>.

Through our review of some environmental factors that also contribute to pushing women into the world of crime, we observe that they are no less important than the previously mentioned factors that lead women to criminality.

#### **4- Economic Factors:**

Economic factors, particularly poverty and financial strain, serve as primary drivers behind the increasing involvement of women in criminal activities worldwide. Research indicates that economic marginalization, characterized by limited access to legitimate employment and lower wages compared to men, forces many women to adopt survival strategies, such as petty theft, shoplifting, or drug-related offenses, to meet basic needs<sup>49</sup>. Furthermore, structural inequalities and lack of economic empowerment can lead women into abusive situations, which are also linked to higher crime rates. According to specialized studies, economic necessity often drives criminal acts that are focused on providing financial stability for families, rather than violent tendencies<sup>50</sup>. This situation is compounded by the fact that many women in prison are victims of systemic poverty, and their criminalization is a direct result of economic desperation rather than criminal intent. Consequently, in many regions, the rate of women imprisoned for economic-related crimes has increased significantly, highlighting a clear nexus between poverty, lack of resources, and female involvement in the criminal justice system<sup>51</sup>.

It is said that there is a definite link between crimes committed by women and their economic circumstances. By economic circumstances, we mean both periods of prosperity and recession, and the woman committing the crime may be poor or rich.

Undoubtedly, crime exists in both economically prosperous and recessionary societies, and a female criminal may be driven to commit her crime by poverty or by wealth. If economic circumstances play a role in female criminality, it is best to examine them from an individual perspective, considering factors such as poverty, unemployment, and the decline in living standards resulting from war. These are the social factors we discussed.

Generally speaking, a woman's economic situation may be prosperous. In such a case, a life of luxury and ease will inevitably create needs that will not be satisfied until they are fulfilled. And once these needs are met, she will begin to think of other needs she hadn't previously considered, driven by ambition.

Thus, abundance creates need, need creates desire, and desire dictates behavior. The same applies to deprivation; deprivation creates need, and need dictates behavior.

It may not occur to us that a rich woman commits criminal acts such as theft, for example, as she has no need for that due to the wealth she enjoys. She may be known for her justice, upright conduct, generosity, and honesty. But if we delve into her world and trace her sins, we find that her vices, immorality, and evils are countless, and money pays for them. Her crimes would not have been committed were it not for the wealth she possesses. Among the crimes that women commit as a result of luxury and extravagance are, in particular, crimes of morality such as adultery, fornication, marital infidelity, abortion, killing newborn children, and the use of alcohol and drugs. It is also noted that the state of prosperity creates crimes among women that are known only to rich women.

A woman who lives a life different from that of a wealthy woman—one who lacks the status and money of the latter—may see her life as a model and a goal to strive for. She may perceive it as a source of injustice and social oppression, believing that taking a share of it by any means is a right that does not trouble her conscience. This is why criminal women often target the wealth of the rich.

In this situation, a woman may be deprived of the means of living and leisure. She aspires to acquire luxuries (a car, a villa, a beach vacation, travel, etc.). Therefore, she is denied what other women have achieved through comfortable means, and consequently, she seeks to attain it through illicit methods.

It is not uncommon for a rich female criminal to meet a poor one, and for both of them to seek to fulfill the other's desires. The wealthy one, who has money and whose social status does not allow her to associate with places of entertainment or sit with just anyone, seeks to provide everything she needs in secret and discretion. Thus, a bond is formed between them, and they cooperate to proceed with implementing a roadmap plan in which they experiment with all kinds of crimes. The circle may begin with a small number of female criminals, later including hundreds and thousands... like an epidemic that begins with one case and ends with millions of cases.

### **Summary**

For decades, criminologists, sociologists, and criminal psychologists have focused their attention on women's crimes. The results of these studies have been reviewed above, but there is still a need to conduct more studies and identify patterns of women's criminal behavior, especially in light of the integrative interpretation of women's criminality, the changes that have occurred and will occur in the future, and to compare women's criminal behavior in Western societies with their behavior in other societies.

There is also a need for more studies on the attitudes and treatment of law enforcement agencies, such as police, courts, and prisons, towards women who violate the law, whether in Western societies or in Arab countries. It should not be assumed that the need for more studies on the integrative interpretation of women's criminality is intended to call for separating the study of men's crimes from women's crimes and creating a new sub-specialty. Rather, it supports the idea of expanding into important aspects of studies and scientific facts that have remained unknown for a long time in Western societies, and which are still unknown in many other societies, including Arab societies in general and Algerian society in particular.

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