QUALITATIVE RESEARCH JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES
ISSN Online: 3006-4686, ISSN Print: 3006-4678
Volume No: 02 Issue No: 04 (2025)

# INVESTIGATE THE INCREASED RATIO OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN KOT LAKHPAT JAIL LAHORE UNDER THE SECTION 378(THEFT) OF PAKISTAN PENAL CODE

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***Abstract***
*This research played a very crucial role in current unstable crisis situation of the country. The main objectives of the study were to find out the reason and causes of committing the offence under section 378 of Pakistan Penal Code by Female accused, the multidimensional different criminal ways and means using by accused for such illegal act and to find out the suggestions for elimination of such illegal offence through a counseling and training of female prisoners in jail. The sample of study were ten female prisoners in jail on theft from central jail Kotlakpat Lahore, Punjab and the nature of the study was qualitative. However, the Purposive Sampling Techniques were used and this study was limited on specific areas for in depth information. Hence, in this research the main aim was to know the reason and causes behind increased ratio of female prisoners in jail, under section 378 (theft) of PPC.*
***Keywords***: *Law, Offence, Crime, Female, Prisoners, Pakistan Penal Code, Jail.*

## Introduction

Investigation into the rising number of female inmates in Central Jail Kot Lakhpat, Lahore, specifically under Section 378 (Theft) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), reveals a complex intersection of economic hardship, gender-based vulnerability, and systemic legal gaps. While women have historically constituted a small fraction of Pakistan's prison population, recent data suggests a concerning upward trend in property-related offenses. UNODC (2011) and Baloch (2013) determine that the upsurged in women theft cases at Kot Lakhpat Jail is not just merely a legal issue but a significant socio-economic indicator of the widening gender gap in developing country like Pakistan economic and judicial systems. Khalid and khan (2013) examine that economic survival is the main factor which contributed in the rapid spike of female prisoner ratio under section 378 of the Pakistan Penal Code. Baloch (2013) reported

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that the Pakistani society have patriarchal structure and masculine power dominance in all spheres of life which often highly impacts the women's and their status in society which increased extreme financial dependency.

Khalid and Khan (2013) further argue that while Section 378 is gender-neutral in its definition, its application often fails to account for the coercive environments or "pathways" that lead women to crime, such as being forced by male relatives to act as accomplices. Butt (2014) explains that the criminal justice landscape in Pakistan has traditionally been dominated by male offenders; however, the demographic shift in correctional facilities like Central Jail Kot Lakhpat, Lahore, indicates a burgeoning crisis regarding female criminality. Butt (2014) and JPP (2024) indicate that many women incarcerated in Lahore are not habitual offenders but are victims of situational stressors, including domestic violence and lack of educational empowerment.

Justice Project Pakistan (2024) reports that the overcrowding in Punjab's prisons, which are operating at over 170% capacity, further exacerbates the plight of these female inmates, many of whom remain under trial for extended periods due to an inability to afford legal representation. Hussain and Ishfaq (2025) believes that this phenomenon is significantly deeply rooted in the "feminization of poverty," where females, mostly the sole breadwinners or heads of homeless families, turn to the crimes related to the property to meet fundamental familial basic needs. Dawn (2025) explored that the inadequate level of awareness knowledge regarding constitutional rights particularly under Section 497 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which features unique bail exemptions design specifically only for females as a result countless offenders are kept in detention for minor offence that could easily resolved with probation. Hussain and Ishfaq (2025) affirmed that there are many contributing factors associated with the social exclusion which increased social stigma attached with imprisonment. However, these accused females creating more recidivism after their release.

**Research Objective:**

- To find out the causes of committing offence under section 378 of Pakistan Penal Code by female accused**.**

## Literature Review

Khalid and Khan (2013) identify that for many women in Central Jail Kot Lakhpat, theft serves as a survival mechanism necessitated by "pathways" of early life victimization, problematic family relationships, and extreme economic deprivation. Zafar, Ahmad, and Sheikh (2013) emphasize that low education levels and economic dependency are the primary "dragging factors" that force women into the criminal justice system in the Punjab province. Butt (2014) highlights that the "Situational Analysis" of Kot Lakhpat Jail reveals an environment where female inmates are socially excluded and disadvantaged, with theft often being the result of psychological pressure or direct compulsion by male relatives. Saeed, Rehman, and Usmani (2018) conclude that the rising inflation and unemployment rates in Pakistan's urban centers like Lahore have created a "lust for money" or a necessity for survival that directly correlates with the increase in theft cases among women.

Nabi, Ali, and Jadoon (2023) state that women in Pakistan are often imprisoned for non-violent crimes, such as small-time larceny under Section 378, yet they face the same harsh conditions and psychological trauma as those convicted of more violent offenses. Hussain and Ishfaq (2025) find that socio-cultural determinants, specifically forced marriages and the refusal of inheritance property rights, leave women with few legal avenues for financial independence, thus pushing them toward criminal behavior. Justice Project Pakistan (2024) reports that a significant portion of female inmates are under-trial prisoners who remain in custody for theft

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due to a systemic lack of access to legal aid and an inability to post bail. Nayyab, Khan, and Khan (2025) argue that the lives of female prisoners remain challenging due to the ineffective implementation of the Pakistan Prison Rules and international norms like the Nelson Mandela Rules, particularly regarding gender-sensitive rehabilitation.

Faiza and Alam (2025) indicates that the female criminal patterns in Punjab mostly vary by demographic trends where urban women's have high rate of property related offences as compared to the rural female accusers. The National Commission for Human Rights (2025) stated that even the new addition of the new barrack for females between 2010-2024 but still the jail prison system fails to adequately offer the unique rehabilitation and health resources which play role in the prevention of the female offences related to the property issues.

## Method and Materials

The choice of the study design based upon the nature of query. The Questions of the study being addresses along with its context decide the type of research. Because the main persistence of the study was to known the increasing ratio of female accused in jail on offence of theft. However, the need of the research was to find out the description in term of getting interviews of the accomplices. Therefore, qualitative research best facilitated in this regard. Moreover, the population of the study were consisted on female Prisoners from central Jail on theft. Who were punished by under the prescribed criminal law and the sample size was ten females' prisoners from central jail Kot Lakhpat jail Lahore, Punjab as well as the prisoners were from different district and sector of Lahore, and data collection was stopped after reaching the point of saturation. Hence, for this research the Purposive sampling techniques was used to approach the participants. However, research approach to participant through the long process to get permission from inspector of general prisons Punjab to visit central jail Kot Lakhpat Lahore for interviews. After collecting the demographical information, the researcher notes down the all-key answers in detail as well as the interviews of the study were conducted in very objectively and in unemotional way. The main source of data through a researcher collects their data was structured interview guide for this purpose researcher travelled to jail to conduct their interview to know the main reason and causes behind their crime. Furthermore, for the data analysis transcription of the conversation were started after conduction of interviews because most of the conversation during the interview was in Urdu and Punjabi language as per the convenience of participants. After completion of the data collection the collected data analyzed thoroughly and theme were also generated as well as finding from these cases were interpreted and analyzed in order to highlight main causes.

**Delimitation and Limitations:**

- Photography and all types of video recording audio was not allowed and the visit was properly conducted under supervision with security arrangements Moreover, the Deputy Superintendent was also presented during the interview.
- First and more important limitation of the study was that the sample size was very small and based on specific area.
- The second limitation was that the title of the study was sensitive in nature for open discussion.
- Most of the female did not want to share their personal experience with researchers. They feel uncomfortable while taking researcher.
- The other limitation was that the researcher was restricted not to take interviews in recording from so that's why all the details of the interview wrote at the time of interview.

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## Data Analysis

**Table 1: Demographical Information of the Respondents:**

| Sr. No | Age | Education | Marital Status | Residence/City/Offence committing Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 30 | Illiterate | Married | Okara |
| **2.** | 35 | Illiterate | Married | Rahim Yar Khan |
| **3.** | 27 | Matric | Married | Faisalabad |
| **4.** | 50 | Illiterate | Married | Faisalabad |
| **5.** | 40 | Illiterate | Married | Rawalpindi |
| **6.** | 40 | Illiterate | Married | Chungi Amar Sidhu |
| **7.** | 37 | Illiterate | Married | Changa Manga |
| **8.** | 38 | Illiterate | Married | Okara |
| **9.** | 36 | Illiterate | Unmarried | Lahore |
| **10.** | 40 | Illiterate | Married | Sheikh Pura |

The first respondents of this research were 30-year-old women who was living in Okara and married illiterate lady. The first respondents of this research were 35-year-old women who was living in Rahim Yar Khan and married illiterate lady. Hence, the third respondent of the study was a 27-year-old married female who has matriculated and belongs from Faisalabad and fourth female respondent was 50 years old and also from Faisalabad with same information but illiterate. However, the fifth respondents were 40 years old married illiterate women from Rawalpindi. Moreover, the profiles of the remaining five respondents indicate a consistent demographic information pattern.

All female respondents around the age of 36 to 40 years old and illiterate, which suggests limited formal education and possibly restricted access to information or employment opportunities in their Past. Four out of five respondents are married, implying they have family responsibilities, which may influence their life. Only one respondent is unmarried, which might reflect personal or cultural factors influencing marital status. The location wise geographical distribution from different areas of Lahore including Chungi Amar Sidhu, Changa Manga, Okara, Lahore, and Sheikhupura demonstrated a mix of semi-rural and urban backgrounds. This demographical information helped the researcher to contextualize the experiences of accused related to life, opportunities and challenges as well as causes of crime.

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Reported Causes of Committing Crime**

| Causes of Committing Crime | Percentage % |
|---|---|
| Revenge | 16.66% |
| Greed | 20% |
| Habitual causes | 16% |
| Poverty | 40% |
| Other issues | 7.34% |

**Question 1**

**The first question of this study was about the main causes of committing the crime.**

The collected data revealed that the majority of the female accused faced poverty and financial issues which were the primary cause that pushed them towards crime. However, the collected information indicated that many females who were from poor background face economic issues to fulfill their basic needs which were unmet. Some respondents also highlight domestic violence, lack of education, and pressure from abusive spouses or male family members as the main contributing factors. In some cases, physical and psychological distress,

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mental health illness which were created by chronic mistreatment and trauma were significant factors.

**Question 2**

**This question was designed to examines what did the accused gain from committing the crime.**

The data from the 10 female prisoners at Kot Lakhpat Jail reveals that the "gain" from theft was primarily used for immediate domestic survival rather than personal luxury. Most respondents liquidated stolen items to pay for basic necessities like food, medicine, and children's expenses, or to settle informal debts to avoid harassment. In several cases, the financial gain was immediately seized by abusive spouses or male relatives, leaving the women with all the legal risk but no actual benefit. Ultimately, the study shows that the gain was a temporary, desperate fix for systemic poverty, where the small material reward was vastly outweighed by the severe legal consequences under Section 378.

**Question 3**

**The researcher uses this question to identify the what problems did females face after committing the crime.**

The collected data revealed that the immediate collapse was occurred in their domestic stability which is the basic challenge for the ten accusers of the study. Most of these women's were socially shunned upon arrest because mostly male family members distance their self in order to circumvent the pilferage issue and deprived the women's without economically and psychologically support for their legal protection or in their case proceeding.

Furthermore, high legal expense incurred inside the jail which quickly outweighed the financial gain they had been already sought oftentimes plummeting their family members under the extreme poverty they were trying to avoid. The group of mothers generally stressed the intense emotional agony of being separated from their children's, who were either left without any main primary caretaking or forcefully pushed to the child labor.

Moreover, because of insufficient information and related resources for using the judicial system, a number of respondents face harassment which increased the vulnerability and concerns about their self-security. Ultimately, the problem that accompanied the crime which ranged from a socio- cultural boycott to a decline in psychological well being became more long lasting and acute than the initial financial difficulties which ultimately led to the crime.

**Question 4**

**This question was to examined what kind of conditions provoked females for committing the crime.**

The fourth question of this study examines the specific environmental and social triggers that provoked the 10 female prisoners at Kot Lakhpat Jail to commit theft under Section 378 of the PPC. The data collected in the study show that prolonged economical distress in combination with the sudden unexpected collapse of informal community support networks was the most crucial precipitating factor. The threshold of the numerous participants was an unexpected domestic cataphoric event that left these accused individuals with no choice but just to commit crime and steal things for their survival and for their children as well who also suffering from severe issues. Beside poverty issues, some respondents also said that they were also forcefully involved this crime because their spouses were drug addicted, oppressive, violent, abusive and they need money otherwise they beat them if they deny to performed what they said and due to illiteracy and no recognized mean of source for the survival they involved in this crime.

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**Question 5**

**The main objective of this question was to find out whether economic conditions were the reason behind committing the crime.**

The data gathered from the ten female respondents or the accuser of the theft crime show that their involvement in the theft crime was basically due to the financial issue. The majority of the accuser were from low-income background and their insufficient capacity to pay for their basic needs such as housing and adequate food which motivate them toward criminal offence. However, these women had no legal way to manage household crisis because of their inconsistent occupation and not having a reliable source of financial safety net. As a result, the offence was viewed as frantic preservation tactic spurred by systematic economic distress rather than a moral choice and all respondents of the study show a strong relationship among the increasing prevalence of women's imprisonment for economic related offence as well as Pakistan rising inflationary pressure.

**Question 6**

**The purpose of this question was to investigate how they planned the crime.**

The investigation into the ten female prisoners at Kot Lakhpat Jail reveals that the large number of the theft were not well-planned professional. Instead of using specialized tools or complicated plans, these females just simply decided to take benefits of a transient chance because they often serve as household employees or have access to their nearby neighbors' houses. A few respondents stated that their spouses or male family members utilized them for their advantage which push them to execute and carry out their action plan. Overall, the lack of any sort of genuine planning indicate that these were frantic acts instead of habitual repeat offenders.

**Question 7**

**The aim of this question was to find out how they carried out the crime and what steps took to escape after committing the crime.**

The collected data shows that all accused female prisoner at Kot Lakhpat Jail were mostly executed and unsystematic in simple way. However, majority of the female mostly house hold helpers from bustling areas, concealed small stolen items such as valuable ornaments hidden within what they wore. Their main safe plan was to look ordinary and normal like everybody else while doing this criminal offence because they had no professional experience or habitual. In some instance, stolen items were quickly handed over to their family member or crime partners in order to evade capture but in most cases they were easily identify by the law agencies due to their fear in experience in this act.

**Question 8**

**The purpose of this question was to identify what tools or resources they used during the crime and how they obtained them.**

The data of the ten female inmates at Kot Lakhpat jail indicated that those females who were under the investigation process revealed that they did not used any special confiscated items or any weapon while committing crime. particularly in Pakistan under section 378, theft cases in which women involved were typically non violent and driven primarily by deception instead of brute force. However, these females also stated that many time they stole household items and hide them under their shirt and shawls and in extreme level cases they use knives not for hurting or killing but to safe their own self from any type of violence from kitchens because they were familiar about everything of house so, this statement indicates that mostly these sorts of crime were spontaneous impulsive act of majboori.

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**Question 9**

**This question seeks to know whether the accused committed the crime alone or had assistance from someone.**

According to the collected data from the accused females during interview shows that majority of them had assistance from their family members or in some cases they did unintentionally independently out of sudden majboori or problems. However, in several cases their spouses and male family member were the mastermind who forced the female into stealing items or cash while they were stood outside the location. ultimately the findings illustrate that these female typically served as the greatest susceptible connection in the illegal criminal act, whether they did this alone or with the help of someone.

**Question 10**

**The purpose of this question was to understand the overall living conditions in jail, including the treatment prisoner receive, the availability of hygiene and cleanliness facilities, and the adequacy of the food provided.**

The collected data from the accusers of theft offence who were at Kot Lakhpat jail Lahore shows that there are significant serious severe deficiencies in basic health care services as well as extremely over crowded and psychologically miserable residing situation. Respondents of the study reported that poor inadequate staff behavior and their management create a serious health issue such as inadequate supply of fresh clean water and hygiene supplies. However, mostly female participants also highlight that the jail management and concerned authorities provide poor expired food sometimes without any check and balance which caused severe stomach illness to the people who were under imprisonment.

**Question 11**

**This question was intended to know whether accused are still in contact with their family or not.**

All selected female respondents of the study collectively reveled the heartbreaking severe social isolation and family alienation. The feeling of a shame and societal pressure related to the theft allegation impacts female mental health and leads to completely terminate their relationship with their families because they are considered as a symbol of shame in society even whatever the reason behind their committing this sort of offence which make them a burden on society and in mostly cases their social death occurred and their families don't wanted to tie any connection with them and left alone to deal with their own problem.

**Question 12**

**The purpose here was to explored whether they receiving any kind of education while in jail.**

According he respondents of the study there are significant obstacles in access of the formal education in jail. There are very limited choices and opportunities for females in secular education or literacy related programs although some females in jail have basic access to traditional religious education like initial stage Fehm e Quran classes. As a result, the offenders again lose the chance of learning in their social rehabilitation period and almost spend their all time behind the bars working on simple task instead of participating in meaningful learning. Consequently, their statements revealed that they are remain at the risk of again reentering into the same venerable cycle of criminality and poverty right after getting their released due to the inadequate learning opportunities for the poor female prisoners.

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**Question 13**

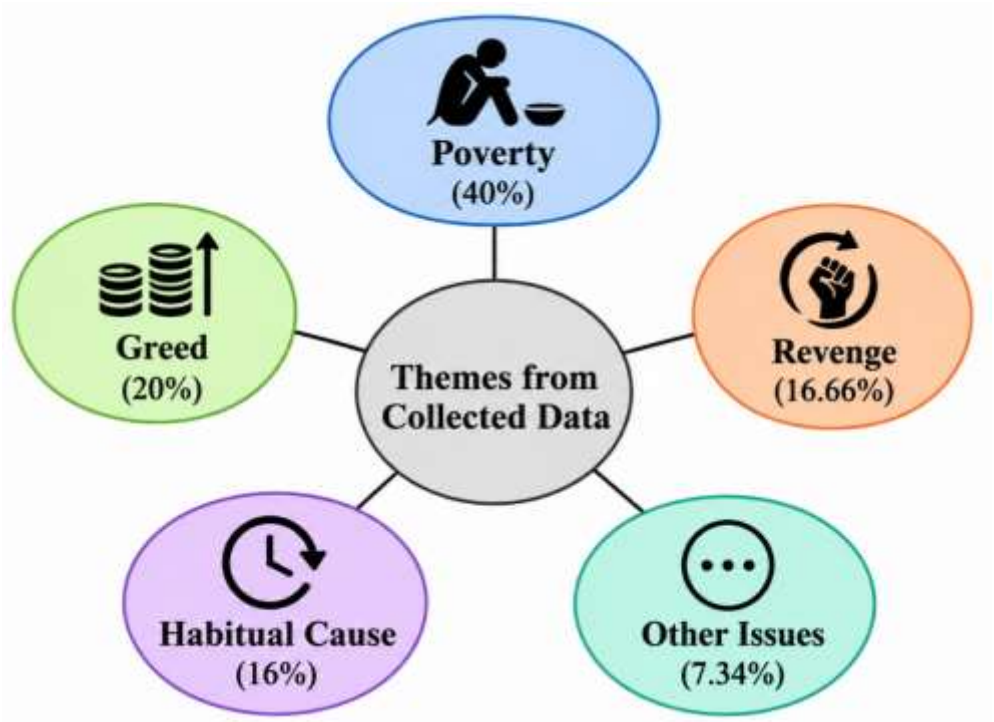
**The purpose of this question was to explore whether they feel any regret after committing the offence and to understand what consider to be their biggest mistake.**

The data from the ten inmates' females at Kot Lakhpat jail shows that these females have profound regret on their act and this deep regret primarily due to the repercussions of their crime rather than the actual crime. The adverse impact on their kids and the damage done to their social public image in the society are often highlighted by mothers as the biggest disgrace mistake of their life. However, the attempt they made just to complete their temporary necessity through this criminal offence led to the permanent damage for their families and their children's especially which cause severe social isolation and psychological distress for their own selves.

**Question 14**

**This question seeks suggestions for how the jail system can be improved to help in the rehabilitation of prisoners.**

The final question of this study highlights the urgent need for a shift from punitive measures to a rehabilitative approach within Kot Lakhpat Jail. Based on the data from the 10 female




prisoners, the primary suggestion is establishment of the skill-based training institutions which empower them and enable to earn their living without any fear which make their life easy after release. The respondents of the study also pointed that there is a need for regular counseling related to mental health which help them to process the trauma of any type of violence and social abandonment.

Moreover, the theft prisoner suggested that the jail authorities should provide visitation rights and facilitate them with a better condition visitation center to maintain their maternal relationship which reduced the rate of social death. Ultimately another major key suggestion was related to the provision in legal aid services especially for those females who can not afford any prosecutors, making sure that their proceeding isn't placed aside permanently.

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Consequently, the data revealed that the jail system must give priority on empowering females through education and by developing skilled in order to end the cycle of criminality and poverty under section 378.

*Figure 1: Cluster of Themes Identified from the Collected Data*

**Findings:**

- This study was conducted to know about the causes of increased rate of theft crime in female from the different areas of Punjab the main focus of this study was one specific Jail for the data collection which reveled the causes of offence under the PPC 378.
- However, the Finding of the study indicated that the ratio of the female prisoner on theft crime in central jail Kot Lakhpat was combatively low as compared to other horrible offence as well as few respondents considered theft as a serious crime while most of them were illiterate so that's why they did not differentiate between the right and wrong things.
- Moreover, the demographical information of the respondents shows that all women were from very poor background, uneducated and facing hard bad times because of the current inflation crisis situation of the country.
- Almost all females used cheap method to attempting theft because of their low poor economic situation without any proper planning they committed this offence in aggression and tried to handle the situation according to the situation but the women had no idea that what they were doing was a criminal offence and illegal according to Law and our Islamic teachings.
- Hence, these females got different sort of trainings in Kot Lakhpat jail, the concerned authorities with collaboration of non-governmental organizations give them ethical trainings and then teach them some skills for their better future through they can earn and live their life in a peaceful way.
- Furthermore, the study findings revealed that some women have children with them and their children study under the responsibility of central jail because children of these accused faced severe types of bullying and abuse from their families so that's was these children lived under the custody of central jail.

**Suggestions:**

- The ministry of education should take step for free and compulsory primary education especially for the females who are living in backward areas where the literacy rate is very low.
- Educate people on types of offence and give them awareness regarding these issues and highlight consequences as well.
- The government should establish more counselling cell for after recovery to reduced the rate of again committing crime.
- Prisoner Departments should make strict policies for those who violated laws.
- Provide accused mental health and vocational trainings services for their better future.

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