

MEDIA COVERAGE



PIDE
PAKISTAN INSTITUTE
OF DEVELOPMENT
ECONOMICS

Knowledge Brief

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Gendered Pathways to Crime

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The principle that laws should apply equally to all, regardless of financial status, social standing, religion, race, or caste, is widely accepted (Clear, 2009). However, the question remains whether the formulation, design, and implementation of laws should account for markers of exclusion and marginalization, such as gender (Bloom et al., 2003). The literature on Gendered Pathways Theory (GPT) addresses this issue, arguing that while criminal acts may be gender-neutral, the pathways leading to these acts are distinctly gendered (Daly, 1992). Ignoring the gendered nature of these pathways—encompassing the motivations, commission, and consequences of crime—can lead to ineffective policies and flawed conclusions in criminological research (Reisig et al., 2006).

October 22, 2025

The News International

<https://e.thenews.com.pk/detail?id=440021>

Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/pide-study-calls-for-gender-sensitive-criminal-justice-reforms-in-pakistan/>

Lead Pakistan

<https://leadpakistan.com.pk/news/pide-study-calls-for-gender-sensitive-criminal-justice-reforms-in-pakistan/>

Fact File

<https://factfile.pk/2025/10/19/pide-study-calls-for-reforms-in-criminal-justice-system/>

Study calls for gender-sensitive criminal justice reforms

Rasheed Khalid

Islamabad

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics's (PIDE) Dr Fida Muhammad Khan and Zainab Fatima from Women Aid (WA) have challenged the assumption that men and women engage in criminal behaviour under similar circumstances, arguing that the pathways leading to crime are profoundly shaped by gender, social expectations and structural inequalities that disadvantage women from an early age.

They said this in their joint brief on "Gendered pathways to crime" published by PIDE. The study emphasised the urgent need

for gender-sensitive reforms in Pakistan's criminal justice system. Authored by Trust, the study challenges the assumption that men and women engage in criminal behavior under similar circumstances. It argues that the pathways leading to crime are profoundly shaped by gender, social expectations, and structural inequalities that disadvantage women from an early age.

Both the authors explained that women often experience unique forms of trauma, marginalisation and abuse that increases their likelihood of becoming involved in criminal activity – factors that are rarely recognised by existing laws or institutions.

Although laws are written to apply equally to all, their implementation often overlooks the intersecting effects of gender, poverty and class. The authors highlight four major pathways discussed in Gendered Pathways Theory (GPT) literature that frequently lead women into crime – childhood trauma and abuse, drug misuse linked to emotional or economic stress, violence from intimate partners and socio-economic coercion including sex work.

These pathways are reinforced by systemic inequality, patriarchal norms and limited access to justice making women's experiences of crime and punish-

ment significantly different from those of men.

The brief also highlighted that Pakistan's colonial-era criminal justice system continues to operate under gender-neutral assumptions, focusing primarily on the act of crime rather than its underlying causes. It documents instances where women have been coerced into false confessions through threats of humiliation or sexual violence, exposing deep-rooted power imbalances in law enforcement and judicial processes. The authors argued that recognising gender as a key factor in understanding crime is essential for achieving fairness, preventing reoffending and en-

suring justice.

To address these issues, the study recommended comprehensive reform of Pakistan's criminal justice system through gender-sensitive policing, judicial training and the creation of women-only police divisions and prosecution units. It also proposes revising sentencing guidelines to reflect gendered pathways to offending and expanding academic and policy research on women offenders within South Asia. Such efforts would help build a justice system that recognises women's lived experiences and addresses the structural and cultural barriers that contribute to their criminalisation.

PIDE study calls for gender-sensitive criminal justice reforms in Pakistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A new Knowledge Brief published by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) emphasizes the urgent need for gender-sensitive reforms in Pakistan's criminal justice system. Authored by Dr. Fida Muhammad Khan, Assistant Professor at PIDE, and Zainab Fatima, Researcher Women Aid Trust, the study titled "Gendered Pathways to Crime" challenges the assumption that men and women engage in criminal behavior under similar circumstances. It argues that the pathways leading to crime are profoundly shaped by gender, social expectations, and structural inequalities that disadvantage women from an early age.

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While the Gendered Pathways Theory (GPT) has been extensively studied in Western contexts, the authors emphasize the importance of developing localized research in Pakistan and other post-colonial societies. Contextualizing GPT within South Asian realities is vital to understanding how social hierarchies, cultural expectations, and colonial legacies shape women's vulnerability to crime today.

LEADPakistan

October 20, 2025

PIDE study calls for gender-sensitive criminal justice reforms in Pakistan

NEWS DESK
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Call for gender-sensitive criminal justice reforms in Pakistan

DNA

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