Dear Editors,

We want to thank our three reviewers and the associate editor Dr. Beth Huebner for their constructive critiques and the opportunity to revise and resubmit our manuscript again. We revised our manuscript in accordance with all the comments with the goal of the article now meeting your journal’s requirements so that it will be suitable for publication.

First, we would like to apologize for taking a few more days to revise the article. Your email set a deadline of sixty days for revisions, which would normally be more than enough time to complete this work. However, during this pandemic period in Israel, we entered into a third lockdown during the course of the revision period. With children now learning from home, and younger children having no daycare arrangements, our work could not be completed within the designated period. We hope that this unique situation will be taken into consideration and that you will receive our manuscript without requiring it to be resubmitted.

Below please find our explanations of the changes we made.

**Reviewer num. 1:**

Comment 1:

**a.1**: I’d encourage the author(s) to explain how a sample of 30 is normative for this type of qualitative work. The author(s) may want to provide references to other studies such as Swanson (1986) or DeHart (2004).

We have added an explanation of why this sample can be considered normative, including relevant references (pp. 6–8*).*

**b.1**: Also, the author(s) should note how this sample may differ or be similar to other samples from United States, since many of the studies cited in the literature review utilize data from samples in the United States.

Although there are differences in the number of female offenders and their characteristics between Israel and the United States, there are also similarities, especially compared to male prisoners in both countries. These points are discussed on p.8 before “data collection.”

**c.1**: Finally, did the sample differ from the population (of sentenced offenders) in terms of demographic characteristics and offense types?

Some of the demographic characteristics are the same, but the data are consistent with the general female prisoner population in Israel. This has been noted on p.8.

Comment 2:

It seems that a figure of 40% not experiencing any type of abuse is a bit high for a sample of incarcerated females—typically that figure is 10-20% in other studies. Within this section, please also tell readers how abuse was measured. Researchers have found that asking broad questions like “Have you ever been abused” produces different results (and typically underestimates the prevalence) than specific behavioral questions such as “Have you ever been slapped or hit? Had something thrown at you? Insulted, threatened or screamed at?”

The information about the abuse came from self-reports of the interviewees relating their life stories. The participants were asked to talk about their lives freely. The inmates volunteered and reported very personal details about their life stories, addressing their difficulties with family members and spouses. It is possible that among the 40% who did not report, some abuse occurred, but the focus of the interviews was to let the inmates speak freely and allow them to explain why they broke the law in their own words, rather than gathering specific facts. In addition, most of these women grew up in established families, built impressive careers and were mostly sentenced for economic offenses. These offenders are characterized as having less victimization history. This point has been emphasized on pp.11–12, Tables 3–5.

Comment 3:

The author(s) state “Chronic delinquents can be characterized as drug or alcohol users, or involved in prostitution. The adult delinquents were mainly economic offenders.” Please provide specific data points to back up these conclusions.

After reading all comments and, specifically, the last comment of Reviewer 1 regarding participants’ classification, we analyzed our data again and found that our participants could be classified either according to their age at the time of the first offense — as minors or as adults — or by which of four offenses they had committed — drugs, general violence, domestic violence or economic offenses. We rewrote the results adding new qualitative and quantitative analyses and added new tables.

Comment 4:

I found the qualitative quotes difficult to match up with the author(s) interpretation of the participants’ biography/narrative. It may be because English is not the first language of the participants and so words may mean different things in different languages (and the ordering of words are different). For instance, when the author(s) describe the female participant as trading drugs, I am assuming this means selling drugs (not trading sex or some other commodity for drugs). For the second example under the personal choice section, the author(s) write “claimed that they had chosen to break the law to obtain material objects and economic abundance, and mainly, to create an image of themselves as successful and strong women in the eyes of others….they felt unsatisfied with their lives.” This makes sense, but the comments such as “Most comfortable in these situations is denial…And on the other hand…thinking less about feeling, the thinking was about doing and not a result.” I’m not entirely sure what this means (e.g., thinking less about feelings).

We wrote in the Method section that the quotes are written as closely to the source as possible. Nonetheless, in response to this comment, we have added explanations and grammatical corrections in the quotes to make them more understandable.

Comment 5:

The section titled “A Reference to an Offense in Three Time Frames” was a little difficult to follow. I found it difficult to identify what were the prompts and what was the categorization of the responses. When I began reading the section, I assumed that the interviewer asked questions like “Tell me a little bit about why you committed the current offense” and then the responses could be categorized according to whether the participant took responsibility (either full or partial) or blamed others. However, language in the results such as “Response to the depends upon me situation…” suggests this was a prompt rather than a way to organize the responses.

We agree that it was difficult to follow the logic of the results. As we mentioned in Comment 3, we decided to rewrite the Method and Results sections to make them more understandable. We used three tools in our data collection: 1) a life story written by the participants after being asked to write about their lives; 2) a life story interview in which the participants were asked to tell about their lives; and 3) a semi-structured quaternary in which the participants were asked to refer to their conviction offenses in three time frames.

Comment 6:

The underlying thrust of this paper is that women who have a history of victimization may engage in crime because that victimization drives them to do so (as the author(s) says “either through mental distress or lack of choice”), and as a result they do not take responsibility for their actions. The author(s) write “While the chronic offenders saw their nuclear families as the reason for their having embarked on their criminal lives, the adult offenders reported that they had committed their offenses because of their spouses or partners.” Regarding the first part of the sentence, I could not find qualitative data to back up the assertion that chronic offenders articulated how victimization led to their criminal lives (and as a result did not take full responsibility for their behavior).

The underlying thrust of this paper is that female offenders take partial or full responsibility for their criminal acts regardless of whether or not they had been victimized. We hope that after rewriting the Results section, this position is much clearer.

Comment 7:

The author(s) write that “Another finding of this study was that victimization construction explanations characterized mainly participants who were in therapy during their incarceration.” This is the first time this was mentioned in the manuscript and so I’d encourage the author(s) to discuss how many of the participants were in gender-specific therapy during their incarceration and what was the breakdown of chronic offenders, adult offenders - economic motivated, and adult offenders – violent in genderspecific therapy.

This article is based on a larger research paper, and since the focus of this article is not on the treatment of delinquent women, but on their explanations and the degree of personal responsibility they take for making choices to engage in delinquent behavior, we decided to remove the reference to the treatment aspect from both the Results and the Discussion to avoid presenting excess findings and creating confusion.

Comment 8:

The author(s) write “The results of this study support this integrated approach. Over 50% of the participants described their decision-making processes as rational, and the majority of women inmates referred to their delinquency in terms of partial or full self-responsibility.” This speaks to the genderneutral side of the integrated approach but also identify the elements from the study which suggest a gender-responsive approach as well.

In addition, it is quite plausible that the integrated approach would be most beneficial for chronic offenders versus adult offenders (especially those economically motivated) (in line with results from Saxena et al. (2014) and Day et al. (2015)).

Saxena, P., Messina, N. P., & Grella, C. E. (2014). Who benefits from gender-responsive treatment? Accounting for abuse history on longitudinal outcomes for women in prison. Criminal justice and behavior, 41(4), 417-432.

Day, J. C., Zahn, M. A., & Tichavsky, L. P. (2015). What works for whom? The effects of gender responsive programming on girls and boys in secure detention. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 52(1), 93-129.

These are two excellent articles exploring outcomes of gender-responsive therapy and their therapeutic benefits for some in the criminal population. The outcomes of these studies make an important contribution to our discussion as well as provide ideas for further research. We addressed these articles in our Discussion.

Comment 9:

It seems in the writing that there were three typologies of offenders identified in the study: (1) chronic offenders who began early and had a history of abuse, (2) adult offenders – motivated by financial and status concerns, and (3) adult offenders – violent offenders who were motivated by intimate partners. If this is what is emerging from the analysis, the author(s) may want to organize their findings this way similar to how Daly (1994) organizes her typologies of the street woman, harmed and harming women, battered women, drug connected women, and other. It seems that organizing by these typologies and then describing (while comparing and contrasting with other typologies) may help frame the discussion. This is just a suggestion and I understand why the author(s) may lay out the findings in an inductive/building kind of way, rather than a deductive fashion. Given that most criminologists are trained as deductive reasoners, it may be beneficial to consider this alternative approach

We want to thank the reviewer for this comment. We analyzed the typologies once again and found two different references: 1) the first typology divides the participants into four group according to the offenses; 2) the second typology divides the participants into two groups according to the age of the first offence: under 18 (history of physical or sexual abuse as children, convicted of violent or drug offenses); over 18 (history of domestic abuse from the spouse or no history of abuse, convicted of domestic violence or economic offenses). We arranged our results by the following three main themes: first offense age; offenders with a history of abuse; and offender’s conviction offense (Tables 3–7).

**Reviewer num. 2:**

Comment 1:

Throughout the Introduction and in the Discussion, the authors point that (p.16): “Examining a history of childhood shows that, like delinquent women, delinquent men suffer from physical sexual and mental abuse (see Burto et al., 1994; Dargis et al., 2016; Dutton & Hart, 1993; Miley et al., 2020; van der Put, 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is not much difference in the family backgrounds of delinquent women and delinquent men.  
However, this assertion is not quite accurate.  Numerous international studies and Israeli indicates female inmates reported a higher prevalence of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, compared with the male inmates. See, for example, Chen, G., & Gueta, K. (2016). Childhood abuse and mental health problems: does gender matter?. Psychiatric quarterly, 87(1), 189-202.‏

Some studies (e.g., Chen & Gueta, 2016; Martin et al., 2008) found that there are higher rates of emotional and sexual abuse among female offenders than among male offenders. Other research has indicated that female offenders who reported abuse or maltreatment in childhood had a higher risk of later delinquency, similar to that of male offenders, or with no significant differences (see Ryan & Testa, 2005; Watts & Iratzoqui, 2019). For example, Watts and Iratzoqui (2019) found that, within the same sample, physical childhood abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect all increased the likelihood of various delinquent behaviors during middle adolescence. Their results suggest that specific types of maltreatment, rather than gender, shape specific delinquent behaviors. We have clarified this point in the Discussion.

Comment 2:

Regarding the sample size, why did the sampling stooped at 30 participants? Was there evidence that saturation was achieved?

We kept our sample small because we wanted to conduct as many interviews as possible until we reached saturation. We explained on pages 6–7 the uniqueness of Israel’s women’s prison. In addition, we had our own research requirements of offenders who had been imprisoned for the first time to avoid imprisonment influence; most of the prisoners had a record of more than one imprisonment. It is important to emphasize that the prison population is more suspicious, less cooperative and more reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with strangers mostly because they can’t control what the latter will discover and report (Jackson, 1987; Patenaude, 2004).

Comment 3:  
More information is needed on the analysis procedures: \*How did coding occur? Was a codebook used? Which authors coded?

We have now added further information on the analysis procedures in the Method section. As discussed above, this article is based on a much larger research project which involved life story analysis on two levels: holistic content analysis relating to the entire life story of the individual; and a focus on the story’s content and meaning along with a categorical analysis in which the researcher isolated parts of the text, classified them, grouped them into categories, and interpreted them. The analysis was carried out by both researchers using the ground theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Urquhart & Fernández, 2016) and content analysis (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1988). We encoded parts of the text into categories using comparisons of data and identification of common meanings and patterns. While the analysis uncovered many themes, this article refers to only one of them: the criminal world of the participants, including references to entering the criminal world and references to the specific offense forwhich they were convicted.

Comment 4:  
P.7 Given that the Life stories were usually written in the participants’ mother tongues of Hebrew, Russian, or English” more details is needed regarding issues related to cross-language qualitative analyses. How translation to a second language for publication may have affected findings if the researchers themselves speak both Hebrew and English; see here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2995873/>)

Life stories were usually written in their mother tongues of Hebrew (26 participants), Russian (3 participants), or English (1 participant). The written life stories were translated by one of the researchers whose mother tongue is Russian, and both researchers have a high level of English. We added this explanation in the Method section.

Comment 5:  
Where their women that reported both victimization and choice experiences or all the women reported exclusively victimization or choice experiences? Assuming women experienced both victimization or choice experiences, more information is needed on how women integrated these experiences and made overall evaluations of their criminal history.

After reading all reviews, we organized the results differently. We made a major revision in the Results section and added the information about the participants according to the length of their criminal lives, their conviction offenses and their abuse histories (Tables 2–-7).

Comment 6:

The authors should include more information about their epistemological approaches. For example, at what level was the themes identified (surface-level with focus on what was said or at a more interpretative level whereby the authors looked beyond what participants said (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Do the authors take a realist or constructionist lens? These approaches should inform how the authors analyze and introduce the data.  
This issue is important because qualitative research in criminology represents the idea that people's narratives of their deviant behaviors, serve numerous functions and not only a factual description of their past.  For example, research indicates that the ability to claim victim status is shaped by gender and this process of victim claiming may serve to resist stigmatization but also may hinder one’s agency. Researchers must be clear about their epistemological and ontological assumptions before embarking on the analysis. These are not addressed.

By using mixed method and different tools for gathering information (writing the life story, in-depth interviews and quaternary with open-ended questions) we included both inductive methods to identify new themes and deductive analysis to understand as closely as possible the participants’ perceptions, understandings and interpretations. The claim that “research indicates that the ability to claim victim status is shaped by gender and this process…” is incorrect. The conclusion of the research is that some female offenders (similar to male offenders) emphasized the abuse they experienced as the main reason for having broken the law, while some (without a history of abuse or in spite of the abusive history) claimed full responsibility for their actions. The research analysis tried to understand what were the distinctions between these groups and why these two groups differed.

Comment 7:

Further, the results as presented are largely descriptive and rather closely mirror the topics identified in the Methods section and to three-time frames introduced by the Author, et al., 20xx). One wonders whether or not the interview process and/or analysis were somehow restrictive and not as open to the participants’ perspectives as they might have been. Participants’ may have had concerns other than those of specific interest to the researchers, and these may have been overlooked.

We made a major revision using mixed methods in the Results and showed different and combined analysis points of view.

Comment 8:  
Given the qualitative methodology, I was surprised to see no framing or interpretation of this paper or its findings with attention to the shared Israeli context or Jewish cultural identity.

This is a very interesting remark, but we need to emphasize that the study focuses on a general discussion of the phenomenon of the decision-making involved in female delinquency. In addition, this issue was not raised in the analysis. The participants were Jewish, Muslims and Christian, but none of the participants referred to religion or a religious context with regard to entering a criminal life path or with regard to the offense for which they were convicted, which is the focus of this article.

Comment 9:  
 Page 19, the authors state: “In this study, participants who were in the process of therapy emphasized their victimization and tended to assume partial, if any, responsibility for their delinquent behavior”.  I didn’t remember this particular result is included in the results section.  The conclusions in this paragraph seem to overstate the data collected and analyses presented here.  Authors should temper this discussion and/or include more data to illustrate the connection between being in therapy to responsibility/choice similar to the way they did regarding the age or religious background (p.12 line 31).

This article is based on a large research paper, and as the focus of this article is not on the treatment of delinquent women, but on their explanations and the degree of personal responsibility they take for their delinquent life path, we decided to remove the reference to the treatment aspect from both the Results and the Discussion to avoid presenting excess findings and creating confusion.

Comment 10:

The manuscript lacks critical literature of prison-based treatment programs as a therapeutic context. For example, adding more contextual literature on pressured rehabilitation’ (Day et al. 2004) may help the researcher better interpreted the current study findings.  
See for example:  
Day, A., Tucker, K. and Howells, K. (2004), ‘Coerced Offender Rehabilitation – A Defensible Practice?’, Psychology, Crime & Law, 10: 259–69.

The reviewer’s comment is correct, but as this article deals with the female prisoners’ assumption of responsibility for their criminal acts, and not the therapy of the female prisoners, we excluded the analysis of the therapeutic effect.

Comment 11:  
The potential impact of the findings of this study on future research, theory, and policies were perhaps not as clearly articulated as they needed to be. There is a lot to draw from theoretically to convey how this work would have an impact. For example, research indicates that the ability to make excuses such as to claim victim status or to place responsibility on substance use problems may in fact enhance desistance.  
See for example,  
Maruna, S., & Copes, H. (2005). What have we learned from five decades of neutralization research?. Crime and justice, 32, 221-320.‏  
Maruna, S., & Ramsden, D. (2004). Living to Tell the Tale: Redemption Narratives, Shame Management, and Offender Rehabilitation.‏

Thank you for referring us to some theoretical sources. We have rewritten the Discussion to make it clearer and more understandable regarding the results of this article. Nonetheless, we want to emphasize that the focus of this article is an analysis we made to understand whether female prisoners take responsibility for their actions, to what extent, if at all, and whether the results could point to variables that can explain and distinguish between female prisoners who take responsibility and those who do not see themselves as responsible for their actions. Hence, a discussion about victim status, including reference to concepts like explanations or negotiations around victim status is indeed important and interesting, but it does not reflect the essence of this study. This study focuses on female prisoners’ subjective perceptions about their responsibility for the choices they made in order to better understand what leads women to break the law: choice, or the pressure of internal and external forces.

Comment 12:  
It would be useful to frame the strengths, limitations, and implications of this study in terms of the Israeli/Jewish context.

As we noted in Comment 8, the analysis of the theories and of the narratives of the participants in the Israeli/Jewish context was not raised by the participants. While the narrative analysis presents the subjective perspectives of the participants with different ethnic backgrounds, the analysis did not uncover differences in answers in relation to the ethnic origin of the participants. Since this issue does not emerge from the narratives, it was not addressed in the results analysis, the Discussion or the Limitations.

Comment 13:

Minor issue: p.16 Chen and Einat (2010) is a book and not an article.

Thank you for pointing out the error. We changed the reference in the sentence.

**Reviewer num. 3:**

Comment 1:

General: A greater focus should be put on the theoretical setting of the study.  
A general reference was made to factors related to women’s crime. However, no reference was made to the type of crimes committed. There is presumably a difference between women’s drug-related crimes and crimes involving fraud and so on. This should be addressed, even if only in general. The articles cited with regard to women’s crime refer to this in a very general manner.

For instance, line 26 cites the findings of a study (that focused on Moffitt and Caspi’s (2001) model cited in the current article), which found that one of the groups was characterized as “chronic” delinquents. It is important to understand which group (the article cited related to the type of offence).  
There is a reference to the type of offence in the discussion. It is advisable that the researchers address this. The review in Table 2 also presents the “main conviction offence”. Does this affect the response to the research question? (The answer is yes. The researchers themselves refer to this in the discussion) – In my opinion, this should be addressed in the review, and the research questions should be fine-tuned accordingly.  
Line 13: It is advisable to cite recent statistics, including at the place where the study was carried out.

Thank you for this comment. We have revised the paper and rewritten the theoretical background, adding explanations about different and specific types of offenses that were found in the studies of Daly (1992), Moffitt and Caspi (2001), Shechory et al., (2011), and more. We hope that our additions are sufficient and better explain the theoretical foundations of our study.

Comment 2:

Procedure  
General: A great many details are missing  
When was the study conducted? How were the participants selected? Did they all give their consent? What was the response rate? What explanations did they receive?  
It says that the respondents wrote their life story. This is not clear –  
Were they all literate? How much time did the writing take? How was it carried out?

(Line 49: "Life stories were usually written in their mother tongues of Hebrew, Russian, or English")- Who translated the interviews?

We have made a major revision in the Method section, adding all the missing information requested by the reviewers (pp. 6–10).

Comment 3:

"Combining the two research methods, quantitative research and qualitative research, neutralizes any disadvantages of each research paradigm and optimizes the advantages of each"- It is unclear what this means. In any case, this is a small sample that is certainly unsuitable for quantitative analyses. Descriptive statistics were indeed provided – this does not lead to the conclusion that this " neutralizes any disadvantages of each research paradigm and optimizes the advantages of each."

We agree with the reader’s comment and have deleted this sentence.

Comment 4:

Participants  
A description of the criterion for selecting the respondents should be provided in the research procedure.

We have added these criteria (Procedure, p. 9)

Comment 5:

Results  
**5.a:** I would recommend strengthening the description of the methodology and decisions taken around the qualitative analysis itself  
  
Line 17: It is unclear how the data were analyzed – what guided the decision?  
  
Further to the comment on the type of offence, provided in the introduction, this should be addressed in the analysis. For instance, the findings refer to chronic delinquents and adult delinquents without linking this to the research findings. The authors indeed note that "Chronic delinquents can usually be characterized as drug or alcohol users, or involved in prostitution. The adult delinquents were mainly economic offenders". It is unclear whether this arose from their findings. How is this evident?

We analyzed the typologies once again and found two different references: 1) the first typology divides the participants into four group according to the offenses; 2) the second typology divides the participants into two groups according to the age of the first offence: under 18 (history of physical or sexual abuse as children, convicted of violent or drug offenses); over 18 (history of domestic abuse from the spouse or no history of abuse, convicted of domestic violence or economic offenses). We arranged our results by the following three main themes: first offense age; offenders with a history of abuse; and offender’s conviction offense (Tables 3–7).

**5.b**:Line 34. "Following the model of Author, et al.," – It is unclear what model this refers to. Line 37: It is unclear how this indicates the degree of responsibility.

Lack of clarity was created as a result of incorrect use of the concept. This is not a model but a semi-structured interview. We added the explanation on p.18*.*

Comment 6:

Discussion  
I suggest that the authors employ caution in the discussion with regard to the conclusions, particularly in light of the research limitations. In addition, it is necessary to relate in the research limitations to the required distinction by type of offence.

We rewrote parts of the Discussion and the Results based on the reviewers’ comments.