Cover letter:

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 writing based on all comments hopping that this time the article will meet your journal requirements and will be suitable for publishing. Submitting below our cover letter explaining the changes we made.

We would like to apologize for taking a few more days to revise the article. According to your email you gave us 60 days. This is more than enough time in the normal period but during this period in Israel, following the pandemic we entered a third lockdown and children are continue learning from home, makes it very difficult to concentrate and carry out the writing. Hopefully this unique situation will be taken into consideration and you will receive our manuscript without re-submitting it.

Submitting below our cover letter explaining 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).

*Authors answer: We added an explanation 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.

*Authors answer: although there are differences in the number of female offenders and their characteristics the are also similarities especially compared to men prisoners in both countries. These points are discussed at 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?

*Authors answer:* *Some of the characteristics are the same but data are consisted with the general female prisoner's population in Israel. We pointed this out at 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?”

*Authors answer:* *The information about the abuse came from self-reports of the interviewees in life stories. The participants were asked to tell about their lives freely. The inmates volunteered and reported very personal details in their life story, addressing the difficulties with family members and spouses. It is possible that out of 40% who did not report, there is a possibility of an abuse, but the focus of the interview was to let them speak freely and allow them to explain in their own words why they broke the law rather gathering specific facts. In addition, most of these women grew up in established families, developed glorious careers and were mostly sentenced for economic offenses. These offenders are characterized of less victimization history. We emphasized this point at pp.11-12, table 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.

*Authors answer:* *After reading all comments and specifically the last one of reviewer 1 regarding participants classification we analyzed our data again and found that our participants can be classify by the age of the first offense – as minors or as adults, or by 4 offenses: drugs, general violence, domestic violence and economic offenses. We rewrite the results adding new analyses – qualitative and quantitative 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).

*Authors answer: We wrote at the method thar the quotes are written as close to the source as possible. Yet after this comment we added explanations\grammar corrections in the quotes so it can be 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.

*Authors answer: 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 the results so it will become more understandable. We used 3 tools in our data collection: 1) a life story written by the participants after been asked to write about their life's; 2) life story interview where the participants asked to tell about their life; and 3) semi-structured quaternary in which the participants were asked to refer to their conviction offense 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).

*Authors answer:* *The underlying thrust of this paper is that female offenders take partially or full responsibility for their criminal acts regardless of been victimize or not. We hope that after rewriting the results this point of view is much more evident.*

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.

*Authors answer: This article is based on a large 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 in the delinquent life path, we decided to remove the reference to the treatment part from both the results and the discussion.* *So it won't create excess findings and confusion in understanding.*

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.

*Authors answer: This are two very great articles which explores outcomes of gender-responsive therapy and their therapeutic benefits for some criminal population. The outcomes of this studies are very beneficial for our discussion as well as ideas for further research. We addressed to 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

*Authors answer: We want to thank to the reviewer for this comment. We analyzed the typologies once again and found 2 different references: 1)first typology is dividing the participants in 4 group by the offenses 2) the second typology is dividing the participants into two groups by the age of the first offence.- under 18 (history of physical or sexual abuse as children, convicted of violent or drug offenses) more than 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 these 3 main themes: First offense age, offenders with 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.‏

*Authors answer:* *Some studies (e.g. Chen & Gueta, 2016; Martin et al., 2008) found that female offenders have higher rates of emotional and sexual abuse compared with male offenders. Others indicates that female offenders who reported abuse or maltreatment in childhood had higher risk of later delinquency similar to male offenders or have no significant differences (see Ryan & Testa, 2005; Watts & Iratzoqui, 2019). For example, Watts and Iratzoqui (2019) found that within the same sample that child physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect all increase the likelihood of various delinquent behaviors during middle adolescence. They result suggest that specific types of maltreatment shape specific delinquent behaviors rather than gender. 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?

*Authors answer:* *We wanted to make as much interviews as possible until we reached* saturation*. We explained on pages 6-7 the uniqueness of Israeli women prison. In addition, we had our own research requirements: Offenders who had been imprisoned for the first time to avoid imprisonment influence- most of the prisoners had more than one imprisonment record. It is important to emphasize that prison population is more suspicious, less cooperative and less 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?

*Authors answer:* *We added this explanation in the method: This article is based on a much bigger research which included life story analysis on two levels: holistic content analysis relating to a whole life story of the individual, and focuses on its content and meaning and a categorical analysis in which the researcher isolates parts of the text, classifies, groups them into categories, and gives them interpretation. The analysis was done by both researchers. Using 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 comparison of data and identification of common meanings and patterns. The analysis raised many themes while this article shows reference only to one of them: the criminal world of the participants - references to entering the criminal world and the reference to the specific offense for which they were convicted of.*

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/)
*Authors answer:* *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 researches whose mother tong is Russian and both researches have high knowledge of English. We added this explanation in the method.*

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.

*Authors answer:* *After reading all reviews we organized the results differently. We made a major revision on the results and added the information about the participant by age of their criminal life, their conviction offense and their abuse history (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.

*Authors answer:* *By using mixed method and different tools of gathering information (writing the life story, in-dept interview and quaternary with open-ended questions) we included both inductive methods to identify new themes and deductive analysis to be as much closer as possible to understanding 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 men offenders) emphasize the abuse they experience as the main reason for braking the law, while some (without a history of abuse or in spite of the abused history) clamed full responsibility for their action. The research analysis tried to understand why or what was a distinction between this groups.*

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.

*Authors answer:* *We made a major revision using mix-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.

*Authors answer:* *This is very and interesting remark but we need to* *emphasize that the study focuses on a general discussion of the phenomenon of decision making of female delinquency. In addition, this issue was not raised in the analysis. The participants were Jewish, Muslims and Cristian but no one refer to religion or a religious context regarding entering a criminal life path or towards the offense for which they were convicted of - 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).

*Authors answer:* *This article is based on a large 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 in the delinquent life path, we decided to remove the reference to the treatment part from both the results and the discussion.* *So it won't create excess findings and confusion in understanding.*

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.

*Authors answer:* *The reviewer is right in his comment but since this article deals with responsibility of their criminal acts and not 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.‏

*Authors answer*: *Thank you for referring us to some theoretical reading. We rewrite the discussion to make it clearer and more understandable regarding the results of this article. Yet we want to emphasis that the focus of this article is on an analysis made around understanding the question of whether female prisoners take responsibility for their actions, to what extent if at all and whether it would point to variables that can explain and distinguish between responsible populations and those who do not see themselves as responsible for their actions. Hence, a discussion around victim status, concepts like explanations or negotiation around victim status is indeed true and interesting but is not the essence of this study. The essence is a subjective perception around responsibility for the event to understand what leads women to break the law: choice or 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.

*Authors answer*: *As we pointed out in comment 8 the analysis of the theories and of the narratives of the participants the Israeli/Jewish context has not been raised by the participants. The narrative analysis presents the subjectivity perspective of the participants with different ethnic backgrounds. Yet, the analysis didn't point out different answers in relation to 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.

*Authors answer*: *Thank you for being pointed out the mistake. We change the formulation 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.

*Authors answer: Thank you for this comment. We did a revision and rewrite the theoretical background adding explanation to different and specific types of offenses that were found in the researches like Daly (1992), Moffitt and Caspi’s (2001), Shechory et al.,2011 and more. We hope that our additions are meets your expectations and better explain the theoretical points our study is based on.*

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?

*Authors answer*: *We made a major revision in the method adding all missing information required by the reviewers (see 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."

*Authors answer*: *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.

*Authors answer*: We added these criterion (see "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?

*Authors answer*: *We analyzed the typologies once again and found 2 different references: 1)first typology is dividing the participants in 4 group by the offenses 2) the second typology is dividing the participants into two groups by the age of the first offence.- under 18 (history of physical or sexual abuse as children, convicted of violent or drug offenses) more than 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 these 3 main themes: First offense age, offenders with 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.

*Authors answer*: *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 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.

*Authors answer*: *We rewrite parts of the discussion based on the reviewers comments and the results.*