

Low Self-Control and Its Relationship to Deviant Behavior Among Incarcerated Women in Jordan

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between low self-control and deviant behavior among incarcerated women, focusing on negative emotions, fear of victimization, exposure to violence, and demographic factors. Using a descriptive-analytical design, data were collected from 67 female inmates at the Juwaida Correctional and Rehabilitation Institution through a structured questionnaire and were analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis in SPSS. The findings revealed statistically significant associations between deviant behaviors and negative emotional states, particularly guilt, fear, frustration, and anger. Low self-control traits, including impulsivity, egocentrism, and short-term orientation, were associated with various forms of deviance and exposure to violence. Demographic variables, especially age and education, were also associated with differences in self-control patterns. Fear of victimization and domestic violence emerged as significant correlates of women's deviant behavior. The study advances criminological research by empirically applying self-control theory to the understudied population of incarcerated women in the Arab context, offering evidence-based insights for rehabilitation and preventive programs.

Keywords

Deviant behavior; incarcerated women; negative emotions; self-control; victimization

Introduction

Deviance has become a very popular topic among sociologists and criminologists because it covers all forms of illegal, socially unacceptable, or morally reprehensible behavior. Deviance can occur when individuals do not meet social expectations, either due to poor socialization or because they feel that the social structure is unjust, so some form of deviant behavior will appear. So, rather than simply being an individual's wrongdoing, deviant behavior can be indicative of a feeling of social isolation or perceived injustices (Al-Jamil, 2000; Bouzbara & Ishbouden, 2016).

Men generally have a higher probability than women of engaging in deviant behaviors and committing crimes. Although women tend to commit fewer deviant acts than men do, the type and pattern of offending committed by females is different from that of males. With changes in the past few decades in areas such as women having better opportunities for education, being included in the workforce at greater rates, and shifts occurring within families, there is evidence that females are experiencing conditions that could lead to deviant behaviors (Sabkhawi & Zawi, 2014). Therefore, indicate the necessity for additional research regarding the current trends related to female involvement in deviant behaviors (Hussein & Al-Arabi, 2006). This is not just confined to Western cultures since there is evidence indicating that women in many Arab societies are now also becoming more involved with deviant behaviors and being incarcerated at higher rates (Şahin, 2015).

While female offending is relatively understudied, this is particularly true in Arab countries. The combination of societal views and institutional barriers has led to female offenders in correctional and rehabilitation settings receiving relatively little attention from criminologists, as they are often viewed as being less likely than men to engage in criminal activity. Thus, official crime statistics may underestimate the extent to which women participate in crime, and consequently, there is limited understanding of the psychological and social factors associated with female offending (Al-Shdaifat & Al-Rasheedi, 2016; Mohammed, 2017). In addition, researchers who study female inmates in correctional and rehabilitation settings often face significant methodological and administrative barriers when attempting to gain access to this population.

Accordingly, this study examines low self-control among female offenders not only as an individual characteristic but also in relation to emotions, victimization, and social factors. Self-control is one of the most widely studied predictors of deviant behavior in criminological research. Low self-control refers to the limited ability to regulate impulses, delay gratification, and anticipate the consequences of one's actions (van Gelder & Frankenhuys, 2025).

The general theory of crime, developed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), posits that individuals with low levels of self-control tend to engage in deviant behavior, especially when opportunities for offending exist, and early socialization fails to promote behavioral regulation. Numerous studies have reported associations between low self-control and a wide range of criminal and deviant behaviors (Baek et al., 2023; Burt, 2019; Pratt & Cullen, 2000). Although classical self-control theory places primary emphasis on individual differences related to behavioral control processes, modern criminology has begun to acknowledge the potential influence of gender-specific social experiences on the development and expression of self-control. Among women, social hardship, victimization, and stress may shape self-control in ways that differ from those observed among male offenders.

Although this self-control model has been thoroughly tested and endorsed in the West, empirical research involving women, particularly in Arab countries, remains limited. Regional and national studies suggest that there are various social and psychological pressures that can influence the development of self-control (Mohammed, 2017; Şahin, 2015; Zavala & Perez, 2022). Such experiences may weaken self-control and increase vulnerability to both victimization and deviant behavior. The relationship between self-control and victimization and deviant behavior that has been established in Western societies may not necessarily apply to incarcerated women from Arab countries.

In addition to self-control, emotions are also crucial in the development of deviant behavior. Emotions such as fear, guilt, frustration, and anger have been found to increase the likelihood of aggression and deviance, particularly among individuals who lack emotional regulation skills (Garofalo & Velotti, 2017). Fear of victimization and experiencing violence can increase the risk of offending as well as victimization, thus developing a relationship between psychological distress and deviance (Bostrom et al., 2026; Guedes et al., 2023; Kim & Lee, 2025).

The following research seeks to explore the link between self-control and deviant behavior among female prisoners in Jordan, focusing on the correlations between self-control, negative affectivity, experiences of domestic abuse, victimization, and certain demographic characteristics. Thus, the present research fills the existing void by providing empirical evidence from an underrepresented group. Examining incarcerated women at the Juwaida Correctional and Rehabilitation Institution extends the applicability of self-control theory to non-Western settings and helps to understand the intricate interrelationships among emotional stress, victimization, social variables, and self-control that influence female criminality.

The majority of the existing literature is concerned with the topic of self-control only. In this research, the connection between self-control, emotions, victimization, domestic violence, and demographic factors is studied within the same framework. This approach can help to better understand the possible causes of female criminal behavior. Analyzing these factors in the context of Jordan also expands the scope of existing debates on crime beyond Western contexts. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is there a relationship between deviant behavior and negative emotions among incarcerated women?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-control and deviant behavior among incarcerated women?
3. Is there a relationship between self-control and selected demographic characteristics of incarcerated women?
4. Is there a relationship between incarcerated women's fear of becoming victims of crime and deviant behavior?
5. Is there a relationship between low self-control and incarcerated women's exposure to domestic violence?

The identification of the factors linked to female criminality can prove useful in developing appropriate preventive measures for addressing the problem. This can facilitate the creation of rehabilitation and prevention programs that address the social and psychological factors involved in female criminality, while taking into consideration the unique needs of incarcerated women in the Arab region.

Self-control and deviant behavior

The concept of self-control has proved to be among the most significant concepts in criminology due to its ability to help understand why some people commit deviant or criminal acts. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), people who lack self-control usually act impulsively, seek immediate gratification, and cannot resist their impulses, defer gratification, or take into account the consequences of their actions. As a result, they are more likely to engage in deviant behavior. Extensive empirical evidence supports this theory, demonstrating strong associations between low self-control and a wide range of criminal behaviors (Burt, 2019).

More recent empirical studies have further highlighted the importance of self-control across different social contexts. Among Caribbean youth, Baek et al. (2023) reported that low self-control was associated with delinquent behavior and that parental supervision reduced this association. Similarly, Squillaro (2023) found that low self-control was closely associated with criminal thinking among college students, suggesting that its influence extends beyond adolescence. Longitudinal evidence further suggests that self-control may be transmitted across generations, as parental criminal behavior and low self-control have been found to predict lower levels of self-control among offspring (Johnson & Vazsonyi, 2024; Nofziger & Newton, 2018).

Gender and deviance

Although the general theory of crime was not originally developed to explain gender differences, research suggests that self-control should be examined within gendered social contexts (Pusch, 2024). Research on women's participation in deviant behavior suggests that social, psychological, and family-related factors influence women's involvement in deviance differently from men (Al-Jamil, 2000; Berkou, 2007). Delinquency among women is often associated with emotional distress, interpersonal conflict, and experiences of violence rather than instrumental or organized forms of offending (Vazsonyi et al., 2025).

There have been many studies conducted on the causes of women's criminal activity within Arab nations. According to the literature, women may engage in criminal activity due to their experiences of abuse or domestic violence, patriarchal social systems, and lack of access to social services (Mohammed, 2017; Şahin, 2015). Sociologically, Şahin (2015) discovered from her research on incarcerated women in Turkey that violence within the family and gender socialization factors were important determinants of women's deviant behavior. Likewise, Sabkhawi and Zawi (2014) revealed that deviant behavior among females is underreported in Arab countries because, culturally, such acts committed by women are not socially acceptable.

Emotional factors, victimization, and deviance

In the case of deviance, just as with self-control, emotions play a significant role. Negative emotions such as rage, fear, guilt, and frustration have been found to be related to aggressive and deviant behaviors among people who lack emotional control (Garofalo & Velotti, 2017). Emotional distress may weaken self-regulation, leading to impulsive behavior and poor judgment. Fear of victimization and exposure to violence have likewise been identified as important contributors to deviant behavior (Guedes et al., 2023; Hernández-Medina et al., 2024; You & Stults, 2025). Guedes et al. (2023) found that the relationship between low self-

control and victimization was moderated by fear of crime. These findings suggest that victims of violence, or those who anticipate becoming victims, may engage in deviant behavior as a maladaptive coping mechanism, thereby blurring the distinction between victim and offender. Previous studies have also identified domestic violence as an important predictor of both criminal behavior and victimization among incarcerated women (Al-Shdaifat & Al-Rasheedi, 2016; Şahin, 2015).

Regional and empirical gaps

Although the literature on self-control and deviance is extensive, research focusing on incarcerated women in Arab prisons remains limited. Most previous research on deviant behavior in Jordan and other countries has focused on male offenders or broader offender populations. The majority of these studies adopted a broad view of offending and did not take into account the gender-specific aspects of deviance (Al-Shdaifat & Al-Rasheedi, 2016; Hussein & Al-Arabi, 2006).

In addition, few studies have examined self-control, emotional factors, victimization, and demographic characteristics within a single analytical framework.

Therefore, the present study empirically examines the relationship between low self-control and deviant behavior among incarcerated women in Jordan. It also builds on previous research by providing context-specific evidence from an understudied population while incorporating emotional factors, experiences of victimization, fear of victimization, and demographic characteristics. In doing so, the study contributes to a better understanding of female deviance in Arab correctional settings and extends the application of self-control theory beyond Western contexts.

Data and methods

Research design

The study used a cross-sectional correlational research design. Cross-sectional research designs are particularly well-suited for examining associations among various psychological and social factors (i.e., deviant behavior, emotional states) within a particular context, in this case, a correctional institution. This type of design allows researchers to examine how individuals' behaviors and psychological states are related. While qualitative research methods would allow researchers to gather deeper insights into the experiences and meanings of incarceration, they would not allow the statistical examination of relationships among variables as provided by cross-sectional research studies. Therefore, using this design provides a means of comparing the findings with prior research on self-control conducted in similar settings.

Study population and sample

The study's sample was female inmates in the correctional/rehabilitation institutes located throughout Jordan. A total of 67 females were sampled through Purposive Sampling; they were selected from the women's department at Juwaida Correctional and Rehabilitative Institute. Juwaida was selected for two reasons: first, it was available to the researchers;

second, it has a large female offender population residing there. As a result of the ethical and logistical issues involved in researching incarcerated individuals, particularly female offenders, the sample size represents those limitations associated with such research.

Given that this study used purposeful sampling from one correctional institute, the results may be viewed as analytically generalizable versus statistically generalizable. Although purposeful sampling provided researchers with access to this understudied population, the sample size limits statistical generalizability due to both its small size and the practical/ethical restrictions to researching incarcerated women in Jordan (limited researcher access to correctional facilities and institutional rules).

While the sample size will limit population-level generalizations, it provides enough data to perform an analytical examination of the theoretical relationships supported by self-control theory within the contexts of gendered social control, patriarchal families, and few social opportunities. The post hoc power analysis showed that when using a sample size of 67, this study would have at least .8 statistical power to detect moderate-sized correlations ($r =$ approximately 0.30) among the variables examined. These results therefore provide considerable insight into how criminogenic processes occur in environments that contain strong effects of gendered social control, patriarchal family structure, and limited opportunity.

Research instrument

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers, drawing on existing literature on self-control, deviant behavior, negative emotions, victimization, and violence, as well as the general theory of crime (Burt, 2019; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The instrument consisted of the following sections:

1. Deviant behavior, including theft, vandalism, drug use, aggression, and rule violations (12 items; rated on a 3-point scale: 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$).
2. Self-control, measured using items assessing impulsivity, preference for simple tasks, risk-taking, emotional regulation, and egocentrism, as defined by the general theory of crime (14 items; 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$).
3. Negative emotions, including anger, fear, guilt, frustration, and resentment (10 items; 5-point Likert scale; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).
4. Fear of victimization, assessed across multiple social contexts (6 items; 3-point scale; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$). The scale used the following response categories: 1 = not afraid, 2 = somewhat afraid, and 3 = very afraid. Responses were averaged across the six items to generate an overall fear-of-victimization score, with higher scores indicating greater perceived fear of victimization.
5. Demographic variables, including age, education, marital status, family characteristics, and employment status.

In order to create a clear and relevant context for the target group, the items of the questionnaire were ordered appropriately. The questionnaires were filled out in an appropriate language and layout suitable to the participants. The Deviance Behavior Score was based on the frequency of participating in each type of deviant behavior as reported by

the participants. The scores of self-control, negative emotions, and fear of victimization were calculated according to the different scale ratings.

Validity and reliability

Internal Consistency was examined using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. In terms of internal consistency, values can range from acceptable (.70–.79) through good (.80–.89) to excellent ($\geq .90$). Therefore, it has been shown that overall reliability coefficients demonstrate sufficient internal consistency, and therefore the data collection instruments applied in this study are sufficiently reliable to conduct the statistical analysis as described above.

Data collection procedures

Before data collection began, approval for conducting the research at the selected prison facility was acquired. The recruitment of participants took place voluntarily; furthermore, participants were made aware of the goals and methods of the research before giving their consent in writing. Further assurances were given to participants concerning the anonymity/confidentiality of their participation and that no other use than for research purposes would be made of the data collected.

Ethical considerations

All aspects of the research involving human participants were conducted in accordance with accepted ethical principles. Prior to data collection, all participants provided written informed consent. Participants' rights were protected by ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the absence of coercion. The Institutional Research Ethics Committee / Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Al-Balqa Applied University, Jordan, granted approval for this research project (Reference Number: BAU/24/09). All study procedures complied with internationally recognized ethical standards, including the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data analysis

All analyses were performed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships among deviant behavior, negative emotions, fear of victimization, exposure to violence, and demographic factors. Effect sizes (r values) were reported for all correlational analyses, and statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Because this was an exploratory study, no adjustments were made for multiple comparisons. Consequently, correlations with small effect sizes (e.g., $r < .23$) were interpreted with caution to reduce the likelihood of Type I errors.

Results

Relationship between deviance and negative emotions

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between negative emotions and deviant behavior. Several statistically significant associations were identified between specific types of deviant behavior and negative emotional states, as shown in Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients (r) are reported to indicate the strength and practical significance of the observed relationships. Because this was an exploratory study, correlations with small effect sizes ($r \leq .23$) were interpreted with caution to reduce the likelihood of overinterpreting weak associations.

Table 1: Pearson Correlations Between Deviant Behaviors and Negative Emotions

Deviant behavior	Statistic	Resentment	Anger	Frustration	Guilt	Fear
Property vandalism	r	.148	.134	.095	.253*	.170
	p	.201	.247	.415	.028	.142
Theft (< \$5)	r	-.055	.022	.153	.109	.230*
	p	.637	.853	.186	.348	.045
Physical assault	r	.032	.057	-.024	.215	.167
	p	.783	.622	.834	.062	.149
Exam cheating	r	-.144	-.046	-.103	.066	.084
Alcohol consumption	r	-.024	-.032	-.014	.198	-.049
Drug use	r	.072	.225	.232*	.283*	.031
Running away from home	r	-.079	-.074	.178	.273*	.093
Running away from school	r	.148	.023	.150	.307**	-.049
Fear of victimization	r	.091	.101	-.006	.029	.284*
Violence outside family	r	.203	.208	.100	.241*	.124
Domestic violence	r	.221	.176	.234*	.213	.259*

Note. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The results showed statistically significant correlations between property vandalism and guilt, theft of low-value items and fear, and drug use with both frustration and guilt. Running away from home and running away from school were also positively associated with guilt, as was fear of victimization. In addition, violence outside the family was positively associated with guilt, whereas domestic violence was positively associated with frustration and fear. These findings suggest that negative emotions were associated with several forms of deviant behavior among incarcerated women.

Relationship between self-control and deviant behavior

To examine the association between self-control and deviant behavior, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between self-control indicators and various forms of deviant behavior. Table 2 presents the results. Effect sizes (r values) are reported for each correlation, and statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$. Given the exploratory nature of the study, correlations with small effect sizes were interpreted cautiously to reduce the likelihood of Type I errors.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations Between Self-Control Indicators and Deviant Behaviors

Self-control indicator	Statistic	Cheating exams	Alcohol use	Drug use	Property vandalism	Violence outside family	Domestic violence
Preference for easy tasks	r	.280*	.035	.143	-.033	-.083	.009

Self-control indicator	Statistic	Cheating exams	Alcohol use	Drug use	Property vandalism	Violence outside family	Domestic violence
Physical activity preference	<i>r</i>	-.256*	-.229*	-.146	.003	.040	-.101
Physical over cognitive tasks	<i>r</i>	-.229*	-.057	-.019	-.141	-.016	.062
High energy vs peers	<i>r</i>	-.226*	-.236*	-.230*	-.060	-.236*	-.088
Prioritizing own interests	<i>r</i>	-.195	-.069	.080	-.019	.215	.264*
Others' discomfort irrelevant	<i>r</i>	.034	.140	.094	.238*	.248*	.071
Obtaining things despite harm	<i>r</i>	.235*	.091	.122	.187	.147	.180
Losing temper easily	<i>r</i>	-.149	-.021	.221	-.140	.121	.085
Others should stay away when angry	<i>r</i>	.195	.057	.123	.210	.140	.195

Note. *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient. **p* < .05.

Several statistically significant relationships were observed between low self-control traits and deviant behavior. A preference for easy tasks was positively associated with exam cheating. In contrast, a preference for physical activity rather than reflective or cognitive tasks was negatively associated with theft of low-value items and alcohol consumption. Likewise, a preference for physical over cognitive activities was associated with selected forms of deviant behavior. Higher perceived levels of energy and motivation were also negatively associated with alcohol consumption, drug use, and violence outside the family.

Egocentric attitudes were likewise positively associated with deviant behavior. Prioritizing one's own interests despite the impact on others was associated with domestic violence. Similarly, viewing others' distress as "their problem" was positively associated with property vandalism and violence outside the family. Exam cheating was also positively associated with endorsing the pursuit of desired outcomes despite potential harm or inconvenience to others. No significant associations were found between losing one's temper and theft of low-value items or between believing others should stay away when angry and engaging in behaviors that harmed others.

Relationship between demographic factors and self-control

The correlation between demographic variables and self-control was examined. Table 3 summarizes the results.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations Between Demographic Variables and Self-Control Indicators

Demographic variable	Statistic	Short-term focus	Avoid difficult tasks	Physical task preference	Egocentrism	Emotional reactivity
Age	<i>r</i>	-.149	-.203	.248*	-.038	.085
Educational level	<i>r</i>	-.297**	-.233*	-.042	-.236*	.075
Mother's education	<i>r</i>	-.083	.089	-.117	.147	.188
Home ownership	<i>r</i>	.192	.116	.017	.249*	.114
Family member employed	<i>r</i>	.142	-.040	.080	.064	.272*
Number of family members	<i>r</i>	.200	.146	.021	-.002	.016

Note. *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01.

The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between age and a preference for physical rather than cognitive tasks. Educational attainment was negatively associated with short-term orientation, avoidance of difficult tasks, and egocentrism. No significant correlations were found between mothers' educational level and any of the self-control indicators; therefore, no further interpretation of this variable is presented.

A positive correlation was observed between home ownership and egocentrism. In addition, having at least one employed family member was positively associated with emotional reactivity. No significant associations were observed between the number of family members and any of the self-control indicators. Accordingly, the interpretations presented are limited to the statistically significant correlations reported in Table 3.

Relationship between fear of victimization and deviant behavior

To examine the association between fear of victimization and deviance, correlations were drawn between different contexts of fear and deviant behavior. Table 4 reports the results.

Table 4: Pearson Correlations Between Fear of Victimization and Deviant Behaviors

Context of fear	Statistic	Theft (< \$5)	Exam cheating	Gambling	Drug use	Alcohol use
Fear inside the home	<i>r</i>	.266*	.273*	.222	.173	.125
Fear at school	<i>r</i>	-.001	.131	.226*	.009	.106
Fear on the street	<i>r</i>	.018	.098	.098	.165	.008

Note. *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient. **p* < .05.

The results show statistically significant positive correlations between fear of victimization at home and theft of low-value items and exam cheating. Fear of victimization in the school environment was also positively associated with gambling. No statistically significant relationships were observed between fear of victimization and the remaining forms of deviant behavior.

Relationship between low self-control and exposure to violence

Table 5 displays correlations between low self-control and violence exposure.

Table 5: Pearson Correlations Between Self-Control Indicators and Exposure to Violence

Self-control indicator	Statistic	Violence outside family	Domestic violence
High energy and motivation	<i>r</i>	-.236*	-.088
Prioritizing own interests	<i>r</i>	.215	.264*
Others' discomfort irrelevant	<i>r</i>	.248*	.071
Emotional withdrawal under stress	<i>r</i>	.064	.092
Impulsivity	<i>r</i>	.152	.167

Note. *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient. **p* < .05.

These results indicate a statistically significant negative association between higher perceived levels of energy and motivation relative to peers and experiences of violence outside the family. A statistically significant positive association was also observed between prioritizing one's own interests despite the impact on others and domestic violence. Additionally, the belief that others' discomfort was "their problem" was positively associated with violence outside the family. Effect sizes (*r*) are reported for all correlations to indicate the strength of the observed relationships, and correlations with small effect sizes were interpreted cautiously because no adjustment was made for multiple comparisons. Overall, the analysis demonstrated statistically significant associations among deviant behavior, low self-control, negative emotions, fear of victimization, and demographic variables among incarcerated women.

Discussion

Insights into the connections among self-control, emotions, victimization, and deviance are relevant to the factors involved in female crime and help to understand the research questions addressed in this study.

A number of deviant behaviors exhibited by women were found to have a positive correlation with negative emotionality, including feelings of guilt, frustration, fear, anger, and resentment. Even though the results suggest a link between negative emotional experiences and deviant behaviors, causality cannot be established using a correlational research design such as this one. Deviant behaviors appear to be linked to various inner experiences. However, the nature of this relationship is still unclear since emotional distress can occur both before and after deviance occurs. This interpretation is consistent with Garofalo and Velotti (2017), who identified negative emotionality as an important factor in aggression and crime. Likewise, Şahin (2015) proved that domestic violence could be another reason for the emotional stress leading women to criminal activity.

The results concerning the second research question show that low self-control was linked to various types of deviant behavior. Females characterized by higher impulsivity, short-

sightedness, egocentricity, and a desire for instant gratification show a strong association with deviant behaviors such as cheating, vandalism, drug use, and harming others. These results indicate associations between self-control and deviance without establishing causation. In line with the key tenets of self-control theory as postulated by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), the findings indicate that self-control theory is applicable in explaining female offending even outside Western societies. Similar findings have also been reported in previous studies (Al-Bahnasawi et al., 2024; Baek et al., 2023; Squillaro, 2023), providing further support for the relevance of self-control theory in understanding female offending.

Regarding the third research question, the findings indicate that at least one education, family, or age-related factor was associated with an indicator of self-control. Thus, there is evidence that self-control can be influenced by broader social and family-related factors. It is worth noting that no association was found between mothers' educational level and self-control.

Lower educational attainment and a focus on the short term do not necessarily indicate poor impulse control or an inability to think about the future. Women's access to education in Jordan may be constrained by early family responsibilities, economic challenges, and cultural and social expectations that limit opportunities for long-term planning.

In other words, people will typically prioritize today over tomorrow due to their current level of resources. As such, it appears that many of the women studied here were primarily focused on addressing their present-day needs as opposed to developing longer-range plans. The above-described focus on the short term may have been due to both impulsiveness and a number of external social/economic barriers that limit their capacity to develop and execute long-range plans.

In addition to illustrating how numerous social/structural influences affect individuals' self-control (Hay et al., 2023; You & Stults, 2025), the relationships found in this research indicate that self-control develops in a larger social framework rather than being influenced simply by the personality characteristics of the individual. Consistent with Al-Shdaifat and Al-Rasheedi (2016) and Ali (2010), the findings from this research illustrate that socioeconomic and educational circumstances impact self-regulatory behaviors as well as criminal behaviors. Furthermore, this study indicates that gender-specific social restrictions, victims' experiences, and familial interactions are likely contributing to the development/expression of self-control among women prisoners in Jordan.

Regarding the fourth research question, the researchers indicated that there are several forms of deviant behavior that fear of victimization is associated with (Guedes et al., 2023). In addition to suggesting that fear of victimization exists in both the home/school, environment and can also result in different forms of deviance, such as theft, cheating, or gambling. The study's correlational nature suggests that fear of victimization may serve as a risk factor for engaging in various forms of deviance. Notably, these findings differ from those identified by Guedes et al. (2023), who discovered that when high self-control exists in combination with fear of crime, it leads to lower experiences of victimization.

In terms of the fifth research question, the researchers identified that low self-control traits were related to domestic violence, whereas higher perceived energy and motivation were negatively related to violence outside the family. It appears as though there is a relationship between several aspects of self-control and experiencing violence. While associations were found, the cross-sectional design of the study does not allow causal relationships to be established. Similar to previous studies conducted by Kim and Lee (2025) and Zavala and

Perez (2022), which similarly identified associations between self-regulation and experiencing violence among incarcerated women; however, both studies failed to establish temporal/causal relationships. Şahin (2015) and Al-Shdaifat and Al-Rasheedi (2016) also described a cyclical connection between reduced social bonding/victimization/deviant behaviors amongst women.

This research study aims to provide a new sociological look at how self-control theory can explain crime through examining the ways in which women's self-control is influenced by broader societal and relational structures. The results indicate that there are strong associations between low self-control and both domestic violence and experiencing emotional distress and social limitations during incarceration. In addition, the results of the current study provide empirical evidence supporting the expansion of existing models of self-control that account for the social and gender influences found in earlier literature related to females who are either victims or perpetrators of crimes (Kopf et al., 2026).

The significance of this study comes from its exploration of the relationships between emotional, psychological, and social elements affecting female criminal behavior in a unique Middle Eastern cultural-social context. While past studies have significantly contributed to the advancement of self-control theory, this study has the most significant impact on exploring these variables together. These findings will allow for the development of culturally and gender-sensitively designed rehabilitation programs based on a more complete understanding of female offending, as well as the social-emotional contexts surrounding such offending.

Finally, these results also support the notion that female offending cannot be explained by one variable or factor. Instead, female offending is influenced by an individual's cumulative experience across multiple areas of their life, including, but not limited to, physical and emotional abuse, sexual victimization, limited access to educational opportunities, and economic resources. When combined, all of these factors may produce an environment in society that creates an increased likelihood of female offending in Jordan.

Conclusions

This study examined the relationships among low self-control, criminal deviance, negative emotionality, fear of victimization, exposure to violence, and demographic characteristics among incarcerated women in Jordan. The findings suggest that low self-control should not be viewed as an isolated predictor of delinquent behavior but rather as one component of a broader process shaped by emotional and social factors.

Several forms of deviant behavior were significantly associated with negative emotions, particularly guilt, fear, frustration, and anger. Comparable associations were also observed for self-control. Women who exhibited higher levels of impulsivity, short-term orientation, and egocentrism were more likely to engage in different forms of deviant behavior. These findings support the predictions of self-control theory and demonstrate its continued relevance for explaining female offending in Arab and other non-Western contexts.

The results also indicate that multiple factors shape the patterns of association observed in the data. Measures of self-control were associated with educational attainment, age, and family-related characteristics. These findings suggest that sociodemographic factors play an

important role in the development of self-control. Furthermore, women who reported greater fear of victimization or exposure to domestic violence were more likely to exhibit deviant behaviors.

A major strength of this study is its simultaneous examination of self-control, emotional factors, victimization history, and demographic characteristics rather than analyzing each factor individually. Focusing on incarcerated women in Jordan provides an opportunity to expand research in a setting where studies of criminal behavior remain limited, as most existing research has focused on men and has been conducted in Western countries. This focus offers a better understanding of the social and emotional factors associated with female offending and how they are shaped by the local cultural context.

Despite the fact that the findings cannot establish causation because they are based on correlational studies, the research indicates that rehabilitation and prevention programs could benefit from adopting measures to assist individuals in developing skills to regulate their emotions, recognize and deal with victimization, and make use of social networks.

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