

Complicity among Female Perpetrators of Crimes with Special Reference to Cases from the Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract: Historical teachings and attempts to understand female's overall participation in criminality have shown us that at certain moments the idea that science had about women's participation is reduced to their inciting or helping in the commission of criminality. Namely, it is considered that the "chivalrous" behaviour of the man contributed to less and less frequent detection of the criminal behaviour of the woman. One of the characteristics that prevails in the majority of cases when a woman appears as a perpetrator of a crime, is that she does not do it alone. In a woman, the affect prevails and she is independent in the role of a criminal when it is done in affection, especially when committing murders or serious physical injuries to an intimate partner or a close person, but when she seriously engages in criminal, recidivist and professional activities, she is usually accompanied by other persons, so she appears as a co-perpetrator or as an accomplice in the crime. We think that this topic is interesting to consider since that the overall statistics might be very different in relation to the total participation of women in criminality if they are left alone at any moment, and also depending on who appears in the role of a co-perpetrator. Through an analysis of the theoretical understanding of the problem and statistics in our country, we want to check whether such understandings are correct and whether we could contribute to the understanding and prevention of female crime in North Macedonia and the neighbourhood.

Keywords: woman, perpetrator, co-perpetrator, crime, accomplice, North Macedonia.

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PURPOSE

*“When a woman commits a crime
and does it with a man,
we focus our attention
on the man because we think
he was the instigator.”⁴*

Historical teachings and attempts to understand women’s participation in criminality have shown that at certain moments the idea that science had about women’s participation is reduced to her inciting or helping in the commission of criminality. Namely, it is considered that the “chivalrous” behaviour of the man contributed to less and less frequent detection of the criminal behaviour of the woman. Here, the starting point is the existence of equal distribution of criminality on a gender basis and the existence of their equal burden, which is distorted in a certain way through differential criminal prosecution (Polak, 1950).

One of the characteristics which prevails in the majority of cases when a woman appears as a perpetrator of a crime, is that she does not do it alone. In the cases when she is dominated by affect, she is independent in the role of a criminal, especially when committing murders or serious physical injuries to an intimate partner or a close person. But in the cases where we can see her serious intrusion into criminal waters, she is usually accompanied by other persons, so she appears as a co-perpetrator or as an accomplice in the crime. Hence, we consider this topic interesting to consider for reasons that the overall statistics might be very different regarding the total participation of women in criminality if they were left on their own at any given time. Despite the fact that motivations may exist, in certain situations the support that one has in one way or another from other persons is crucial to commit a crime. It is believed that a woman would never have committed a certain crime if there was no person or group that in some way pushed her into it or supported her. The more fragile character that a woman has, the greater dependence on social approvals and opinions, or her indecisiveness are only part of the reason why women do not like conflicts in general, and why they do not get into situations of confrontations with the law.

Analysing the larger countries in the world (the USA, England, Italy, Argentina, Japan, Brazil), we come to the conclusion that the very role of women in a certain organizational structure aimed at committing crimes has changed over the years (Koshevaliska et al., 2018). We still meet women from different profiles and with different determination, but their voice is rising more and more and has an impact on the organization’s activities. That is why getting to know their role in such a structure is particularly important in understanding the phenomenology of female crime.

In order to understand the participation of a woman in partnerships or groups that commit criminal acts, incidental or tendentious, we must first of all make a terminological differentiation of these terms, i.e. indicate the ways through which she, as well as every

⁴ Statement given by a famous Argentinian public prosecutor who worked on the “Yomagate” case where the main accused is a woman (Amira Yoma). To this statement, that when a woman commits a crime, the focus of the public is always on the man because it is always considered that he would be the initiator, he added that this view is due to the limitation that does not allow them to see the woman in the role of something that is considered as men’s work. The federal judge added ironically that he was not aware of any study on female criminals in Argentina: “Crime is a man’s affair. We leave you the role of a victim.”



criminal, could appear as a member within the framework of a joint crime. Thus, she appears as a *co-perpetrator* in a specific criminal offense if several persons, by participating in the act of execution or with another special contribution to the execution of the crime, jointly commit a criminal offense.⁵ So, it is a matter of joint performance of a certain criminal act by direct participation in the act of execution or by undertaking another action that represents a particular, i.e. key, contribution to the execution of the crime. Hence, it is about the existence of an explicit or tacit agreement among the persons for the joint execution of the act, accompanied by a division of roles according to the theory of division of labour (Kambovski, 2006). *Complicity*, on the other hand, is expressed through *encouragement* or *helping* to commit a crime. Encouragement represents the intentional creation or solidification of a decision in another to commit a crime, while aiding is an intentional contribution to the execution of the crime, after the perpetrator has already made a decision to commit it. When a woman is in a criminal association, her role as an accomplice is more characteristic than as a co-perpetrator.

DESIGN/METHODS/APPROACH

For this purpose, we will use historical methods for analysing the developments of some theories and also findings on this topic. We will use comparative method for comparative analysis and searching for good practices, and case study method for analysing some cases in the Republic of North Macedonia, as we will present and comment statistics and numbers of total participation of female in criminal activities in North Macedonia and analyse cases of complicity.

FINDINGS

SOME GENERAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Social changes that have been going on for all these years and their reflection on the woman's position in the society have also precipitated a change in the criminal behaviour of women in the role of potential criminal offenders over the years. The types of crimes that are committed, the modus operandi and the motives have evolved hand in hand with the overall social evolution (Koshevaliska & Maksimova, 2019).

The association of women to commit crimes is particularly characteristic of several climates. In the United States and England, women usually join street gangs, in Italy, women are part of the mafia, as well as in Argentina and Brazil, the structures that exist are somewhat similar to the Italian mafia. For reasons that we cannot go into detail, in every crime where a woman is complicit/co-committing, we would capture the picture of her association by presenting certain data characteristic of some of these climates.

Structures of association of criminals are mostly formed when people “operate” on the street. When it comes to the grouping of men and women when committing thefts (mostly street robberies), a key factor for women whether they would join such a group or not is

⁵ Legal definition of co-execution according to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia, Article 22.



the victim who is being targeted. If she is a woman, the woman as executor works alone. But if it is a man, the woman is always looking for men with whom she would approach committing crimes. In such robberies, the woman either has an equal role with the man, or perceives herself as placed in a secondary, assisting position. However, such assisting positions are not perceived as less important, for reasons that include passively observing the robberies committed by men until any incident occurs. The observing woman is armed and at the first threatening situation in which her partner would find herself, she activates. But almost never does a woman in a group with men have a leading role in committing street robberies or robberies (Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2008: 58). A woman, when entering into this type of co-execution or complicity, almost always chooses close male persons, persons whom she trusts, such as an intimate partner, brother or close relative. A study of women in the United States who are involved in such gangs (as a country where the gang problem has escalated into “street gang warfare”) who commit property crimes has shown that women very rarely step out of this “safe zone” and act alone. They stated that they know all the details of committing a crime, but out of fear of being caught, they would never commit crimes on their own. They perceive the passive role assigned to them as completely satisfying (Miller, 1998: 57–58). What is more, some of the respondents in the study believe that they have never done anything wrong, nor that they have had any confrontations with the law. They state that in the several street robberies they committed, they only “held the gun”, but never used it, so they do not perceive themselves as criminals. They even consider their involvement to be part of their intimate relationship with their partner, and the same would end with the termination of the relationship. Since social expectations for family formation and care are still on the woman’s side, the fact that a woman equates her intimate relationship with her partner as a benchmark for living is indisputable. So, she often starts a criminal career only under the influence and in cooperation with the partner (Miller, 1998: 61). The partners are left with the leading role, in terms of who they would rob and when they would rob, as well as how they would do it. This subordination is especially prevalent among the white women surveyed in the aforementioned study, and much less so among African-American or Hispanic women in the United States. Thus, the researchers conclude that it is the result of the social views towards the specific race. Because society is more judgmental towards people who are not of the white race, with prejudices and stigmas, it is believed that the results of this go to the point where even they themselves are made resistant from caring about society’s views, so they more easily admit to themselves that they are part of the criminal gang. From the beginning, they do not feel the need to satisfy social expectations, because the past has taught them that no matter how hard they try, they will always be socially marginalized. The white woman is more agitated and dependent on social currents and opinions, so she is in constant denial about her criminal involvement. That is why she enjoys the accessory role assigned to her.

Continuing with a word or two about the subordination that the female offender feels when she works with the man, we must also mention the subordinate role that they themselves take in mediating prostitution. They see themselves mostly as executors of the directions given by the mediator, who is usually a man, and rarely see themselves as equal to him (Miller, 1998: 62). This kind of mental image is often adopted by women who have been trafficked and who, although they are victims, under the influence of the “Stockholm



syndrome”⁶ and the need to satisfy the desires of the recruiter, carry out his orders and stand up for him.

However, not every woman on the street and a member of a gang (with long-term work or occasional independent work) reconciles with a subordinate role. Older women who commit such robberies in order to satisfy their drug needs when entering into withdrawal crises, and not out of whim or driven by a desire to prove themselves, usually associate with other men or women who have the same needs (Schwartz & Steffensmeier, 2008). They are not armed, or it is completely accidental, and they are inclined to use opportunities when they know that the victim has money with him/her (when withdrawing money from a machine, when leaving a bank, when leaving a store, etc.). Thus, one distracts the attention of the victim, while another “operates”, and they divide the prey evenly (Miller, 1998: 59). Physically stronger women do not like the subordinate role either, who do not submit to the male members of the gangs and with all their efforts prove themselves to them until they get the equal position. Such women emphasize the masculinist characteristics of themselves in order to be liked by the group (physical, but also character traits).

Younger groups often detect the victim out of boredom, driving together and from immediate notice, on a whim, decide to attack him. However, in any case, women prefer to be sent by men rather than women. They think that if things do not go according to the plan, men stay with them until the end and help them. With women, on the other hand, they think that selfishness and timidity work and they know how to escape despite the fact that their partner may be in trouble.

The association of women in gangs for the purpose of committing a crime is not only a problem that exists among minor girls. This practice is mirrored in the post-adolescence period with the difference that here it is already a matter of lifestyle. In such gangs, as we said above, women usually have a secondary subordinate role. American journalists compare them to cheerleaders of a football team - they wear the colours of the gang, they are with them, they cheer for them but they do not go out on the field. The most common roles they get as members of a criminal group are to perform espionage actions for the group or thought processes (intelligence) (Waldemar, 2008). However, they are constantly treated as second-class members by male members of criminal groups. Most often, they are perceived as sex-objects that possess them. In Jody Miller’s research (1998), it was concluded that women most often become part of such groups when they have experienced abuse, mental, physical or sexual abuse within the family, by their parents or their partners, and under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Such women give all their trust frivolously to the first person who meets them, equating it with love and support. Most of the time, it is their intimate partner who thus brings them into the criminal gang and influence them to enter

6 Stockholm syndrome – love for the abuser, medical: a group of psychological symptoms that occur in some people in a captive or hostage situation. It has received considerable media publicity in recent years as it has been used to explain the behaviour of such well-known victims of kidnapping and human trafficking. The term takes its name from a bank robbery that took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in August 1973. The robber took four bank employees (three women and one man) into the vault with him and held them hostage for 131 hours. After the employees were finally released, it became apparent that they had formed a paradoxical emotional bond with their captor. They told reporters that they saw the police as the enemy, not the person who committed the robbery, and that they had positive feelings towards the criminal. This syndrome was first named by Nils Bejerot (1921–1988), a professor of medicine who specialized in addiction and served as a psychiatric consultant to the Swedish police during the bank robbery. Stockholm syndrome is also known as Survival Identification Syndrome.



into crime. In order to keep such affection from their partner, they start a criminal career which they see as a lesser evil compared to losing their partner. However, this apparent love lasts for a short time and the woman is often victimized in the gang itself, where she becomes sexually “available” to almost all members in it (Arbai, 1999).

The role of women in an organized structure that commits criminal acts is little scientifically elaborated. The beginnings of such currents, for the possible participation of women in such groups, appeared in the 1990s, and the most interesting and elaborated then were the women’s memberships in Sicilian mafias⁷. The roles that women had in such mafias were named as “vivandiera” (supplier, provider), “postina” (postman), or “messaggera” (messenger) and at first did not exceed the social stereotypes of the existence of only male perpetrators of crimes. This point of view was also mirrored by the law enforcement authorities, so women usually went unpunished because they were only “passive subjects” in the group. Gradually, women began to take leadership roles in gangs when men were prevented as well as within prisons and wherever men failed to meet the needs of the role they had within the mafia. Women in such situations have shown self-confidence, power, entrepreneurial skills and awareness of the violent culture. This situation, which began to affect Italy at the end of the 20th century, is mirrored and present in a number of countries in the world, especially when men fail (Brazil, Japan, Argentina). So, the question arises, how much of the strong behaviour that the woman is doing at this moment can be attributed to the collapse of the man or the lack of a suitable male figure, and how much to the high criminal potential that the specific woman has in herself (Fiandaca, 2003: 3). The woman as part of the mafia and as part of any organized group created to commit crime, in addition to the mentioned street robberies and robberies, is also involved in international criminal acts (such as drug trafficking, money laundering as well as managing illegal economic activities, which always exceeds the borders of a certain country). Most of the time, the criminal structure itself places women in the commission of this type of criminal acts for reasons that are less suspicious for the police and law enforcement authorities, so they can operate imperceptibly for a longer period of time and on a larger territory. The woman in Italy specifically, at the beginning of the 1990s, was on the margins of the Napoleonic criminal underworld, in the shadow of her husband, father, brother or close relative. Already at the beginning of the 20th century, he began to assert himself with leading abilities and strategic plans for the work of the members of the mafia, while taking the work into his own hands (Allum, 2003: 10). Unlike the gangs we mentioned in the larger cities of the United States and England, where women as members are often abused and objectified, women as part of the mafia in Italy are elevated to a pedestal. Namely, they always know everything and have all the information, enjoy a high reputation, they are mothers who must have the respect and obedience of the male members. It is financially powerful, influential in raising children, in their education and lifestyle (Di Maria & Lo Verso, 2007: 89). However, a woman can be part of the mafia and not participate in committing crimes. Part of the women, according to their character and predispositions, have a passive status within the family, and in function of

⁷ Italy cares about the role played by women in the “mafia” as evidenced by the conference organized in Palermo in 1997 *La donna nell’universo mafioso* [the Woman in the Mafia Universe] by the Faculty of Educational Sciences, then the researches of the authors of Italian origin Teresa Principato and Alexandra Dino and their product entitled *Mafia e donna, le vestali del sacro e dell’onore* [The Mafia and the Woman, Vestals of Honour and the Sacred], also from 1997. Then continued with the researches of Umberto Santino and Anna Puglisi, etc.



the smooth operation of the mafia, because these two structures often become greyer. She raises the children and teaches and educates them in the spirit of religion and family at the same time, she concludes arranged marriages in order to calm two families, etc. She should be representative and protect the face, reputation and name of the family, she must be obedient and not interfere in the business deals of men. However, she does not participate actively and directly in the crime zone (Di Maria & Lo Verso, 2007: 93–94).

The increased participation of women in such structures is noticeable. They have to fight for emancipation even in criminal circles, with noticeable success from 1990s onwards. However, it is also notorious that women rarely appear as initiators of association and committing crimes. Statistics around the world and isolated cases show that the woman is most often involved in such organized groups by the man. And from him he received the criminal behaviour. And, no matter how absurd the social views that neglect women as perpetrators of organized crimes, the facts confirm them. As long as a woman has feminine attributes and does not have masculine behaviour, she is marginalized, sometimes even victimized, within the criminal associations of men. Research has shown that her increased involvement in such groups is considered key to their survival today. Therefore, for their prevention, breaking and repression, it must start from the woman as their member. As long as law enforcement places the main focus on the man, who at a given time was in co-perpetration with a woman, and applies methods adapted for men and not for women, criminal associations will exist and undermine the social order.

COMPLICITY AMONG WOMEN WITHIN SPECIFIC TYPES OF CRIME

Men often use a range of abusive techniques to persuade women to co-offend with them, including direct threats of violence (Barlow & Weare, 2019: 91). Ways of manipulation can vary – either through controlling their supply of drugs, or exploiting their declarations of love. This manipulation can be different, but the outcome is involving a woman in committing a crime, that she probably would not have committed alone. Women who co-offend may be more likely to reoffend, especially if their relationship with the co-offender(s) continues after their release from prison (McNeeley, 2021: 920). There are significant differences in the involvement of a women in the total committed crime, in the specific types of crimes and also in the ways and reasons why she is committing a crime. There are also differences in the type of influence that she is receiving or help during a commitment of a crime, or the level of equality with her accomplice while committing it. To illustrate some of this, we will mention some types of crime that are committed by a woman, and in what way she can appear as co-offender.

In Mullins and Wright's study (2003) they say that when women are involved in burglary offences as co-offenders, that is often because they received a threat by their partners or as they stated because of blackmail 'if you love me, you'll do it'. Men and women robbers act in a variety of ways on the street, where the man as a perpetrator of property crime mainly dominates. As a victim, the female criminal usually chooses another woman, for the reasons that she has a weak constitution, is easy to overcome and does not offer resistance, something that male robbers leave out because in those cases their masculinity does not come to the fore, and because they have another man as their target. But when women choose a man as a victim, they almost always work in a pair with a man as a co-offender,



or if she commits a robbery, then she chooses to be part of a group made up of men as well (Miller, 1998: 51).

Murders as crimes rank high among popular crimes. But over 90% of murders are committed by men, about 70% of murder victims are men, and over half of all murders are between men. The historical review testifies to crimes committed by women in the role of serial killers and numerous unsolved cases in large noble families where women's backgrounds were monitored, which we mentioned earlier. Since the ancient historian Titus Livius, there is a recorded case from the 6th century BC when the daughter of the penultimate Roman king Servius Tullius, Tullia, initiated and supported the murder of her own father (Apasiev, 2016: 41). Considering the physical constitution of the woman, most authors believe that the only way for a woman to appear as a murderer would be by using her insidiousness, so the acts of murder she would commit would be through poisoning, fraud, etc. However, there is no divergence of opinion that the woman, despite her sensitive nature, was and is represented as the perpetrator of this crime against life and body, although on a significantly smaller scale than man. However, the largest percentage of murders committed are based on their emotional attachment to the victim, that is, like everything else that women do, they are motivated by their feelings. Female murders and violence are usually not initiated by the need for some profit or to establish control or supremacy like men. The very manifestation of violent behaviour in women is mostly due to their own perception of experienced "failure" in a certain field of life. Well, her outbursts of violence are actually the result of a loss of control, as opposed to the successful takeover of control in violent cases characteristic of the male murderer (Meguire et al., 2012: 717). However, when women are committing a crime of a murder, and it is involved with a man during a way, situation is a bit different. During such incidents, however, women are less likely to participate in the violence itself due to gender differences in 'moral evaluations', particularly when they are in small groups when 'group influence may be less pronounced' (Lantz, 2020: 97). There are cases, where women have reported being unaware of offences involving their partner until they were 'at the crime scene', at which stage 'it was very difficult to back out' not least because they were 'scared' (Mullins & Wright, 2003: 820). In another study (Welle & Falkin, 2000) women who admitted planning an initial crime, often described being implicated in a more serious offence as, for example, their partner unexpectedly produced a weapon during an altercation. Barlow (2015) emphasises the ways in which 'abusive, controlling and/or obsessive relationships with a male partner may influence a woman's "decision" to offend' with evidence suggesting that 'domineering' partners leave women feeling cornered with 'little choice' but to participate in the offence. Women often engage in more serious offending with a male partner than when they do so alone (Mullins & Wright, 2003; Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003). They are more likely to engage in gender atypical offences when they co-offend with a man, such as robbery and murder (Becker & McCorkel, 2011).

As for the involvement of women in white-collar crime, it exists, although significantly less often than that of men, and it is carried out from significantly lower working positions. As such, it gets the appropriate theoretical name - pink collar crime. The term "pink-collar crime" appears as a counterpart to "white-collar crime", which in turn is nothing but "professional crime committed by members of the upper ruling and business circles, who use their influence and connections in society to commit crimes that bring enormous



material benefit to them, and enormous damage to citizens and society. Considered from this aspect, of the existence of a completely new criminality that takes the woman as the perpetrator of professional crime in the centre, Daly (1989) concludes that when a woman commits this type of crime, she usually does it alone, unlike a man who is prone to association. And in those few cases when women work in a group, their leading or subordinate role depends on the type of crime being committed (Daly, 1989).

REASONS WHY WOMEN ACCOMPLICE – SHORT ETIOLOGICAL VIEW

There can be plenty of reasons why one commits a murder. Thus, there are more than it is known reasons why woman would accomplice while committing a crime. In their research, Barlow and Weare (2019) distinguish several factors that can contribute to female's involvement with a male to commit a crime:

- “I felt trapped”: The influence of women's relationships with a romantic male co-offender
- “You gotta have somebody there...” The influence of friendships
- Influence of ‘other’ motivating factors
- ‘Significant life events’.

The first factor is a factor of intimate partner's influence. Women choose the criminal path to please their partner or because they are afraid of him. The coercive and controlling behaviour, manipulation, physical violence, abuse, are also detected among several participants in their survey. In some of the cases, gambling addiction of an intimate partner is the reason why he is aggressive toward her and pressures her to commit a crime.

As well as co-offending with intimate partner, some female perpetrators co-offend with male ex-partners, or male and female friends, what is the second factor, the influence of friendship. For these women, the co-offending relationship with friends was not a pathway into crime, but rather a motivation to continue offending. Sometimes relationships with friends, particularly female “best friends”, is a motivating factor to continue offending, and when co-offending is with another woman, they feel close-bond, trust and have positive narrative towards the relationship. This emphasises the integral role that offending played in their friendship, as well as the ways in which this friendship influenced their motivations to offend. However, it is noteworthy that these friendships did not influence women's pathways into crime in the same way as co-offending with a male partner. This highlights the importance of gaining a nuanced understanding of the ways in which different types of co-offending relationships influence women's offending behaviour (Barlow & Weare, 2019).

“Influence of the other motivating factors” is referred mostly to drugs addiction, economic circumstances or traumatic life event. Although there can be plenty of internal factors, these are most likely to initiate co-offending among women. In some cases, the intimate partner was her dealer previously, or was someone who introduced her with drugs. So, in this concrete research, and what is concluded from the respondents, co-offending and drug use were fundamentally intertwined as offending motivations albeit to differing extents and in different ways. And when it comes to economic reasons, it can be that they appear on women's side as well as on intimate partner's side.



Another motivation can be some “significant life event” that impacted or affected the woman’s life, decisions, and subsequent actions. It can refer to illness, hers or of someone else close to her, or previous victimisation (for example, sexual assault/abuse).

So, it can be concluded that, beside love or fear, there can be various factors and vulnerabilities, such as substance misuse, financial issues, and significant life events overlapped, creating multiple offending motivations. Whilst co-offending with an intimate partner was a key pathway into crime for many women, it was not their sole ongoing motivation for continued offending. Rather there can be overlap, albeit to varying degrees, between the co-offending relationship and other experiences in the women’s lives, which motivated their continued offending (Barlow & Weare, 2019).

ORIGINALITY/VALUE

FEW FACTS ABOUT THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

When it comes to the Republic of North Macedonia, we must emphasize that Macedonia also belongs to the group of countries where the criminality of women, compared to the total criminality, does not exceed 20 %. What is more, analysing the last five to six years, we see that the total participation of women in total criminality is not higher than 10% (Table 1).

Table 1: *Involvement of Women in Overall Crime Committed in the Period 2017–2022 in the Republic of North Macedonia*

Year	Total crime	Crime committed by women	Percentage
2017	6273	550	8.77%
2018	5857	419	7.16%
2019	4712	410	8.71%
2020	6351	558	8.79%
2021	7634	664	8.7%
2022	7769	758	9.76%

Source: State Statistical Office (<https://makstat.stat.gov.mk/>)

Regarding the total participation of women in criminality, in the analysed period, there is a slight increase in the presence of women in the committed crime, and accordingly there is an increase in the number of crimes committed as an accomplice (Table 2).

Although the percentage is not too high, it is not at all to be neglected, especially taking into account the fact that complicity among female criminals increases year by year (Table 2). There are no official statistics on which groups of crimes, or which crimes the complicity refers to, so we will do a case study to one specific case, known to the public, where the woman appears as a co-perpetrator. We must mention that when a woman appears as an executor or with an executor, the media sensation in recent years is much greater. This,



we believe, is due to the belief that women have not only violated the law but also social standards and stereotypes about the role of women in society when committing crimes. Thus, the members of the group of women who commit the registered crime committed by them, experience facing double condemnations. According to social views and judgments, they crossed not only social boundaries, but also gender ones.

Table 2: *Complicity among Female Perpetrators in the Period 2017–2022 in the Republic of North Macedonia*

Year	Total crime committed by women	Working alone	Co-offending	Percentage
2017	550	502	46	8.3%
2018	419	328	89	21.2%
2019	410	336	72	17.5%
2020	558	424	133	23.8%
2021	664	463	197	29.6%
2022	758	521	236	31.1%

CASE #1

In 2014 there was a monstrous murder of a young girl that was committed by unmarried couple, parents of three minor children, that received huge media coverage. The case was fully disclosed to the public.

The autopsy performed on the dead girl, showed that she was beaten with fists, kicked, pressed with a foot, and there were signs of strangulation on the neck. For both perpetrators, as it was reported by the media a detention was given. The man was suspected of committing murder, and Jasmina (his partner) was initially suspected of helping. The main injuries that led to traumatic shock were the injuries to the brain shell, stomach, the girl's ribs were broken on both sides, and there were also injuries to the large intestine (Osomničeni ot ubiec, 2014).

The case was reported by a friend of the girl's mother. She, along with the deceased girl and her other children lived in the same house with the now convicted and their family. The brother (then aged five) told the deceased girl how the little girl had been injured, and that he and the rest of their children had been told to hide under a blanket and cover their ears as they were physically present in the room in which the drama unfolded. One of the child witnesses, a child of the convicts, admitted to the psychiatrists who talked to him that Mevljana (the girl that was killed, age 3) was beaten with fists and kicked on the head, body and buttocks, because she wet herself on the carpet. They scolded her that they could not buy her more clothes and wash her.

The mother found her child wrapped in a blanket and smeared with toothpaste to cover up the bruises. She was told that the girl had fallen and that they tried to revive her in the shower, but failed. The defendants did not want to take the child to a doctor and convinced



the mother not to call the police and an ambulance under the pretext that there would be problems, since the girl did not have any documents.

At the trial, the representative of the prosecution presented the charge of complicity in premeditated murder. It emphasizes the aggravating circumstances on the side of the defendants, for which despite the defence they refer to, that the girl fell down the stairs, the expert reports gave a sufficient picture of the event as well as the children's testimonies. It brings to the fore the right to protect the child's life and her innocence in this case. In the closing words, he also addressed the carelessness on the part of the girl's mother, because she herself did not know when the girl was born exactly, she had no documents, and the expert's report noted previous injuries and fractures on the girl, two weeks before the tragedy, which the mother did not notice.

The very statements of the defendants are supported during the trial, from what is attached to the verdict. However, the testimonies show that such allegations presented at the trial were the result of an agreement between the defendants, which was noticed and taken into account by the court. The high degree of neglect by the girl's mother can also be seen from the testimonies. She left the children in the care of the accused, whom she had known for only two or three weeks, and who took care of the children's hygiene and nutrition. None of the three children had any documentation. The father was in prison, they left the home of her parents where they went to live because of the abuse they suffered from the grandfather of the deceased girl. Wandering around Skopje, they were picked up by the accused. On the day of the event, the mother was at work in the bar, and was called by the defendant that her child was not well. When the mother and her friend came to the house, from her testimony, information was obtained that the girl still showed signs of life, which means that if medical help had been called in time, they might have been able to save her. With the rest of the children, who initially testified as they were told, i.e. that the girl fell by herself, and then, after being relieved of fear, told what happened, the experts noticed a strong influence of post-traumatic stress, which, due to the particular poignancy and brutality of the event, contributed to self-isolation, anxiety, sleep problems, etc. In addition to testimonies, exhaustive expert reports and an autopsy were conducted, from which it was indisputably established that the child died as a result of physical injuries inflicted by the defendants, made by using a cable and a belt. The technical advisor explained that if the child fell down the stairs, it was logical that there would be other scratches and bruises on the body and back, but such injuries were neither seen in the photo documentation nor mentioned in the autopsy. From the prepared reports and additions from Forensic Medicine, as well as the testimony of the expert, the fact was confirmed beyond any reasonable doubt that the injuries that led to the death of little Mevljana, were caused as a result of a direct impact of blunt hard force, which implies blows with fists or kicks, not from falling down stairs.

The verdict of the Basic Court Skopje 1 - Skopje (Basic Court Skopje 1, 2015), one year after the death of the girl, reads a prison sentence of 20 years for the co-perpetrators of the crime, for the crime of murder under Article 123 paragraph 2 item 7 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia. The Criminal Council, on the proposal of the public prosecutor, extended the measure of detention for the accused, and for the accused, whose detention was previously replaced by a measure of precaution due to the birth of a newborn, it was extended until the finality of the judgment, that is, until the beginning of serving the prison sentence (Presuda, 2015).



Jasmina used her fourth pregnancy to avoid detention, and was granted a restraining order. After the verdict became final, she disappeared from relatives and institutions and got married in a village near Skopje. She became pregnant again and submitted to the court a request to postpone serving the prison sentence due to pregnancy, which the court rejected. After she came to serve her prison sentence in Idrizovo, she requested a suspension of her sentence, and the day when the decision to suspend her sentence reached her, she gave birth in Idrizovo.

Regarding the verdict, the prosecutor's office also filed an appeal, or which the public prosecutor told the press in front of the media that the amount of the sentence was being appealed, which, according to the prosecutor's office, "is insufficient for this kind of crime, especially since the case is dominated by aggravating circumstances, because the life of a three-year-old girl is taken, as well as the absence of repentance of the accused during the process" (Obvinitestvoto, 2015).

SHORT COMMENT

In December 2017 we had an interview in the Idrizovo prison with Jasmina. Although after the conversation we realized that she was a mentally unstable person, she was also a victim of physical violence by her previous husband, with whom she committed the crime. Jasmina said that on the day of the murder the girl wet herself on the carpet in the room where they were sitting, and she told her husband to clean her up. She said that when he returned the girl, she showed no signs of life. He claimed that he did not know what and how he did it and what happened. She said he claimed he did not do anything to her. He threatened her that in front of the police and in front of the girl's mother she must claim that the girl fell down the stairs and lost her life, which she did. She considered this kind of lie to be her biggest mistake, and that everything would have been different if she had said what she claimed to be the truth from the beginning.

This is a typical case of co-offender's case that happened because of the relationship influence over the woman as a perpetrator. She has not committed any crime before, she is the first-time offender. For women like these, the relationships with their male co-offenders seemed to form the basis for their pathways into crime (Barlow & Weare, 2019). Fear of the male partner plays a specific role for some women. Sometimes these women confuse love with fear and do anything to keep their partner, even murder. This is not always a reason for getting in co-offender relationship with a male partner. It can also be due to some kind of addiction, economic circumstances, significant life event, etc. (Barlow & Weare, 2019). Although the reasons may vary, when there is a crime committed under the influence of a partner, in most of the time women appear as a "second hand" perpetrator.

RECENT CASES

CASE #2

Another particularly gruesome case that shocked the public was the murder of the Croatian handball player Tot, committed by three co-accused, including a woman (19 years old) (OJO, 2022). The event is fully covered by the media, there are video recordings and



undoubtedly many flaws in the procedure. There was a speculation about a previous intimate relationship between the handball player and the convicted. On the night when the murder happened (3 o'clock in the morning), they were all in a night club, they left the club, got into a taxi, started an argument. One of the defendants got out, pulled the victim out of the vehicle and punched him, causing the victim to fall to the ground (Donev, 2022). The two defendants and the girl kicked him in the head, and he later died from these blows. The girl and one of the defendants were sentenced to 18 years in prison, and the third defendant to 16 years (Vo zivo, 2022; Presuda za ubistvoto, 2022).

CASE #3

Another case of violence, where a woman (22 years old) appears as a co-perpetrator, is the murder of a boy called Pino, who went missing for months and later his skeleton was found (Majkata, 2019). The girl, together with a male accomplice, killed Pino and buried him over Ljuboten. On December 11, 2018, the suspect, a 22-year-old resident of Skopje, called the now deceased to meet them at the embankment in Gjorce Petrov, even though she knew that the first suspect would join them with the intention of depriving the victim of his life. When the first suspect arrived and threatened the victim with a firearm - a rifle, all three of them headed with the passenger motor vehicle near the village Arachinovo. After the suspects arrived, they started a verbal argument with the victim, after which the first suspect shot the victim and killed him (Angela uapsena, 2019). The girl was sentenced to 19 years in prison. Male co-defendant is on the run and unavailable to the authorities (Landov, 2021).

CASE #4

In 2021 there was a case about six co-offenders, among which there was one woman (notary). She was accused of helping to commit the crime by making the first telephone contact with the injured party on September 6, 2020, introducing herself as the girlfriend of the first accused and asking him for a meeting and financial assistance. She lured him to meet the next day on the street Kachanicki Pat. When he came to the meeting, with the use of force and serious threats, the defendants forced the victim to do something to the detriment of his property. Namely, in a particularly violent way, inflicting physical injuries on him, they forced him to prescribe his own Maserati car to them, without being paid. The accused woman (notary) was accused of acting negligently in the exercise of her powers and duties, so encouraged by the first accused, she opened the notary's office outside of working hours, drew up the contract for the purchase and sale of the vehicle, stating at the same time a lower and unrealistic price of 2,950 euros, in order to avoid the ban on cash payments and the obligation to report a suspicious transaction. Although no payment of the specified price was made, in Article 3 of the Agreement she stated that the sum of 2,950 euros was paid before the notary, on the day of certification of the signatures, thus enabling the illegal transfer of ownership of the car in favour of the first defendant (Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2021). She was accused of malpractice in the service.



CONCLUSION

Considering the analysed cases from the Republic of North Macedonia, we will dare to say that none of them would have happened, or would have had that outcome, if the woman had not been associated with men during the execution of the crime. Violent crimes, or crimes that include threats of violence in which the woman also appears as the perpetrator, inevitably include the existence of accomplice of a woman with a man. A large part of those cases where the woman appears as the perpetrator of the crime of murder (as independent perpetrator) also bring doubt in the public about the incompletely adequately conducted investigation and the existence of a co-perpetrator who remained hidden in the procedure. No matter how number of such cases over the years is small, we are still talking about a tragic outcome that should be prevented with adequate prior knowledge of criminological parameters.

Considering the total involvement of women in criminality, we must mention that in addition to the many internal and external factors that can contribute to the involvement of women in committing criminal acts, one factor stands out, which is often the main trigger for the association of women in criminalization. The woman appears more often in the role of a victim, who accumulates serious psychological disorders due to her being brought and maintained in a victimized state (Walkalte, 2007: 84), which can often be done by a criminal who acts alone or in association with other persons, especially the aggressor (who is often an intimate partner) (Maksimova & Koshevaliska, 2023).

According to Robert Agnew's general theory of tension of the prison population in the RSM, according to which tension is the result of the failure to reach positively valued goals (certain social status or finances); the removal of a positively valued stimulus (death of a close relative or friend; or termination of an intimate relationship); and as a result of a negatively valued or dangerous stimulus (domestic violence), the criminal activity of women serving prison terms for certain crimes is related to either financial stress or their lifetime victimization. This means that they were either unemployed or employed in an insecure or poorly paid job, without the opportunity to meet basic needs, or were victims of physical, psychological or sexual violence by, most often, the intimate partner, but also by other family members (Stanojoska, 2020).

Within these frameworks, we can also recognize the etiological factors for association of women in committing criminal offences - from love or fear to economic problems or life events. However, we must note that this field remains particularly unexplored. Apart from the few analyses mentioned above, the complicity of women with committing crimes has bypassed the interest of theorists. One of the reasons is the lack of data on this topic. During our analysis of the problem for the Republic of North Macedonia, we did not come across any gender sensitive statistics. Apart from data on the total number of women as co-perpetrators, there is no detailed analysis of the type of crimes, reasons, age, etc. We believe that this trend must be enriched and considering these theoretical comparative findings, empirical research must be carried out in the future, which, hopefully, will lead to conclusions about the association of women in committing criminal acts on the territory of the Republic North Macedonia, and also in the Balkans.



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