

A Critical Evaluation: Women in the Punjab Police

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Abstract

The statistics regarding women employed within the Punjab police are not very impressive. The three Punjab female police stations are situated in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Faisalabad. In the Punjab, the supervisory officer to constabulary ratio is 1:27. However, female police officials are not exceedingly represented within the supervisory ranks, nor are they involved in criminal investigations. The purpose of this brief article is not to discuss the quantitative side of females working in law enforcement in the Punjab, but rather the article is aimed at analyzing the qualitative side of this critical issue.

Keywords: Law Enforcement; Women in Policing; the Punjab; Pakistan

Introduction

The statistics¹ regarding women in the Punjab Police are not very impressive. The three Punjab police stations are situated at Rawalpindi, Lahore and Faisalabad. The “gazetted” (supervisory) officer to constabulary ratio is 1:27.² The purpose of this brief, yet concise article is not to discuss the quantitative side of women police officers within the Punjab Police; instead, the article is aimed at analyzing the qualitative side of this important issue. Following are some of the chief factors related to the issue of female police officers working in the Punjab:

1. First and foremost is the issue of the organization of the Punjab Police. Female police officers, since the inception of their involvement within the Punjab Police,³ have not been fully integrated into the organization. Although the female police stations have been established in three out of the 36 districts of the Punjab, the responsibilities assigned to them have always been short of a full-fledged police station. This is due to both legal and administrative reasons. On the legal side, the criminal law is designed on the basis of geography, and from this perspective, the jurisdiction of women police stations has not been clearly elaborated. Most of the times, some job tasks are sent to women police stations and others not. On the administrative side, it is sometimes impossible for a victim to travel to a women police station situated far away. For example, if a woman is killed by a woman in Tehsil Murree of Rawalpindi district, it is not possible for the victim to approach a female police station situated about forty miles away in district headquarters of Rawalpindi to lodge her complaint and then follow up with the investigation. Likewise, it is prohibitively difficult for a

woman police officer to reach a crime scene far away from the police station and then to get the autopsy conducted through a provincial government's hospital. Undoubtedly, the geographical basis of the criminal jurisdiction will have to be reassessed before advocating more police stations in other districts of the Punjab.

2. Secondly, female police officers posted in the police stations are staggered and predominantly are confined to two roles:
 - a. To assist the male police in arrest and court proceedings of female offenders and suspects as required by Police Rule 26.18A of the Punjab Police Rules of 1934⁴;
 - b. To assist the male police colleagues in law and order situations especially in handling female protesters.

Both of these tasks are primarily support roles. Female police officers have not made it to mainstream police positions and perhaps this is the reason for the insufficient number of police stations and very few women police personnel when compared to the number of their male counterparts.

3. Thirdly, there are very few or no women police officers who work as criminal investigators. As stated above, female police officers have been kept away from the primary police work of prevention and detection of offences. Women police officers are trained with men police officers, therefore, they are competent to deal with criminal investigations, however, when it comes to actual field work, they are not provided the requisite experience and exposure to these cases.
4. Finally, as it relates to the mainstream career path, there is virtually no separate career planning for women police officials. In this regard, more effort must be made to improve career advancement opportunities for females working within the Punjab Police.

Having highlighted the chief issues, it is in order to analyze how the concept of a women police station has been received by academia and human rights activists. In this regard, a study was undertaken by Farah Taj (2004)⁵ in which she concluded that the female police stations were not meant to segregate the criminal justice system between men and women.⁶ She stated that the aim was to integrate women into the mainstream. Though her study was confined to the

Province of NWFP (now KPK), she had pointed out the conceptual issues underlying the establishment of women police stations. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has not shown its satisfaction in the state of women involved in law enforcement within the country. The Human Rights Commission has stated that women working in the police have had limited influence.⁷ In any case, it is highly recommended that the Punjab Police take measures to redefine the role and responsibilities of women police officers and their related police stations in order to better integrate them into supervisory positions, criminal investigations, and other relevant tasks and responsibilities to best serve the communities of the Punjab.

¹ The data has been obtained from Establishment Branch of Police Headquarters, Punjab Police Lahore. The data is updated till 01-11-2011.

² The gazetted officers are grade 17 and above officers who are appointed to senior positions. There were 52 gazetted officers for 1378 constables as of 01-11-2011. It must be noted that the sanctioned strength of women constabulary is 1017 whereas the present strength is much above the sanctioned.

³ It is believed that they started working since 1994 when Benazir Bhutto was the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Brief detail is available in Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's Report on *Police Organizations in Pakistan* in its Section 2.7. The report is available online at [http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Police_Organisations_in_Pakistan\[1\].pdf](http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Police_Organisations_in_Pakistan[1].pdf)

⁴ The rule provides that arrests of women, with or without warrants, shall be made by an officer of rank not below ASI and that no remand of a woman police be obtained without special order of a gazetted police officer.

⁵ Taj, Farah, *Policing in Purdah: Women and Women Police Stations, Peshawar, NWFP, Pakistan* available on internet at <http://www.ub.uib.no/elpub/NORAD/2004/uib/thesis01.pdf>

⁶ Ibid, p.84

⁷ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's Report on *Police Organizations in Pakistan* in its Section 2.7. The report is available online at [http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Police_Organisations_in_Pakistan\[1\].pdf](http://www.hrcp-web.org/pdf/Police_Organisations_in_Pakistan[1].pdf)

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