

Problems faced by Women Police in Pakistan

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Abstract

Like other sectors of society, whereby women's discrimination is blatant, armed and security forces like police has also historically side-lined women folk on stereotypical grounds. This paper attempts to analyse the various administrative and socio-cultural problems faced by prospective women to be recruited in police force as well as the same nature of problems faced by the already serving women police staff in Pakistan. The study was based on secondary analysis of reported problems faced by women police in Pakistan. Findings of the study reveal that certain administrative problems such as male officers' strict attitude, access problems to the crime scenes, police station's infrastructure, recruitment and training problems and other socio-cultural factors such as sexual harassment, general perception towards women policing, male officers authoritative attitude and lack of cooperation from them have been the salient pulling factors that hamper the efficiency of already employed women police force as well as discourage the general women folk to enter into the police department.

Keywords: Women policing; Pakistan; Discrimination; Patriarchy; Stereotyping; Norms and Values

Background Analysis

Women are important segment of society and any dream of development will remain elusive without their active participation in various spheres of life(Kazi& Raza 1991). Women in Pakistan face extreme difficulty while entering into any occupation (Khan and Maan, 2008). Due to a male dominated and patriarchal culture there is division of labour in society (Tisdell, 2002) where women have been assigned duties inside the house while a man dominates the world outside the home (Jehan, 2000). In such a societal conditions, women are deprived of better education, and are

imparted those skills which are necessary for their role as mothers and wives only (Parveen, 2011). On the other hand, male members of the family are given better education and skills in order to prepare them for their future roles (Afza and Rashid, 2009). Within such an unfavourable gender social milieu, women have to naturally accept many socio-cultural challenges when they choose to work in a largely patriarchal and male dominated society (Augusto and Saadia, 2005; Chodorow, 1978). Women in Pakistan are mostly attached to some typical professions like teaching, banking and medicines while, their entry into law enforcement agencies like police force has not been encouraging (Khan, 2007). The topic of women police has been fairly marginal in police studies. Severe problems of modern law enforcement such as corruption, victim neglect, excessive force and sexual harassment are what have become the salient features of male-dominated nature of police work (Prenzler & Sinclair 2013). The situation is very much typical of developing countries, whereby considering women as second citizens is still the norm. A large body of research prescribes that policing as a whole could better be improved universally, provided that women policing is given fair representation from the population on equitable grounds (Natarjan, 2008). Most of the developing countries including India, Nepal and Pakistan are characterized by an acute representational deficit as per their populations in law enforcement sectors such as policing. The case of Pakistan is justifiably worst for having less than one percent of women police officers (Niazi, 2013).

Theoretical Grounding

Feminism can be defined in many ways. This study, however utilizes the conception of feminism being provided by Bierema and Cseh (2003). To these scholars, viewing the world from a feminist lens means a full acknowledgment of the position and existence of women in the society as well as ensuring equality between the genders. The theory also advocates for equality which is all-inclusive, irrespective of racial, ethnic and sexual orientation. It further implies to spotlight the workplace issues in terms of the forms of oppression, discrimination, socio-political relationship and social justice (Brisolara, 2003). This paper also borrows concept of equity and access from (Valenziano, 2008) analysis of the workplace from a

Feminist HRD perspective which are similarly used here as were meant by the author in the stated study. Equity means equal treatment across all employees, while access is considered to be the ability to find and engage in positive work opportunities (Hite, 2004).

Methods and Procedures

This study aims to identify the socio-cultural constraints hampering women participation in police force of Pakistan. It is largely based on secondary analysis of problems faced by the women police in Pakistan. Qualitative approach has been adapted to come up with a detailed and complete portrait of the problem. For this very purpose, comprehensive methods of literature review have been employed with the help of relevant books, newspaper articles, journals and online materials. In addition, several authorities of the law enforcing agencies were also contacted to provide additional supplements to the literature already being reviewed.

Results and Discussions

As acknowledged worldwide now, an equitable gender approach is the call of the day to address issues of the contemporary World. The call has been responded well by a relatively recent emerged group of advocates of gender equality (Feminists) who view development both as a product as well as precursor of balanced gender representation and participation in every walk of life. Gender issue and its related problems have now largely been addressed in the developed World, insurmountable challenges, however, still exist to be overcome by the developing nations including Pakistan which ranks even higher in Gender Disparity Index (The News, 2014). The severity of such challenges is often characterized by its socio-cultural and historical backgrounds. Like other sectors of society, whereby women's discrimination is blatant, armed and security forces like police has historically side-lined women folk on stereotypical grounds. The main premise of this study is based on the analysis of women's participation in police force since the country's inception as well as an enquiry into the actual problems faced by recruited women staff in police force.

Women policing in Pakistan-A historical view

The history of women police can be traced back to the British regime in the subcontinent in which recruitment of women police was infrequent (Baba Khel, 2015). In 1939 women police were inducted for a short period of time for curtailing female agitators that were part of the farmer's movement in Punjab (Shah, 2014). The strength of women police did not increase considerably until 1952 when 25 Constables, two Head Constables and an Assistant Sub Inspectors were recruited. The situation remained the same until 1994 when former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (late) established the first ever women police station in Rawalpindi (Prenzler & Sinclair 2013). The Rawalpindi Range's then DIG Dr Muhammad Shoaib Suddle told that the founding of women-only police stations was in response to the public demand and complaints against the male officer for arresting or investigating the women suspects (Taj, 2004). Aligned with the public aspirations, it was therefore emphasized that all cases involving women had to be dealt with by the Women's Police Station. Female staff in the same Women's Police Station included an Inspector, two Sub-Inspectors, one ASI, two head constables and 13 constables (HRCPC/CHRI, 2010). Benazir Bhutto, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan took the same initiative in Abbotabad, Peshawar, Lahore, Multan, Karachi and Larkana (The News, 1994). However, she could not materialize her plan of setting up the women –only police stations in every city of Pakistan due to her government dismissal in November 1996 (Awan, 2004). As far as the performance of these women police stations is concerned, the one in Peshawar had not registered a single case until 2004, whereas that in Abbotabad had registered 400 cases by that time (The News, 2013). Due to some reasons, however, all-women police stations including Abbottabad, were stopped from registering cases in 2002. Although, gender parity seems to have traditionally been an integral feature of Pakistan's policing, the situation appears to be slowly changing (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013).

Role of women policing in Pakistan-A functional view

The role and importance of women in police cannot be denied in any country due to the increasing rates of female criminality, juvenile

delinquency and rise in domestic violence (Seal, Muhammad and Fulkerson, 2013). Research studies confirm that women police have proved to be more efficient and effective than their male counterparts in dealing with family disputes and showed more concern, care, tolerance, and understanding in these situations (Bell, 1982; Homant and Kennedy, 1985). This is largely true due to the social and cultural sensitivities that are neither expected nor appreciated to be addressed by men. Keeping in view the importance of women police, Model Women Police Stations have been established due to the problems faced by women in filling First Information Reports (FIRs) and due to lack of facilitation from patriarchal police structure (Jalil, 2011). In addition, women police were required for arresting women suspects, house searching and physical handling of women suspects because the normative structure did not allow male police officer to conduct body search of women suspects (Horne, 1980; Niazi, 2013; Natarajan, 2008). Furthermore, police women were also required for improving the operational capacity and effectiveness of forces by building trust with the local communities, de-escalating violence and collecting very important intelligence than man could do (Lonsway et al., 2003).

Although women police stations are operational mostly in urban areas, but there are a number of socio cultural challenges due to which women are either unable or unwilling to join police force in Pakistan. In addition, women who join police force face various challenges while performing their duties. Some of the challenges and problems being spotlighted are as under;

Normative pressures

In many societies, policing is considered as a “masculine role” and even today the percentage of women joining police is very less as compared to other profession (Abbasi, 2013). General perception of a police role signifies masculine attributes (Fasihuddin and Sajid, 2013) like authority, domination, physical vigour, ruthlessness and roughness that are fairly opposing to the generally perceived feminine attributes of dependence, subjugation, delicate physique, softness and accommodative spirit (Cooper, 2008; Shah, 2014). In the pre-industrialized era, work of

every sort had naturally to be manual and consequently difficult. Patrolling, raids and arrests required enough strength, skills, courage and vitality. It was therefore more viable that certain biological features as are integral to women folk plus their social interpretations prevented women to get into such hard professions. Conversely, modern era, especially in the developed countries is more characterized by a factor of convenience, in almost every sphere of social life. Technological interventions have almost perished or redefined the concepts of 'men' or 'women' jobs. In addition the police use to deal with convicts or criminals, generally thought to be undesirable and interaction with such anti-social elements is in opposition with the norms and values of society (Ghosh, 1981). According to Seal, Muhammad and Fulkerson, (2013) despite the financial benefits, and opportunities of professional development, police service in Pakistan is still less desirable for women due to the prevalent cultural patterns and the social stigma attached with this profession. Similarly HRCP Country Reports (2012) concludes that due to limitations on women movement and social pressure related to women joining law enforcing agencies, utilization of women's police centres was limited.

Administrative compulsions

Owing to the small number of women police stations, complainants often face difficulty in accessing them in order to lodge their pleas (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013). On the other side women police officer also face logistic problems while reaching the crime scene at distance and to get the autopsy through a government hospital (Adil, 2013). Physical infrastructure of the existing women police stations is also women unfriendly i.e. lacking proper accommodation/hostels and pick and drop facility. Except for Islamabad, women police are deprived of day-care and transportation facilities in other police stations (Kotwal, 2012). In addition, the ten litre fuel provided for patrolling of eight hours shift is also not sufficient (Daily Dawn, 2012). According to Jalil (2011), women police stations have become examples of female disempowerment. In KP, for example, senior male officers impose strict restrictions on policewomen's mobility out of the station. A research study by HRCP (2012) concludes

that women police stations lack necessary equipment which are necessary for discharging their duties.

Recruitment & training

Women are under-recruited by Pakistan's police and underrepresented in decision-making roles. Statistics released by the National Police Bureau of Pakistan in 2011 reveals a total of 453,901 members of police personals, in which a dissatisfactory number i.e. 4,027 were women. This represents only a 0.89 percent of the total women police strength of Pakistan. Most of them served in lower ranks, from constable to inspector level. Only 85 of these policewomen served in higher ranks, and majority were from one province—Punjab (Peters, 2014). Similarly, according to the Daily Nation (2014) DIG Muhammad Ali Baba Khel in one of his presentation mentioned that that in Pakistan there are only 12 women police stations as compared to 442 women police stations in India, in which 196 police stations are in Tamil Nadu. He further adds that the ladies police recruited in 1990 so far could not get the training and there is lack of coordination between recruitment and training centre. He held that there was no physical instructor in 23 women institutions and only 11 law instructors are available in the country. The women police officer also lagged behind in building their capacities due to the prejudice of their male colleagues. Ms Rozia Altaf, a 16-year's veteran of the force is an excellent example who waited for six year before her application for police training was even accepted (Gosh, 2013). According to Awan (2004), lack of training has badly affected the performance of women police officers and they even could not register First Information Reports (FIRs) which is their primary responsibility. In addition, due to lack of training in investigative skills, the women police officers are not involved in investigation cases related to violence against women (Sajid, Khan, and Farid 2010). Furthermore, lack of opportunities for specialised training, out of town training locations, long duration of capacity building sessions, especially with the family responsibilities are limiting factors in career development of women police (Sethi, 2012).

Male perception of women police in Pakistan

Owing to the concerted efforts by the civil society there is growing awareness about women rights. However, the attitude and behaviour of society and particularly of men towards the changing role of women is still conservative (Shah, 2013). A social mind-set still exists in the society that a lady who comes out of her house for work is an open invitation for all. While in police department the male officers consider women police officers as weak, incapable, having low capacity of law enforcement (Young, 1991). Similarly, Mahajan (1982) in his study of women police concludes that police women play an unimportant role in policing. They get salaries and other benefit but do not perform a major role in policing due to socio-political factors. In addition, Brown and Campbell (1991) in their study on the Hampshire Constabulary in England conclude that most women officers were not involved in investigation, prisoner handling, patrolling and did not have air support. Similarly Individualland survey result reveals that 51 percent of Islamabad police officers and staff held that women police officers are not involved in investigation, patrolling, and raids (Ahmed, 2012).

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can be found in workplace both in government as well as in private sector. As far as sexual harassment in law enforcing agencies is concerned, Sutton (1995) study on women police, reveals that 85% of policewomen from the New South Wales reported that sexist mind-sets and behaviours were very much prevalent within the service in spite of significant organizational reforms in place. Male police officers consider women police as third grade citizens and view them from a sexual eye (Arain 2014; Heidensohn, 1992). In the context of Pakistan, the threat of sexual harassment in police department discourages women from joining police force. A research study on women police concludes that attempts of sexual harassment from male colleague in the form of signs, exposure of sexual organs, and sending of sexual messages and calls have been reported to be prevalent in the police department in Baluchistan (Fasihuddin and Sajid 2013). Furthermore, environment in the police stations is not conducive for women to be posted (Ahmed, 2012).

However, once hired, women face discrimination, sexual harassment, or even threats, and they often lack the necessary role models or mentors to help them move up the ranks (Niazi, 2013). Results of the survey conducted in 2013 regarding sexual harassment in police force of Pakistan reveals that 17 percent of the respondents spoke about harassment, and only half of these registered complaints. Similarly, 29 percent of those complainants said that the concerned authorities redressed their grievances. Of the half who did not register complaints, 41 percent feared revenge, 41 % faced non cooperation by superiors and 18 % due to lack of mechanism for registering complaints (CHRI, 2015). Hence, it can be summarised that the threat of sexual harassment is a contributing factor in inhibiting women from joining police force.

Lack of cooperation from male colleagues

The role of women in policing is vague due to organizational differences and lack of cooperation from male colleagues (Shah, 2014). Women police officers encounter more work related problems as compared to male counterparts (Pattanaik, 1996). To Young (1991), women police confront persistent antagonism “in the job” by their male colleagues who strive to maintain control and dominance at the work place. Similarly, Otto (1989) holds that on account of the stereotypic conception of policing as “men job”, policewomen tend to receive a discriminatory treatment from their colleagues and the public as well. Thus due to non-cooperative behaviour of male police officers, the problems of women police officers have increased manifold making the police a less desirable job for women.

Conclusion

The role and importance of women policing cannot be denied in any country of the world. In Pakistan, women police stations were established for the facilitation of women in registering FIRs and for house searching, body search, physical handling of women suspect and dealing with the juvenile delinquents. In Pakistan, people in general acknowledge the role of women police still it is not a preferred profession for women. Due to the stigma attached with the police force, as well as the hard nature of duties, the women are unwilling to join police force. On the other hand, the women

police are also facing numerous socio-cultural and administrative hurdles in the police department. Those problems include, cultural hurdles like general perception of women policing, strict norms and values, sexual harassment while administrative hurdles include, lack of cooperation from male colleagues, recruitment & trainings, poor infrastructure, lack of facilities for women staff, lack of proper accommodation, access to crime scenes, lack of transport facility and lack of fuel for patrolling duties. The article concludes that women are part and parcel of criminal justice system especially for controlling crimes involving women and children. In addition, they can play the role of bridge in linking police with the community and gathering important information for investigation purposes. For integrating women police in the law enforcing agencies, they should be trained and promoted to higher ranks on their performances.

Recommendations

For the integration of women in police department there should be no discrimination in recruitment on gender basis. Attractive salaries and other benefits should be introduced for female police staff so that women recruitment may be encouraged. Besides, women staff should be provided equal opportunities for training, promotion and other fringe benefits. Separate training centres should also be established and women instructors be provided for training women police officers. In addition the classrooms should be equipped with modern equipment like multimedia, projector and other assistive technology.

Strict laws should be introduced and implemented for discouraging sexual harassment in police department. The police officials involved in sexual harassment should be given exemplary punishment.

Thana culture should be changed and facilities like separate offices with washroom be provided to women police officers of all ranks. Furthermore transport/pick and drop facility as well as vehicle and sufficient fuel should be provided to them for patrolling and easy access to the crime scene.

Friendly work environment should be introduced in the police stations so that more and more women may join the police department. Male police officers should cooperate with women police in discharging

their duties and be engaged in investigating family disputes and other cases involving women and children.

Print and electronic media shall play an effective role in changing the general attitude of public towards women policing as well as motivating the women to join police force.

The subject of gender mainstreaming should be made part of the curriculum of police training courses for sensitizing male police officers. Government should keep women police on the top of the agenda and fulfil their needs on priority basis.

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