

Women Policing in Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

Women role has changed considerably during the last few decades and Pakistani women are joining those professions where they could not enter in the past. Despite this trend, women face difficulties in the form of socio-cultural constraints to join law enforcing agencies. Women police face problems in the police department in the form of discouragement from co-workers, senior officials, un-conducive work environment inside police stations, lack of facilities, strict working hours, lack of career development opportunities, discrimination and sexual harassment. In addition, due to male dominancy and cultural values the women has to seek the permission of their male head of the house to join police. These problems hinder women to join police force due to which their representation is meagre as compared to other countries.

The study suggest that in order to attract women in to police profession, attractive packages and other incentives should be provided to newly recruited women police. In addition, rest room with attached bath, transport facility, equal opportunities in promotion and training should be provided. Furthermore official and staff involved in sexual harassment should be given exemplary punishment so that more and more women can join police department. Police women should be appointed/transferred to the nearby duty stations so that they may not face accessibility problems. Over all the women police department needs restructuring in order to make it public friendly.

Keywords: Women, Police, Culture, Facilities, Pakistan

Introduction

Women play significant role in the development of any country (Bradshaw, Castellino and Diop, 2013). A most visible trend of the 2nd half of the 20th century was an immense increase in females' participation in earning activities in both, developed and developing countries. Women participation in earning activities has attracted the attention of world as well as Pakistan (Faridi, Chaudhry & Anwar 2009). The Constitutions of Pakistan (Articles 25, 27 and 34), also guarantees the rights to equality and non-discrimination (National Assembly

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of Pakistan, 2012). Women in Pakistan are faced with dual challenges; on the one hand they are doing their jobs outside their homes while on the other they perform their domestic responsibilities (Shaheen, Shabir, Faridi, & Yasmin, 2015). Due to segregation on the basis of gender, women are left with a few options to join government or private jobs (Jurik, 1985). Due to socio-cultural values the women cannot join jobs on their will (Falken & Boland). The obstacles include socio-cultural, religious, ideological and institutional which are strongly embedded into the women lives due to socialisation process. As a result of segregation on the basis on gender women are barred from entering in to government sector (Dorius, and Firebaugh, 2010). In law enforcing agencies especially in police force women can play an effective role but their representation is meagre. Although 10 % quota has been reserved for women in police force, still women make up less than 1% of the total police force. The number of female police officers in the country is just over 4,000 or 0.94% of the total police force of over 425,000. The situation in Balochistan is not good with only 103 female officers out of a total strength of 32,937 — less than one third of a per cent. In Punjab and Sindh, the number of female officers is 1,798 of a total of 149,719 (1.2%) and 902 of a total of 147,782 (0.61%), respectively. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the number of serving female police officers is just 438 (Sheikh, 2015). Recently the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa appointed the first batch of women police officers in Bajaur Tribal District. The people of the area appreciated this positive move from the provincial government and hoped that this initiative will help in maintaining law and order in the local area. While some local people criticised this move and declared it as an immature step taken in hast (Mehsud, 2019).

Women police can be traced back to the pre-partition Colonial times – before Pakistan and India existed on the map of the world – when in 1939, a lady head constable and seven lady police constables were recruited to control the female farmers agitation in Punjab. After the independence of Pakistan, the first significant female police induction came in 1952 with an ASI, two lady head constables and twenty lady constables recruited into the police force (Gilmore, 2015). The most significant milestone in female police was in 1994 when the first women police station was established at Rawalpindi. This was followed by setting up similar police stations in Peshawar, Abbotabad, Lahore, Karachi, Multan and Larkana. There are now over 3700 lady police serving in the force and 18 women police stations are operational in the country (CHRI and HRCP, 2011). The establishment of women-only police stations resulted due the increasing number of complaints against the male police regarding arrests, investigation and handling of the female by the members of male police.

Subsequently, majority of the cases involving female population were to be dealt by the women police/ Women Police Stations (Ahmad, 2012).

Police department is a provincial subject under the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 and therefore, the concerned provincial ministries of interior manage the respective police departments (Abbas 2011). Yet the Police Act 1861 of the colonial era is still in vogue which governs the police under the rules and regulations from the same Act. In spite of various attempts to reform the police, it suffers from various inherent structural deficiencies due to lack of political commitment which hinders police reforms to increase representation of women within police (CHRI and HRCP, 2011). Researchers and academicians have analysed the causes of women under representation in different levels of occupations. Andre Gunder Frank (1966, 2010) introduced Dependency Theory which highlights dependency among various organs of society at macro (state) and meso (organization) and micro (individual) level. The basic purpose of the study is to delineate the discrimination faced by women on the basis of gender in the police department in Pakistan. The male counterparts put hurdles in the way of professional development which leads to dependency at organizational level (Pearce, 2010).

Methodology

The study is based on the analysis of available literature regarding problems faced by women police in Pakistan. In addition the study also aims to identify the socio-cultural factors which restrict women from joining police force. Books, research journals, news papers and other online sources were consulted in order to get deep insight in to the problems of women police inside the police station and outside as well.

Literature Review

Lack of facilities and promotions

Physical conditions matter a lot in any organization or workplace that is committed to integrating gender equality in their roles. In addition working hours, distance from home during training and other official engagements are also responsible factors due to which women seldom try to join police (CHRI, 2015). In Pakistan the infrastructure of police stations is out-dated, established in temporary buildings, lack fuel for patrolling, travel expenses, stationary and petty cash (Individual land, 2012). In addition lack of separate washroom facility for women police, unavailability of rest room for whole staff and lack of privacy in police stations further affect their performance (Pakistan Institute of Development

Economic, 2016). The women police stations lack basic amenities like accommodation and separate offices. The women police officers are not authorised to make decisions on their own pertaining to investigations and operations (Jamil and Mohyuddin, 2015).

Regarding slow promotions and lack of promotions to the women police, Gavin and Metcafe (2007) held that male officers are provided more opportunities for professional development as compared to women police. A research study conducted in United Kingdom regarding female police officers performed much better than their male counterparts but their promotion ration was less as compared to men police officers (Farid, Abbasis, Ali & Ashfaq, 2016).

In police department, there are very few opportunities for women police to get promoted to higher ranks. The men police officers do not allow women police to get higher position in operational ranks as only one women was promoted to 'Chief Inspector' in 1990s while in late 1999 only one women was promoted at the rank of superintendent (Mayhead, & Marshall, 2005). According to Sahgal (2007) women police officers cannot avail promotions chances as like men police officers due to slow procedure.

Male officers seldom accept women officers because of their superiority complex and consider police as male oriented profession (Gossett & Williams, 1998). In addition the male officers consider the women police as threat to their status in the department (Morash and Haar, 1995).

The women police face discrimination even in availing training and professional development opportunities (Gosset & Williams, 1998).. When trainings are organized they often takes place for long periods and training venues are located very far from their homes which discourages women from participating especially when child care facilities are not available (Peters and Saeed, 2016). Research studies confirm that due to prejudice of men police officers, the women police officers receive less training opportunities during their service. The male officers discourage them and sometimes use abusive language for them (Wexler & Logan, 1983).

Cultural values and male dominancy

Women face extreme socio-cultural pressures when they opt to join police force. Most institutions are male oriented and serve the purpose of the male only (Shigri, 2016).Police force is also considered a male dominated profession and women feel themselves uncomfortable and excluded in this profession (Guzman, Das, & Das, 2013). Research studies confirm the problems faced by women police in India as well especially problems related to adjustment with their male colleagues. In addition the male counterparts consider women police as incapable

for police job and discourage them by their un-welcoming attitudes (Pattanaik & Worley).

Pakistan is also a patriarchal and gender segregated society where cultural values and norms are strictly observed (Farid, Abbasi, Ali & Ashfaq, 2016). Women constitute around 49 percent of the total population of Pakistan (UNDP, 2018) and are considered custodian of cultural norms and values. According to Bano (2009) women are considered as symbol of honour for family. They are not allowed to interact with people outside their family and close relatives.

In subcontinent in general and Pakistan in particular, police and policing has remained predominantly a male-dominated profession. The unconventional nature of job and socio-cultural values makes it un-favourable profession for women. Though 5 % quota has been reserved for women but few women seldom opt to join police (Punjab Police, 2012). There is no gender balance within the department and the situation is not encouraging as the situation is getting worse due to distrust between police and citizens (Ali, & Shah, 2011).

Despite the fact that policing and police is considered a masculine field, a lot of research studies have been conducted regarding the problems faced by women in this field (Resetnikova, 2006). In Pakistan too, women face so many problems while joining law enforcing agencies. Women have to seek permission of their male head of the house. Due to male dominance and un-favourable working conditions the women has to think so many times before opting for police job (Tarar, & Pulla, 2014). Police department in Pakistan is male dominated, women in police have also ratio of participation. Joining of police force by a women is considered un-conventional and against the norms and values of society (Farid, Abbasi, Ali & Ashfaq, 2016). As a result there is male dominance in police department at police station and at the top of the management. On the other hand, the department working conditions are more protective of the male needs and interest (Individual land, 2012). Research studies reveals that women in policing are viewed with antagonism by the male staff, seniors of their own police department despite the fact that women have been part of police over one hundred years (Price, 1996). Police force is characterised by male dominance, use of force and authority are not accommodative towards women even if concerted efforts are launched to integrate them (Fairchild, 1987). According to Young (1991) men consider women as police officers as weak having no capability of law enforcement.

Discrimination and Thana Culture

Gender discrimination at workplace has attracted the attention of researchers and policy makers during the last few decades (Behal, 2018). Research

studies reveal that there are many fields of life where women can perform better than men if they are provided equal opportunities. Women are not treated equally in their family and society in general in spite of huge claims by governments as well as non-government sector organizations working for women empowerment (Munis, 2009). Dick and Nadin (2006) highlighted that gender based discrimination in occupational differences are common in United States of America and United Kingdom as well. Women are still not given equal status as of men and not accepted in police force

In South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular women are reluctant to join police force due to its bad image in the general public. Policy makers instead of changing the image of police excuse the lack of women in police by indicating their helplessness. In addition media has also contributed a lot in presenting the bad image to the public (CHRI, 2015). The women police are not involved in policy framing (Pagon, 1996). At the police station, women police officers cannot register a case without the permission of their male supervisors and have no authority to investigate cases (Abbas, 2011). Another salient feature of police force is the *Thana culture*— having its roots very deep in the police system. The said *Thana culture* exists in the system since the colonial era and has thrived because of the influential segments in the society like politicians, local khans and bureaucrats. The culture signifies misuse of power, torture, illegal detentions, rude and violent behaviour of the police, inefficiency and corruption; and the promotion and support of this culture ensures the vested interests of the powerful segments of the society (Azeem, 2014). It is the existing *thana culture* that makes the female population hesitant to join the force. In the prevalent police culture, the women – who are already vulnerable – can hardly report a case of mental or physical abuse at the hands of their husband or any other family member to the police. This culture needs a drastic change and overhaul (Khan, 2018).

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment at workplace is also one of the important factors which restrict women to the four walls of their houses and does not allow joining profession of their own choice (Ali & Shah, 2011). In Pakistan women are not willing to join due to the fear of harassment at police stations. During surveys in 2013, 17% of respondents revealed that they were harassed but about half of them could come forward to lodge a complaint. Even then, out of those who had lodged a complaint, just 29% professed that their complaint was processed. While the other half did not complain because: 41% were afraid of reprisal, 41% had no support of superiors, and 18% had no platform or mechanism to complain. The figures show a very bleak picture of the enactment of the Protection against

Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, just three years after implementation. For the first time, this Act defines sexual harassment, and accordingly, all employers— including police – are required to establish mechanism for internal inquiry to counter harassment allegations (Gilmore, 2015). Research study conducted by Sethna, Masood and Jahangir (2018) reveals that women officers in general and constables in particular are harassed by their male colleagues. Although there is anti harassment drives in most districts, and it has been tried to change mindsets, but it's a slow process. Similar situation was faced by 140 women traffic wardens in Lahore who faced harassment while in public duty. These traffic wardens are now performing their duties in offices (Bhatty, 2012).

Conclusion

The research paper concludes that women face extreme difficulties while joining police force. Police force is considered a job fit for men only and women are considered incapable due to their fragility and lack of support from their families. In addition the bad image of police department, lack of facilities in the police stations, tough duty schedule, lack of promotion and incentives and lack of acceptability by the seniors male officers in the police department. In addition the socio-cultural conditions, male dominancy, discrimination, Thana culture and sexual harassment at police stations are the contributing factors which discourage women to join police force. Furthermore discrimination in provision of training opportunities, refresher courses, career development opportunities and assignment of responsibilities also hinders women joining police force. The attitude of male officers is also biased towards women police and lack of cooperation makes policing a difficult job for women in Pakistani society. Overall the environment of police stations in Pakistan is un-friendly for the public and is not delivering the required services for ensuring peace in their respective areas. Due to this bad image of the police department the women seems less interested in joining police department which is clear from the ratio of women joining the police force.

Recommendations

The study recommends that police department needs to be overhauled in respect of provision of equal opportunities to all irrespective of their bio-physical being. Thana culture should be changed and women police officers should be given facilities like day care for the women police officers having children, rest rooms with toilet facility should be provided so that lactating mothers can feed their children in privacy. The pregnant women police officers should be allowed

to avail maternity leave as per rules/regulations. In addition flexible working hours and pick and drop facility should be provided to the women police officers.

Attractive packages and other incentives should be provided so that more and more women join police. In addition service structure like that of men police officers should be framed for women police so that they can go up the ladder to the senior level position.

Complaint centre should be established for reporting of sexual harassment cases and the culprits should be given exemplary punishment. The numbers of women police stations should be increased and the required number of staff should be hired on urgent basis. Women specific training centre should be set up under the supervision of female instructors where women can get their trainings in conducive environment.

Police department needs to be re-structured and should be made accountable to the public. The police department should promote gender balance culture so that the increasing rate of female criminality can be controlled. Women police should be engaged in investigation as well as operational activities in order to bring them in to the mainstream of police department.

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