

## **Examining the Issues and Challenges Faced by Women Police in Pakistan: A Qualitative Research Approach**

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### **Abstract**

The major aims of this study are to explore the reasons for low percentage of women representation, to explore the role of women police in responding to distressed women (victim of rape etc.) and lastly, to explore the challenges, issues and future endowers of women police in Punjab, Pakistan. The research was based on a secondary examination of literature and also interviewed was conducted to address the issues faced by female Pakistani police officers. According to the findings of this research administrative issues such as male officers' strict attitude, problems gaining access to crime scenes, inadequate infrastructure at police stations, issues with recruitment and training, and social and cultural factors such as sexual harassment, public perception of women in law enforcement, and male officers' authoritative attitude and lack of cooperation are the most significant factors reducing the effectiveness of currently employed women and also hinder the potential women employees. The paper draws the conclusion that women should have an integral role in the criminal justice system, particularly in the prevention of crimes committed against children and women's who are victim of rap. In addition, they have the potential to act as a bridge between the community and the police, so facilitating the collection of vital information for the objectives of an investigation. Training and promotion to higher levels should be based on a woman's performance in order to facilitate the integration of female police officers into law enforcement organizations for better curbing of the rape incidents of victims.

***Keywords:*** *Women Police, Discrimination, Socio-Cultural issues, Punjab Police, thana culture*

### **1.0. Introduction**

The women are vital organ of our society. They are playing a vital role in every field of life. More than half of the population of Pakistan consists of females. According to the population statistics the crimes associated with females should be, roughly, half of the figures. The females can be complainant, witness, victims and accused. In this way to deal with the females associated to these crimes, half of police force should consist of female police officers. Strength of Punjab Police= 200000 Total Female Police officials: 4268 Percentage of female police officials=2 %. One Female police official is for 12200 women. (Punjabpolice.gov.pk)

The majority of women in Pakistan work in traditional occupations such as teaching, banking, and medical; nevertheless, their admittance into law enforcement institutions such as the police force has not been encouraging (Ahmad, 2020a). In the field of police studies, the subject of female officers has traditionally had a very minor position. The nature of police work, which is mostly performed by males, has resulted in a number of significant problems in modern law enforcement, including bribery, neglect of victims, use of excessive force, and sexual harassment. These issues have become the most prominent characteristics of the profession (Nisar & Rasheed, 2020). This is a condition that is quite common in undeveloped nations, where there is still a prevalent attitude that views women as second- class citizens.

According to the findings of a significant body of research, police as a whole has the potential to be enhanced worldwide, provided that women in policing are supplied with equal representation from the population on equitable grounds (Rehman et al., 2019). The majority of developing nations, including India, Nepal, and Pakistan, are characterized by a significant representational deficit in law enforcement sectors such as police. This is due to the fact that these countries have larger populations than developed ones. The situation in Pakistan, where there are less than one percent of women working in law enforcement, is undoubtedly the worst (Humayun et al., 2018).

Despite considerable advances in protecting women's rights, including laws, many still lack access to justice. The challenges are exacerbated by a large gender disparity in law enforcement agencies and a lack of gender awareness among authorities. Most of these institutions, including the police and the court, are controlled by males, and the widespread patriarchal mentality within them inhibits women, particularly in rural regions, from relating their experiences. Certain initiatives taken by the police to encourage female complainants, such as establishing helpdesks

in each of the province's 36 districts and establishing anti- harassment and violence cells staffed by policewomen, have not proven to be sufficient, and women's representation in the force continues to be abysmally low. Therefore, a significant gap is available in literature and practice that women representation in police is an ignored area and need to explore the major issues related to such sensitive matter.

### **Research Objectives:**

- To explore the reasons for low percentage of women representation in Punjab police, Pakistan
- To explore the role of women police in responding to distressed women (victim of rape etc.)
- To explore the challenges, issues and future endowers of women police in Punjab, Pakistan

## **2.0. Literature Review**

### **Empirical Studies**

Women who work in occupations that are either mostly male or predominantly female tend to report poor levels of job satisfaction (Nalla et al., 2020). In other words, the practice of sexual segregation often contributes to feelings of discontent in the workplace. As a result, the process of recruiting women for positions traditionally held by males may be a long one since women often face opposition from their male coworkers and other relevant referents. Research conducted on the small but growing number of female police officers in Bahrain and South Korea (where women make up just 4% and 10% of the force, respectively) reveals how cultural norms influence women's participation in law enforcement (Lan et al., 2020; Marcos et al., 2020). According to Arshad (2020), segregation and integration of women can coexist. This raises the possibility that integration cannot take place in Bahrain in the same direct and unilinear manner as it reportedly does in Western countries, as a result of the cultural conflict between the local and the global. However, in South Korea, women's reported choices to join the police were heavily influenced by perceptions of law enforcement as thrilling and good pictures of the work (Trussell et al., 2009). This not only refers to the relevance of occupational prestige and good opinions of the police in general, but it also implies that Western ideas of police service as attractive may be a contributing factor. The message here is that the connection between the police and the community

may be an essential component in recruiting, regardless of the gender of the potential recruits.

Overall, these results provide credence to the idea that law enforcement personnel should have a higher degree of control over, and formalize, their contacts with women recruits and the general public. There is a correlation between the formalization of work regulations and increased equality for groups who are underrepresented or stigmatized (Ashraf et al., 2021). Since informality may imply a greater dependence on cultural understandings, frequently enforced official laws and procedures might drive short-term change.

### **3.0. Methodology**

The population of this research consists only of women employed by the Punjab Police in Pakistan. According to the findings of the study, the researcher feels that female police have a greater knowledge of the issues that Pakistani women experience. SHO lead police officer, Sub inspector lead police officer, and lady investigation officers were interviewed over the course of the investigation. According to the literature, six to ten interviews are sufficient to get a thorough grasp of the subject. Therefore, the researcher conducted interviews with seven female police officers to better understand the study issues. During the course of the research, the researcher uses a technique called telephone interviewing in order to elucidate and get a better understanding of the research topics. In qualitative research, this strategy guarantees that participants are free to express their thoughts and helps them grasp the questions being asked. Additionally, it is effective in capturing any respondent from any geographical region (Gillham, 2000).

### **4.0. Data Analysis**

#### **Objective 1 : To identify the reasons for low percentage of women in Punjab Police**

Despite the fact that women's police stations are mainly functioning in metropolitan areas, Pakistani women face a variety of sociocultural obstacles that prevent them from joining the police force and even discourage those who are interested in becoming police officers. In addition, women who join the police force confront a variety of obstacles in carrying out their job responsibilities. The following is a list of some of the issues and problems that have been brought to the attention of the respondents:

One of the respondents was asked about their thoughts on the sociological and cultural hurdles that used to prevent women and girls from entering the police force, particularly

in rural regions, but such barriers no longer exist.

*“When I joined the police department a few years ago, the only profession that encouraged women to join was teaching. But attitudes are beginning to shift today. I was the first female from my hometown to join the police force, but since then, a great number of other young women have followed in my footsteps” (R2)*

Another respondent shares the view that a lack of resources is to blame for the limited number of women's police stations, despite the fact that the government is working towards expanding these stations on the tehsil and district levels.

*“The SHO, is of the opinion that "women fear to contact police since at a conventional police station the reporting officer is a male." This is the belief held by the SHO. She claims that many individuals did attempt to discourage her from joining the police force, but she was passionate about doing it” (R1)*

Some of the respondents brought up the issue of gender inequality and imbalance as a crucial factor for females, stating that it compels them to limit the services they provide and makes them feel unsafe in societies that are dominated by men.

*"Women are reluctant to contact the police because there are not enough female officers; nonetheless, she feels that the answer is not to depute women everywhere but rather to promote gender awareness within the male force." (R3)*

*"The women police station model has not been effective because, as she says, this segregation isn't realistic, since women of a whole city can't be compelled to attend to one police station." (R4)*

## **Objective 2: Women police responding to Rap Victims**

A significant number of rape and domestic abuse victims in Pakistan choose not to disclose the incidents to authorities since the police force is mostly male. Some female cops are now taking steps to encourage more women to come out with their experiences. A few of the respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the most significant challenges that are experienced by women who have been the victims of rape. The following replies may be given in reference to this point:

*"Violence against women is widespread in Pakistan, with many incidences of rape over the last year hitting national headlines and sparking an outrage in the Muslim-majority South*

*Asian country of Pakistan." However, campaigners claim that the incidents that have been documented are merely the tip of the iceberg since the majority of instances of gender-based violence in the nation go unreported. In many cases, women do not come forward to report abuse to the appropriate authorities'' (R4)*

*"An element of fear may be playing a role in what's going on here." Women in Pakistan are hesitant to communicate with members of the police force and the court since these institutions are mostly controlled by males. During the course of the inquiry, there have been instances of people being harassed within police station'' (R6)*

### **Objective 3: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward**

Some of the respondents share their views regarding major challenges, issues and way forward:

*"Pakistan needs a police force that is able to protect the population and respect the rights of women," yet even the police have been accused of committing rape. "Pakistan needs a police force that is able to protect the population and respect the rights of women," (R3)*

*“Another problem caused by the system is that aggravated sexual assaults and rapes are more prevalent in rural regions, where there are fewer police stations than in cities and, as a result, victims have less protection” (R6)*

*“Another problem caused by the system is that aggravated sexual assaults and rapes are more prevalent in rural regions, where there are fewer police stations than in cities and, as a result, victims have less protection” (R6)*

*“Attitudes that are more racist and patriarchal are also more prevalent in rural communities, and women are not viewed as equals in these settings” (R2)*

### **Conclusion**

It is impossible to argue against the significance of the role played by women in police in any country around the world. In Pakistan, woman police stations were constructed in order to make it easier for women to file First Information Reports (FIRs), as well as for the searching of houses and individuals, the physical treatment of female suspects, and the dealing with of juvenile offenders. Although most people in Pakistan recognize the important role that women play in the police force, most women do not choose a career in law enforcement. Women are reluctant to join

the police force, mostly because of the negative connotations associated with the profession and the strenuous nature of the job. Being a woman, women police officers can also help to deal with women who were raped and small children who were afraid. Female Raped victims seemed to be able to talk to a female officer more comfortably than talking to a male officer. On the other hand, the women who serve in the police force are confronted with a variety of socio-cultural as well as administrative challenges inside the department. These issues include cultural barriers such as the general perception of women in policing, strict norms and values, and sexual harassment, as well as administrative barriers such as a lack of cooperation from male coworkers, recruitment and trainings, poor infrastructure, a lack of facilities for women staff, a lack of proper accommodation, access to crime scenes, a lack of transport facility, and a lack of fuel for patrolling duties.

The paper draws the conclusion that women should have an integral role in the criminal justice system, particularly in the prevention of crimes committed against children and women's who are victim of rap. In addition, they have the potential to act as a bridge between the community and the police, so facilitating the collection of vital information for the objectives of an investigation. Training and promotion to higher levels should be based on a woman's performance in order to facilitate the integration of female police officers into law enforcement organizations for better curbing of the rape incidents of victims.

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