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Role of Women in Pakistan Police

By Ms. Laraib Fatima Hassan

Student of MSc Criminology at the PMAS Arid Agriculture
University,
Rawalpindi



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"No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you"

-Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Founder of Pakistan, Aligarh, March 10, 1944.

Introduction:

The concept of “women in police”, in the region traces back to British rule in the sub-continent. There were several local uprisings during that time which involved women's participation as well, as a result, authorities had to recruit women constables to manage the female protestors.

Initially, women were least involved in forces or law enforcement agencies in Pakistan. Gradually we have observed that the idea of masculinity associated with these professions has transformed drastically, thereby including the role of women in law enforcement.

The most significant change came in the year 1994 when the government of Pakistan took several initiatives to establish separate women's police stations in the major cities of the country including Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Multan and Abbottabad. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto established the first ever women's police station in Rawalpindi so that all cases involving women should be dealt by the women's police station. The female staff included an inspector, two sub-inspectors, one ASI, two head constables and 13 constables.

As a female student in the field of criminology, I took the opportunity to visit female police stations and interview female police officers serving in various parts of Pakistan.



This article is based on the real-life experiences of these officers, the obstacles they faced before and after joining, their expectations, and their role in Pakistan law enforcement. The recommendations and suggestions are based on the discussions with these officers.

Current situation

According to the population census 2017, the number of men stands at ¹106,449,322 which is 51% of the total population whereas the number of women stands at 101,314,780 which is 48.76% and transgenders form 0.24% of the total population. Despite having such a large representation in the total population, women represent less than 2% of the total police force of Pakistan which itself is very alarming. 22 women police stations are working across the country which is not enough to meet the problems of females from the whole country. For example, it is very difficult for a woman from rural Punjab or Balochistan to access women's police stations which are far from their cities or villages. Secondly, it is nearly impossible for 22 police stations to cater problems of 48% population.

According to a report from 2017, several total number of female personnel in the Pakistan Police was 4265. Currently, 6899 females are working in police across the country.

¹ <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2017/08/population-census-2017-men-outnumber-women-pakistan/#:~:text=quantity%20than%20women,-,According%20to%20the%20press%20release%20of%20the%20Pakistan%20Bureau%20of,are%2010%2C418%20transgenders%20in%20Pakistan.>



Women have been working in law enforcement in Pakistan for several decades, but their numbers have traditionally been low. According to data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, as of 2018, women make up only about 3% of the total number of police officers in Pakistan. Despite this low representation, there has been a push in recent years to increase the number of women in law enforcement in Pakistan. This has been motivated by a desire for diversity and the belief that having more women in law enforcement can lead to better policing and stronger community relationships. However, despite some progress, women still face many challenges in the field of policing in Pakistan, including discrimination, harassment, and bias, both on the job and within their departments. Additionally, cultural and societal norms can also be a barrier for women to join and succeed in the police force.

Positive Aspect

Despite the low representation of women in police, women are serving in many designations of the Pakistan Police service, we witness Women constables, and also women serving in designations as reputable and senior as deputy inspector general (DIG).

Importance of Women's Representation in Pakistan Police:

As women are now equally participating in all walks of life, their participation in the law enforcement agencies must be also prioritized.



It is important to note that in the 2019 Women, Peace and Security Index, Pakistan ranked 164 out of 167 countries. This indicates an environment where crimes against women and women's safety are compromised.

In the year 2019 alone, 25,389 incidents against women were reported, while in 2020, 23,789 cases of abuse and other crimes, including rape, came to the fore. Similarly, in 2021, 14,189 cases were registered.

According to the statistics, over 3,987 women were murdered across the country from 2019 to 2021, while 10 thousand 517 cases of rape against women were registered.

During the same period, 643 cases of gang rape of women took place and 5,171 cases of torture against women were registered. Besides, 1025 women were killed in the name of “honour” while 103 cases of acid attacks took place.

The statistics are a clear representation of the increasing crime rate against women. This alarming situation calls for appropriate actions to curb this situation. While the state is actively working to address these problems by drafting bills, and legislation and penalizing crimes against women, the role of law enforcement agencies cannot be ignored. This is where the importance of women in the police force is required, keeping in view the social dynamics of Pakistan, women feel more comfortable while they are communicating with women. A female victim will feel more at ease while communicating her situation with all details to a female police officer. Women officers have been proven to be effective in handling cases related to domestic violence, child



abuse, sexual harassment and crimes against women, as they can relate to victims more effectively and provide a more empathetic approach.

Both research and experience have shown that empowering female police officers to take on these roles is one of the most effective ways to address GBV crimes. Having female officers at the frontline of GBV also remains the most effective way of providing humane support services to the victims and survivors of such crimes.

Additionally, when women are in decision-making positions and higher ranks, they can make sure to have a more gender-inclusive environment in their station, ensuring a safe and secure environment for women.

Moreover, as per the Criminal Procedure Code of Pakistan, only female police officers are allowed to search, arrest and handle female prisoners. Hence, to deal with female convicts and offenders, police stations must have female officers.

Furthermore, women play an important role in law enforcement, as they bring diversity, perspective, and skills to the field. They are often able to connect with and understand different segments of the community, which can lead to better relationships and cooperation between law enforcement and the public. They also bring unique perspectives and problem-solving skills to investigations and can help to ensure that all voices are heard and all angles are considered. Additionally, having a diverse workforce that includes women can help to promote a culture of inclusivity and respect within the law enforcement agency



Apart from the reasons stated above, women tend to be better at communicating and they also have powerful persuasion skills. In a country like Pakistan where almost half the population consist of women, it is important to have a female perspective and a female point of view when it comes to Police personnel.

Women's involvement in crimes

As mentioned above, to deal with crimes committed by women, it is recommended to have female police officers deal with them.

It is interesting to note that in a patriarchal country such as Pakistan, most of the criminal cases on females are not minor crimes, most of the cases are heinous such as murder, theft, robbery etc.² A study conducted in a women's prison in Sindh showed that findings showed that out of 100 respondents, 25 respondents were involved in the murder of a husband, 26 in drug trafficking, 23 in kidnapping, 18 in murder and 2 in child trafficking. Involvement of women in such crimes is increasing day by day so to eradicate and uproot these crimes we need more women in police.

Challenges for Women in Pakistan Police:

While discussing the limited representation of women in Pakistan, it is important to analyze the reason behind a very less ratio of women in the police. We conducted short interviews with women police officers in Pakistan police who are serving in different

² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271339663_Female_Criminals_of_Pakistan_Personal_and_Socio-demographic_Profiles



positions and identified some challenges commonly faced by women in Pakistan before and after joining the force.

Before Joining:

Social Constraints:

It is unfortunate that despite having immensely talented women in our country, very few of them are allowed to step out of their homes and serve in law enforcement agencies. As soon as a female shows interest in joining the police force, she has to face certain social constraints from her family and peers.

The constraints are born and bred because of the misconception that women are not fit for male-oriented professions such as police service. Moreover, when the overall perception of a police station is a room full of men, many families hesitate in allowing their female family members to join the Police force.

Public perception of Police in Pakistan:

The public perception of the police in Pakistan is often very disturbed. When we talk about police, the picture we draw in our mind is of a man who takes bribes, does extra-judicial murders and harasses the common man. Although, the reality is quite opposite. Indeed there are some negative cases of Pakistan police but there are also hard-working officers who work day and night to keep our society secure.

The public perception of police, especially the involvement of women in Pakistan police must be addressed and internalized. Awareness campaigns to enlighten society



regarding the positive side of police and the remarkable services of both male and female officers must be highlighted through mainstream channels for Pakistani society.

After joining

Discussed above are a few of the socio-cultural problems faced by women before being recruited into the police force. Following are some of the problems that are faced by already serving women police staff in Pakistan.

Workplace harassment

Most of the Police stations in Pakistan are not conducive for females to be posted. During a survey in 2013, 17% of female police personnel talk about harassment whereas only half of them filed complaints against this harassment.³ 29 per cent of those complainants said that the concerned authorities redressed their grievances. Of the half who did not register complaints, 41 per cent feared revenge, 41 % faced non-cooperation by superiors and 18 % due to a lack of a mechanism for registering complaints (CHRI, 2015).

Discrimination

While writing this report we have talked to several women police personnel who are in their mid-careers. Most of them have reported that they face discrimination in several ways such as male colleagues don't take their opinion as seriously as the opinion of their male fellows. Sometimes the general public doesn't discuss their case rather they

³ <http://www.pjcriminology.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/6-8.pdf>



prefer male officers. Women in the police also face discrimination in promotion. ⁴One of the women police reported that she joined the police force in 1981 as a constable, and after 30 years she was promoted to head constable while her men colleagues of that time were Sub-Inspectors and ASI.

Infrastructural needs

Women police also face problems related to the infrastructure of police stations. Most of the police stations don't have separate washrooms for women police staff. Police stations don't have any common room or staff room where a female can rest during long duty hours.

Health and maternity leave

Women in Pakistan police reported that Pakistan police grant 90 days leave as maternity leave which is fine but the issue here is that during maternity leave pick and drop allowance which is Rs. 10,000 is deducted from the pay which negatively affects the monthly expenditures of the family.

Steps Taken to Ensure Women's Participation in Police Force:

Gender Crime Cell

Gender Crime Cell was established in 2006 at National Police Bureau to address the lack of data on gender crimes in Pakistan. GCC functions as a central repository of relevant data on cases of violence against women to assist policymakers in developing

⁴ Needs and Challenges for Women Police: Study of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Arsalan Haider



holistic and effective policies to prevent and punish violence against women. GCC has also been working on Gender Mainstreaming in the police.⁵

Gender Responsive Policing, therefore, strives to ensure that the principles of gender parity are reflected within all police procedures, protocols, rules and regulations, and reinforced through gender-sensitive training for police personnel, including both policemen and women.

ANTI-RAPE (INVESTIGATION AND TRIAL) ORDINANCE, 2020

This law was enacted on December 18, 2020. This law was introduced through temporary legislation i.e., ordinance instead of permanent legislation. The Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Ordinance is an administrative and procedural law. It provides the administrative structure of the Anti-Rape Crisis Cell (APCC) that can be established by the Prime Minister at any place in the country. APCC will be headed by the deputy commissioner or commissioner of the district or division.⁶ The APCC shall comprise Commissioner/DC, District Police Officer (DPO), a Medical Superintendent and an Independent Support Advisor (ISA). The reason to mention this initiative here is that according to this law, one member of APCC must be a female. For the investigation of rape cases, female police officers of the rank of ASP/DSP and above must be entrusted with the investigations.

⁵ <http://www.npb.gov.pk/index.php/gcc-introduction/>

⁶ LAW, GENDER AND POLICING: CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 2020 AND ANTI-RAPE (INVESTIGATION AND TRIAL) ORDINANCE, 2020 By Kamran Adil



The implementation of the law largely depends upon the police, which plays a central role in service delivery on the ground. The police, however, are suffering from gender imbalance to supply an adequate number of female police investigators.

Recommendations and Way Forward:

Keeping in view the current situation in Pakistan and the contemporary trends of including women in Pakistan Police, the following are some recommendations that may improve the overall situation of women in Pakistan police and their representation.

These recommendations are based on analyzing the above-mentioned challenges and having discussions with women serving in the Pakistan police.

Recruitment and hiring: Develop targeted recruitment efforts to attract more women to apply for positions in law enforcement. This can include outreach to women's organizations, schools and universities, and other community groups.

Training and development: Provide training and development opportunities that focus on addressing gender bias and discrimination, as well as providing career advancement opportunities for women.

Flexible working arrangements: Implement flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work, job sharing, and telecommuting, to help accommodate the needs of women with family responsibilities.

Supportive culture: Create a supportive culture within the department that values diversity and promotes the inclusion of women. This can include mentoring programs and employee resource groups for women.



Review and monitoring: Regularly review and monitor the representation of women in the department and track progress towards increasing the number of women in leadership positions.

Address discrimination and harassment: Establish policies and procedures to address discrimination and harassment, including training for all employees on how to identify and prevent it, and ensure that complaints are taken seriously and handled appropriately.

Support women in operational roles: Provide women officers with training, resources and support to be successful in operational roles, and provide them with the same opportunities as men to be promoted to leadership roles.

Address societal norms: Address societal norms that discourage women from joining the police force, through education and awareness campaigns.

It's important to remember that increasing the representation of women in the police force is a gradual process and requires a consistent and sustained effort over time.

After interviewing and meeting police officers in multiple cities of Pakistan, it can be concluded that women in Pakistan are more than capable of taking over tough and challenging jobs like serving in the Pakistan police. Several examples are witnessed where women have dealt with difficult situations while serving in the police force of Pakistan. For a better, inclusive and secure society for women, it is important to ensure and normalize women's participation in Pakistan police.



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