

## Experiences of Women Police at Work Place in Pakistan

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### Abstract

Gender roles in contemporary Pakistan have witnessed transformation in the last few decades. This has increased women's participation in the work force and allowed them to work in institutions where they could not work in the past due to socio-cultural constraints. Yet, despite this women tend to encounter adjustment problems at different levels. Police department is one of such organizations, where women encounter numerous challenges. This research aims to examine the experiences of women police to be able to understand the issues they encounter at work. The study was carried out in three cities including Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Peshawar using quantitative research design. A total of 280 respondents on the basis of proportionate sampling technique were selected by using researcher administered questionnaire. The results highlight that women police did not get opportunities to participate in in-service trainings and they had limited promotion opportunities at work. The study recommends that the issue of the discrimination encountered by women working in police department can be reduced by providing them access to promotional opportunities and in-service training. This will encourage more women to participate in this profession.

**Keywords:** Experiences, Women, Police, Work, Place, Pakistan

### Introduction

Pakistan is a patriarchal and gender segregated society with established set of norms and values. Women constitute 48.4% of the population (Government of Pakistan, 2011) in the country and are considered as custodian of cultural norms and values. Pakistani culture places restrictions on the mobility of women, and associates honor and respect with their movement and safety. Often women are not allowed to interact with people they are not related to (Bano, 2009; Syed & Ali, 2005).

Gender discrimination at workplace is an issue that has been highlighted through academic research across the world. Research has demonstrated that there are many fields of life in which women perform much better than men but they do not get proper rewards for their

contribution. Women are suppressed in family, community and society and are not given their right position in spite of claims for gender equality and equity (Munis, 2009).

In Pakistan women have historically remained within the private sphere and their participation in the public spaces has remained limited (Weiss, Hussain, & Sathar, 2001). However, in recent years due to technological advancements the economic opportunities for women have been increased and they can be seen working in diverse range of occupations including those institutions which are male dominating and were forbidden for women in the past (Shabir, Aqduş & Iqbal, 2009). One of these institutions is the police department.

Working in the police department is challenging for women since it involves frequent mobility and public dealing. This is against the traditionally expected socio-cultural roles from women in the Pakistani society. Despite such constraints, the participation of women working in the police department has increased recently in the country. In police department, gender integration and prospect for women to contribute in forming policy has been the result of their own courage and struggle (Schulz, 1995).

Although a very small portion of women choose to work in the police department yet men consider them as a threat for them. These women encounter numerous problems while working in such male dominated spaces. They are neither supported by their male colleagues nor by the public (Pearce, 2010).

Keeping in consideration the reality that women in police department generally face negative attitudes of the male colleagues and also by their families as well as communities, this study aims to explore the discrimination faced by women working in police department. It further analyzes the impact of this discrimination on the women's work performance.

## **Literature Review**

Since the profession of Police is predominantly male dominated women have been reported to have feelings of exclusion in this profession. Consequently they encounter constraints in adjustment and performance at work. Studies in India have explored the problems faced by police women

specifically focusing on job adjustment and work performance. In a survey conducted among lady police adjustments in India, the behavior and facilitation of women police with their male colleagues were explored (Jisu & Worley, 2011). According to the data the officers of Orissa were reported to be more inclined towards their job than their counterparts in Delhi particularly because of greater urban population and larger families in Delhi. The study reported that despite this commitment on part of women police they are still considered ineligible for police job due to the male dominant nature of the society.

Likewise, Skerlj and Virjent (2009) reported in their study that female discrimination was practiced in police in Slovenia for many years. Women were considered misfit for the force as they were considered weak and powerless. The researchers have reported that this trend has changed recently and the Slovenian police force now employs women officers.

Similarly, Gavin and Metcalfe (2007) analyzed the slow promotion and encouragement for female police officers with respect to the mismanagement and less commitment to goals by female officers as compared to the male officers. Two surveys regarding promotion of male and female police officers controlling tenure and their organizational commitment were conducted in police department of two countries in the UK. According to the results, female police officers performed better than the male officers but the promotion ratio was higher for the males. The study recommended that the police department should review their workforce and management rules for the betterment of the department.

In the context of Estonia, Resetnikova (2006) has reported that although a large number of women have joined the police force in the country but this does not show the actual situation of gender inequalities. In order to suppress the mono sexual tradition of thought, the author deals with the information from a female perspective.

Morash, et al (2006) reviewed the literature which dealt with a variety of workplace problems, such as gender bias and lack of influence over work activities, as influences on police stress. Additionally community conditions, for example, high crime rates and size of the community, token status within the police organization, and lack of family and coworker support for work-related activities, these influence the stress conditions of the police officers.

Finally, Dick and Nadin (2001) explained that gender based discrimination and occupational discrimination is prevalent in the USA and

the UK. Women are still considered inferior to the men and are not accepted in male dominant occupations like management etc. Organizations have been trying to make efforts in making fair decisions and unbiased selections which could lead to decrease in female discrimination.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Dependency theory given by Andre Gunder Frank (1966, 2010) provides theoretical basis to this research. It is western economic model which explains the dependency among state in general while economic dependency in specific. This cycle of dependency exist at different levels including macro (state) meso (organization) and micro (Individual) level. This study describes discrimination faced by women on the basis of gender in the police department. The males working in police department exercise their power and create unseen pressure over female coworkers (Pearce, 2010). The male fellows make the glass pressure through creating hindrances in the way of professional development which is necessary for their promotion in the department. Ultimately it creates dependency of women in police over men. In this study we have applied this concept of dependency and attempted to construct a new model to explain the phenomenon of gender discrimination and dependency at organizational level (meso level).

### **Methodology**

Keeping in view the nature of the study and the research aim, quantitative methodology was used to collect the data and survey research method was conducted. Questionnaire was used as research instrument and 280 police women were selected by using proportional sampling technique. The research was conducted in three major cities of Pakistan including Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Peshawar where the number of women working in police department is comparatively high. The analysis of the data was carried out by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in which descriptive and inferential statistics were done.

### **Data Analysis**

This section deals with the results obtained from the survey and discussion of the data. It describes the analysis and interpretation of the data collected by using questionnaire. It consists of different questions regarding

socio-economic profile, promotion, opportunities for training and different tasks related to office work.

Table 1

*Information about the Respondent Rank*

Respondent rank at the time of joining in police department (Frequency) %	Respondents current rank in police department (Frequency) %
ASI (3) 1.1%	ASI (5) 1.8%
Constable (250) 89.3%	Constable (233) 83.2%
Computer operator (8) 2.9%	
Inspector (12) 4.3%	Sub Inspector (1) 4%
Head constable (2) 7%	Head constable (13) 4.6%
Traffic warden (4) 1.4%	Traffic warden (28) 10%

Source: Survey

Police department has many ranks and each has certain predefined qualification and experience. Sometimes one may not get the deserving rank because of certain reasons. The majority of the policewomen had joined the department as constable and very few had been promoted to higher ranks. Table 1 above shows the rank of respondent at the time of joining police department. The majority of the respondents (89%) were constables when they had joined police department, whereas 7% percent were head constables.

Similar results have been reported in previous literature. It has been argued that women police are deprived of higher ranks in police department. As the department is dominated by men, they do not allow female to hold a higher positions in the same department. The highest rank policewomen can achieve is constable. Even if their performance is better than the men they are not given their right to hold the deserving rank. It is generally believed that women are not capable enough to work effectively in operational positions against their counterparts as in 1990's only one woman was promoted at higher rank "Chief Inspector" while in late 1999 only one woman was promoted at the rank of superintendent (Mayhead, 2000).

Table 1 above also depicts the current rank of the policewomen. The majority of the respondents (83%) worked as constables. 10% were traffic wardens. 4.6% worked as head constables and 4% as sub inspectors. Only 2%

of respondents had the position of ASI at the time of the survey. Sahgal's (2007) study also concluded that due to low educational attainment most of the females are recruited as constables.

Table 2

*Information about Promotion in Service*

Promotion during their service (Frequency) %	Promotion schedule (Frequency) %	Opinion about promotion of male colleagues (Frequency) %	Opinion about the frequent promotion of males (Frequency) %
Yes (47) 16.7 %	Once (31) 11%	Yes (130) 46.4%	Better performance (124) 44.4%
No (233) 83.2%	Twice (12) 4.3%	No (150) 53.6%	Gender discrimination (68) 24.2%
	Thrice (4) 1.5%		Personal Contacts (88) 31.4%

*Source: Survey*

The findings of this study illustrate that once police women get in to the department they are rarely promoted to higher ranks. The respondents were asked about promotion during their service and their responses are shown in the table 2 above. It clearly shows that majority of the respondents (83.2%) had never been promoted during their career yet. Among those who were promoted 4.3% were promoted twice during their career 11% were promoted only once during their tenure.

Table 2 also shows that when police women were asked about the promotion of their male colleagues, the majority (46.4%) of them responded that of their male colleagues were frequently promoted during their jobs in police department. 53.6% believed that promotions were hard for their male colleagues too during their service.

Policewomen were asked to give their opinion about the reasons for the frequent promotion of their male colleagues. The majority (44.4%) were of the view that the policeman got the opportunity to get promoted to higher ranks because of their better performance.

However, 24.2% believed that men were promoted because of gender discrimination in police department. 31.2% reported that police men were more likely to get promotion because of personal contacts.

Sahgal's (2007) study established that promotion process in the police department is very slow as compared to other government sectors. Martin (1993) reported that the majority of men's willingness to accept women positively in law enforcement is due to their physical safety, lack of experience and inability to handle dangerous situations potentially.

While on one hand, the literature has suggested that male officers are concerned about females safety, on the other hand some researcher hold the view that male officers are uneager to accept women officers because of the male- oriented police subculture and feeling of superiority in performance than male officers (Gossett & Williams, 1998; Morash and Haar, 1995). It has been argued that if women do the same job which male officers have been doing for many years, male officers feel reduced in status and think that it takes away their social status and position in a society in result of which male officers are not promoted frequently (Gossett & Williams, 1998).

Table 3

*Information about in-service Trainings*

Reasons for not being nominated for in-service training (Frequency) %	Problems during training (Frequency) %	Nature of Problems during trainings (Frequency) %
Biased attitude of senior officers (38) 13.6%	Often (14) 5%	Taunting behavior of trainer 22.6%
Lack of qualification (53) 18.9%	Rare (49) 17.5%	Non cooperative behavior of trainer 10%
Lack of training opportunities (85) 30.4%	Never (217) 77.5%	Gender discrimination (61) 21.8%
Lack of personal interest (40) 14.3%		

No problem (64) 22.9%		
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*Source: survey*

In police department different kinds of training is given to the employees to make them practically fit for the institution. These trainings are very helpful for their service. Sometimes it is not easy for female police to join such trainings therefore they avoid taking part in it. At times they are not nominated for such trainings. The respondents of this study were asked about their experiences of in service training.

The data reveals that the majority of the respondents (56.1%) were not nominated for any in-service training while (43.9%) had been nominated and had participated in such trainings. When asked about the reasons for not being nominated majority of the respondents (30.4%) mentioned lack of availability of training opportunities. Some of them (18.9%) reported that their low qualification was the reason for not being nominated in these trainings. 14% respondents reported that they had no interest to join these trainings. While 13.6% reported that biased attitude of senior officers was a reason for not being nominated for in-service training.

Those who had attended trainings were asked if they had encountered problems during the training sessions. Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents (77.5%) reported to have encountered no problem at all. Very few numbers of respondents (5%) had often faced problems.

Table 3 also depicts the kinds of problems faced by female police during training with their male colleagues. 22.6% complained about the taunting behavior of their male colleagues while 10% complained of the non-cooperative behavior of the trainer. Gender discrimination during trainings was reported by 2.8% respondents.

Similar findings have been reported in previous studies. Researchers have suggested that female officers have received inadequate training before and after entering policing (Gosset & Williams, 1998). Moreover, it has been argued that male officers do not accept women officers and use unacceptable ways to show their disagreement. For instance some refuse to talk to women officers and others use offensive language and make derogatory remarks (Gosset & Williams, 1998; Wexler & Logan, 1983).



Table 4

*Experiences of Working as Police Women*

Categories	Strongly Agree (Frequency) %	Agree (Frequency) %	Neutral (Frequency) %	Disagree (Frequency) %	Strongly Disagree (Frequency) %
Unable to handle violent situation	(74) 26.4 %	(97) 34.6%	(46) 16.4%	(55) 19.6%	(8) 2.9%
Physically weak for policing tasks	(34) 12.1 %	(91) 32.5%	(65) 23.2%	(82) 29.3%	(8) 2.9%
Police department is fit for males	(75) 26.8 %	(71) 25.4%	(57) 20.4%	(71) 25.4%	(6) 2.1%
Feel more concerned with women related issues	(132) 47.1 %	(87) 31.1%	(22) 7.9%	(32) 11.4%	(7) 2.5%
Unable to take independent decisions	(74) 26.4 %	(61) 21.8%	(56) 20%	(72) 25.7%	(17) 6%

*Source: Survey*

Table 4 summarizes the response of the respondents when they were asked to share their experiences at work. Since the profession of police often involves violent encounters the respondents were asked about their ability to handle violent situations. The majority of the respondents (34.6 %) agreed that they were unable to handle violent situations and 26.4% strongly agreed that it was very difficult for them to handle violent situations.

It is believed that working in police department need courage and strength to handle diverse situations. Physical fitness is very important for everyone who works in police department. Men are physically stronger as compared to women. The responses of the respondents were taken regarding the physical fitness of women for the profession of police and their opinion is given in table 4 above. The majority of the respondents (32.5%) agreed that they were physically weak for policing tasks whereas (29.3%) disagreed with the statement.

It is not easy for females to work in a male dominated department. Their working environment as well as response from the people mould their thinking that police department is suitable for males only. Women feel that males are more comfortable doing their jobs as compared to them and that is why after joining the police department they think that police department is fit for males only. Young (1991) has found that men identify women police officers as weak individuals with no real aptitude of law enforcement. A number of studies have documented that police officers and community members both perceive women as too weak and polite to deal with dangerous situations successfully (Kerber, 1977).

Table4 above shows the response of the respondents when they were asked whether police department is fit for males only. The majority of the respondents (26.8%) strongly agreed that police department is fit for males only while (25.4%) agreed that males are more suitable to work in police department as compared to women. Some of the respondents (25.4%) however did not agree that only males are fit to join police department.

Since women are deprived of their basic rights in our society women working in police tend to have strong sympathy towards women's causes. Policewomen feel that they can better resolve the problems of women as compared to their male colleagues. They take great interest in cases pertaining to family life.

Table4 illustrates the response of policewomen when they were asked about their main concern while working in police department. The majority of the respondents (47.1%)strongly agreed with the statement that they felt more concerned with the women related issues whereas 31.1% agreed with the statement.

Due to the patriarchal nature of Pakistani society women are often not given authority to take decisions independently which discourages them greatly. Table 4indicates that the respondents were unable to take independent decisions at work. The majority of the respondents 26.8% strongly agreed with the statement while 21.8%agreed with the statement.

Table 5

*Opinion about Women Working in Police*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly agree
Females provide a helping hand in office work.	(111) 39.6%	(129) 43.2%	(22)7.9%	(26) 9.3%	(1) .4%
Hard to supervise	(77) 27.5%	(57) 20.4%	(61) 21.8%	(74) 26.4%	(11) 3.9%
Lack confidence	(11) 3.9%	(63) 22.5%	(94) 33.6%	(96) 34.3%	(16) 5.7%
Take more sick leave	(39) 13.9%	(98) 35.0%	(55) 19.4%	(76) 27.1%	(12) 4.3%

*Source: Survey*

Table 5 above illustrates the opinion of women police about their work in the police institutions. On a statement about women providing helping hand to coworkers the majority of the females (39.6%) strongly agreed that they provided helping hand in office work. The table further shows result about the supervision of female police. The majority of the female police (27.5%) strongly agreed that it was very hard for them to supervise while 20.4% agreed with the statement. When the respondents were asked if female lacked confidence at work 22.5% agreed, and 34.3% strongly disagreed with the statement. To the statement if women police took more sick leaves 35% agreed and 27.1% disagreed.

**Conclusion**

The paper highlighted the experiences of women police at work. The data illustrates that women police were deprived of making progress in their career. They were excluded from various opportunities such as in service trainings and one reason for this was lack of qualification and unavailability of such trainings for them. The attitude of males towards women police was reported to be biased according to the perceptions of women police. It was revealed that women police were not satisfied with their male colleagues and non-cooperative attitude of trainers. The study recommends that the issue of the discrimination encountered by women working in police department can be lessened by providing them promotional opportunities, boosting up their morale in police service, efficient involvement in in-service training to upgrade their knowledge and skills for effective handling of challenges faced

during their duty. The study also provides some future directions as it can be extended into other locales and the problems of women police can be further explored via qualitative research.

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