

Gender Responsive Policing and Women in Law Enforcement

Comments from the Guest Editor

When one thinks of the interaction of women and the policing profession, three main issues come to mind. What steps have law enforcement administrators taken to ensure that females are properly represented in front line, supervisory, and executive positions? How do criminal justice officials interact and deal with female victims of crime and women offenders? And in countries like Pakistan and others in the region, have gender responsive measures been implemented to address the sensitive issues involving domestic violence, sexual abuse and harassment, and the ideological and cultural constraints on contact and interaction with females?

When put into historical context, these issues have only been recently addressed on the global level. As Moran and Hanser; Schwindt; and McDermott will highlight, these issues started to receive some positive attention in the 1970s and 1980s in the USA, Germany, and Australia. Progress has been slow and one can only conclude that these endeavors are moving in the right direction. It would appear that efforts to incorporate “affirmative action” or the preferential hiring and promotion of females in criminal justice and policing positions have led to noticeable and constructive organizational changes. However, these efforts at creating a gender balanced work environment have received criticism from male colleagues and have resulted in predominantly unsuccessful challenges in the courts. One agency that has had visible success in incorporating females into front line, investigatory, and supervisory policing positions is the New York City Police Department. Tobin has outlined relevant issues that involve the carrying and use of firearms by women police officers in the NYPD, both on and off-duty. On the other hand, Lancaster-Ellis has noted slow progress in Caribbean nations; Icli has highlighted some advancement in Turkey; while Hanser and Moran have reported little improvement in achieving a gender balance in policing agencies in South Korea. Similar conclusions can be made in relation to Pakistan as relayed by Seale, Mohammad and Fulkerson; Fasihuddin and Sajid; Adil; Bandesha; Fasihuddin, Hussain, and Sajid; and Ali Shah. All of these studies and articles have revealed that women police officers in a number of Pakistani cities report a certain level of job satisfaction, but many also have raised reservation in recommending a police position to female friends and family members. More disturbingly is the overwhelming perception that work place sexual harassment is not only pervasive in Pakistan, but goes unaddressed and unpunished. Each of the articles includes propositions and recommendations for

addressing and improving these challenges faced by women police officers and female community members in Pakistan.

Of equal merit is that it is evident that domestic violence and criminality targeting females in Pakistan has not been properly documented and addressed. Both Masihudddin and Wajid have independently highlighted that the male dominated police profession apparently views these issues as private ones and not suitable for criminal justice intervention. Fasihuddin and Sajid have concluded that one main obstacle has been the lack of training provided to law enforcement personnel to comprehensively deal with these offenses and incidents. Due to this lack of appropriate attention by law enforcement organizations, Mahmood, Ahmad, and Bhutta have reported that many female victims and the neighborhood at large have engaged in vigilantism to seek revenge against predators that have targeted female community members. Clearly this situation has diminished the credibility of the police, yet criminal justice and government administrators have made little effort to improve this dereliction of duty.

Sethi, McDermott, and Lancaster-Ellis have separately highlighted the need for the international community, donor groups, and NGOs to continue to coordinate conferences and alliances to promote and to ensure progress as it relates to gender responsive policing and the advancement of women in the law enforcement and criminal justice arena.

Based on the enlightening information and perspectives provided by the contributors to this special edition, a number of findings and recommendations can be proposed:

- Although affirmative action and preferential hiring and promotion of women and minority groups in the criminal justice sector have received some scrutiny, these initiatives have proven to be successful in increasing the number of females in law enforcement and other public service agencies.
- All training and in-service education for criminal justice agencies should incorporate gender related issues into their curricula.
- Law enforcement and criminal justice organizations must ensure that agency policy and procedure appropriately address and outline the necessary steps needed for dealing with female victims of crime.
- Federal guidelines and legislation must be created to mandate that sexual harassment and all forms of workplace discrimination, including engaging in retaliation for those who file complaints, are unacceptable and will lead to severe penalties, including the loss of position.

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- Criminal justice and police organizations must make certain that all facilities have proper accommodations for both male and female employees and visitors.
 - The international community, federal authorities, donor groups, and NGOs must continue to coordinate meetings and initiatives to address and enhance the special needs of female employees and women community members, particularly in certain geographical regions, e.g. the Middle East, south-east Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, South America, south-east Europe, and the Far East, where progress has been slow or negligible.
 - In nations where ideological issues may deter the direct interaction of male police personnel and female crime victims, as in Pakistan and some surrounding countries, federal and regional criminal justice administrators should strongly consider creating female only police stations (or teams) to ensure equality and professionalism when interacting with all community members.

In conclusion, this special edition of the Pakistan Journal of Criminology will examine the critical issues that have affected female crime victims and the trials and tribulations that have been observed in advancing the role of women working in the law enforcement profession. An even closer analysis of these factors as they have been observed and experienced in Pakistan will be comprehensively delineated. It can not be emphasized enough how important it is that the voices of women in the community be heard, recognized, and properly addressed. And just as relevant, criminal justice agencies, including its front line actor, the police, must reflect the gender and diversity of the communities in which they serve.

About the Author and Journal Editor

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