

**Female Perceptions toward the Women Police Officer Profession in
Pakistan:
Case Studies of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

Fasihuddin (PSP), Basharat Hussain, and Imran Ahmad Sajid

Abstract

It is critical to better comprehend why qualified females in Pakistan are not drawn to the law enforcement profession. In order to further this understanding, a survey was distributed to university educated females, working women, and female NGO employees in two provinces in Pakistan, i.e. Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study findings revealed that a significant majority of the respondents were not joining the police service due to lack of respect in society; security issues; and family and marital disturbances. The survey research data and recommendations will be outlined in comprehensive detail.

Keywords: Women in Policing; Pakistan; Balochistan; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Introduction

Economic development has much to do with female participation in the labour market. Muhib Asad (2009) argued that economic growth is the key to the spread of all kind of social benefits to the populace. He further argued that there cannot be large scale economic uplift in an unsafe environment.¹ J.M (Johan) Ras (2010) also recognized the critical role of Pakistani women can play in liberating their country from violence, extremism, terrorism, crime, poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment.²

The fact is that much of the increase in female labour force participation has been brought by economic development in developed economies. There the participation increased from 4% at the beginning of the 20th century to almost 70% by 2000.³ The transition economies have also experienced an enhanced female participation in the labour market. This surely has brought a drastic shift in the socio-economic status of women in these countries. The case for Pakistan is different. Despite a high economic growth and structural transformation, Pakistan still has the lowest female labour force participation rate (22%) compared to not only the developed but South Asian economies as well⁴ (Table I).

Table I: Labor participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)

Country	% of female population ages 15+
USA	58%
Canada	62%

UK	56%
Korea	72%
Japan	50%
Thailand	64%
Indonesia	51%
Bangladesh	57%
Sri Lanka	35%
India	29%
Nepal	80%
Pakistan	22%

Source: World Development Indicators. (2011). Retrieved Dec 06, 2012 from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

In the case of Pakistan, a *New York Times* story of 2010 by Adam B. Ellick argued that necessity has pushed Pakistani women into the job market. The argument is that the *women are pressed into the work force not by nascent feminism but by inflation, which has spiked to 12.7 percent from 1.4 percent in the past seven years. As a result, one salary — the man's salary — can no longer feed a family.*⁵ Ellick came up with this argument on the basis of his interviews with young females working either in KFC or McDonalds, or other such occupations. Such occupations may attract some females to work, nonetheless, not all the jobs attracts women equally. The law enforcement profession is one of the occupations in Pakistan that has not witnessed much progress.

It is critical to discover why females, educated females in particular, are not joining the police service in Pakistan. An attempt will be made to find out the potential bottlenecks in the police organization that inhibit females from joining this profession and to identify what measures can be taken to persuade women to join law enforcement agencies in Pakistan.

The Need for Women in Law Enforcement in Pakistan

There is a considerable amount of crime against women in Pakistan. According to official figures, there were 2,176 cases of domestic violence, 1,890 reported cases of rape, 52 cases of acid throwing, and 571 cases of suicide in Pakistan. Between 2006 and 2008, there were more than 12,900 reported cases of violence against women throughout Pakistan.⁶ Many of the cases involving female victims go unreported. Even fewer cases are routinely reported in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. Domestic violence including murder; assault; battery; honour killing; burning through acid throwing or stoves; rape; gang rape; custodial rape; incest; physical harassment; sexual harassment; psychological harassment; kidnapping; and abduction are a few of the many heinous crimes which have reportedly been committed against women in Pakistan.

The situation looks more aggravated when one looks at some of the constraints involving female related violence in Pakistan. Wazir (2010) argued that violence against women is often sanctioned under the garb of cultural practices and norms, or through misinterpretation of religious tenets.⁷ Likewise, while describing constraints in violence against woman, Sajid, Khan, and Farid (2010) argued that the low number of female police officers; the lack of exposure and training provided to all police personnel related to female oriented crime and related issues; and the lack of training in investigative skills are the predominant reasons for the lack of involvement of women police officers in cases involving female crime victims.⁸

On the other hand, the presence of women police officers has been regularly observed in cases when women are criminal offenders.⁹ It is generally assumed that crime is largely a male activity (Smith and Wincup, 2009). Studies consistently show that males commit more crimes than females and their offenses tend to be more serious and violent in nature (Ibid). Until the 1970s, the 'maleness' of crime was largely taken for granted. Since then feminists have done much to make visible the experiences of women as offenders.¹⁰

In most of the cases involving women (either victim or offender) in Pakistan, male police officers have not been overly effective. The reason has been the cultural norm that strictly forbids males from having sensitive interaction with females. Under such conditions, e.g. crimes involving rape, the presence of a female police officer is undoubtedly critical.

Women in the police are especially needed in order to search and/or physically interact with women who may be suspected of crimes. The norms in Pakistan strongly prohibit male police officers from physically searching a female. A male police officer cannot even enter a house without the permission of the head of the household. If any of the police officers enters the house without permission, it is considered as an insult to honour (*Chadar and Chardiwari*). For female police officers, there is no such restriction in Pakistani society. Any women can enter into anyone's house. Socially there is no constraint on such entrance. This makes the need for the increased presence of women in policing more evident.

Women in the Police of Pakistan: An Overview of the Statistics

Ahmad (2012) related the extremely low complement of women in police services in Pakistan when related to the overall cadre of the police and the challenging nature of the job.¹¹ In her survey, Ahmad (2012) found that 89% of the respondents from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reported that the symbol of authority in the police is a male police officer, while in Balochistan 92% had responded the same. Similarly, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, 87% and 77%, respectively, responded that female police officers are more suitable

to help a woman in need of police intervention. Despite this attitude, only 22% of the respondents said they would allow their sisters/daughters to join the police force in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On the other hand, 72% in Balochistan responded that they would allow female members of their family, i.e. sisters and daughters, to join the police force. This could lead one to conclude that there is a higher presence of women in the police force of Balochistan, however, the real picture is different.

Although there have been attempts towards recruiting more women into the police department, being a woman police officer has not been found to be an attractive label for many of the educated females in Pakistan. When some of the official figures are examined, there are presently a total of 33,147 police personnel in Balochistan. Out of this complement, the number of females in the police service in Balochistan is only 103, which is less than even 1% of the total number of law enforcement officials in Balochistan.¹² The case is no different in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In 2010, the total police corps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was 50,105, of which the number of female police officers was only 281.¹³ The situation is also not promising in other provinces of Pakistan. In Sindh, the total number of police personnel was 98,544 during 2008-09, of which, the number of female police officers was 1,534.¹⁴ Out of the total women police representatives in Sindh, more than 68% are in Karachi, one of the largest cities in Pakistan and the world. And women are mainly assigned to the lower ranks of the police service at the constable and/or head constable levels.

The need for more woman in policing, the dearth of literature on the subject, and the extremely low strength of the woman in the Pakistani police merits further attention to find out why females are not attracted to the law enforcement profession in Pakistan.

Methodology

For the present study, a survey was used as the method of research. This survey research was conducted in the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan. The respondents were university educated females, working women, and female NGO employees. The questionnaires were distributed through emails and through the head of the respective institutions and organizations. A questionnaire was developed which asked the following primary questions (in Urdu):

1. If given the chance, will you join the police service?
 - a. If yes, state one reason?
 - b. If no, state one reason?
2. In your opinion, why are qualified females not joining the police?

The responses to the open ended questions were converted into keywords. After necessary coding and conversion of open responses into keywords, the data was

entered into a SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software application. The tables presented below were extracted through the use of SPSS.

Results and Discussion

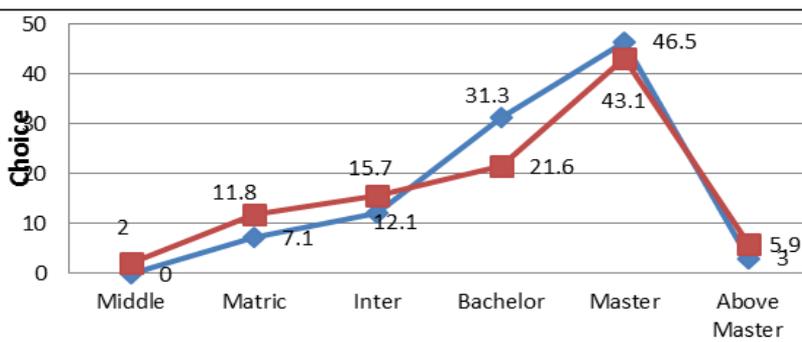
Table II: Would you join the police department if given the option?

Education	Balochistan					Khyber Pakhtunkhwa					TOTAL				
	Yes		No		Total	Yes		No		Total	Yes		No		Total
Middle	0	0%	0	0%	-	1	100%	0	0%	1	1	100%	0	0%	1
Matriculation	0	0%	1	100%	1	6	50%	6	50%	12	6	46%	7	54%	13
Inter	2	29%	5	71%	7	6	46%	7	54%	13	8	40%	12	60%	20
Bachelor	3	12%	22	88%	25	8	47%	9	53%	17	11	26%	31	74%	42
Masters	15	36%	27	64%	42	7	27%	19	73%	26	21	31%	47	69%	68
Above Masters	0	0%	0	0%	-	3	50%	3	50%	6	3	50%	3	50%	6
TOTAL	20	27%	55	73%	75	31	41%	44	59%	75	50	33%	100	67%	150

Table II is a trivariate analysis that shows the educational status and place of residence of the respondents along with their choice for joining (or not joining) the police. The majority of the respondents were highly educated, i.e. Masters degree or above (49%), while 28% respondents had the Bachelor degree. Only 23% of the respondents possessed educational level below the university degree.

Out of the total 150 respondents, 75 were

Figure I: Association between Police Choice as an Occupation and the Level of Education



selected from each province. Overall, the majority of the respondents (66%) reported that they would not join the police even if given the opportunity while

34% responded in the affirmative. There happens to be a slight variation in choices for joining the police when we examine the province level. In KP, 73% women responded negatively, while in Balochistan 59% did so, which is -14% lower than KP (See Table II).

Furthermore, the level of education does not seem to be associated with the decision to join the police. As highlighted in Figure I, there is no significant relationship between level of education and the choice of joining the police.

Table III: If yes, what will be the reason for joining the police force?

Reason for Joining the Police	Province		Total
	Balochistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	
To serve society	7 35.0%	10 33.3%	17 34.0%
To understand and properly solve the problems of females	4 20.0%	5 16.7%	9 18.0%
To bring positive change in society	7 35.0%	12 40.0%	19 38.0%
I am unemployed and non-government jobs are rare	2 10.0%	2 6.7%	4 8.0%
To gain authority (<i>Dandy ke zor par buraion ka khatma</i>)	0 .0%	1 3.3%	1 2.0%
Total	20 100.0%	30 100.0%	50 100.0%

Table II reveals that there were only 33% of the females who responded that they would join the police if given the option. The reasons mentioned for this choice were numerous, i.e. to serve society (34%); to understand and solve the problems of females (18%); to bring positive change in society (38%); government jobs are rare (8%); and to gain authority and power (2%). No significant provincial difference were noted (Table III).

Table IV: If no, why will you not join the police force?

Reason for Not Joining the Police	Province		Total
	Balochistan	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	
No respect in society	13 23.2%	10 22.7%	23 23.0%
No security and safety	3	4	7

	5.4%	9.1%	7.0%
Family life is disturbed	3	0	3
	5.4%	.0%	3.0%
No permission from family	10	8	18
	17.9%	18.2%	18.0%
Female are not compatible with this job	6	2	8
	10.7%	4.5%	8.0%
Duty schedule is not normal	4	0	4
	7.1%	.0%	4.0%
Male dominant society	1	0	1
	1.8%	.0%	1.0%
I am not interested in this profession	4	8	12
	7.1%	18.2%	12.0%
Lack of efficiency of police	12	7	19
	21.4%	15.9%	19.0%
Lack of awareness	0	1	1
	.0%	2.3%	1.0%
I am too old to be hired	0	2	2
	.0%	4.5%	2.0%
Due to cultural limits	0	2	2
	.0%	4.5%	2.0%
Total	56	44	100
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

There is a long list of reasons why educated females are not joining the police, however, there is no one major justification. One of the explanations which was shown to be slightly higher than the others was the lack of respect for the police department in Pakistani society. In other words, the image of the police is too corrupt and too dishonorable that the educated and qualified females are rarely attracted to join this occupation. Threats to life, disturbance in family and marital life, the incompatible nature of the job, male dominance in society, lack of interest, and cultural limitations were found to be a few of the many reasons stated by the female respondents who answered negatively to joining the police service as a profession (Table IV).

Table V: In your opinion, why are young educated females not joining the police?

Opinion about Not Joining the Police by Young Females	Frequency	Percent
No respect	23	15.3%
No security	9	6.0%
Chronic Violation of Rules and Regulations	15	10.0%
Potential for problems in marital life	2	1.3%
Day/Night duty with males	2	1.3%
Lack of efficiency of the police	1	0.7%
Family Life would be disturbed	9	6.0%
Duty schedules are not normal	10	6.7%
No permission from family	16	10.7%
No reasonable salary	4	2.7%
<i>Parda</i> Factor (can not work with male)	6	4.0%
Duty is hard (incompatible with female)	5	3.3%
No proper awareness of women police profession	2	1.3%
Male dominant society	7	4.7%
Negative image (bad reputation) of the police in society	9	6.0%
Female are not compatible with this kind of job	12	8.0%
Our culture does not support female police officers	10	6.7%
Police are not well cultured and are abusive	1	0.7%
Total	143	95.3%
No Response	7	4.7%
Total	150	100.0%

When respondents were asked why educated females, in general, are not joining the police profession in Pakistan, their responses were diverse in nature. Most of these responses have been reported in Table V. Again, lack of respect in the society has been presented as one of the reasons for educated females to abstain from joining the police force. Security, corruption, problems in marital life, day/night duties, mixing with males, lack of family permission, lack of reasonable salary, the '*parda*' factor, culture, and the harsh nature of the job are a few of the major reasons presented by the respondents. In short, it can be said that respect, security, mixing with male counterparts, irregular work schedule, and potential for disturbances in marital life are a few of the perceived factors

which are inhibiting females from joining the police force as a profession (See Table V).

Summary and Conclusion

The majority of the respondents (67%) reported that they will not join the police service in Pakistan even if given the opportunity. The attitude was the same for females in both Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The level of education was found to have had no significant effect on the choice for joining the police. The majority of the respondents (38%) wanted to join the police in order to bring a positive change to society. To gain power and authority and to respond effectively to the problems of females were also revealed to be the other major reasons for females joining the law enforcement profession. The deteriorated public image of the police (lack of respect in society) is a major reason why educated females would not select the police as a profession. Threats to life, disturbance in family and marital life, the incompatible nature of the job, male dominancy in society, lack of interest, and cultural limitations were the other reasons for educated females to not opt for joining the police service. Lack of respect, security, mixing with male counterparts, odd duty schedule, and potential disturbances to marital life were found to be a few of the perceived factors which are prohibiting females from joining the police profession.

Recommendations

In order to attract educated and qualified females to the police profession, the following recommendations based on the above findings should be strongly considered.

Ensure Workplace Security and Comfort: A sense of safety is not limited only to the physical police facility, but rather this personal security includes protection from sexual harassment at the workplace. Although the law prohibits sexual harassment in the work environment and social norms are also in strong opposition to it, the practice unfortunately is still too common. There is clearly a need for a stronger and enforced policy against sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace, whether it involves verbal harassment, text messages, or sexual remarks and gestures.

Ensure the Correct Use of Authority: Law Enforcement is an occupation strongly regulated by obedience to authority. This norm of obedience to the authority is sometimes abused in cases involving women. In another of the journal articles, Fasihuddin and Sajid found that in the Balochistan police, approximately 75% of women police officers noticed attempts of sexual harassment by their male co-workers.¹⁵ In addition, the agency methods for dealing with abuse of authority are rarely followed. It should be ensured by

every Provincial Police Officer (PPO) that strong actions are taken against any officer who abuses his authority, particularly in cases involving female police officers.

Sensitization through Duty to the Nation: There is a requirement to strongly highlight that qualified and educated females are needed by society to join the police service. This can be done through the media. The image of the police has to be improved. The poor image of the police in Pakistan has been manipulated even in the media, i.e. in TV dramas, stories, novels, and the movies. It is recommended that films and the media emphasize a more positive image of the police. This is one way in which the respect of the police can be enhanced in society, but also in which females can be made to look at the law enforcement profession as a promising and positive career.

Offer Reasonable Salary: This option could attract many educated females. Educated females in Pakistan usually expect higher incomes. They prefer jobs with higher salaries. Police salaries are still not so impressive, so females are not attracted to this career path. If a female has to compromise on her sense of security, her work schedule, her family life, and so many other factors, she needs to get enough compensation for all these concessions that she would be making.

Evaluate Work Schedules: Police work scheduling should take gender into consideration when allocating personnel resources, particularly during evening and night hours and when female officers responsible for the care of younger children are involved. A community oriented and gender responsive policy should be taken into consideration.

End Notes

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- ¹⁴ Office of the Director General, National Police Bureau, Islamabad, Pakistan
- ¹⁵ Fasihuddin and Imran Ahmad Sajid. (2012). Policing Behind the Veil: Problems of Ladies Police in Quetta, Balochistan. In *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*. Vol.4.No.3.Jan2012.

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