

The State of Women in Police in India and the Discrimination Faced By Them

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ABSTRACT

Women Police have now become an integral part of the police reforms in almost all countries of the world, including India. However, the current situation of women in policing is a development of specific historical circumstances. The situation of women police with regards to their status, function, role and the obstacles they face during their job.

The study seeks to look at the Gender Issue in the Police by understanding the role and perception of the police by the women employed as police, by the men who work along with these women police and by the public/society in general and hence understanding gender issues from the women's perspective, men's perspective and by the society's perspective by taking a sample of 25 female (Police Gazetted and Non Gazetted officers), 20 male officers and 20 public members.

The study also aims at understanding the women police from a sociological point of view by looking at their backgrounds, intent to join the police force and their perception of the current state of women in police. The method used is the questionnaire method followed by interview of the candidates.

The results show that there is a prevailing gender bias against the women with regards to their job, status, function and role and the bias exists in the perception of the female officers, male officers as well as the society. The study also make recommendations to overcome this gender difference.

Keywords: *Women, Police, India, Discrimination*

‘We visualize that in the years to come, women police would form an integral part of the police force especially in the cities, town and other thickly populated areas’ (Fifty Report of the National Police Commission, Government of India)

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Women Police have now become an integral part of the police reforms in almost all countries of the world. However, the possibility of women functioning as full members of a police force and playing a role for achieving its objectives was not well perceived in the early years of evolution of the police system. This was perhaps because traditionally law enforcement has tended to remain mostly a masculine job involving substantial use of physical prowess.

The need for women police was first recognized in the United States, during the first half of the nineteenth century, when 'Police Matrons' were appointed in New York City in 1845, for handling of women and girls held in police custody. In India, early history of policing by women is available in the Ramayana, Mahabharata, 'Arthashastra' of Kautilya and the Ashokan edicts.

The Ramayana gives a vivid description of how Sita was put under surveillance of the police women who carried all around vigil. Likewise, the Ashokan edicts frequently speaks about the 'Prativedikas' who protected the Royal Chamber from intruders and kept the king informed about day to day happenings (Roy, 1990).

In India, the need for women police was first felt during the labour strike, which took place in Kanpur, in the year 1938. The State of Travancore also experimented with the appointment of women in as Special Police Constables in the year 1933, where one women head constable and twelve women police constables were appointed. Due to the partition and all the after effects of it, a number of women organizations cropped up which needed women police. Due to riots, atrocities on women, kidnapping, abduction and other sex offenses, it was thought to increase the number of women in police. The Delhi Police force was the first to recruit police women on a regular basis in 1948.

According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development Report (1975), the principle duties performed by women police in India are:

- Helping in the investigation of crimes involving women and children.
- Providing assistance to the local police in tracing missing women and children
- Recovering minor girls from brothels and escorting them to rescue homes, courts and hospitals.
- Recovery of women and girls involved in abduction and kidnapping cases.
- Search and escort of women offenders.
- VIP and security duties
- Work relating to women passengers at airports and search for their person and belongings
- Providing assistance to local police in evacuating women and children from disturbed areas and emergencies.
- Maintaining order in women meetings and processions.
- Dealing with women agitators, satyagrahis and labour troubles in which women are involved.
- Looking after women and children in fairs and places of worship and in festivals.

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- Guiding women passengers at big railway stations and important bus stands in large towns and cities.
- Helping children cross the road near school

According to the National Crime Record Bureau publication 'Crime in India-2000,' the actual strength of women police in the civil police was a total of 17,412. However, there were only 20 women in the rank of S.P and above, 77 women in the rank of A.S.P and above, 1443 in the rank of inspectors, S.I, A.S.I and 15872 in the rank of Head Constables and Constables. This clearly shows a huge difference in the number of women officers appointed at every rank.

The qualification for a women sub inspector is a minimum age of 20 (for the Scheduled Caste/Tribe it is 33 and for Widows it is 35), a minimum height of 157 cm, any degree in terms of educational qualification. The Qualification for a women police constable is a minimum age of 18 (for the Scheduled Caste/Tribe it is 29), a minimum height of 157 cm, a tenth standard pass degree in terms of educational qualifications.

The present study seeks to look at the Gender Issue in the Police by understanding the role and perception of the police by the women employed as police, by the men who work along with these women police and by the public/society in general and hence understanding gender issues from the women's perspective, men's perspective and by the society's perspective.

The study also aims at understanding the women police from a sociological point of view by looking at their backgrounds, intent to join the police force and their perception of the current state of women in police.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of literatures were studied in order to understand the level of research done on the use of women in the police, on the discrimination faced by them, on their perception and the jobs which they do as police people, a wide range of development, growth, training of the police personal.

A number of foreign journals like Police Journal, Journal of Police Science and Administration, Criminal Law, Criminology give an insight into the problems and issues related to the police at the international level. The Indian Police Journal, Uttar Pradesh Journal and Madhya Pradesh Journal, the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Journal discuss the Indian Police. Besides these there are various reports like the First Report of the National Police Commission, Government of India, February 1979, Second Report (1979), Fifth report (1980) etc which gives information regarding the Police.

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Roy D. Ingelton's book 'Police of the World' concentrates the study on the police of the developed countries. He uses a lot of photograph to highlight aspects of dress and weapon of both men and women. He also talks about the strength of the police force. However, nowhere does he talk about what kind of job roles women police officers/employee do. It again focuses more on the developed countries leaving aside a study of the police force of the developing countries.

Peter Horne's book 'Women in Law Enforcement' is a very interesting book as it traces the growth of women police in major developed countries and especially in Japan. The aspects highlighted in the book are mainly related to selection process, training and salary. What this book fails to provide us are recommendations/sub fields for using women in the police force more efficiently.

In India, S K Ghosh's 'Women in Policing' uses a lot of Data from the Bureau of Police Research and Development and also the International Council of Police Officers. Being a police officer himself(former Inspector General of Police),Mr Ghosh has an insight into the police department. He highlights the functioning of police women around the world as a background and talks about women police in India, their recruitment, training and service conditions .He also talks in length about the position of women in society .This book also asks questions like the questions which are the basis of many talks about women and discrimination i.e can women perform all functions of the Police work .He also highlights a very important feature which is the future of the women police in India. Even though he did do an extensive research on the past, present and future state of women in police force in India, there are some aspects which are not discussed. The main one out of them is the attitude of the people towards employment of women police in India. Also, this book has a lot of factual information. What is missing in the interpretation and understanding of this factual information.

A study of New York Police Department officers was conducted in 1975-76 (Sichel et al., 1978). This study matched 41 male and 41 female officers and followed their performance for a seven-month period. These officers were assigned to two-person motor patrol. The data were gathered by direct observation, citizen interviews and from police files. The researchers attempted to determine what police officers do on the job and how effectively they do it. The study focused on control-seeking behavior exhibited by the officers. Control-seeking behavior was defined as "the attempt to influence another person or persons to take a particular action" (Sichel et al., 1978, p. 12). This behavior could range from verbal requests to physically forcing compliance.

The study found no great difference in the "style" of policing for male and female officers. They both went about the job in similar fashion. The researchers found no differences in the methods or techniques used to gain control. About 75% of the control-seeking attempts were verbal. Other methods, involving physical force or use of a weapon, were employed by females at similar rates

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to males. Only about 10% of the control attempts involved actual physical contact of any kind, from touching to struggling.

Dr Shamin Aleem's Book 'Women Police and Social Change; give us a bird eyes view on women police in India. Besides giving us a detailed study and research about the recruitment, training and other aspects of the police job, what she pointed out and studied in particular was the role of the police women as viewed by the others. This can give us an idea about the stereotypes that exist and the myths that still exist in the minds of Indians about women in police.

Natarajan (2001) had conducted a study on 'Women Police in Traditional Society' and had given a different angle to the study by examining the performance and job satisfaction of the women police .This was done by studying and examining accused, victims ,witnesses and women police themselves. This clearly showed that the reason for the low performance of the women police was due to the lack of motivation and low job satisfaction that existed amongst the women police force in India.

One study by Chakravarthy on the topic 'Equal opportunities to Women in Police' emphasized that a clear understanding and complete preparedness on the part of the spouse ,provision of residential quarters at the place of posting, a break for 2-3 years without pay to sort out domestic issues can help improve the police force and also increase participation of more women in the police force as it will control the situation of separation from husband and family and issue of managing household work along with police work.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out about the status ,function and the role of women in Police
2. To identify obstacles in the way women joining the police services and those already in services.
3. To suggest ways and means of attracting better talent.
4. To make an analysis of the state of women in police from the eye of the men servicing in the Police department.
5. To find out the sociological reason as to why women join the police department.
6. To analysis from the eyes of the women, their status and position in the police department.

HYPOTHESIS

1. It is hypothesized that gender bias exists in the Police department in India ,across all positions.
2. It is hypothesized that society has a negative attitude towards women policing.
3. It is hypothesized that women police face a lot of conflict in their personal and professional life which comes in the way of proper utilization of their talent.

SAMPLE

The target group of this study are the Police Gazetted and the Non Gazetted officers in the Union Territory of New Delhi(Delhi Police and other Police forces)

The sample of this study was 25 females and 20 male officers and 20 public /students in the state of New Delhi.

- The ranks of the females was:10 constables,10 inspectors, 5 High Level Officers(superintendent and above)
- The males in the study included:10 inspectors,10 High Level Officers
- The profile of the public included: college students(10),office going workers(6), housewives(4)

METHODOLOGY

A self designed questionnaire was used, followed by the interview of a few candidates to understand better about their background and attitudes. An informal conversation was held after the questionnaires were filled in a standardized environment .This was again, to understand backgrounds of the people better.

Snowball sampling was used to collect data from participants

ANALYSIS OF REPORT AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the questionnaire, the interviews and informal discussion were seen in the light of three things majorly. The personal background of the women employed in the Police Department, the attitude of the men and the attitude of the public. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that these things get pointed out clearly. Not all examples have been cited but a few of them have been used to explain the results.

THE PERSONAL ATTITUDES AND FAMILY BACKGROUND:

In the present study, the background of the police personals was studied using the following factors-age, educational qualification, length of service, place of residence ,marital status, per capita income of the family

a. Age

In the survey done. about 45 percent of the women police personals were in their twenties, 42 percent were in their thirties, 12 percent were in their forties and 1 percent was in their fifties.

This clearly shows one thing. That the number of women personals in the lower wages was more because more women were recruited in the lower levels. The number of women recruited in the SP and above level (through the civil service exam) was less. Even though the people topping the civil service exam have been women for over some years, yet the percentage of women joining the police force is very less. The problem is even more deeply rooted in the officers belonging to the senior batches.

b. Religious Composition :

From the study conducted, it was found out that about 95 percent of the women employed in police were Hindu's, four percent were Muslims, 0.75 percent was Christians and only 0.25 percent belonged to other religions.

We cannot comment of whether this is due to some sociological factor and if along with gender discrimination, even religious and caste discrimination exists in the police force. The reason why this factor was put into play was to understand the family background of the women. The values, the belief and the custom's that they follow which can effect the choices they make and the decisions they are forced to make.

1. Educational Qualification :

According to the responses of the study, about 19 percent of the women who joined were High School pass outs, 43 percent were Intermediate pass outs,31 percent were graduates and 7 were PG and above pass outs.

This just shows one thing- Majority of the women that join the police force are not even graduates. They do not have a full understanding about their rights and duties and also the working of the society. Many of them also are not suited for other jobs as they will be rejected due to the lack of qualifications they have

2. Marital Status :

According to the responses, eighty one percent were married and 19 percent were unmarried. Even though the picture clearly states that there were more married women than unmarried ones ,this still calls for some analysis.

Many of the women who were part of the survey had consciously taken a decision of not marrying because they felt that the job of a women police officer was demanding and it was difficult to adjust both profession and a household. The other reason given by a few of them was that they had joined the police as a Sub Inspector and had become involved in the work that they had passed the age of marriage and there was no way they could have gotten married later on.

3. Reason for joining the force:

As can be seen from the questionnaire that was administers to the people, the reason for joining the police force can be broadly divided into five major reasons-66 percent of them joined it because they had a personal interest in it,13 percent joined it because the job of the police being a government job guaranteed long term security,11 percent said that it was a random choice and no factor played an influence in their decision,1 percent said that it was because they were influenced by their friends and 4.5 percent said that it was because their parents were itself in the police force and they were influenced by the work of their parents.

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When asked whether it was a good career option for women or not, 61 percent of the women responded that it was a good career option whereas 23 percent of women said that it wasn't and the remaining 16 percent said that they weren't sure. The reasons given were also different. Those who said that it was a good career option said that there were certain aspects of the job which could be done by only women in uniform and since it commanded respect, it was a good option. However, even though majority of them agree in principle that it is a good career option, some of them don't agree with it also. Some of them said that since the police women had to keep odd working hours it reflected badly on the children and the household and majority of the women working in the police had to neglect their household duties. Some women said that since they had to deal with the worst elements of the society, it wasn't a proper place for women to work and that they would not recommend it to other people. The other reasons given were that women were discriminated against, there was excessive corruption in the department, police women were not appreciated and were not rewarded like the men and hence it was not the best of the environment that could be offered to women.

4. Reason for not joining :

According to the survey, there was a consensus amongst the women that low salary was not the reason why women do not join the police service. Many of them said that the salary structure was all right and as decided by the government there wasn't any discrimination when it comes to salary amongst the male and female. If there were complaints about the salary it was mainly due to the salary per se keeping in mind the increased cost of living and not to do with gender. Many of the respondents in fact looked at having a government job as having security.

63 percent of the respondents said that they perceive the police to be a male dominated service while the remaining 27 percent perceived it to be a job where both men and women could work equally and were given equal responsibility.

About 70 percent of the women said that there was low working condition. It was so poor that sometimes they didn't have any change rooms, the bathrooms were small and very dirty/wet. Sometimes they had to be forced to change in the waiting room and send the people waiting in the station outside so that they could change into their uniforms. One of them said that "Madam, what prestige will I have if I have to change my clothes in these circumstances." They had a unanimous call that when the department itself doesn't respect us, how will the others /public respect us.

Around 78 percent women said that they other women do not join the police department because it is a risky business. They are required to deal with the worst elements of society and hence women may not prefer it. The working hours are also an issue.

While around 89 percent of the sample responded that women sometimes don't join the force because that leaves them with very little time to manage their family and households. During the

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interviews what became evident was that most of the women were from the lower strata of society and they had either kept a brother or sister at home to manage their household and look after the children.

5. Discrimination faced by women during the job :

78 percent of the women in our sample felt that they were discriminated against, 90 percent said that the work done by women police was not appreciated and 69 percent felt that women police were not rewarded with promotions and incentives like the men in the police department. Some told us that they could never dream of “getting an independent charge of the Thana.” Some also said that working in the police department was a struggle for them every day as they had to work twice as hard in order to prove themselves better than the male counterpart.

When asked whether they think that women are integrated in the main stream job, a shocking result came out. Only 30 percent of them said that they feel women officers are integrated whereas 65 percent said that they were not. 5 percent of them said that they were not sure.

In terms of the kind of jobs performed by the women, 65 percent of them said that the women police officers were mainly made to do female department jobs , 9 percent said that they were made to do less risky jobs and 26 percent said that they did similar jobs like their men counterparts.

When asked whether the talent of the women have been fully utilized, only 40 percent said that they feel the talent was being utilized while the remaining 60 percent felt that it wasn't being. Due to these factors when asked , if women needed special reservation for the job , 100 percent of the sample said that women need to be given concessions for child rearing and household management. Though there wasn't a consensus amongst them in terms of what this concession could be, they were happy with the current schemes of the government.

Also majority of the women in the survey felt that women should not carry on the same kinds of job as they used to do before pregnancy. Since on field policing needed a lot of physical work which is not recommended for pregnant women. Hence they should be allowed to do desk jobs during pregnancy and a little time after pregnancy.

ATTITUDE OF MEN

In this section, we propose to examine the attitude of male police personals in Delhi Police and other police departments operating from Delhi. The perception of both senior officers towards women policing as well as those at a lower rank will be examined in this section.

The literature indicates that the first female patrol officers were met with distrust and hostility. Attitudes, however, may change over time. As more and more women enter law enforcement,

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and continue to demonstrate successful performance, the discrimination and prejudice directed at female officers may diminish.

From our understanding, there could be four possible reasons for the attitude of men towards the women:

- Fear that women entering law enforcement would lower the status of the profession.
- General feelings of frustration arising from other aspects of the job, relieved by "scapegoating."
- Doubts about the women's physical abilities.
- Questioning of the meaning of masculinity with women performing a traditionally masculine job.

The attitude of men as per the questionnaire reflected the following things:

a. Working together :

According to our survey, 41 percent of the men said that they were comfortable working with women police officers all the time. 36 percent said that they were comfortable working with them sometimes. 6 percent said that they were comfortable rarely to work with women officers while 17 percent said that they were never comfortable to work with women officers.

When asked the males if they accepted what their female colleagues said, 64 percent of them said that they accepted what the women said sometimes, while only 25 percent said that they fully accepted what the women said. However, the bright side is that only 3 percent said that they never accept what women police said while 8 percent said that they rarely accept. These statistics clearly point out one thing-That the women police officers don't have much to say in terms of decisions and putting forth their idea across.

b. Attitude of supervisor :

According to the survey, around 55 percent of the sample said that they felt that their seniors were biased and selective in nature especially when it came to job allocation. They were more biased towards the males than the females. A similar response was also got from the women police officers in their survey. Hence, this statistics clearly shows that the problem and the root cause is the attitude of the seniors which seeps down to the juniors and causes more discrimination against the women.

When asked if superiors underestimated the capacity of the women, 59 percent of the men said yes while 41 percent said no. Even though the difference is not much, yet majority of the respondents felt that the superiors thought the women officers to be a weaker sex and hence gave them less demanding jobs.

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c. Perception about women capabilities :

When asked the respondents if they felt that the women should be given duties at par with the men, 73 percent of them said no. They said that duties like night shifts and specific aspects of patrol should not be given to women.

When asked if women police officers need specific training in order to make them equipped for the special duties, 63 percent of them said yes.

When asked the males officers what they felt was the image of the women police, 87 percent of them said that women police had the image of being gentle .While 8 percent said that they had the image of being harsh and 5 percent of them said that they could not pick between harsh and gentle

Public Perception about women in police:

The general expectation that people have is that of integrity, fairness, civility, responsiveness, appropriate use of force, competency (International Association of Chief of Police, George Mason University). In India, the perception is however :

a. Perception about the job :

When asked the public respondents if they felt that policing was a masculine job, 47 percent of them felt that it was while 50 percent said that it wasn't and 3 percent said that they weren't sure.

When asked if police was a good job and career option for the women to get into, 67 percent of them said no. When asked them if women were fit for the job of police, 63 percent of the felt that they didn't think that women were suited, 6 percent of them felt that they were less competent than men, 4 percent felt that they were weaker in all respects than men to perform the job while the other said that given the opportunity they might replace men.

Regarding equal opportunities for both men and men, only 30 percent of them agreed that police women were not rewarded equally like the men while 70 percent of them felt that no discrimination in terms of rewards exists.

When asked the question of whether women police should be integrated into mainstream, 61 percent felt that they should be integrated. These views are pretty different from the ones expressed in the previous questions where they felt that women didn't fit the job well and that there were no discriminations. Perhaps the reason being that the public was stressing on the point of women empowerment and how women should be part of all jobs ,even if its not the best option for them to be in.

b. Type of Jobs women should perform :

56 percent of them felt that women if employed should get equal opportunity and hence perform jobs which are similar to the jobs performed by the men. However the others disagreed and felt that they should perform difficult jobs but not risky jobs and they might not be trained properly.

When asked if they had more confidence in women policing than men policing, 50 percent of them said that they didn't know. This may be attributed to the fact of the falling trust in the police department due to rising in corruptions, arrogance of the police and misbehaving of the police.

In a traffic situation, around 44 percent of them felt that they would prefer whoever is available and have no special preference. Similar results were also obtained for preference in police station and for catching criminals.

c. Job Commitment :

They felt that women were as committed to the job as the men were (majority of them felt this way) and commitment wasn't the reason why women should not enter the police force as they are equal to men in all sense. Some of them however felt (34 percent) that women are not fit for the job of policing as they are physically not strong enough.

d. General View :

When asked if they would allow their daughters to join the police force, 50 percent of them said that they weren't sure. Only 35 percent said yes and that it depends of the choices their daughter wants to make while 15 percent of them said no.

CONCLUSION:

All the three hypothesis have been accepted however, to a certain degree. Women do face discrimination in the job but the reasons behind this are still not clear. Clearly, it is not just the perception of men or society but of the women in police themselves. Certain changes, are inevitable, if this discrimination (which can be of any form) needs to go. From this study; certain recommendations can be made which can help the police department, overcome this problem.

These recommendations are:

1. The working hours of the women police officers need to be fixed. It cannot be made into a nine to five job however, factors like managing of household, children by these officers need to be kept into account before placing the women in any department.
2. The working conditions need to be improved. Proper toilets, changing rooms and other basic amenities need to be provided to the women officer.

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3. The career aspects of the women in police need to be met. Only then will there be a pace of organizational change within the Police Department.
4. Proper Publicity needs to be given to the post of women police at different levels so as to attract the right kind of candidates.
5. A special drive needs to be taken by both the State and the Central government in order to increase the participation of women in the police force.
6. A regular training program needs to be undertaken by both the male and female members of the Police force in order to be more sensitive to the changing sociological, psychological and human values.
7. The mindset of the men needs to change .This can be done if women and men work together rather than segregating them.
8. The supervisors also need to be trained with proper training in order to change their mindset about women.
9. Police personals should not expect top performance from a women officer when they are not getting that from the men too. The problem in terms of performance doesn't lie in the capability but in the training and sensitivity .
10. Since people open up more to women police officers, the presence of them needs to be felt in all walks of life.
11. The public image regarding anything about the police needs to change. Since they have an image that the police department is corrupt, the problem of recognition and prestige also goes away. This public image needs to change.
12. It needs to be understood that women in police cant keep complaining about discrimination of one hand and not wanting to do some kinds of police related job(mainly patrolling) on the other hand. There needs to be a balance regarding what women can do and what they are made to do

In order to progress, these recommendations need to be worked on .As can be seen , they are not just for the police department but also for the women who are employed in it .Why this is important to be taken into account because police employment will continue to rise in the future as population and economic growth create a need for more officers to maintain law and order. Hence, it is important to improve the condition of the women in these jobs and make them feel more secure and make the job more attractive for more people to join .

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