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Exploring the Factors Affecting Police Service Delivery in District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: An Analysis of Public Perspective

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Abstract: *Police, as one of the law enforcement agencies, ensure peace and security in different parts of the country, including district Swat. However, their effective service delivery and significance were affected during the wave of militancy and Talibanization in district Swat, which led to chaos and insecurity in the area. This daunting situation of insecurity resulted in public despair and distrust, even in the presence of the Police. Meanwhile, many of the local inhabitants raised questions about police services. This less effective role of the Police and the resultant insecurity became the subject of the researchers' discussion. In this study, an attempt has been made to unveil the public perspective on police failure in their services. It also seeks and addresses policy changes to improve policing and mitigate these issues to ensure effective police services in the region. This study was conducted in the Swat district. The study employed qualitative methodologies like interviews and observations to capture a rich, in-depth community perspective. Research participants were chosen based on their experiences and familiarity with the police department. The collected data have been analyzed in the form of various themes. The findings show that many factors have affected the service delivery of Police. However, the significant factors among them are insufficient resources, the indulgence of Police in corruption, trust deficit and lack of cooperation, and slow police response to the crime scenes. However, sufficient resources trust building, public cooperation and coordination, and rigorous and quick response to crime and criminality are some measures that can make Police more effective in their service delivery.*

Introduction

Police are the guardians and first gatekeepers of the criminal justice system (Sanders & Young, 2012). Police are undoubtedly concerned with protecting, preventing, and even eradicating the crime ratio. However, police work is hindered by many factors, and policing is becoming a challenging task in the

modern and fast-changing world (Beck, 1999; Suddle, 2003). Police are subject to regular assessment and evaluation, as their services are assessed and evaluated by their seniors to present a good picture of the Police (Watson, Amin, & Pino, 2022). Contrary to this, research studies also show that people are least satisfied with police performance and services due to their distorted images in the minds of the Public (Akhtar, Rafiq, Asif, Saeed, & Kashif, 2012). Therefore, the topic and discussion of investigating the issues faced by Police and the factors affecting police performance become significant among the persons of relevance.

In many ways, the people perceive the Police as a turbulent force instead of service agents. The study sheds light on this situation in district Swat, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, Pakistan, a district that underwent a significant number of challenges in the near past and a decade ago. This study highlights the lived experiences of the Public in the research area, shedding light on the different out-of-context police activities. As locals of the research area and residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the researchers collected firsthand information and experiences of the participants who encountered the Police while interacting with them. The Public, particularly the vulnerable segment, faces problems of personal disorganization, which results in social disorganization and chaos (Jamal, 2011). The researchers in this study are committed to conducting comprehensive fieldwork to inform policymakers, social scientists, and individuals in the academic circle. This research is essential for different organizations to uphold the values of transparency and ensure accountability for effective services. It is also vital for all interested researchers to conduct further studies in this field.

Research shows that despite providing facilities, funds, and infrastructure, Police remain less effective and fail to ensure public security and peace. Police still try to justify their position and protect their image in Public. Because of their weak performance, there has been unrest among the Public, and most show despair and disparate feelings (Wu and Sun, 2009). The underperformance gives the Police a stereotypical image of weak service agents (Jamal, 2011). They are perceived as oppressors and suppressors of human rights in Pakistan (Suddle, 2015). Such stereotypes led to public frustration against the Police and raised many questions about the performance and credibility of police officers (Terpstra & Fyfe, 2014). Previous research studies show different aspects of policing in Pakistan, but there is a dearth of research investigating the factors affecting the service delivery of Police. There is also a gap in the existing literature to highlight the phenomenon of Policing in war-affected areas like Swat and *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*.

Many researchers have addressed the issue of Police and policing differently in different contexts (Jackson & Bradford, 2010; Loader & Mulcahy, 2003). Many of them have pointed out the issue of trust deficit between the Public and Police (Sun, Wu, & Hu, 2013; Van Craen, 2012), (Cao, 2015; Jackson & Bradford, 2010), and many of the scholars raised the issue of police acceptance and legitimacy (Hawdon, 2008; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Huo, 2002). All these research studies were primarily conducted in the United States of America (Tyler & Huo, 2002) and subsequently motivated researchers in the United Kingdom (Jackson & Bradford, 2010; Loader & Mulcahy, 2003), Hong Kong (Chui & Cheng, 2015) and similarly in China (Sun et al., 2013; Tankebe, 2008). Along with these issues, police misuse of authority is the core concern of public distrust and resentment.

Research shows that Police worldwide and South Asia have many drawbacks and challenges (Suddle, 2015). Many challenges include institutional deficiencies, incapacity, political interference, stressful work environment, and cumbersome procedures. Similarly, the issue of poor training and selection processes, lack of proper oversight, inadequate monitoring, inadequate investigative capabilities, and

poor infrastructure are often cited as significant challenges (Nalla and Mamayek, 2013). The issue is also raised by Patail (2008), and to him, Police in South Asia are indulged in the abuse of power and misuse of authority. The earlier studies reveal that many of the Police are involved in illegal activities like target killing, extrajudicial killing, and unwarranted arrest while providing fabricated evidence and using brutal and torturing methods of public dealing and investigation (Singh, 2021). All these factors show a desperate and messy affair of the police administration.

Similarly, Police in Pakistan are blamed for the misuse and abuse of power, authority, and corrupt nature (Ullah, Hussain, Alam, & Akhunzada, 2016). Moreover, they are also blamed for their poor educational qualifications, ill training, lack of resources, and lousy working conditions. In addition, the arrogant and abusive behavior of the Police alienates them from the Public, ultimately resulting in a trust deficit between the Police and the Public. The majority of people complain about the unprofessional and unethical behavior of Police (Amir, 2010). As a result, the Public are hesitant to visit police stations to register their cases due to the police terror and their complicated procedures.

Why the Police are less capable and less effective in their service delivery? Are the public expectations from the Police too high? Do the Police are corrupt and incredible, and do they are less equipped and lack adequate training to handle insecurity? What are the different loopholes among Police that hinder and influence their services? How can we develop strategies to ensure effective policing? These are some of the questions that this study seeks to answer regarding the underperformance of Police. This study investigates the community's perspective on police services and their reservation about the Police in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially District Swat.

Methods and Procedures

The study is qualitative, in which attention is given to the narratives of the Public, such as experiences, feelings, and perceptions, to unfold and contextualize police problems and challenges. As argued by Cresswell (2012), narration helps researchers gain insight into the phenomenon. The data was collected from 28 respondents through interviews. Interviews were conducted and audio-recorded with the prior consent of the research participants. Confidentiality was ensured by using the pseudonyms of the participants. After all, various themes and sub-themes were developed based on field data. According to Creswell (2012), researchers use narrative analysis when the participants are willing to share their views and stories. The Data has been analyzed thematically to explore all the possible dimensions of the problem.

Results, Findings, and Discussion

The data have been analyzed thematically. The significant themes from the field data have been organized and presented as various factors affecting policing concerning public understanding. Below are the most prevalent factors the researchers found that have affected policing in the research area. The factors mentioned in this paper may not fully cover the issues and challenges police face in *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* and district Swat. Though several themes were identified from the data, this paper discusses the most significant themes repeatedly discussed during fieldwork.

Insufficient Resources and Police

Research shows that civilized and peace-loving states believe in the modern policing system (Janssens, 2015). Police in contemporary times are equipped with modern and updated technology, logistics, resources, and all other required means (Nunn, 2001). Moreover, the contemporary Police adopt the positive trends of police-community relations (Wooden, 2012). It has never been the case in Pakistan due to insufficient resources to show a timely response to the troubling and anarchic situation with the collaboration of the community. In the research area, the Public opined

negatively about logistics support and all other means required to respond to criminal incidents promptly.

On the other hand, Police in the developed world are highly tactful due to their access to the latest technology and other required skills. They are adequately trained about the new dynamic of different crimes and have the latest tools to control crimes and chaotic situations. In Pakistan, especially in district Swat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Police are lagging in the newest technology and many other resources, and resultantly, their services are hindered. About this issue, one of the dispute resolution council chairmen (DRCC) responded in such words:

"Police are deficient in the basic resource provision like logistics, technology, and digital communication to locate and track the culprits and the places of crimes before taking place. The means and methods are lacking with the Police on the modern lines. So, how the police system could be effective to get public order, security, calm and peace".

One of the primary reasons that can not address the challenges of the modern world is the resource constraints that cause ineffective service delivery (Abbas, 2011). It results in insecurity among the Public and police personnel during duty hours. Police in Pakistan face numerous problems while fighting against crime and criminality. Previous research shows that shortage of strength, insufficient resources, and many other issues constrain Police from dealing with crime effectively (Rohde, 2002). Moreover, adequate resources such as the latest forensic labs and methods of crime detection are minimal and insufficient to carry out police work properly and effectively (Munir, Abbas, & Arshed, 2020). The police department in KP and the study area are not fully equipped with the logistics, labs, and scientific means and methods. In this perspective, when asked, one of the respondents, i.e., a member of the National Assembly (MNA), commented:

"Resources such as logistics, technology, and means and methods are lacking in the police department of our province. Other nations succeeded in mitigating and controlling crime rates due to the availability of these resources, as well as tough training and merit in the recruitment processes. Our province and people of the researched area cannot meet both ends; how can fully equipped resources be equipped?".

In Pakistan and researched areas, the pathetic conditions of the unavailability of resources; Police don't have the required standards to identify and encounter criminals. On the other hand, criminals have all the latest means and resources while committing crimes (Khan, Ahmed, Nawaz, & Zaman, 2015). Currently, many people use modern technology to solve their routine problems. On the other hand, police officers do not have the technological equipment to handle police problems concerning crime and criminality easily (Harmon, 2012). Many of the Police have identified that their issues can be resolved by increasing the police force and providing them with better and updated equipment. Similarly, the required capacity and understanding of Police in the target area are not at the level of developed countries. Demand for police services is rising, but increased resource expenditure is not feasible due to budgetary constraints (Stockdale *et al.* 1999). Regarding the said issue, one of the respondents related to media (journalist) expressed his view in such words:

"In developed nations, Police have all the required resources, such as helicopters, night vision devices of lightning, and the latest technology to probe the incidents and places of criminals. But

contrary to this, our Police still follow the traditional way of policing, and henceforth, Police are the most obsolete department to face the challenges and trends of emerging crimes".

Modern technology, adequate resources, and logistic means are the basic requirements of contemporary Police and policing. Compared to this, the Police in the researched area lack the resources and equipment to effectively fight against the criminals and ensure law and order situation in the community. Police capacity has been least developed due to resource constraints, eroding every aspect of the force. This situation has left behind a frustrated organ of government, which is in despair, unable to cope with its legal and social duties of protecting the lives and properties of the people.

Police Involvement in Corruption

Any formal and informal discussions about Police start and end with corruption. The issue of corruption has strongly mingled among Police, irrespective of status and position. From top to bottom, everyone in the department is indulged in corrupt practices. Corruption has been perceived as a lubricant in the machinery of police departments for doing work to expedite the process illegally. Corruption is a legally prohibited behavior where most Police are indulged in some unauthorized material gain. Police corruption is the misuse of power and authority by police personnel to work out of the way to achieve personal gains or facilitate others (Goldstein, 1975). In the report of Transparency International published in the Global Corruption Barometer (TI, 2002), the Police are the most corrupt and least effective organization in the world.

Many forms of police corruption negatively impact the performance and service delivery of Police. Police corruption ranges from petty corruption among lower-level police officers to other bribery in everyday interactions with citizens (Transparency International, 2015). In the study area, field data show similar pictures about Police involvement in corruption. In this regard, one of the participants, a (lawyer) opined and commented in such words:

"Corruption is strongly mingled in all departments, including Police. When police deal with the Public, in major cases they take bribes, gifts and so many other monitory incentives which signify the dilemma of corruption among police".

The community perspective regarding the weak performance of Police in the study area is clear. The study findings indicate that many police constables and officers are involved in corruption in one way or another. The media highlights the majority of corruption scandals that have often led to the development of anti-police sentiments among the Public. In this regard, there are many examples of police corruption that prove that many institutions, including the Police, are badly affected by corruption. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, when the Police purchased certain accessories for their capacity building and better operation, the Inspector General of Police was reportedly found involved in such corrupt activities. In this regard, a journalist presented his viewpoint as:

"From top to bottom, Police indulge in corruption that defame not only the police profession but also the routine functioning. The corruption at traffic roadsides, in Thana, courts, and in jails are the various forms of corruption in the department. From arresting the lawbreakers to the evidence

and investigating the spots of the crimes at all stages, the department personnel indulge in corruption".

The prevalent practices of corruption are taking money for lodging FIRs, taking money in cash for violation of traffic rules, and money for releasing unwarranted arrests. In this regard, the study findings of Bayley and Perito (2011) show that corrupt police activities waste public resources, negatively affect security, create hurdles in providing justice and economic development, and make the Public against the institutions. As a result, police involvement in corruption is equal to the denial of justice to poor and weaker sections of the community because the Police are the only agency responsible for ensuring law and order in the society. In many cases, police personnel arrest innocent people, try to threaten and even beat them, and then release them for little money. Elaborating on this phenomenon, one of the lawyers dealing with criminal cases shared his views:

"Police are powerful, as they can easily arrest individuals who look suspicious. Exercising this kind of power and authority by police increases the chances of their involvement in corruption".

Throughout Pakistan and especially in the researched area, Police have the right to arrest and temporarily send the suspects to jail. Similarly, in many cases, the Police do not even inform the courts and complete the legal formalities. Therefore, the unwarranted arrests and illegal detention of individuals are some of the tactics the Police use to compel the suspects to pay for their release. In this connection, ignorance on the part of the Public about the law of the state and fear of legal complications make them vulnerable to fulfilling the illegal demands of the Police. In most cases, the Public becomes a soft target of the Police in Pakistan due to the terrifying nature of the Police and the complicated process of legal formalities. Police are liable and responsible for following the due process standards and procedures, but they are not observable and workable in a state like Pakistan. Regarding the said issue, one of the dispute resolution council chairmen (DRCC) opined in such words:

"In most cases, Police have a detailed knowledge about the different patterns of crime and those who are indulged in these crimes. But in many cases, Police do not try to arrest the criminals, and instead of real culprits, Police usually arrest the innocent Public to show fake progress. This manipulated reality of police progress intensifies corruption among the police force."

These corrupt practices put nasty and negative scars on the image of the Police and affect the Police. This corruption leads to public mistrust, and their lack of cooperation with the police force ultimately undermines its legitimacy (Hope, 2015). Therefore, the Police, as the legitimate guardians, are perceived as the suppressors and oppressors of fundamental human rights in a country like Pakistan. Most of the Public shows disrespect and disgusting behavior towards Police and policing. Resultantly, the majority of criminals and evildoers pay no attention to the Police due to their low integrity and least resilient nature. Most criminals consider them co-partners in out-of-way and illegal activities. Policing is the state machinery where corruption is the needed lubricant to run the affairs regardless of police integrity and professionalism. Corruption is among the significant factors that possibly impact police legitimacy, integrity, professionalism, and service delivery.

Police Slow Response to Crime Scenes

Police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, especially in the researched area, are considered less capable of responding to the crime scenes of murder, ransom, rapping, and abduction. Generally, it is said that once the criminals vacate the crime scene, the Police appear. Contrary to this, Police in developed countries reach the crime scenes on time, arrest the criminals, and bring them to court for trial in due time. In Pakistan, this slow response of the Police to the crime scenes deteriorates the image of the Police and makes the criminals confident to commit more crimes in the future. In this way, the slow and lack of proactive policing hinders the philosophy of effective policing (Frank et al. 2005). This situation shows their inability to guarantee the security of the Public in advance. It is the failure of the police force to control crimes before they occur. Regarding this, one of the participants, a member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA), reports:

"In our experience in the local circle and area, there are dozens of such examples of firing, killing, looting and creating mayhem while police failed to control and respond meaningfully to the crime situation."

In the study area, the views and perceptions of community members about the role and performance of the Police indicate that the police force's job is to curb criminality, maintain law and order, and ensure peace for needy people. However, they do not fulfill their due role and mostly perform less effectively. They are weak in tracing, locating, and catching criminals. In addition, they are observed to be weak and less capable of investigating criminal cases objectively and assisting the judiciary in dealing with such cases. Criminal justice system. Many Police arrive late at the crime scenes to collect the information, which is primarily incorrect and fabricated. It creates further problems for police departments and the judiciary in dealing with cases effectively and objectively. There are multiple examples of how Police escape the crime places themselves. Suppose they are terrible, lazy, or insensitive to respond promptly. In a similar position, if they fail to provide security to people, they will be baseless to expect public cooperation. Another respondent (Advocate) commented this way:

"The community members know the situation, who the responsible people are, and where they are hiding, but if the policing public spirit is at this level, how could one expect anything of betterment in the entire picture? So, the Police suffer as well as the community".

In short, it is the need of the day to have proactive and active policing capable of responding quickly and controlling the crime spots. There are also issues with the education and training imparted to police personnel. They also face security and fear, making them more hesitant to reach the crime spots on time. They are bound to strict rules and regulations. However, Police need proper training and education to make them able to curb criminality and ensure peace in society. Similarly, when they do not deliver their services properly, the dream of establishing a peaceful environment and stability will remain incomplete, and the people will always feel insecure and frightened. In this regard, one of the participants and advocate shared his viewpoint as:

"If the Police remain vigilant, active, and proactive towards all the prospective crime and terrorism of different kinds, the chance of law-breaking is seldom. But here it is the other way

around. They are found lazy to respond to the criminal scene, slow to process the case, register the FIR, and collect instant data…"

In light of the current discussion, it is said that though some of the improvement is observed in the role and performance of Police in the study area, there is still space for further improvement. This improvement is possible when the police force performs its duties and responsibilities using an active, professional, and assertive approach. In response to this issue, the views of the community members and the collected data did not favor police performance in the study area. The ground reality and significant objective of proactive policing were not instrumental in Pakistan, especially in the research community. The social fabric of the network of our relations and the socio-cultural capital barricades the said approach of proactive policing. On the part of communal relationships, lack of sense of ownership, trust deficit, and lack of cooperation between the Public and Police could not provide a conducive environment to make it instrumental. Similarly, on the part of the police department, lack of intelligence-led policing, lack of technology, and specifically lack of partnership between the community and Police make them ineffective in controlling different crimes before their occurrences.

Conclusion

District Swat, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*, Pakistan, has a serene and beautiful valley that is attractive to tourists from all over the country. The influx and flow of tourists depend on security measures, as they are ensured by the Police and expected by the local Public and tourists. A decade ago, Swat was hit by a wave of militancy, and similar repercussions have been witnessed. As a result, due to the turmoil and insecurity, the local people feel insecure because of the worsening law and order situation. The security situation has worsened due to multiple challenges. The issue yields a lousy police reputation due to their structural and functional aspects. In the region, Police have been perceived and observed as inefficient in taking substantive measures to sort out the worsening law and order, restore security, and protect the lives and property of the Public.

This study reflects the public perspective of the police failure and ineffective service delivery. Where during fieldwork, it is found that Police in the region have insufficient resources to accomplish their task and to go against criminals to encounter their strategies and criminal tendencies. Due to a shortage of resources, policing is a question mark to confront terrorists, suicide bombers, and criminals during duties.

Similarly, Police in the region are indulged in bribery and corruption. The work and service machinery of policing is highly dependent on corruption for being the lubricant regardless of yielding effective results as expected by the Public. Many of the lower-ranking employees to the high-level officers are involved in corrupt activities. Therefore, the required and anticipated mechanism of transparent and accountable policing is absent in the study area. The Public opined negatively about the issue, and most argued that this situation had led to ineffective policing.

Moreover, in the study area, Police are also criticized for their slow response and late arrival to the crime scenes, especially after the crime is committed and the criminals flee. In this regard, there are many examples of incidences of firing, looting, killing, and creating chaos where the Police have been found to fail in terms of timely access to the crime scenes and presenting satisfactory responses. Police are too lazy to respond promptly to address the issue that is duly reported to them. Similarly, Police are

less effective in fighting against criminality, especially the menace of Talibanization that occurred in the study area. In a nutshell, the capacity of the police force has not been developed to professionally, logistically, and ethically counter the incidents of crime and insurgency.

Policy Recommendations

The government has taken many substantial steps for police reforms, but all these reforms could not show effective results. There is an entire need to develop the physical, social, and super infrastructure of the Police according to the current dynamic and challenges. A proper budget allocation is the landmark to hire the latest technology and make them familiar with this to accomplish their task in the most manageable, transparent, and accountable manners. Moreover, seminars and workshops should be arranged periodically to internalize the true spirit of police integrity, professionalism, and ethical dimension in the mind of Police both overtly and covertly. There is also the need to make Police work more transparent and accountable to the department and the Public. A substantial reward and punishment mechanism is the intense need of the current time to make them public-friendly regarding their issues and problems.

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