EXPLORING THE PERCEPTION OF LOCALS ON THE FUNCTIONING AND SERVICE DELIVERY OF POLICE STATIONS

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ABSTRACT*: The present research was conducted to study the perception of locals' from the nearby community/catchment area regarding the complex police culture and general atmosphere of police station. The study was conducted at the Police station LohiBher as a case study. The study was qualitatively designed to reach the respondents with the help of key informants and by conducting both informal and in-depth interviews and focus group discussion(s). A total of 20 respondents were purposively selected to cultivate perceptions and knowledge on the above mentioned issue. It was explored and discovered that the perception of the catchment area locals is mixed towards the service delivery and functioning of the police as a department and the atmosphere of police station.*

Keywords: *Police station, Police culture, Function, Service delivery*

INTRODUCTION

Decrease in crime rates in any community can never be done alone by the police; rather there should be a strong synergy between people and the police of the community. Neither can community compete with criminals unaided by the professional police. The cooperation between the people and the police starts from very first step which is to obey the law 1. Later on at next level the honest people of the community may combine their efforts to strengthen police to battle against the crimes [1, 2].

For every successful community it is primarily important that citizens/people are following the law else the society will fail to run in a longer run, thus it is very important to have a harmony between police and the people in the society. Thus this idea is motivating to apply ad use the idea of community policing which is widely spreading across the globe and it caught its roots from United States. As mentioned above a society can never run successfully in a longer run if people are not abiding to the law, thus idea of police community can bridge the gap between the law enforcing agencies and law abiding citizens [3-5].

Eck and Rosenbaum consider community policing as a result of civil rights movement and increase in the rights of minorities who lacked confidence in the police. Thus this idea changed the tool to measure the performance of the police which was usually only measured by how effectively police can fight with the criminals. Fighting crime was even associated with indicators like response time, criminals arrested etc. Before community policing as mentioned by Cao there was a distance between the community and the police as an institute as their traditional policies to combat crime and to make society safe for people was failing. The need of this work was broadly explained in the work of Tyler for whom the legitimacy of police is not subjective rather it should be measured as perceived by the public. Then another important facet of public having confidence in police is that public is the consumer of the services offered by the police thus they should have strong confidence in their service provider. Thus a police may be working effectively as per their traditional

function but they may see themselves in isolation when surrounded by public [1,6].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was qualitatively designed with the help of purposive sampling technique to enrich the debate on different perceptions regarding the behaviour, atmosphere, functioning and service delivery of the police station and how it can further be restructured. For the purpose, focus group discussion guidelines/themes were developed and designed to understand underlying lay belief systems, cultural norms, access to information and products, social service context etc. 02 FGDs were conducted in the initial phase of the research along with participant observation with the support of key informants.In the light of the findings of focus group discussion, in-depth interview guide(s) were developed to further explore the issues, and objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perception(s) of Locals on Police Culture

The divided community around the police station on the basis of castes, creed, sects and most above of all political affiliations reflects the general trend in the society where power, patronage and politics dominate citizens' interaction with the police.

It was also discovered that the shape of the police culture is defined by the main characteristic of its service delivery at the police station. During the research, a few of the respondents from the community shared that police station itself has a stereotype role and has haunting features. The trauma of registering a complaint is even immense at police station, where a respondent expressed that the Police station must serve as the torch bearer of protection and safety however it is people who commonly pray to stay away from Police stations due to its unprofessional and politicized attitude.

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While discussing gender, it was found that it is even a greater hurdle and a barrier for a single mother or woman to reach police station for any report. It was mostly argued that

stepping into police station itself pollutes and stigmatizes the common man with disorder or pollution of being criminal or at the edge of it. The officers however rejects the connotation attached with police station and expressed that it is not the institute of police or policing but the system which collapses the channel of command.

It was also found that the Criminal Procedure Code 1898 and the Police Order 2002 accord enormous powers to the head of police station i.e. the station House officer to discharge these functions effectively.

The irony discovered is that citizens are not only intimidated to access police due to an unresponsive and dismissive police attitude, but the physical environment is unwelcoming. The officers found it little hard and explained that the jurisdiction indeed demands responsibility but the people have also found only one channel to talk to the Police which is to pressurize through political sources. One of the police officer respondent clearly mentioned that the hectic routine along with several other tiring pressures does open loop holes but the citizens may also realize that the investigations or recoveries requires time and procedures. It was argued that citizen takes the police in a fashion as if police itself is involved in all the criminal activities.

The mindset to run or attract educated brain is of utmost importance, both officers and citizens during the study agreed that the current police setup requires an overhaul with the help of an educated class till the last or lower most tear. It was also argued that better wages may also be helpful but de-politicizing requires efforts not only through the police station but also changing the perceptions of the people towards the respect and core duties of the police. One of the respondents shared that media and transparent monitoring can resolve existing issues.

The police officer respondents expressed that they may resolve or solve many cases but a single case even if delayed creates atmosphere of hate and anger. The political *sifarish* was usually burdened the most as a buzz term. Most of the respondents also expressed emotionally that should we save our jobs or respect, because they both are interwoven due to the nature and scope of job. It was also argued that a number of honest officers are forcefully suspended or being pushed for early retirement. Thus for the police staff it is the governance mechanism which has the flavour of colonialism in it. The overall structure of governance is also reflected in the casual approach of the police department.

The experiences within the department may force us to look deeply that is it the economics or the vigilant monitoring that would fix the errors? Is it the political ownership for neutrality or third party monitoring? Is it the fear of losing the permanent government job or the casual approach due to the salary package? Is it all due to the flawed selection of human resource or poor training? Or is it all connected from schooling to college, from curriculum to stereotyping police with only force, brutality, power and hunger?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Police culture reforms needs to have gigantic debate ranging from political neutrality to quick transparent delivery including no compromise on self respect and internal autonomy. The condensed recommendations are given below that are cultivated through the qualitative research study:

- Existing governance structure hinders police work thus requires restructuring the overall network
- Operational autonomy and overhauling the administrative monitoring may be considered as top priority to ensure better coverage and service delivery
- Budget constraints and resource allocation should be revisited
- Capacity building of Police Stations and staff may enhance and strengthen the force
- Honest/role model leadership may set the fresh trend
- De-politicizing police should be the crucial slogan
- Corruption may well be controlled by adopting the ITP and Rescue 1122 model
- Certifying bodies should be engaged independently as third monitor for performance evaluation
- Gender justice should be mainstream strategy
- Improve the overall image through a nexus with state, media and security agencies

The complexity within the culture of the police which uses certain rituals and symbols to defence and guard its pride and promote a unique system and institute one of its kind in Pakistan. The larger context may also be not ignored which pressurizes the security agencies in a compelling way to adjust and move accordingly.

It is indeed correct to understand the importance of wider political national nexus and global commitments which have raised the bar to be achieved mostly by the security and policing agencies of Pakistan. However, the impact of the legacy of colonial type administration is still deeply embedded in the collective cognition of the institute of police. The modern policing system has new paradigms of-course to tackle wider and more complicated challenges.

CONCLUSION

The architect within cognition and cultural mindset may well be gradually changed by introducing equipped, transparent and service friendly police stations. It is also important to balance the legitimate power at police stations. The legitimacy if balanced properly may lead to a reasonable pro people and community service. It is indeed discussed that by converting the system from reception, submission, registration to investigation online would help. In the light of existing study, it is revealed that most of the community members are usually not equipped to channelize the application online or with the help of IT. By that way, if it is considered the CHANGE, the researcher begs to differ that it may cut a lion's share of the community. Thus creating online system may only cater a small amount of IT equipped public of Pakistan.

The construct of the connotations of the word Thana is somehow different from the word Police and differs greatly with the modern slogan of using police as a service. Thus a long road needs to be paved to create a sustainable development in the police department with a support of

charismatic political leadership, civil society, media and academia.

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