

COMPLEX POLICE CULTURE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF *THANA LOHI BHER*

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ABSTRACT: *The present research was conducted to study the complex police culture and perceptions from both the nearby community and the service providing officials and staff. The study locale was the Police station Lohi Bher which was notified in 2012 to be established, before it used to serve as a police picket (chowki). 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 31 respondents were purposively selected to cultivate perceptions and knowledge on the issue(s) of Police department and its existing culture. The study was conducted through multiple visits by the lead researcher and its fellow team members. It was found that existing police culture is a complex whole of politics, economics and other socio-cultural factors which shapes and defines different currents, functioning of the service delivery.*

Keywords: Police station, Police culture, Crime, Police department

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, recently the authorities have realized seriously about scientific and systematic studies on crimes, its causes, preventions and control. So far very little scientific work has been carried out in this area in general and police culture in particular in Pakistan. Even today little attention is paid by the law enforcing agencies to the growing menace of terrorism and crime in the urban and rural centres. It is believed that majority of the cases of violation of law by offenders are either not reported to police or escaped its attention. Police records fail to provide enough data for scientific analysis of the problem by the sociologists and criminologists. The dearth of scientific literature on crime, especially delinquency in Pakistan is attributed to the lack of relevant data, financial constraints, and social neglect [1].

Under these circumstances, some serious beginnings have to be made. Besides collecting basic data about demographic, socio-cultural and economic characteristics of the criminals and juvenile offenders, it seems imperative to collect important information about crime and juvenile delinquency. Thus, it would not only reliable and urgently needed data to the policy makers in order to address juvenile's problems and also facilitate further, sharply focused, scientific, and sociological studies.

A wider definition of police culture is as per the modern definition of culture; however police culture refers to the accepted norms and behaviours accepted in police circle which give meaning to police work. Further research highlights that police culture is not isolated from society it in return leaves its impression on society. Work of Thomassen draws attention to impact of police culture on society which can be positive or negative, resting its base on how officials from police department are exercising their duties. As per the current geographical study definition of police culture as carved out by Prenzler is more relevant, for researcher problem of police behaviour is a broader definition of police culture. This is the psychological perspective of the same police culture. The term blue wall is also widely used especially in United States which highlights the sociological side of police culture; Skolnick covered how the term blue wall can

design the culture of police department. Which actually is to hide or conceal the misconduct of other police officer and its larger understanding is that in police department attack on one police officer is considered to be attack on all. Thus police culture is much stronger and may not widely accept reforms from any macro environmental force [2-5].

As in case of any misconduct by police, the police will be scrutinized by police hence rising the blue wall to new standards. This was also highlighted by Silverman that police officer are silent over the wrong doing of their peers and working group thus they will be more reluctant toward reforms. Thus the research of Skolnick and Silverman has raised an important issue that police culture is stronger due to blue wall and may not be open to change and reforms. Another element is of masculinity is widely spread through the culture of police, which is concern for sociology and anthropology [6,7].

However the word police reflects a department which enforces law however study of Chan concluded that police culture cultivate masculine culture and also reflect the masculine culture though its actions. Thus it can enhance masculine culture in society and even at intra-level it is nurturing masculinity within the department. Particularly to bring reforms in police, study of Davis and Thomas studied police as organization. Their study found that police is a deep-rooted organization with stern bureaucratic structure which is less likely to accept reform or change. Thus it's not only to change any particular culture but also to change the structure of the police organization [8,9]. Similar answer was also deducted by Skolnick and Bayley, their work focussed on reforms in police organization and uncovered the finding that risky innovations are not fit for this type of organization. Traditional practices will halt newer reforms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A qualitative case study research was designed where the researcher obtained the initial information and insight from the selected key informants. Key informants also helped the researcher in communicating in a much better and culturally appropriate way with the members and

interpreting the local, traditional metaphors and terms. In contrast to informal interviews researcher conducted 15 in-depth interviews (10 police station, 05 visitors) to serve the purpose of describing the issues qualitatively, the researcher clearly knew what he wanted to cultivate from the interviewee and constantly kept a clear plan while conducting those interviews. Informants were free to answer at their own pace. The researcher along with an interview guide used a structured questionnaire to collect the basic information and respective close ended answers to indicators constructed out of the prior informal interviews. For the purpose of this research, 02 FGDs were arranged as well.

FINDINGS

It was found that 397 FIRs were registered in the police station in the year 2014. However, there was no case or application discovered on terrorism rather most of the FIRs were found to be on routine criminal charges including theft, robbery, and a few cases of murder and its attempt. The study also revealed that the police station encompasses around 15 populating societies and around 18 villages. The infrastructure lags behind badly as the station is constructed only on 07-08 marla plot with very less space for the staff to adjust in just 04 rooms. The vehicles and motor bikes also require serious maintenance as the catchment area of the police station requires periodic patrolling and locomotive vigilance.

Profile of Thana Lohi Bher

The police station Lohi Bher, remained a security picket for over a decade. However a notification was issued in 2012 for establishment of two new police stations in federal capital. These two new police stations included Lohi Bher and Banni Gala. One of the respondent from the police station shared that the Lohi Bher was not a densely populated area, and it is only in last 5 years that have brought development due to the spread of housing societies around the original Lohi Bher village and its wildlife park. The police station exhibits the glimpses of typical sub urban area, also depicts a microcosm of social and economic development of the zone V of Islamabad. The station is around 07-08 marlas and the building is still under the phase of construction, not properly equipped to be used as a model police station. There are 4 operational rooms within the station which includes one room for the SHO, one is used as Hawalat (lock up) and a room for investigation officers where most of the clerical job is done daily. One room is used as a wireless room along with Maal khana. There is one attached washroom for the SHO and another washroom is for the rest of the staff.

The open spaces are not being getting fenced and blocked, most of the items used are still not appropriate for the functioning of the security of the police station. The paint on the walls is somehow weakened by the rain as per expressed by a respondent. Apart from the central building the courtyard is usually used to park the theft and robbery recovery bikes. The yard is also used to park the motorbikes of the station employees. On the other hand most of the vehicles being caught during certain investigations are being outside Police station, which indeed is not a good picture and demands for more secured place and sound premises of the Thana.

The police station is surrounded by a number of housing societies including CBR where the building itself is situated. At one stretch across the main highway there is a road known as Japan road. On the other hand, the station is surrounded by the PWD commercial wing. From one angle it is being covered by Sawan garden housing society. The area now where the building is situated is now being hurriedly constructed for housing and also commercial purposes. Along with the boom of famous Bahria town, there is a commercial uplift and also unauthorized vegetable and fruit shops with the boundaries of PWD, Pakistan and Korang town(s) respectively. One of the officer respondent shared that there are around 15 populated societies though most of them are still under the phase of development and construction along with 18 to 20 villages in their security beat.

Normally, each Thana has a lock up, one room for custody of property. It also has place for placing arms and anti-riot equipments. Usually one room is reserved for SHO, one for Muharrir and a few others for the rest of the staff. The studied Thana has around 73 employees including SHO, Additional SHO, Sub Inspector, Assistant Sub Inspector(s) and respective investigation team(s) on different cases and issues. The chain of command is tail ended by Head constables and Lower head constables. However, most of the work load remains on the Duty Officer (DO). The constables are generally employed on watch and ward duty. They serve summonses and warrants and effected arrests. They also look after the bad characters in the area directly under the Thana.

The police station also lags behind in terms of its vehicles for patrolling the beat. The station has two single cabin vehicles in a bad condition; on the other hand it also has two motor cycles. However it was discovered during discussion that 10 litres are usually given for each vehicle but the irony is that police vehicles gets fuel from the petrol pump near foreign office and consumes half of it when it reaches the beat of the Lohi Bher police station. The police station only has one computer which is argued not being given by the Sarkar (government) but the station has got it on its own.

Originally there were 25 registers in the Thana for documenting all processes and actions taking place. The detailed description and procedure to maintain them is provided in Chapter No. 25 of the Police rules 1934. The important registers includes FIR, Daily Diary or Roznamcha, History sheets, City crimes, Proclaimed offenders, Governmental belongings, Licenses etc.

The existing culture of Thana Lohi Bher

The atmosphere, ambiance and activities within Thana is very different from an ordinary government office. It is interesting that the Police and Criminals are housed together in the same building in the same building. The Thana is not just a workplace for the policemen but also a living area. Thus the housed criminals may act as a bridge or channel of vested friendship(s) or linkages.

One of the respondent mentioned that they are never detached mentally from their work and environment.

Hmara tu uthna, baithna, sona, jagna he Thana aur Hawalat hain

It is also observed that such attachment(s) due to prolonged stay in harsh and dehumanizing environment create serious effects on the behaviour and especially reactions of

personality of police station workers. The other element is that unlike government offices, Thana has no fixed working hours. As argued by a respondent that Thana works 24/7 and never shuts down its duties. From the SHO's katcheri to the early morning sweeper, the Thana never sleeps.

Major crime details registered at Thana Lohi Bher

The respondents told that on an average they deal with around 9 to 10 reports. It was also shared that 397 FIRs were registered in the police station in the year 2014. It was also said that most of the cases were of car theft, dacoit and robbery. The respondent police officer assured that there is no case of terrorism filed here, however there were cases of murder.

Out of 397 FIRs, most of the cases are tabled below:

S.No	Type of Case	Number
1	Naqab Zani (burglary-night)	56
2	Car Theft	38
3	Bike Theft	34
4	Dacoit (bil-jabr)	37
5	Murder	08
6	Murder attempt	09
7	Zarar (Hit)	12
8	Kidnapping	09
9	Life ending Accidents	01
10	Routine Accidents	04
11	Dacoit (395-396)	05
12	Theft(s)	27
13	Unlicensed Arms	31
14	Drugs (narcotics)	15

Functioning and Service delivery issues

It was also discovered that the functioning of the police station is not typical 9-5 but a 24/7 tiring and hectic approach. Thus, provision of lodging facilities including the availability of kitchen and toilets may create and impact on the self image, attitudes, motivation and performance of the staff. A respondent clearly mentioned that living areas for example resting areas should be made annex to the stations would be extremely helpful in developing a vigilant approach. The tiring routine has no breaks, security and it is worsened by long hour's duty at poorly constructed police station.

Police culture is characterized by a number of peculiarities which distinguish it from other organizational cultures which includes:

- The endless and thankless nature of police jobs,
- Its unpredictability and uncertainty,
- And unwritten code of police brotherhood and,
- Unending reality of an element of danger.

The widening gaps are due to the possible corrupt image of police through media and also the language used in the Thana. Whereas, police officers during research were found helpful and also humble in solving or resolving certain applications and cases. The culture of informality, patronage and reciprocity of undue favours leads to defective and deform structure and functioning of the police service system.

CONCLUSION

The current case study shows how hard it is to fix the existing complications within the department and in the perceptions of the general public. It is also important that the existing police culture still reflects police as a force and usually glorified as a subordinate to the unfair political commitments. The current face of the department has several black marks that are unable to be washed by fixing the system partially. It is evident from this case study that a holistic approach is required indeed to gradually shape and mould the functioning and service delivery in an appealing manner. The police as a service delivery department have failed miserably stapled with weak internal management, linkages with poor governance chain, clash of class difference within officers, allocation of timely resources and corrupt portrayal in print, electronic and social media.

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