

THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES CONCERNING THE WOMEN TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS AND THEIR QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Yashaswi Singh Parmar*
Dr. Nabila Qureshi**

ABSTRACT

Employment of Women in India is a contemporary phenomenon in the present society. With rapid increase in industrialization, urbanization, speedy innovations in technology, and to meet with increasing competition, women have entered the workforce of the economy. Women have marked their step in various field such as education, business, politics, social activism, entrepreneurship and serving in national services such as army, navy, air force, police and many other remarkable fields. Now a days women police have become an essential part of the police services not only in India, but across the globe. The job of policing is been pronounced as one of the most stimulating, demanding, health threatening and psychologically unsafe jobs in the world. Their work is connected with menace, administration, and stressed public relations. The mounting number of women police officials in the country in civil, criminal as well as in traffic regulations has brought about the optimistic declarations about the nation's ranking of the cases against women. The job of the traffic police officers is the field job, they are expected to work in the extreme situations both natural as well as manmade, impacting their physical as well as mental health. Here, the question arises that whether the police force have developed such kind of sensitivity towards its women police officers who are expected to be 24/7 on duty comprising of both their official duty hours and performing the domestic responsibilities after switching off from their official working hours? This question paved the way for the present descriptive research study to explore the ground realities of the problems and challenges faced by women traffic police officers, using semi structured interview schedule as a research tool to conduct the study of 45 women traffic police officers in the city of Vadodara, Gujarat.

Keywords: Women Traffic Police Officers, Policing, Physical and Mental Health, Sensitivity.

Introduction

The traffic police in India is always pestered by Media as the one who is neglecting their duties. No one really investigates in to the matter and finds out about various problems and challenges faced by them in performing their duties. It's very easy to pin point the errors and mistakes of others, but we always fail to realize the struggle they put in while performing their duties, be it in the scorching summer heat, the heavy rains or the freezing winters.

With the increase in urbanization and industrialization, many municipalities around the country are facing a very speedy growth in the number of vehicles leading to serious traffic congestion problems in many streets of various cities. To safeguard a stable move on the traffic congestion, the traffic police have to be on their toes amidst hundreds of earsplitting and contaminating automobiles during their duty hours. They contract consistently with an assortment of exceptional circumstances and stressors. Working throughout the day in such an atmosphere led to adversative physical and psychological impact on individual. Having awareness of such brutal conditions, still women have entered in to the field and are tremendously doing a great job by performing the dual responsibility, of executing their duty on field as well as post duty hours, women are not getting total off, they manage with dual responsibilities of managing their houses as well.

* Research Student, Faculty of Social Work, The Maharaja Sayajirao, University of Baroda, Gujarat, India.
** Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, The Maharaja Sayajirao, University of Baroda, Gujarat, India.

In spite of the dual responsibilities women traffic police officers have found to be sincere, committed and dedicated during their duty hours and keep the city moving. According to an article published by Times of India on 6th March 2022, the case of 5 women traffic cops in the city of Noida, now keeps the city moving with strong dedication and commitment. According to the details mentioned in the article, the department only comprised of Male members till 1st March 2022, with no single female traffic police officer in the department. Five dedicated women cops reached out to the department authorities expressing their strong desire to work with the team, dedicated to resolve and manage the issues related to traffic problems in the city. The authorities agreed for the request and these women cops are effectively performing their duties in the traffic control room.

In India, Gender was first addressed for the very first time under the Model Police Act enacted by Government of India. Thereafter, in 2013, a second committee reconsidered 2006 Model and a New draft policy Act was constituted in 2014.

Previous studies undertaken on the women traffic police officers reveals that there are various problems and challenges faced by the women police officers. A study undertaken by Bhaskar (1986) and Pillai (1987), studied the relationship between job stress and personality. The study suggests that majority of policemen and women face mental stagnation, lack of proper training and professional as well as personal obligations which produce anxiety and mild to severe stress. Another study undertaken by Raghavan (1981) describes lack of proper infrastructural facilities, low compensation structure, heavy workload and limited opportunities for career growth and development.

With this background, the present study was undertaken in the city of Vadodara, Gujarat state to find out the problems and challenges faced by the women traffic police cops.

Study Objectives

- To find out the challenges faced by the women traffic police of Vadodara.
 - Physical challenges
 - Psychological challenges
 - Socio-economic challenges
- To explore the work life balance of women traffic police officers.
- To find out the governmental support mechanism for women traffic police.

Research Methodology

The present study is a descriptive research study which describes the problems and challenges of 45 women traffic police officers who were interviewed with prior appointment after their duty hours in the city of Vadodara, Gujarat. The study was conducted using semi structured interview schedule as a research tool taking views on work life balance, the physical, the socio-economic challenges faced by these women officers in their daily routine i.e performing the duty call as well as managing the responsibilities at home.

Rationale and Scope of the Study

Women traffic police officers perform a very pivotal role however, their services remain unutilized. Like other working women, who have successfully marked their move in various fields, in spite of several challenges like performing the dual responsibilities, longer working hours, and facing various role conflict, the women traffic police officers are also contributing proactively in the traffic management of any city or area. Hence their needs, their challenges, the problems encountered also need to be focused on. With this objective, the present study is undertaken during December till February 2022, to find the problems and challenges faced by these women traffic cops. The findings of the study will help the policy makers to find out the suitable solutions/ strategies, so as to facilitate and encourage more women participating in the traffic control team.

Research Ethics Followed while conducting the Study

- The researcher approached various traffic points of different areas in Vadodara for the data collection.
- The on-duty timings of respondents were from 7.00 am till 3.00 pm therefore the responses were collected on duty.
- The respondents were consulted well in advance and the researcher had taken prior appointment from each of the respondent to participate in the study.

Major Findings of the Study**Table 1: Showing the demographic profile of the respondents**

Particulars		Major Findings Percentage (%)
Age Group	18-27 Years	49
Marital Status	Married	53
Educational Qualifications	H.S.C	66
Type of Family	Nuclear	68
Average Monthly Income	Less than 20,000	54
Working Experience as Traffic police officer	0-5 Years	59

Interpretation

The above table shows the demographic profile of women traffic police where 49% of women aged between 18-27 years, 53% of women were married, 66% of women had higher secondary education qualification, most of the women lived in a nuclear family which is 68%, 54% women had monthly income less than 20,000, 59% of the women had work experience of 0-5 years.

Table 2: Showing the Physical Challenges faced by the respondents

Particulars	Major Findings Percentage (%)
Lack of availability of hygienic and separate female washrooms in and around their duty areas.	60
Highest number of respondents were facing breathing issues due to pollution	56
No Facility for sitting and resting - Facing body ache issues due to constant standing during the duty hours	71

Interpretation

The above table shows the physical challenges faced by women traffic police of Vadodara. 60% of women lack availability of hygienic and separate washrooms, 56% of women were facing breathing issues, 71% of women face body ache issues due to unavailability of sitting and resting areas.

Table 3: Showing the Psychological Challenges faced by the respondents

Particulars	Major Findings Percentage (%)
Respondents face stress issues due to working in extreme conditions	71
Less Motivation to work due to less promotional opportunities	74
Lacks decision making authority in the job as well as in the domestic front	66
Civilians are reluctant to follow the instructions given while controlling the traffic	58
Gender discrimination between male and Female cops in job responsibilities	44
Less opportunities to relieve their stress and Burn outs	69

Interpretation

The above table shows the psychological challenges faced by women traffic police of Vadodara. 71% of women faced stress issues, 74% of women had less motivation towards their job, 66% women faced difficulty in making decision, 58% of women get ignored by the civilians, 44% of women faced discrimination on duty, 69% women agreed on having less opportunities on relieving the stress.

Table 4: Showing the Socio-cultural Challenges faced by the respondents

Particulars	Major Findings Percentage (%)
Support from the family members for doing job	7
Stress due to imbalance between the Professional and Personal life	40
Lack of acceptance from the Society for joining the traffic police officers	54
Able to Spend quality time with Family	44

Interpretation

The above table shows the Socio-cultural challenges faced by women traffic police of Vadodara. Only 7% of the women had family support, 40% women faced stress due to imbalance between professional and personal life. 54% women agreed in having lack of societal acceptance due to the job, 44% women were able to spend quality time with family.

Table 5: Showing the awareness on government support Mechanisms

Particulars	Major Findings Percentage (%)
Are aware of the women protection schemes	47
Aware of the women rights in India	60
Aware of the employment programs	76
Aware of the POSH scheme	14

Interpretation

The above table shows awareness on government support mechanism in women traffic police of Vadodara. 47% were aware of the women protection schemes, 60% women were aware of the women rights, 76% people were aware of the employment programs, only 14% of women were aware of the POSH scheme. Along with this, quantitative data, the researcher has also obtained some qualitative information about the problems and challenges faced by these traffic police officer which is presented through following case studies:

- **Case Study 1:** The female officer was really struggling hard as she has no other earning family members; hence in order to satisfy the basic needs of the dependents, they have migrated from remotest rural village and have taken up a job of the traffic police officer. Hence, the officer shared that she is doing the job out of the need. When she is on duty, the children are unattended and she always have anxiety about her children during the duty hours.
- **Case Study 2:** One officer interacted that she did not get adequate support from the family member to join in the police force, hence she rebelled against her family members and has come from the one of the nearest villages and has joined the police force and right now managing all her things on her own and manage to stay in working women hostel.

Conclusions and Suggestions

- Majority of the Female officers have done the job because of the financial need of the family.
- There is no proper hygienic facility available for them, hence the law makers should ensure of the same.
- Gender discrimination is been noticed in terms of the promotional and job responsibilities, which can be paid attention by the Policy makers.
- Since majority of the officers were not getting support from the family members, awareness has to be made among the community members.
- Traffic rules and sensitization amongst the civilians and especially Youth can be done to have sensitive behaviour towards these Female officer

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