



Work Life Balance Of Female Police Personnel

Anjna kumari^{1*}, Jyoti thakur²

^{1*}P.hd Scholar at Career Point University Hamirpur.H.P. 176041 Email id : anjnakumari89@gmail.com.

²Associate Professor Career point university Hamirpur. HP. 176041. Email id : jyoti.mba@cpuh.in

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ABSTRACT

Posttraumatic stress disorder exhibits gender disparities, with women often experiencing higher prevalence and severity. This study investigates these differences within law enforcement, addressing psychological, social, and organizational factors influencing female police officers' elevated risk of PTSD. Psychological theories highlight peritraumatic emotions, such as fear and helplessness, as key contributors to PTSD development, suggesting gender-specific responses to trauma. Gender socialization and workplace culture also impact female officers' experiences, with biases, stereotypes, and social isolation posing significant challenges. Through qualitative methods including interviews and thematic analysis, this research explores the lived experiences of female police officers, uncovering stressors, coping mechanisms, and support systems within the workplace. By amplifying their voices, the study aims to inform policy and practice initiatives promoting gender equity, enhancing mental health support services, and fostering inclusive organizational cultures. Understanding the multifaceted factors contributing to PTSD among female police officers is crucial for developing tailored interventions and support strategies, ultimately improving the well-being and resilience of women in law enforcement.

Keywords: posttraumatic stress disorder, gender differences, female police officers, law enforcement, workplace culture, psychological factors, social factors, organizational factors, qualitative research.

1. Introduction

Posttraumatic stress disorder seems to affect women at a higher rate and with greater severity compared to men (for a review, see Tolin & Foa, 2006). There is consistent evidence of gender disparities in PTSD among ordinary citizens, regardless of the study's methodology. For instance, Breslau et al. (1998) reported a lifetime prevalence rate of 13%, while Norris (1992) found a 6% conditional current prevalence rate. Breslau & Davis (1992) reported a chronic PTSD rate of 21.8%, while Stein, Walker, Hazen, & Forde (1997) reported a 3% conditional current prevalence rate, while Norris et al. (1992) claimed a 1% rate. Gender distinctions in the military and police have, surprisingly, never been the subject of research (Pole et al., 2001; Sutker, Davis, Uddo, & Ditta, 1995). According to Brewin et al. (2000), there was a notable disparity in the intensity of PTSD symptoms across civilian and military groups ($r = 0.13$ with .00 for each). The symptoms in question were not associated with gender in samples obtained from the military, as determined by a comprehensive meta-analysis. This paradox among female populations implies that the susceptibility to post-traumatic stress disorder may not be solely determined by biological sex, but rather by additional variables, such as the distinctions between law enforcement and military personnel and regular citizens.

The majority of earlier research on gender variations in PTSD has concentrated on characteristics that separate trauma survivors into male and female categories (Pole & Gross, in press; Tolin & Foa, 2006). The research conducted by (Breslau, Chilcoat, Kessler, and Davis, 1999), Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, and Nelson (1995), and Stein et al. (1997) indicate that the frequency of trauma experiences among men is either comparable to or greater than that of women across the majority of categories. Multiple research studies (Breslau et al., 1999; Fullerton et al., 2001; Stein, Walker, & Forde, 2000) have found that despite controlling for trauma categories to which women are more exposed, such as domestic violence and sexual assault, they continue to demonstrate higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. The higher incidence of PTSD among women does not appear to be entirely explicable by the nature or frequency of the index trauma. Furthermore, the discrepancy between genders in post-traumatic stress disorder and the severity of the injury sustained by

the trauma survivor has not been sufficiently accounted for in peritraumatic assessments of life threat or Stein et al. (2000).

Furthermore, the existing body of literature presents a restricted selection of credible explanations which propose that women are at a higher likelihood than men of reporting peritraumatic dissociation (such as depersonalisation, derealization, and disorientation) occurring during or immediately after the traumatic event (Fullerton et al., 2001). Not only is this finding significant because peritraumatic dissociation is thought to be a strong predictor of post-traumatic stress disorder (Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2003), but it is also thought to be caused by strong, overwhelming emotions such as fear, helplessness, and horror (Marmar et al., 2006). Research has indicated that assessing peritraumatic emotional distress and dissociation in the hours or weeks following the traumatic event can determine whether an individual will be diagnosed with PTSD in the future (Kangas, Henry, & Bryant, 2005; Shalev et al., 1998), despite the fact that some individuals doubt the validity of peritraumatic statements made after the fact. Given this, data from both the prospective and retrospective perspectives combine to highlight the prognostic significance of peritraumatic experiences. In conclusion, the diagnosis of PTSD necessitates the presence of intense peritraumatic emotions (PTSD Criterion A2; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). According to (Weatherers, Ruscio, and Keane, 1999), peritraumatic emotional distress reports are very reliable and should be taken into account when diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder, even when using the so-called "gold standard" clinical interviews.

The perceived function of emotions in coordinating numerous psychobiological systems that experience disruptions in PTSD, such as facial behaviour, psychophysiology, and evaluations, may offer a potentially compelling rationale for the differential risk of developing PTSD (Pole, 2007; Levenson, 1999; Levenson, Soto, & Pole, 2007). (Brunet et al., 2001; Ozer et al., 2003) One theory suggests that traumatic stress can amplify PTSD symptoms by helping the brain form stronger associations between traumatic stimuli and problematic memories. In addition, several studies have consistently found that women, as a collective, report experiencing a greater intensity of many emotions compared to men (e.g., anxiety, dread, and helplessness; see Brody, 1997; Fischer, 1993 for reviews). Additionally, women have a higher likelihood than men of meeting PTSD criterion A2, that concerns feeling extremely distressed after a traumatic event (Creamer, McFarlane, & Burgess, 2005). Consequently, gender differences in PTSD may be influenced more by peritraumatic emotions than by peritraumatic dissociation.

While certain feminist academics consider emotionality to be a significant differentiating factor between the sexes (Tannen, 1990), Some claim that social setting may have a greater impact on gender differences in emotion, gender role, and gender socialisation than by biological sex (Brody, 1985; Fischer, 1993). According to Clifton, McGrath, and Wick (1976), women who work in typically masculine occupations, such executive roles, tend to show their emotions less than women who work in traditionally feminine positions, like homemakers. Men who are given the primary responsibility of caring for their children and performing other traditionally feminine responsibilities, on the other hand, exhibit higher levels of anxiety compared to men who refrain from performing these tasks (Radin, 1994). The promotion of a conventionally masculine gender role within the police force is influenced by culture and training (Burke, Richardsen, & Martinussen, 2006; Metcalfe & Dick, 2002). This includes the discouragement of emotional responses, such as dread, that may arise during duty-related situations that pose a risk to life (Reiser & Geiger, 1984). Female police officers who follow these guidelines should, in theory, have less peritraumatic emotional discomfort and, by extension, a decreased likelihood of acquiring post-traumatic stress disorder.

If this is the case, then the relative resilience of female officers to PTSD might incur a cost. They might even devise methods of inhibiting, suppressing, or otherwise regulating their emotional distress that are traditionally associated with men. Consuming alcohol is one example. In contrast to the comparatively lower likelihood of civilian women using alcohol as a coping mechanism for trauma than civilian men (Green & Lindy, 1994), Bellinger, Best, Metzler, Wasserman, and Mohr (in press) report that female cops have been seen to drink alcohol at the same rate as their male associates. Somatization could potentially serve as an additional illustration. Those who choose not to reveal their emotional reactions to unpleasant situations may experience increased psychophysiological reactivity (Gross & Levenson, 1993), a weakened immune system (Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Glaser, 1988), and ultimately, a greater incidence of physical health complications. Given the discovery that male civilians are more prone to swap physical sensations for emotional ones for emotional symptoms in following a distressing occurrence (Green & Lindy, 1994), it is reasonable to hypothesise that trauma-exposed female officers would exhibit a preference for somatic manifestations of distress over emotional ones. Consistent with this hypothesis, a study conducted by Burke et al. (2006) research findings revealed that female officers displayed a higher prevalence of somatization symptoms in comparison to their male counterparts.

In recent years, police officers represent a group at heightened risk for suicide on account of the hazardous and stressful conditions they encounter on the job (Hem, Berg, and Ekeberg 1971). According to studies (Mohandie and Hatcher 1999), Between two and three times as many police officers commit suicide as people in general. Women have significantly increased in number as police officers in recent years, despite the fact that law enforcement has historically been a male-dominated field. Early 1990s data from Brown and Fielding (1993) indicates that the proportion of female police officers in the United States was 9%. Female police officers comprised 12.7% of the force in the United States as of 2001 (Brodeur 2010). Notwithstanding the frequent exposure of officers to peril and stress on the job, according to available data, there has been a notable rise in

the enlistment of women into the police force. Despite significant progress in including more women in the police force, gender stereotypes continue to present obstacles for this demographic. Consequently, female law enforcement officers typically encounter greater professional challenges compared to their male counterparts. The present study aims to illustrate how psychological distinctions between males and females, gender stereotypes, and the culture of police work all play a role in explaining why female police officers, while equally motivated as their male counterparts, suffer from higher stresses. Notwithstanding this, the obstacles that female officers face in the workplace make them less prone to malfeasance than their male counterparts.

2. Psychological Differences Between Men and Women

The psychological development of adolescent women as moral beings is the subject of Carol Gilligan's work. Males and females exhibit distinct patterns of moral development. Gilligan argues that feminine ethics are founded upon compassion and are associated with the recognition of obligations and interpersonal connections. Malevolent ethics, conversely, are concerned with justice and are linked to a comprehension of legal principles and individual rights (Mann 2008). The moral perspectives of males and women diverge. In contrast to men, women place greater emphasis on relationships and values than they do on norms and principles. Research shows that girls are better at understanding other people's feelings than boys are (Gilligan, 1982), which is why women care more about what other people think. According to Gilligan (1982), women demonstrate concern for others through their consideration of diverse perspectives. Women place the utmost importance on their responsibilities towards others. The stance of females regarding morality is that individuals have obligations to one another. Furthermore, the female voice exhibits a "ethics of care" (Gilligan 1982). Women fear abandonment and detachment despite their high regard for connections, intimacy, and relationships. In general, women are more emotionally complex than males. Instead of adhering to a rigid hierarchy of rules, which represents simplistic moral relativism, they strive to consider the complexities of personal lives and experiences when making moral judgements (Mann 2008:338).

Feminists and men possess distinct moral perspectives. Because toughness and independence are frequently associated with masculinity, men dread intimacy. The male voice conveys a judicial ethic, which is characterised by adherence to regulations and regard for personal liberties (Gilligan 1982). From an early age, males acquire organisational skills, fair play, and independence through rough-and-tumble competitive activities with their peers (Mann 2008:338). Conversely, upon reaching adulthood, they adhere to the hierarchical structures of these regulations and tenets (Mann 2008). As a result, males subscribe to the notion that every rule ought to be applied uniformly to all individuals, irrespective of situation (Mann 2008).

An analogy to mathematical problems, men often perceive citizen rights in terms of formulas, concluding that each problem has a singular solution (Mann 2008). As a result of their preoccupation with interpersonal connections, women are more apprehensive when confronted with ethical dilemmas (Mann 2008). Women typically strive to resolve issues without causing harm to others, whereas males typically force themselves to select the most accurate solution. Distinguishing problem-solving methodologies exist between males and women. Women are perceived to have a greater capacity for empathy, which may result in an impact of their emotions on their work performance as police officers. Because they are concerned with how their decisions will affect others, the sentimentality of female police officers restricts their ability to make clear choices. In light of the thief's unique circumstances, a female police officer may be inclined to be more lenient with him or her in comparison to other thieves if she discovers that he or she steals money for food, for example. Due to their concern for compassion and the preservation of peace, they arrive at decisions through the process of mutual consensus. In lieu of abstract and inflexible moral principles, they view morality as situation-dependent and intertwined with particular narratives (Mann 2008). Irrespective of the thief's motivations for perpetrating the crime, male police officers would administer identical punishments to her as they do to other thieves in identical circumstances. Male police officers are believed to be capable of rendering impartial decisions due to the absence of extraneous influences that could sway their judgement. Due to the severe emphasis placed on norms to maintain a peaceful environment, male officers are typically less concerned with how their decisions will affect other staff members.'

3. The status of women police officers

The nineteenth century witnessed a substantial advancement in modern policing; nevertheless, women were initially marginalised. In the early twentieth century, the appointment of female police officers commenced, albeit in a restricted capacity and in small numbers. As a result of labour shortages, expansion took place during World War I. Notwithstanding the progressive incorporation of women, the policing profession continued to lack representation in key leadership positions and specialised divisions. Police administrators and labour unions continued to oppose the pursuit of gender equality. Female police officers encountered bias and preconceived notions regarding their capabilities. Nevertheless, the advantages of their employment include enhanced provision of services to female victims, decreased occurrences of complaints and misconduct, and more. The advancement of female police officers has been substantially aided by affirmative action initiatives and robust equal employment opportunity legislation. Enhanced gender representation in law enforcement has been facilitated by additional supportive initiatives, including recruitment campaigns, career development

programmes, and flexible employment options. Furthermore, certain societies have achieved success with a phased approach to integration, which commenced with divisions dedicated to women.

4. Policing Workplace Culture/Environment

As a result of the police culture, female officers are oppressed. As suggested by Babin and Boles (1998):80, one study finds that women tend to exhibit a greater degree of adherence to explicitly stated organizational policies and standards. In contrast to women, who are typically submissive and obedient, males exhibit more aggressive behavior and exert greater dominance in the workplace. There exists a greater propensity for males to express their viewpoints within organizational settings, while women are more likely to conform and acquiesce to the policies and regulations of the organization, irrespective of their personal views, due to the inherent nature of their instincts. Since they are not subject to the same limitations as women, their viewpoints are consequently more often acknowledged and embraced. Mann (2008) further posits that attachment serves as the foundation of feminine identity. Consequentially, it can be inferred that the organizations establish regulations without duly considering their viewpoints. Moreover, in order to pre-empt conflicts in a culture dominated by men, young women perpetually experience "a feeling of estrangement from the dominant Western lifestyle" (Mann 2008:325). As a result, they internalize or repress their relationship-focused voices or opinions. As a means of preventing conflict, women adhere to the norms. Additionally, they comprehend that in a patriarchal setting, they will receive no assistance from their male colleagues. Subsidiarity and obedience to the norms are therefore typical of women. To ingratiate themselves with the organization, they must either set aside their emotions or make internal adjustments. As an example, female police officers face the same obstacles that are present in other patriarchal organizations, given that the policing workforce is predominantly male. Hence, they encounter challenges in assimilating into the policing profession, which is predominantly male-dominated, physically strenuous, and time-consuming (Parnaby and Leyden 2010:256-257). According to Vartia (2001), an individual's tension level may rise when they perceive limitations in their ability to freely express their opinions. In the absence of a suitable channel through which to convey their concerns, this may consequently increase the stress levels of female police officers.

Parnaby and Leyden (2011) illustrate the deviance of policing through the application of Merton's Theory of Anomie. Parabhy and Leyden (2011:256) argue that while ritualists acknowledge and utilize institutionalized methods, they modify their objectives to be more easily attainable. To illustrate that female police officers rarely perform additional duties to meet the norm or expectations, the authors provide the example of female officers (Parnaby and Leyden 2011). The ongoing requirement to categorize oneself as a "policewoman (officer first/female second)" or a "policewoman (female first/officer second)" presents difficulties for female police officers trying to forge their identity in patriarchal society (Parnaby and Leyden 2011:256). On the other hand, these are not usually challenges faced by male police officers. It is unnecessary for them to self-identify as "policemen" or "police officers." While the term "police" is commonly assumed to refer to them in an automatic manner, the gender distinction consistently emphasizes female police officers.

Furthermore, female law enforcement personnel must address the fallacy held by their male counterparts that women lack the capabilities to perform tasks traditionally associated with masculinity. Therefore, women who adhere to institutional norms perceive compliance with rules as a means to secure the approval of male officers (Parnaby and Leyden 2011:257). This elucidates the reason why women are typically more compliant and submissive to the policies of the organization: doing so serves as a means to demonstrate their competence to the male police officers. Nevertheless, the environment fails to afford female police officers any chance to demonstrate their capabilities. Male colleagues have been observed to designate female officers who engage in social interactions with one another "estrogen mafia," which hinders the ability of female officers to effectively collaborate (Parnaby and Leyden 2011:257). Women often experience social isolation as a result of their enlistment in the police force, according to Parnaby and Leyden (2011:257). Female officers encounter challenges in assimilating into this predominantly masculine professional setting due to these attitudes.

In addition, a study reveals that female police are more likely than their male colleagues to encounter high levels of harassment, overt antagonism, and other unfavourable social encounters while performing their official tasks (Morash and Haarr 1995:689). This is due to the hostility that permeates the culture of police organizations toward female personnel (Morash and Haarr 1995). Moreover, there has been speculation that the negative repercussions of the profession might have a greater detrimental impact on female police officers compared to their male counterparts (Morash and Haarr 1995:689). Further, this substantiates the notion that "female officers encounter a significantly less favourable internal organizational culture and external work environment" (Morash and Haarr 1995:689).

Furthermore, as indicated by the results of an empirical inquiry into the career aspirations of 71 female police officers, "policewomen who are presently employed do initially strive to attain specialized responsibilities" or believe that perceived bias prevents them from being appointed" (Holdaway & Parker, 1998). In a research published in 1987, Steel and Lovrich interviewed two senior female officers who were stationed in California and Massachusetts. The findings of the research indicate that while women have made significant strides in the field, they have yet to attain exact equality. Additionally, this demonstrates that gender barriers present numerous obstacles for female police officers.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the provided information is that female police officers face significant challenges within the male-dominated culture of law enforcement organizations. In comparison to their male counterparts, these obstacles consist of prejudices, preconceived notions, and unequal treatment. An adverse influence on their job performance and overall well-being, female officers frequently encounter elevated levels of tension, harassment, and social isolation.

Despite advancements in gender representation and affirmative action initiatives, the policing workplace environment continues to present obstacles for female officers. The organizational culture tends to favour male officers, leading to difficulties for women in asserting themselves, expressing their opinions, and advancing their careers.

Moreover, societal perceptions and gender stereotypes further exacerbate the challenges faced by female police officers. These perceptions can lead to misconceptions about women's abilities to perform masculine work and can result in increased levels of harassment and hostility towards female officers.

In conclusion, while progress has been made in integrating more women into law enforcement, Concerning the establishment of a more inclusive and supportive professional milieu for female police officers, considerable progress remains in the effort to rectify gender disparities. Efforts to promote gender equality, combat biases, and provide support for women in law enforcement are essential to ensure that female officers can thrive and contribute effectively to their organizations.

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