



Women Police in Bangladesh: Concerning Motivation, Barriers, Perception, and Stress

Fatema Islam*

**Additional Superintendent of Police Deputy Director (Academic) Police Staff College, Bangladesh.*

*Corresponding Email: *moonislam30115@gmail.com*

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Abstract: *Policing is a male-dominated profession, so women Police sometimes face gender-dominated obstacles. The study aimed to demonstrate the motivations, experiences, perceptions, barriers, and approaches of the women police of Bangladesh toward their career in the Bangladesh Police. The study analyzed the responses to a questionnaire from 40 women police of different ranks in Bangladesh. With the application of the mixed methodology, the study found that: i) the women police were motivated to serve the nation as well as to support their family, ii) 82% of the respondent women police felt that they were equally competent, and 13% indicated that they are more capable than their male counterpart in different job criteria, iii) 35% of the respondent women police thought that they are equally treated compared to the male members of Bangladesh police, iv) the respondents believed that there is a lack of gender-sensitive work environment in Bangladesh, v) stress occurs from the bindings of performing the dual role at a time: Home management, and workload in the office, vi) 57.5% of the 40 respondent officers mentioned that they did not experience the comfortable work environment.*

Keywords: *Women Police, Mixed Methodology, Bangladesh Police, Stress, Motivation, Barriers.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This study revealed that in Bangladesh, there was a perception that gender roles affect the selection of a profession. The majority of Bangladeshis believed that only men were capable of being police officers. The women of Bangladesh have, however, challenged this prejudice. They have effectively and bravely served the Bangladesh Police since joining in 1974.. Their first responsibilities were restricted to helping with interrogations, looking for female suspects, and escorting the women and children under prosecution. However, authorities expected the women police to work in practically all areas of law enforcement. Despite an increase in participation, their functions did not increase as much as they should have. According to



experts, female police officers are essential for investigating crimes against women and children, including rape and sexual assault. According to data from Bangladesh Police, there are 797 female investigators (SI) throughout the country, although most rarely have the chance to investigate cases. In contrast, women have to maintain both workplace and household responsibilities. So, it imposes extra stress on them. Yet, despite all the obstacles, the brave and active role of women police is widely praised nationally and internationally. According to the website of Bangladesh Women Police Network, the number of women police in this country is 18380 (till November 2022), which represents 7.10% among all ranks and 10% among cadre officers. The exploratory and descriptive study showed the present scenario of women in the Police of Bangladesh. It analyzed the inspiration, attitudes, approaches, and perceptions of Bangladesh's women police themselves towards their job as law enforcers. The researcher looked into factors including why they decided to join the Bangladesh Police, how welcoming their workplace is, and whether they feel capable of handling the traditionally patriarchal nature of police service.

A. Research Questions

1. Why do women choose to serve as a member of the Bangladesh Police?
2. How do they think they are compatible with the job?
3. What kind of job responsibilities do they think are suitable?
4. How do they think the work environment of women police is comfortable?

Literature Review

Since men are supposed to be more aggressive than women, a significant gender-based difference exists. Society manufactured these gender disparities in which it considered men superior and more robust than women because men are intrinsically more cold-blooded, hostile, and violent. Social stereotypes lead to the belief that women are weaker than men and need more assistance and protection from others.. In every country, men predominate in the police service because people see Crime control and investigation as traditionally masculine activities. According to Bardwick, the reputation of law enforcement as a traditionally masculine field and the entrance of women will destroy the area. Even in patrol duty, women perform just as well as males; they encounter a lot of male police officers' displeasure. The gender perspective compels female police officers to cope with male hegemony. The existence of women in law enforcement suggests that the field cannot be as physiologically challenging as women succeed in doing the job. Balkin opines that in addition to lowering the status of male officers, the participation of women also contributes to a lower public view of the field. Initial studies found that men and women chose to work in law enforcement because of job security. Women also claimed that their law enforcement pursuit was motivated by a desire to serve female individuals and minors. The patriarchal aspect of law enforcement was the main argument against women joining the ranks of the Police. The general idea that women have physical and emotional limitations from birth was the basis for barring them from law enforcement occupations. Society viewed Female cops as being too soft, less skilled, and less inclined to employ force than their male counterparts. Female officers are supposed to be on pace with their male counterparts without going too far in deviating from the mainstream. However, such position and identity ambiguity might cause personal problems, such as a withdrawal from the



workplace. Frustration and internal problems may impact the perception of women police towards their workplace. These areas include maternity leave, child daycare policies, and sexual harassment in the workplace. A study regarding the women police of Bangladesh (Below ASP) reveals that the job satisfaction level of the women police of Bangladesh is good, and they perform well in some specific job responsibilities. On the other hand, in the workplace, women are more likely to follow and accept the organization's regulations and procedures submissively because of the nature of women's impulses, regardless of whether they agree with them. In contrast, males are more confident voicing their thoughts within the organizations. Women know they will not get any help in this patriarchal society if a conflict occurs. Hence, since men have fewer restrictions than women, their opinions are more frequently heard and accepted. As a result, the organizations likely adopt policies without considering women's views. In addition, women find it challenging to function in the male-dominated, psychologically and physically demanding, and time-consuming police environment. Even in a patriarchal society, they have to do extra work to meet the expectations, though they have to identify themselves as "policewomen" or "women police," where the "woman" word comes with the Police. Sometimes the women police do not get to show their capability in a dominant male environment. Moreover, women police officers are often more affected than their male counterparts by the negative phases of their jobs. However, According to a study, women Police were often better at defusing conflict than men. They also performed as well on most performance indicators. Equal opportunity should continue to be the primary justification for encouraging women to pursue police jobs, and policymakers need to be cautious of "gender essentialism" while promoting feminized policing. Research also suggests that more women working in law enforcement will result in fewer complaints and instances of misconduct, such as using force less frequently.

2. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

The study mainly uses primary data from the in-depth structured interview of 40 Bangladeshi women police officers of different ranks (Constable to DIG) to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. In the questionnaire, the researcher included some close-ended questions for quantitative research. The researcher took interviews through face-to-face conversation, e-mail questionnaires, and Whatsapp calls. She sought permission from the interviewees before commencing and recording the interview. The researcher interviewed them from 14th March to 20th April 2023. The 40 responders ranked from Constable to Deputy Inspector General. Besides the formal structured interview, informal conversations with the women officers of different ranks gave significant insight into the various features of the life of woman police in Bangladesh.

B. Data Analysis

An application of mixed methodology is appropriate for exploratory and descriptive research. To complete the quantitative analysis, the researcher utilizes the descriptive quantitative data analysis method by using frequency distribution which gives an image of the socio-economic status, demography, and job perception of the respondent women police in Bangladesh. Next,

she analyzed the qualitative information found from the interview by open coding. Then the data are categorized into different themes.

Findings

A. Quantitative Study

1) Rank:

Bangladesh recruits the members of the Police in three tiers: Constable, sergeant/Sub-Inspector, and ASP. The ranks of Bangladesh Police are as follows:



(Wikimedia,BangladeshPoliceRankBadge)

In this research, 20 of the 40 responders are Constable, one Naik, two Assistant Sub Inspectors (ASI), two Sub-Inspectors (SI), three Sergeants, two Inspectors, two Assistant Superintendent of Police (SP), five Additional Superintendent of Police (Addl SP), two Police Super (SP) and one Deputy Inspector General (DIG).

2) Academic Qualification:

Table I displays the academic backgrounds of the 40 women police officers who were the subject of the study.

Table I: Academic Qualification

Rank	Academic degree	Number of officers
Constable	Secondary School Certificate	6
Constable	Higher School Certificate	13
Constable	Bachelor Degree	1
Naik	Bachelor Degree	1
ASI	Secondary School Certificate	1



ASI	Higher School Certificate	1
SI	Master's	2
Sergeant	Masters	2
Sergeant	Bachelor	1
Inspector	Masters	1
Inspector	Bachelor	1
ASP	Masters	2
Addl SP	Masters	5
Police Super	Masters	2
DIG	Masters	1
Total		40

Table I shows that all the respondents were perfectly educated according to their job requirements. The highest academic degree for Constable the researcher found was a Bachelor's degree. Most of the constables (13) passed Higher Secondary Certificate. Six of these 13 constables informed the researcher that they also continued higher education. All officers above Constable ranked completed a minimum Bachelor's degree. In addition to the conventional educational system, the officers ranked from Sub inspector/ Sergeant undertook a special compulsory course related to the police science and criminal justice system as a part of their basic training course.

3) Perception of Own Competency of Women police towards their job:

The perception of women police about their job is vital for creating them as an efficient force. What women Police thought of their competency compared to their male counterparts is shown in Table II:

Table II: Perception of Own Competency

Duty Category	Less Competent	Equal Competent	More Competent
Motor patrol	6 (15%)	32 (80%)	2 (5%)
Foot patrol	5 (12.5%)	34 (85%)	1 (2.5%)
Public Order	4 (10%)	32 (80%)	4 (10%)
Using lethal weapons is needed	3 (7.5%)	37 (92.5%)	0
Interrogating Male suspects	3 (7.5%)	33 (82.5%)	4 (10%)
Report Writing	2 (5%)	35 (87.5%)	3 (7.5%)
Clerical work	1 (2.5%)	32 (80%)	7 (17.5%)
Domestic Violence	3 (7.5%)	23 (57.5%)	14 (35%)
Juvenile cases	1 (2.5%)	26 (65%)	13 (32.5%)
Interrogating female suspects	0	18 (45%)	22 (55%)
Investigation	0	38 (95%)	2 (5%)
Intelligence	0	38 (95%)	2 (5%)



Crime Control	1 (2.5%)	39 (97.5%)	0
Security & Protection	2 (5%)	36 (90%)	2 (5%)
Trainer	0	39 (97.5%)	1 (2.5%)
Average %	5%	82%	13%

Table II presents that, on average, 82% of the respondents felt that they could conduct the various policing functions and responsibilities competently compared to the male officers. Moreover, 55% of respondents also presumed that in some specific task, i.e., handling female suspects, they performed better than the male. Significantly, 97.5% of respondents thought they were equally skilled in training and crime control. The table also reveals that 15% of respondents said they were less competent than the male officers in general motor patrol duties. Overall, 13% of the responders believed they were more capable than the male police officers in various duty categories.

4) Separate Career Structure:

Table III shows that most respondents desired the same career structure for both men and women police. Therefore, they thought that the authority should impose an identical recruitment policy, posting criteria, and promotion eligibility for all members of the Bangladesh Police. On the other hand, 15 respondents believed that as women lag behind men, the women police need a separate career structure.

Table III: Career Structure for Women Police

Rank	Separate Career Structure for Women	Identical Career Structure for Women
Constable	7	13
Naik	0	1
ASI	2	0
SI	1	1
Sergeant	0	3
Inspector	1	1
ASP	2	0
Additional SP	2	3
SP	0	2
DIG	0	1
Total	15	25

5) Preferred Role of Women Police:

The researcher categorized the role of women police into three types. The first one is the Traditional role, where the women police would work on specific cases, such as cases related to juvenile or female victims and female suspects. The second category refers to the integrated role where women Police would do the same work as men. The last type, the Modified role, means that women Police would do the same duties except for any masculine role involving

violence and lethal weapons. The researcher asked which role the respondents preferred for the women police. The 67.5% of respondents who were women Police preferred integrated roles for themselves. On the other hand, 30% felt that the modified role of women police is desirable, whereas only 2.5% of respondents indicated that they wish a traditional role for women police.

Table IV: Preferred Role of Women Police

Rank	Traditional Role	Integrated	Modified
Constable	0	9	11
Naik	0	1	0
ASI	0	2	0
SI	1	1	0
Sergeant	0	3	0
Inspector	0	2	0
ASP	0	1	1
Addl. SP	0	5	0
SP	0	2	0
DIG	0	1	1
Total	1 (2.5%)	27 (67.5%)	12 30%)

B. Qualitative Study

1) Motivation:

The number of female police officers in Bangladesh has significantly increased in recent years, although they are sometimes subject to oppression in the masculine police atmosphere. This phenomenon suggests that women in Bangladesh are as motivated as men to join the Police service. To address their attitude towards their job, the researcher asked two questions. Firstly, what was their motivation for pursuing a career in Bangladesh police? Secondly, what motivates them to continue their career in the same job? The motivation for 16 constables and one Naik to join in Bangladesh police was the opportunity to serve the country and its fellow citizens. They took this profession as a symbol of patriotism. One Constable said,

"My motivation behind choosing this job is to serve the people. I love the smile of the service receiver after they get good service from me."

In contrast, four constables chose this profession to help their families. The two ASIs described their motivation for this career line as helping the country and the distressed people. The same concept of motivation for helping struggling people came from the two respondent SI, three sergeants, and two Inspectors of this research. One ASP described her motivation towards the job, saying,

"There is a great opportunity to develop myself professionally through this job. I can help people directly. As a woman, it is essential for us to be in a position where others will honor us and pay heed to our sayings. We can be the change makers through the opportunity entitled to this profession."



On the other hand, one additional SP presumed this profession as a synonym of patriotism. Another Additional SP expressed that she started her career in the Bangladesh police to serve the nation powerfully describing the job as an icon of women's empowerment. The second largest category of inspiration the researcher found from the interviews was an approach of "Taking a challenge." Besides, motivation from the family members was common in choosing this job. One Additional SP stated,

"I always paid close attention to my studies since childhood. Later, my spouse inspired me to continue my studies and career. So I came to this job motivated by my family.

One Superintendent of Police defined her motivation it is saying,

"I love challenging work and acting innovatively to change society."

Another Superintendent extracted her ability to take challenges and work hard as a motivation. In her words,

"I love the uniform, walkie-talkie. I love to learn laws, regulations, and their applications. I dare to take on challenges. I can work hard, and I am sincere."

The opportunity to embrace new challenges daily was also the motivation for the respondent DIG of Bangladesh Police. She said,

"My government officer father wanted us to join the civil service. I chose the police service in BCS because I enjoy challenges and work distinctively. Every day is a new day in the Police."

All interviewee officers opined that they wanted to continue their careers in Bangladesh Police. My primary motivation to continue the job was to get the opportunity of helping others. Among 40 respondents, 42% said that they want to continue the position to work for the mass people. According to the respondent Naik in Bangladesh police,

"Policing is the best way to serve the people, so I want to continue my job."

Job security came to the second position of motivation to continue the job. 31% of respondents wanted to continue this service because of job security from the standpoint of Bangladesh. In this study, 11% of respondent officers admired the diversity in policing as a reason for job continuation motivation. The researcher found that 7% of respondents felt this job enhanced their self-confidence and self-respect. One Constable working in a training institution of Bangladesh Police took the job as self-correction. She said this job compelled her to avoid any corruption and mishap. However, different thoughts were also there. One Police Super who pursued higher education in "Policing" discussed the intellectual nature of this job. She gratefully said that this job enhanced her knowledge, skill, and confidence to change society. In this study, the most influential motivational factors of women police were the opportunity to serve people, support family, take the challenges, ensure job security, and safeguard self-confidence. It is implied from this study that the motivation of women to join and continue jobs there was not entirely different from men.

2) Stress Management:

This study revealed that women police officers sometimes felt stress in their workplace including hostile work environments, job-related pressure, and domestic pressure. Besides, many female police officers had young babies, but because of their job, they had to leave their children in the care of maids or relatives. The tension regarding their children puts them under



much stress and reduces performance efficiency. Due to the nature of their work, many women Police stayed away from their families, which caused emotional and physical estrangement. Consequently, sometimes they encountered depression and loneliness. On the other hand, some young constables balanced their work and higher studies simultaneously. They were struggling since they could not get enough leave from the authority.

Sometimes, distance from family makes them depressed. One sergeant opined that,

“Our hometown and place of employment are far apart. Our authority can adjust our posting parameters so that we can stay close to home. Only then will we be able to spend quality time with our family regularly?”

Not only distance from family and children but the adverse perception of the society towards the Police could also impose stress on women members of Bangladesh police. One Additional SP said,

“Support from family members can ease our problem. However, some women police officers fight to combine work and family because they do not have supportive families. On the other hand, the social perception of policing is often negative in our society. So some officers face adverse social discernment which makes them despondent.”

The study showed that 87.5% of respondents felt that they were equally capable of coping with stress compared to the male officers, while the remaining 12.5% indicated that women were more qualified than their male counterparts in encountering all kinds of stressors.

3) Equal Opportunity:

35% of respondent women officers in this research said they felt that the authority treated them equally to male colleagues. On the other hand, the rest, 65% of officers, believed they were not welcome to make a career in policing in a male-dominated police department in Bangladesh. The study showed that 74% of respondent women police had field-level experience in various categories: traffic, patrolling, intelligence, and investigation. Even though it was common in Bangladesh that the authority deprived the women police of the desired positions in this department. An inspector who had experience working in United Nations peacekeeping mission said that,

“Women inspectors in our department face cruel treatment. We are not allowed to hold an Officer-in-Charge position in a police station. Despite demonstrating our abilities, the authority told us that, being women, we could not manage the rigorous work in the police stations. Ironically, our male counterparts claim us to be incapable if we work a desk job.”

The superior officers of this research indicated that they were treated less favorably in the workplace than their male officers. According to an ASP,

“All we need are a workplace without discrimination and well-defined office hours.”

An Additional SP who served her entire career span in District field level policing opined, “Women Police get bad posting compared to same ranked men. However, the family issues of women are mostly responsible for the phenomena. Women have to balance between home and workplace. So, we, the women, need to develop ourselves to achieve a better position and recognition in the department.”



However, the study reveals that in a department where men predominate, women had to undertake a harder effort to achieve than men because women confronted more significant difficulties and barriers to achievement than males. On the other hand, women were accountable for maintaining the household in some ways, which made their professional life more complex. Since women could not decide to go for their desired posting place because of family responsibilities, they had to sacrifice their careers. The respondent DIG said,

"No one gives anything to anyone. Everyone has to earn rights. Women have to face many challenges throughout their lives. So, there is no alternative to hard work."

The gender-sensitive workplace was another vital issue for women. Moreover, Bangladesh police needed more women officers at the policymaking level. One Additional SP with a versatile range of work experience claimed,

"Bangladesh police should ensure a gender-sensitive, suitable workplace for women. Furthermore, the concerned authority encourages greater participation of women police in policymaking. To attain greater participation of women in policymaking, our government should consider institutional transformation. The relevant authorities can also improve the role played by women police in the overall workflow of Bangladesh police."

However, gradually women's participation in field-level policing is increasing. The respondent DIG said,

"Women are now working as Circle ASP and District Police Super. So people's mindset about woman police is changing gradually. They also want their daughters to carry out study and stand on their own feet."

4. Work Environment:

The researcher asked about the environment of the respondents' workplace. She asked questions regarding the respondents' washroom facility, daycare center, and gender-sensitive surroundings. Among the 40 studied members, 42.5% of respondents opined that their work environment was comfortable. On the other hand, 57.5% said that they had faced an uncomfortable work environment. One Sub Inspector said,

"We need separate washrooms and changing rooms in our workplace. In addition to that, The authority should allow the mother to stay with their children during the breastfeeding period. There should be well established Baby Daycare center in every unit of the Police."

The researcher found that the traffic Sergeants of Bangladesh police work on busy city roads. No washroom is available for women traffic police officers in Bangladesh. One traffic Sergeant said,

"We, the traffic sergeants, do not have washroom facilities. So, I consume less water which causes me serious health hazards."

At least seven respondents of this study expressed that they faced harassment in the workplace by male seniors or co-workers. They encountered frequent gender-insensitive comments,



offensive anecdotes, slang words, disrespectful remarks, and objectionable stories from male colleagues.

3. CONCLUSION

This research indicated that Bangladeshi women Police had played a promising role in law enforcement for several decades. Though women police are minor in number in Bangladesh, they presume themselves as equal as or more compatible than their male counterparts. However, several respondents believed they were not offered the desired position and posting compared to the equally qualified male officers. The researcher suggests integrated posting guidelines, including regular shuffling for all men and women members of the Police, grounded on individual skill and competency. The research showed that the women police were highly motivated to serve the nation and support their families. Though balancing between family and workplace impose stress on them, the majority of the respondents felt that they could encounter stressors better than men. The researcher opines that the Bangladesh police authority should establish well-established baby daycare centers in all units of Bangladesh police to reduce the mental stress of new mothers. Sometimes the women police came across an adverse working environment or dominating situation. Many respondents claimed they face gender-insensitive comments, humor, or slang. The researcher opines that a further in-depth study is needed to discover the sexual harassment of women police in Bangladesh in the workplace. However, no respondent planned to leave the job; it pointed out that the work environment of women police in Bangladesh is endurable and secure.

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