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Public image and its impact on the job satisfaction of the Police Officials

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Abstract

Police is a vital Organ of Indian society. A police force is a service-intensive organization with a significant proportion of its employees working in direct contact with the general public. Researchers have been highlighted problems faced by police officials such as long working hours, lack of autonomy, political interference, disturbed personal life etc. It is argued that this is reflected in their interaction with public. The present study tried to explore the perception of different rank Police officials about their Public image and its impact on their job satisfaction. It was found that police officials believe they are perceived less favorably by the community. It was also found that officers' perceived image in most non-enforcement situations was significantly related to their job satisfaction.

Key words: Police Officials, Public Image, Job satisfaction

Introduction

The perception of the public about image of the police varies from country to country. Positive views of the police by citizens can lead to a positive relationship with the police, which can improve the effectiveness of the police (Brown & Benedict, 2002). The negative views can however, lead to resentment, which can impede the ability of the police to be effective formal agents of law and order (Goldsmith, 2005). It is therefore important to explore and understand views about policing (Nalla & Madan, 2012). It is argued that general public in US have shown satisfaction with and confidence in the police force (Frank et al. 1996; Nofziger & Williams, 2005); however, the majority of the Nigerian college students report that the police are too quick to act, are impolite to citizens, are corrupt, and use excessive force (Alemika, 1988). A majority of surveyed Mexican college students view the police as being ineffective in controlling crime and treat citizens unfairly (Brown et al. 2006). In another survey of residents of St. Petersburg (Russia) it is reported that the police stop people without a good cause (Davis et al. 2003).

There have been a series of studies based on the World Values Survey to examine the confidence in police by general public in various countries. It has been found that respondents from U.S.A. generally show greater confidence in the police than their Japanese counterparts (Cao & Stack, 2005). The respondents from Germany are less confident in the police than the respondents from the U.S.A (Cao, 2001). Similarly Chinese respondents show lower level of confidence in their police (Cao & Hou, 2001). Additionally, citizens from different Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela don't have confidence in police (Cao & Zhao, 2005). In another study, the views varied across nations. The European nations have more positive views about police than non-European nations

(Van Dijk et al. 2008). Such findings clearly indicate that there is a lot of variation in public image of police across the globe.

According to Unnithan (2010); Verma, (1999), the police are the most visible and powerful part of the criminal justice system in India. In recent years, the police are under constant pressure to prove them. Public-community relations in India are constantly under scrutiny. It is mainly due to the fact that the present police are examined in the context of colonial legacy and the police Act of 1861, people still believe that the police are meant to protect the government rather than serve the public (Das & Verma, 1998; Nalla & Madan, 2012). There is a lot of literature highlighting lack of accountability of police. According to Dhillon (2005) "Indian policemen are state servants, not public servants. As such, there is no concept of direct accountability" (p. 38). Nalla and Madan (2012, p. 5) have noted that the Indian police have "a primary operational philosophy of serving government interests at the cost of negligence of human rights, at times." The police are heavily influenced by politics, and top police officials owe their allegiance more to political parties than to the public (Dhillon, 2005). Brutality and corruption are pervasive among the Indian police. Verma (1999) contends that "corruption exists within every rank, from constable to the chief of police" (p. 264).

Thus the police in India have been under considerable criticism from various sections of society. Reports in media continue to highlight that there is perhaps no crime which the police has not committed. The upholders of law and order appear to be its worst violators. The police have been the object of a good deal of dissatisfaction lately, whether in open confrontation with rioters and demonstrators, or as the object of severe criticism by the courts and civil society. Since the respect and cooperation of the public are essential for

effective police operation in reporting crimes, assisting officers, testifying in court or in less direct ways-police departments have begun to turn their attention to the sources of this tension.

Although various studies report overall there is satisfaction with the police conduct (Bell, 1979; Mastroski, et al. 1998) but a few studies also report that support for police is not universal. The police are viewed as discreditable (Dean,1980).Bhaskar (1986) Mathur (1995) report lack of respect from public is one of important source of stress among police personnel. Mishra (1992) has found that a large section of Indian society feels that the police function with favouritism and injustice. Further he reports that the public feels that police officials are professionally incompetent, cruel and corrupt.

Public-community relations in India are generally farfetched. The police in India trace their roots back to the colonial period and the police Act of 1861, general public perceive that the police are to protect the government rather than serve them (Das & Verma, 1998; Nalla & Madan, 2012). Nalla and Madan (2012)(p. 5) note that the primary responsibility of Indian police have been of serving government interests at the cost of oversight of human rights, at times. The police are heavily swayed by politics especially in Indian context and top police officials especially have their obligation more toward political parties than to the general society (Dhillon, 2005).

Royal Commission on the police (1962), Skolnick (1966) report that police officials believe that public have negative image of the police. People who have high crime rate in their locality are more critical of police (Huebner et al. 2004; Weitzer and Tuch, 2006).

Some studies have depicted peoples' prior contacts with officials influence their perception about the police (Dean, 1980; Scaglione and Condon, 1980). Researchers have indicated that the kind of treatment that people receive during interaction with police makes the difference. People who have been treated politely and fairly, without bias are more satisfied with police actions than those who have not been treated fairly (Skogan, 2005; Stone and Pettigrew, 2000; Tyler and Huo, 2002). When police unnecessarily stop people on roads for questioning on the basis of doubts it creates negative reactions from public (Decker 1981; Smith and Hawkins, 1973). It is argued that persons who are harassed by the police hold more negative attitudes toward the police than those who are not harassed (Block, 1971; Homant et al.1984). More negative attitudes toward the police are held by individuals who have experienced crime and are victims of criminal proceedings (Parks et al. 2000 and Taylor et al. 2001).

A study carried out by Indian Institute of Public Opinion, New Delhi in 1978 on the public image of police reveals that an impaired image of police in the minds of the people. People who have personal experience or some interaction with the police have a

better impression of police than those who have formed their opinion on hearsay without any personal knowledge. According to the most of the people, police is corrupt and harassing and the reasons behind the present image of police are nature of the job and personnel policies (Sharma, 1977). Khan (1983) reports that the lower rank police officials (constables, head constables, sub Inspector and Inspector) have threatening and rude image in the eyes of public.

According to Alexander (2006) the functioning of the police shows a sense of distrust and antipathy among the people. There is a wide gap between the perception of the people about police and their actual performance. According to Dahiya (2016) police in India is often accused of human rights violations having no fear of being punished. Police officials often indulge in frequent violation because of colonial attitude, unsatisfactory working condition and inadequate institutional arrangements. People with low economic background believe the police are unreliable, unfair, and corrupt (Sherman, 2006).

Mishra (2006) has explained that general public fears police and afraid of going to police station. They do not want to involve themselves in any police related issue. People are not comfortable while interacting with police. Bajpai (2000) states that people carry negative image of police due to unlawful arrest by the police and unnecessarily harassment of general public.

Literature review helps to know that the issue of job satisfaction and public image particularly amongst Indian police officials has received only limited research attention. Most of the studies have been done on police officials belonging to one rank position only. Through this paper an attempt has been made to bridge in the gap in existing literature.

Objectives

- * To examine the level of satisfaction with regard to public image among police officials at U.T Chandigarh.
- * To highlight the relation of job satisfaction with public image of the police among police officials posted at U.T Chandigarh

Materials and Methods

The present study focused on medium and lower rank male police officials i.e. Inspector, Sub-Inspector, Assistant- Sub Inspector, Head-Constable posted in sixteen police stations in UT Chandigarh. Out of total strength of 449 male police officials in sixteen police stations, 50 percent of the sample was drawn i.e. 231 respondents were interviewed depending on their availability and willingness to take interviews that included 16 Inspectors, 31 Sub-Inspectors, 41 Assistant Sub-Inspectors and 143 Head Constables. There were two Inspectors each in three police stations in Sector 17, Sector 19 and Manimajra police stations. It was decided to take one Inspector from each of these police stations. A structured interview schedule was used to collect information.

In the present study, the term ‘job satisfaction’ has been to show a combination of the employee's perceptions towards the different aspects of the job. The four indicators namely financial, working conditions, work policies and public image were used to measure the level of job satisfaction.

(1) Financial aspect of job included salary, overtime, pension and retirement benefit and family financial security.

(2) Working conditions related to infra structure such as air condition and lightening, necessary equipment, quality of equipment, adequate supervisory support /backing and working hours.

(3) Work Policies of the police Department focussed transfer, holidays ,vacation time ,etc., Promotion system , opportunities for professional growth , Grievance redressal system, Satisfaction with due credit to capabilities.

(4) Public image highlighted current method of filling report, public image, feeling proud of working in this police department, public dealing of the police and police public ratio.

Keeping in mind these four aspects level of job satisfaction was measured. To measure the level of job satisfaction of the respondents, statements from Minnesota job satisfaction scale were adapted. It included 20 statements. The responses to each statement were rated on five point Likert scale. All the 20 statements were rated on five point Likert scale.

Results

Socio-demographic profile

Table No. 1 Rank wise distribution showing perception of the respondents about police image in the eyes of the public

| Response | Rank | | | | | | | | Total | |
|----------|----------------|---------|-----|---------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Head-Constable | | ASI | | Sub Inspector | | Inspector | | | |
| Yes | 34 | (23.8%) | 14 | (34.1%) | 12 | (38.7%) | 2 | (12.5%) | 62 | (26.8%) |
| No | 109 | (76.2%) | 27 | (65.9%) | 19 | (61.3%) | 14 | (87.5%) | 169 | (73.2%) |
| Total | 143 | (100) | 41 | (100) | 31 | (100) | 16 | (100) | 231 | (100) |

Data reveals that, a majority of the respondents i.e. 73.2 percent reported that they were not satisfied their public image that included 76.2 percent Head constables, 65.9 percent ASIs, 61.3 Sub Inspectors and 87.5 percent Inspectors. They reported that public perceives police in negative vein. They don't empathize with police. There were only 26.8 percent respondents who showed satisfaction with the image of the police in the eyes of the public that included 23.8 percent Head constables,

It was found in the 56.2 percent Inspectors, 76.2 percent Head Constables, 58.1 percent Sub Inspectors and 46.3 percent ASIs were above the age of 50 years. 58.3 percent respondents were from general caste background and 74.4 percent respondents belonged to Hindu religion. Majority of Head Constables were educated up to High School and majority of Inspectors were either Graduate or Post Graduate. 14.7 percent Head Constables, 29.3 percent ASIs, 32.3 percent Sub-Inspectors and 87.5 percent Inspector rank officials were Graduates. 70.9 percent respondents belonged to rural background. All the respondents were married but very few spouses of the respondents were working. 96.9 percent of the respondents were residing in nuclear household and had small family. Although a majority of the spouses of the respondents were educated they were not engaged in any kind of paid work .A majority of respondents had children of both sexes and they were educated and engaged in paid work also.

Results indicate that. 97 percent of the respondents had more than 20 years of experience. There were 52.8 percent respondents that included 63.4 percent ASIs, 54.8 percent Sub Inspectors ,50 percent Inspectors and 49.7 percent Head Constables who reported that they are on night duty 20 times in month. For 35.9 percent respondents shift duty extends more than 12 hours.

Satisfied with the public image of the police

A number of studies show that police has a negative image in the eyes of Public and police officials are aware of the fact that they are not liked by people. In this regard, an attempt was made to know whether respondents were satisfied with their public image.

34.1 percent ASIs, 38.7 Sub Inspectors and 12.5 percent Inspectors..

Type of image

It is a common perception that police officials are corrupt, rude and authoritarian. In this regard an attempt was made to know the reasons for the tainted image of the police in the eyes of the people according to the respondents.

Table No. 3.14.1 Rank wise distribution showing type of police image in the eyes of the public according to respondents

| Response | Rank | | | | | | | | Total | |
|----------------------|----------------|---------|-----|---------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Head-Constable | | ASI | | Sub Inspector | | Inspector | | | |
| NA | 34 | (23.8%) | 14 | (34.1%) | 12 | (38.7%) | 2 | (12.5%) | 62 | (26.8%) |
| Authoritarian | 9 | (6.3%) | 5 | (12.2%) | 1 | (3.2%) | 2 | (12.5%) | 17 | (7.4%) |
| Unsympathetic | 41 | (28.7%) | 9 | (22%) | 6 | (19.4%) | 2 | (12.5%) | 58 | (25.1%) |
| Corrupt | 41 | (28.7%) | 10 | (24.4%) | 8 | (25.8%) | 8 | (50%) | 67 | (29%) |
| Negative stereotypes | 18 | (12.6%) | 3 | (7.3%) | 4 | (12.9%) | 2 | (12.5%) | 27 | (11.7%) |
| Total | 143 | (100) | 41 | (100) | 31 | (100) | 16 | (100) | 231 | (100) |

There were 25.1 percent respondents that included 28.7 percent Head Constables, 22 percent ASIs, 19.4 percent Sub Inspectors and 12.5 percent Inspectors who reported that public feels that police is unsympathetic. They don't understand the problems of the public. Results reveal that 29 percent respondents that included 28.7 percent Head Constables, 24.4 percent ASIs, 25.8 percent Sub Inspectors and 50 percent Inspectors who reported that public considers police most corrupt. There were 7.4 percent respondents who reported that public considers police authoritarian. Data shows that 11.7 percent respondents that included 12.6 percent Head Constables, 7.3 percent ASIs, 12.9 percent Sub Inspectors and 12.5 percent Inspectors who maintained that public carry

negative stereotypes about police because police is wrongly portrayed by media.

Level of satisfaction with regard to public image

Police officials are of the opinion that public support for the police is important for successful policing. Not only is public support fundamental to the legitimacy of the police, but it is also important for enlisting the public in efforts to reduce crime. An attempt was made to find out level of satisfaction with regard to public image of the respondents.

Table 1 Rank wise distribution showing level of satisfaction with regard to public image of the respondents

| Level of satisfaction | Rank | | | | | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------|-----|------|---------------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|
| | Head Constable | | ASI | | Sub Inspector | | Inspector | | | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Low | 72 | 50.3 | 27 | 65.9 | 20 | 64.5 | 6 | 37.5 | 125 | 54.1 |
| Medium | 22 | 15.4 | 5 | 12.2 | 6 | 19.4 | - | - | 33 | 14.3 |
| High | 49 | 34.3 | 9 | 22 | 5 | 16.1 | 10 | 62.5 | 73 | 31.6 |
| Total | 143 | 100 | 41 | 100 | 31 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 231 | 100 |

Results reveal that a majority of the respondents i.e. 54.1 percent that included 50.3 percent Head Constables, 65.9 percent ASIs, 64.5 percent Sub Inspectors and 37.5 percent Inspectors who reported low level of satisfaction with regard to public image. These officials reported that

authoritarian attitude of Police towards people is not appreciated by society and therefore police officials do not carry good image in the eyes of general public. Some respondents reported that there are a few police officials who are corrupt they bring wrong name to the

whole department. Results also show that only 14.3 percent respondents had medium level of satisfaction with regard to public image of police officials. There were 34.3 percent Head Constables, 22 percent ASIs, 16.1 percent Sub Inspectors and 62.5 percent Inspectors who had high level of satisfaction with regard to public image of police officials. Results reveal that most of the respondents had low level of satisfaction with regard to public image.

Discussion

A police force is a service-intensive organization with a significant proportion of its employees working in direct contact with the general public. It is the duty of the police to protect life and property and maintain peace and order. The public police ratio in Chandigarh is 157:1. It indicates that for every 157 people there is one police official. Such findings clearly show that police officials are overburdened. Police organization and particularly Chandigarh police is under constant pressure of work. The police officials have to work in long shifts and many a times they don't get weekly off. It is often said that the general working environment, poor salaries and lack of financial incentives force police officials to adopt corrupt practices. Public does not carry good image of police officials. Police Officials feel that they work hard but they get public rebuke than sympathy. The poor performance of police officials adversely affects public attitudes toward the police.

Police officials are exposed to various stressors that are significantly different, in terms of quality and quantity to those experienced by the general population. They are reported to have higher rates of substance abuse, suicide, skepticism, exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and lower self-confidence vis-a-vis members of other professions. This is not surprising considering the intrinsic dangers and challenges police face in the course of their duties. The job profile of a police official includes witnessing a fellow officer killed in the line of duty, indulging in homicide in the line of duty, recovering bodies from motor vehicle accidents, watching domestic or community violence, countering cases involving child abuse and neglect etc. Police officials face job pressures due to their role. Additionally most of police officials especially belonging to lower rank are not highly educated. Low educational qualification plays an important part in defining police culture which survives on power and control thus tarnish police image.

Results reveal that Police officials are concerned about their public image. The results are in accordance with the findings of Balch (1972) who stated that police personnel are aware that they don't carry positive image in the eyes of the public. Results are in accordance with the findings of Sharma (1977), who reported that the police are corrupt, harassing and hostile towards people. Police officials have an authoritarian attitude (Westley 1953 & Skolnick 1966). Sharma (1977) attributes negative image to their work culture. Bajpai (2000) relates negative image to unlawful activities performed by police officials.

Lower the level of job satisfaction higher the discontentment with regard to public image. Police

officials feel that public is not considerate to their work overload and stressful lives. Their negative image creates stress for them thus results in low job satisfaction. They feel that the police become the tangible target for grievances against the shortcomings of the system. They also feel they do not get the support, understanding and fair treatment they expect from the people they serve.

Suggestions

To provide a few suggestions, it is proposed that police departments should make serious efforts to develop community-policing programs. Programs targeting young people should also be considered. One option would be having police officials work with high schools and college students. Young people should be encouraged to learn about the police and question irrational concepts about them. Curriculum should be designed where interaction with police officials is encouraged.

Next most importantly, all personnel should concentrate on conducting themselves in a courteous and professional manner at all times. Police Officials should be aware that their every move is under public scrutiny and that even minor in discrepancies can do damage to the reputation of the police. Administrators should strive to promote professionalism, investigate complaints, and develop strict policies to minimize inappropriate behaviors.

Media should also play positive role in this regard. It should present an accurate and balanced views rather distort the realities of the criminal justice system to grab ratings and produce profits.

Conclusion

Police are often viewed as rude and highhanded. The public does not appreciate the extreme conditions under which they lead their lives. Additionally media present very negative image of Police. Thus the major task of the police in the new millennium is to refurbish its image for which reforms at organizational and personnel levels are imperative. A number of innovative mechanisms focusing on the attitudinal change of police personnel also need to be incorporated in order to harmonize the relations between the police and the public.

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