

## PERCEIVED GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN POLICE'S MENTAL WELL-BEING: A STUDY OF SARGODHA CITY

Mr Izzat Gul<sup>1</sup>, Dr AsmaYunus<sup>2</sup>, Sundus Rauf<sup>\*3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology & Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology & Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha

<sup>\*3</sup>Head of Department (Assistant Professor), College of Law, The University of Lahore, Lahore

Corresponding Author: <sup>\*3</sup>[sundas.rauf@law.uol.edu.pk](mailto:sundas.rauf@law.uol.edu.pk)

Received: June 21, 2024

Revised: July 31, 2024

Accepted: August 10, 2024

Published: August 21, 2024

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of female police officers in Sargodha City regarding gender discrimination, coping mechanisms, mental well-being and suggested solutions within the police force. The examination of participant replies demonstrates a sophisticated comprehension of the difficulties encountered by female police cops, as well as the tactics utilized to tackle them. Although formal policies are in place, respondents tend to underestimate the extent of gender bias. The qualitative study was used in research. Nevertheless, the implementation of coping techniques, such as cultivating a mindset devoid of stress and requesting assistance from supervisors and peers, emerges as crucial tactics. The importance of organizational support, which encompasses existing policies and programs, is widely recognized in fostering mental well-being. The significance of representation and support systems is underscored by recommendations for improving gender inclusion within the department. In general, the results underscore the necessity of adopting a comprehensive strategy to tackle gender bias and enhance psychological welfare inside law enforcement agencies. Incorporating these observations into policy and practice can help establish a fairer and more supportive atmosphere for all officers.

**Key words:** Female Police Officers, Gender Discrimination, Mental Well-Being, Gender Bias, Psychological Welfare, Law Enforcement Agencies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Over the last three decades, there has been a steady increase in the number of women serving in law enforcement. Despite these improvements, women remain grossly underrepresented in law enforcement. Only 12.7% of all sworn law enforcement posts are held by women; this number drops to 8.1% in smaller or rural agencies with 100 or fewer employees (Luo, 2019). In a field that men have historically controlled, it has not been easy to get recognition. Challenges for women police officers may be seen in how superiors judge them, how male colleagues treat them, how they are seen by the public, how far they go in their careers, and whether or not they get promotions (Todak, 2021).

Increased instances of both sexual harassment and gender prejudice only make matters worse (Casad et al., 2021). As a result, women police officers may experience additional stress due to the pervasive culture of sexism. So, we're looking

at gender variations in stress levels and how that's affected by factors like actual or perceived discrimination in the police force.

Work in law enforcement is quite demanding (Cramm et al., 2021). As members of the police force, officers face "inherent" and "organizational" stresses. Events that occur often in the line of duty and have the potential to cause psychological and bodily damage to police officers are called "inherent stressors." Boredom and inaction, using force, using judgment, making crucial choices, constantly seeing residents in misery or anguish, and being exposed to danger, violence, and even death are all sources of inherent stress. Organizational stressors, on the other hand, refer to the police department's policies and practices, such as low pay, a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy, a lack of training and resources, long hours, weekend shifts, few opportunities for advancement, no administrative

support, and complicated relationships with superiors and coworkers (Shane, 2019).

However, the number of women in law enforcement continues to be dismally low. According to the data, women comprise fewer than 10% of police forces worldwide. While 12-13% of police officers in affluent and sub-Saharan nations are women, this number is far lower (3%) in emerging countries like India. Since women make up half of the world's population and do two-thirds of its labour, it's discouraging to see that they only possess 10 percent of the world's property while owning half of their workforce (Ismail, 2019).

Among police colleagues, sexual harassment in the workplace is sometimes minimized or disregarded as harmless, pleasant flattery between men and women. This connection may be OK on a date or in a private setting where couples may go together if both parties agree, but it is very wrong in the workplace (Fairchild, 2020). Unfortunately, we must keep up the intimidation. Particularities of policing, such as subordination, solidarity, etc., play a role in explaining why sexual harassment cases often go undetected in the police force.

When men and women work together in law enforcement, sexual harassment is a regular problem. Since women in the police force are expected to work in teams led by males, they are particularly at risk. Being in close quarters with male coworkers makes women more susceptible to sexual harassment and assault. Many female police officers also blame the excessive concentration of discretionary authority at the department's highest levels. More senior male executives tend to misuse their authority by violating the modesty of female coworkers. It may go to the opposite extreme of sexism against women and impose excessive constraints on them. The issue is made worse by the absence of a clear path for women to take when they have a problem. The current reporting mechanisms are so onerous that women are discouraged from making any effort to report sexual harassment in the workplace (King Johnson, 2022).

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

Objectives of conducting this research are:

- To investigate how women police officers in Sargodha City perceive the

impact of gender discrimination on their professional growth and opportunities within the police force.

- To identify specific policies or practices within the police force that women officers perceive as contributing to gender discrimination.
- To examine the coping mechanisms employed by women police officers to address the stress and challenges associated with perceived gender discrimination in their daily work.
- To assess the overall mental well-being of women police officers in the context of their work in Sargodha City.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Many researches have narrowed their attention to sexual harassment rather than perceived gender discrimination as a whole, and overall, studies have relied on tiny convenience samples to derive their conclusions. This research aimed to fill a gap in the literature by analyzing the correlation between women police officers' experiences of prejudice and their long-term mental health. We focused on measures of mental health and well-being, including levels of depression, mental functioning, psychological distress, life satisfaction, and self-rated health.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Gender Discrimination**

Few studies have looked at discrimination against women and the salary gap between men and women in South Africa. The following study looks at the progression of discrimination and salary gaps based on gender across many years after the end of Apartheid. The fact that people in the labour market may have varying job prospects is also considered. Detecting the so-called indirect effects that already emerge at the selection into employment stage is made feasible by calculating selectivity-corrected pay regressions, which allow for the decomposition of wage discrepancies into the well-known endowment and discrimination components. Conventional decomposition methods may provide an inaccurate picture of pay discrimination, while the results from this method may be quite different. Recent research has

shown that African women are increasingly being discriminated against throughout the recruiting process, whereas White women are more likely to experience direct salary discrimination (Bladek, 2019).

This research analyzes how gender bias manifests itself in the first few phases of the recruiting process. New Chinese university grads are the primary target audience. This study isolates the impact of gender on a student's likelihood of getting an on-site interview from the confounding effects of other factors by analyzing firms' reactions to fictitious resumes with randomly generated information on gender and other key attributes of applicants (such as school reputation, student's academic achievement, and leadership experiences). The data shows that controlling for other characteristics, hiring companies are less likely to invite female candidates to on-site interviews than they are to invite male applications. Additionally, the findings of this research seem to be driven by gender discrimination in the fields of computer science, mathematics, architecture, engineering, and sales. According to the qualitative evidence based on interviews with corporate recruiters, findings from this research are broadly compatible with the role congruity hypothesis of bias found in the psychological literature. Evidence for a taste-based discrimination perspective is provided by the conclusion that a candidate's quality (academic accomplishment and leadership experience) does not mitigate gender prejudice, while evidence for a statistical discrimination view is lacking (Zhang, 2021).

## **2.2 Defining Mental Well-being**

According to Keyes (2012), a person's level of mental health is a composite of their emotional well-being, their social well-being (defined as the degree to which they can participate actively in their society), and their psychological well-being (psychological well-being refers to effective individual functioning). According to Swami (2010), mental wellness is crucial to success in all aspects of life. Subsequently, the WHO established the following definition of mental health: "a state of well-being in which the person fulfills their potential, can deal with the usual pressures of life, can work successfully and

fruitfully and can contribute to her or his society" (p. 12).

It is necessary to additionally identify risk factors linked with poor mental health to comprehend the theoretical foundations upon which these definitions of "optimal" mental health are based. Social (including parenting styles, parental conflict or dispute, parental divorce, relationships, poverty, unemployment, lack of social support, no education, or very low education) and psychological (including depression) factors have been identified as a significant risk for mental health problems in developing countries (WHO, 2012).

### **2.2.1 Mental Well-being**

One's occupation is crucial to their well-being and happiness. Since most of an adult's waking hours are spent working, the social and psychological variables on the job and the physical ones substantially impact the individual's physical and mental health. Empirical findings generally attest to the importance of the psychological environment of work on the health and well-being of the workers, expanding the scope of the work environment beyond its original focus on physical factors (Kapur, 2020). The World Health Organization and the American Psychological Association are just two of many international groups recognizing the significance of the workplace's psychosocial environment. Studies conducted on the topic of occupational stress over the past three to four decades have shown that different types of work-related stressors correlate with different kinds of employee strain measured by physiological, psychological, and behavioral indices, as well as with unfavourable outcomes for businesses (Suleman et al., 2018).

Police officers have a disproportionately high rate of illness related to job stress, making law enforcement a potentially stressful career choice. This is because the police are tasked with more than simply executing the law; they also serve the community, safeguard citizens' rights, and deal with issues like criminals, VIP protection, antiquated legislation, and the breakdown of other criminal justice agencies. As a result of the constant pressure and stress they face, the stakes of a police officer's life may be pretty high.

Mental diseases are life-altering conditions that impact one's capacity for rational thought,

emotional stability, and appropriate social conduct. Many different things may set off mental illness. Your ancestry and genetics may have an influence. Your past, including things like stress or abuse, may also play a role. Biological variables may be at play as well. Although there is no shortage of mental illnesses, there are effective therapies accessible.

### **2.2.2 Mental Health in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, Muslims make up around 90% of the population. Approximately 54.2 million people in Pakistan are between 15 and 29. (UNESCO, 2013). It's possible that the historically low rates of reported mental health issues in Pakistan are an accurate reflection of the true situation or that they are the result of a failure to recognize and report the true extent of the problem. Despite a substantial increase in reporting since the mid-1990s, the topic of mental illness is still primarily taboo, so researchers should be wary of the reliability of the statistics they find. People still have a way to go before they are comfortable admitting they have mental health problems and are open to receiving treatment (Khan, 2007; Shahid, 2012).

A new field dedicated to mental health is developing in Pakistan. Only two or three psychologists, social workers, or psychiatrists are available for every million individuals (Demyttenare, 2008; WHO, 2011). Although a significant portion of Pakistan's population lives in rural areas, most of the country's educated professionals are concentrated in the main cities. There are reportedly no female psychologists or psychiatrists working in Baluchistan, one of Pakistan's most significant regions (Shahid, 2012). Fear of "social stigma" related to psychiatric patients, along with misconceptions and misinformation about mental health problems (such as the belief that such issues are related to "possession" and caused by supernatural or evil forces), contribute to very low utilization of existing hospital services (Ahmed, 2007).

### **2.3 Gender Discrimination and Mental Well-being**

This research grew from my previous work in the mental health field, which investigated the feasibility of bringing publicly supported mental healthcare services into healthcare settings like

general practice. This study prompted the need for Pakistan-based evidence to enhance service provision and policy development within the dynamic primary mental healthcare sector (Søvold et al., 2021).

This study shed attention on the severe shortage of mental health care funding for people in Pakistan who are suffering from mild to moderate depression or anxiety. Funders and planners inside regional health services started prioritizing resolving disparities regarding access for particular ethnic groups and those living in regions of significant deprivation. However, gender inequalities in access were not taken into account. Males are underreported in population data on depression and anxiety, which is unexpected considering that men typically make fewer visits to general practitioners than women (Ministry of Health, 2016). (Ministry of Health, 2016). This made me question whether there was an unspoken presumption that males in Pakistan are in better mental health than women in general since they are less prone to have mild to severe sadness and anxiety.

In light of persistently high male suicide rates and an absence of information with which to delve more deeply into the social concerns in men's lives, it is prudent to investigate the correlation between male psychological well-being and suicide risk in the Pakistani setting by using a fresh angle. One that doesn't only look at numbers related to suicide and mental illness. The mental health of males is examined beforehand in this thesis. While it is important to treat men who have been diagnosed with mental illness or who seek professional care, I believe that it is equally vital to promote men's involvement in their mental health and well-being to further our knowledge of men's mental health. To achieve this goal, however, we must first have an appreciation for the reality males face in terms of their daily mental health. Although there is a dearth of studies on men's mental health in Pakistan, this topic has recently gained significant attention in the worldwide scientific community (McKenzie, 2016).

### **2.4 Stress and coping theory and Social Identity Theory**

As per the stress and coping theory model forwarded by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), it



states it is the perception of the event as stressful, which can affect the mental well-being of the individual. In the same way, perceived gender discrimination as an experience due to one's gender becomes a stressor that causes the responses of stress. How does a woman perceive this stressor and what type of coping strategies (problem-focused or emotion-focused coping) may determine the meditational effect on mental health?

Developed by Tajfel and Turner, the Social Identity Theory explains how individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. Discrimination against these groups can impact self-esteem and well-being (Scheepers, 2019).

### **3. Research Methodology**

The research methodology used for the qualitative study here is to apply an all-inclusive strategy aimed at capturing the fine-grained experiences of women police officers around Sargodha City regarding perceived gender discrimination and its impact on mental wellness. Here, the following headings show the key elements of the research methodology.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study employs a qualitative research design that looks into the subjective experiences and perceptions of female police officers. A phenomenological approach was used to understand what it means to be subject to gender

discrimination and how such instances have affected their state of mind.

#### **3.2 Sampling Strategy**

Participants were selected purposively to ensure that rich, diverse perspectives were obtained in relation to the subject matter. The criteria for selection included different levels of experience, roles played in policing, and backgrounds, among others.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data collection method. These were conducted one-on-one to allow participants to express their views without any fear or inhibition. Open-ended questions were important for exploring details about participants' experiences with gender discrimination, coping mechanisms they employed, as well as personal opinions on mental health.

#### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The process involves identifying recurring themes and patterns in participants' responses, allowing for a systematic and interpretative data analysis. Rigorous coding and categorization were performed to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Profile of the participant is appended below:-

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Total Period of service</b>
Ms Tayyaba	Lady Constable	5 years
Ms Shahbana	Lady Constable	7 years

### **4. Results and Analysis**

#### **4.1 Thematic Analysis of Perceived Gender Discrimination**

The comments provided by the participants concerning career development and promotion with respect to gender discrimination within the police force indicate a salient trend: the inclination to refuse or understate individual experiences of gender-based bias. Both Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 express a similar opinion, stating that they have not encountered any form of gender discrimination that has influenced their professional growth.

It demonstrates how most individuals generally fail to acknowledge or underestimate gender biases, maybe because of unawareness, hesitance to believe it, or lack of such experiences in their cases.

These findings are supported by responses from participants who hesitated to admit incidents of gender bias observed among women serving in male-dominated fields like law enforcement. Studies show that female law enforcement staff usually face institutional barriers as well as prejudice against them, which hinder their progress at work and limit them from exploring

further opportunities just as men do (Eisenbarth, 2019).

Moreover, scholarly investigations have brought attention to the widespread existence of a "gender-blind" organizational culture inside law enforcement agencies, wherein instances of prejudice may be accepted as the norm or disregarded, leading to a decrease in the reporting of such occurrences (Ismail, 2019).

Although the participants in this research may hold the honest belief that they have not encountered instances of gender bias, their answers emphasize the significance of noting the intricate manifestations of prejudice and recognizing its influence on individuals' career paths. Furthermore, it underscores the necessity of implementing interventions and policy modifications inside police organizations to tackle gender prejudices and establish a work climate that is more inclusive and equal.

The participants' replies offer insights into their perspectives on policies or practices contributing to gender bias within the police force. Both participants emphasize the presence of current procedures designed to tackle gender bias, albeit they employ distinct approaches.

#### **Respondent 1 emphasizes**

"There are already policies in place such that if gender discrimination happens to anyone, then action should be taken against that person."

On the other hand, **Respondent 2 offers**

"First of all, there are check posts where we work and share such issues with them. Apart from this, we have our group, which we discuss. Apart from this, there is a women's safety app through which we discuss, and apart from this, if there is any such issue, we inform the DSP. Then he tells SP, and this is how it goes to up level."

These comments exemplify a blend of official rules and unofficial activities that aid in tackling gender bias within the police force, underscoring the intricate nature of the problem.

The feedback provided by the participants aligns with prior scholarly investigations regarding the impact of policies and procedures in mitigating gender bias within law enforcement organizations. The significance of formal policies and informal support networks in addressing gender-based prejudices and discrimination has been emphasized in several studies (Morash et al., 2006).

The reference made by Respondent 1 regarding the presence of established policies is consistent with scholarly literature that underscores the importance of structured policies and procedures in addressing gender bias within law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the mere presence of policies does not ensure their efficient execution or the eradication of prejudiced behaviors (Triana, 2019).

According to Zhang (2021), the account provided by Respondent 2 regarding informal practices, such as internal discussion groups and reporting structures, underscores the significance of informal support networks and communication channels in addressing gender bias and advancing gender equality within police forces.

Collectively, these responses emphasize the significance of adopting a holistic strategy that integrates formal policies, informal practices, and support networks in order to tackle gender bias within law enforcement agencies adequately.

#### **4.2 Thematic Analysis of Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems**

The participants' replies offer insights into female law enforcement personnel's coping strategies and support networks to manage the stress and difficulties arising from perceived gender bias in their professional duties.

**Respondent 1** underscores the significance of cultivating a composed and composed disposition to manage the strain associated with perceived gender bias. The authors emphasize the importance of voluntarily acknowledging their position and refraining from unwarranted strain to mitigate difficulties. The provided response exemplifies an individual coping mechanism centered on the cultivation of a constructive mindset and the mitigation of stress via the practice of self-regulation.

**Respondent 2 discusses**

"The stress that happens is basically on timing because we females have to come early, then it also happens because we plan because I know that I have to reach here at 6:00, so I will see which vehicle will come, then this manage this also reduces stress and secondly, what is this? Like you are talking about gender discrimination, has there been any show like this? If so, then like I told you earlier also that we will discuss it with the incharge of the check post; apart from this, we also have meetings We discuss in that also and apart from; he has also shared his numbers with us so that if there is any such issue and your in-charge has not reacted, then you can also talk to us directly."

Both respondents recognize the presence of rules and practices within the police department to tackle gender-related matters. The authors reference a hierarchical reporting framework where grievances can be elevated to superior authorities if necessary. Respondent 2 explicitly highlights the establishment of teams of male equivalents to provide aid during rescue operations, with the provision of superiors' personal contact details for lodging complaints. These observations suggest the presence of a comprehensive support system within the department.

**Respondent 1 specifically mentions**

"Yes, we have such policies if someone harasses us. We can complain about our in-charge, but first we try to handle it ourselves. But if the matter becomes too much, we get it from our

SP or DSP, sir, and this matter goes to them."

Regarding the pursuit of external assistance in managing the repercussions of gender-based prejudice on mental well-being, Respondent 1 highlights the utilization of help from immediate superiors and higher-ranking personnel inside the organization. The significance of obtaining direction and comprehension from these persons is underscored in managing difficult circumstances effectively. **Respondent 2 mentions**

"Almost every 6 months, we have a test based on different segments. According to this, if we have any stress, we have a counseling class every week for that, and after that again, there is a test."

The findings are consistent with other research that highlights the significance of both internal and external support systems in dealing with the consequences of gender bias on mental well-being inside law enforcement organizations. The importance of organizational support, such as the availability of supervisors and higher-ranking officers, in alleviating the adverse impacts of prejudice on psychological well-being has been emphasized in several studies (Wolter, 2019).

In addition, the inclusion of counseling services and routine mental health evaluations, as indicated by Respondent 2, aligns with the suggestions in prior studies that advocate for proactive interventions to address mental health issues within the police force (Ricciardelli et al., 2018). The findings mentioned above highlight the significance of implementing comprehensive support networks and proactive interventions to enhance the emotional well-being of female police officers who encounter gender-based bias.

**4.3 Thematic Analysis of Mental Well-being**

The responses from the participants provided valuable insights into the mental well-being of female police officers in Sargodha City, along with the various elements contributing to this phenomenon.

**Respondent 1** underscores the need to cultivate a patient and stress-free mental state to navigate the demands inherent in their professional endeavors

effectively. The importance of voluntarily embracing one's position and refraining from unwarranted stress is emphasized to promote a sense of ease and comfort within one's function. This response demonstrates a coping mechanism centered on self-control and adaptability when confronted with stressors, which enhances one's impression of mental well-being.

**Respondent 2 emphasizes**

"For this, first of all, we should be stress-free, there should be no anxiety so that we can do our work well, there should be no tension, we should be tension-free so that the social work can be done in the best possible way. If there is any such issue, we should discuss it at a time so that no issue arises later."

Regarding mental health or emotional well-being changes throughout their careers, both respondents express personal growth and increased resilience in dealing with challenges.

**Respondent 1 mention**

"I feel stronger than before, and I can deal with the Public with love and Patience."

Respondent 2 contemplates their shift from encountering stress to acquiring the ability to effectively handle and comprehend problems, indicating a favorable path in their emotional welfare. Regarding the elements that contribute to the mental well-being of female police officers, both participants emphasize the significance of a work environment that provides support and the utilization of good coping strategies.

**Respondent 1 emphasizes**

"The need for a stress-free approach and ease in their work"

**While Respondent 2 stresses**

"I understand that there should be a female staff to solve these misses so that if any issue arises, we cannot share it with the male staff. There should be a sub-inspector inspector for those female staff members. If we hire a female staff member, we can easily share our problem with her, and she can solve it by sharing it with her officer."

The findings are consistent with prior studies that highlight the significance of coping strategies and conducive surroundings in fostering the psychological welfare of law enforcement personnel, with a particular focus on female officers. The importance of individual resilience and coping methods in reducing the effects of stress on mental health has been emphasized in several studies (Regehr et al., 2019). The prioritization of cultivating a mindset free from stress and employing effective communication aligns with the suggestions put forward in other studies that advocate for proactive strategies for managing stress within law enforcement organizations (Ricciardelli et al., 2018). Moreover, the significance of gender-specific support systems underscored by Respondent 2 aligns with prior research that underlines the necessity for customized interventions and support frameworks to tackle gender-related obstacles encountered by female law enforcement personnel (Ahmed, 2023). The significance of establishing inclusive and supportive work cultures to enhance the mental well-being of



female police officers is emphasized by these findings.

#### 4.4 Thematic Analysis of Suggestions and Solutions

The respondents' comments include recommendations and remedies to tackle gender bias within the police force, improve the psychological welfare of female police officers, and cultivate a work atmosphere that is inclusive and supportive of all genders.

Respondent 1 underscores the significance of current regulations and methods in tackling gender bias, underlining the urgency of taking prompt action against those responsible. This response demonstrates a conviction in the effectiveness of implementing formal policies and processes to address and mitigate prejudice inside the company.

#### Respondent 2 suggests

"I understand that there should be a high ranked female officer at our district level. As we work in a group and as a team, the administrator should be confident enough to share the problem further. For this, our officers feel they should share this issue with us so that a solution can be found."

Regarding initiatives to enhance the mental well-being of women police officers, **Respondent 1 mentions**

"Apart from this, another spice is the timing of the morning. Those who are married or single, then for them, they have to get up in the

morning, have to work for the family, have to prepare breakfast, have to send children to school; for them, the morning timing should be such a way that they do not have any tension. Apart from this, transportation is also a big issue. Girls who come from faraway areas should also work on transportation."

**Respondent 2 underscores** the importance of practical factors, such as modifying morning schedules to accommodate family obligations and resolving transportation problems. This emphasizes the necessity of rules that consider female officers' distinct difficulties. Additionally, they promote the utilization of female personnel to effectively address gender-specific issues, fostering inclusivity and providing assistance inside the department.

The findings are consistent with prior research that supports the implementation of organizational policies and programs aimed at tackling gender bias and enhancing the mental health of female police officers. The significance of formal rules and procedures in resolving instances of prejudice within law enforcement agencies has been emphasized in many studies (Menifield, 2019). Furthermore, scholarly investigations have underscored the importance of organizational support, such as the provision of flexible scheduling and transportation aid, to cater to female officers' requirements and alleviate the pressures linked to achieving a harmonious equilibrium between work and personal life (Oludayo, 2020).

Moreover, the department's focus on female representation and support systems aligns with existing research highlighting the significance of gender-inclusive settings and supportive

networks for female officers (Regehr et al., 2019).

### 5. Conclusion

In general, the examination of answers provided by female cops from Sargodha City demonstrates the multifaceted nature of gender discrimination, coping mechanisms, mental health and recommendations towards police department. Despite tackling various subjects, commonalities emerge thus highlighting the difficulties faced by women in police profession and how they address them. Most importantly, the feedback indicates that gender discrimination is widespread among law enforcement agencies. Although there are policies and structures to address these inequalities, respondents often appear to downplay or deny their existence across the board. This supports previous research, which has suggested that individuals, especially those working in male-dominated fields like policing, tend not to acknowledge instances of prejudice. At the same time, however, these remarks also illustrate how resolute and imaginative females cope with these pertinent issues emanating from sexual differences. Consequently, critical strategies identified include reframing situations to avoid stress perception, using effective communication channels, and seeking help from supervisors or colleagues within the system. These findings align with previous research that highlights the significance of personal resilience and supportive surroundings in reducing the effects of stressors on mental health. Furthermore, the comments emphasize the significance of organizational assistance in fostering the mental wellness of female police. The recognition of current rules and efforts designed to tackle harassment and discrimination demonstrates a dedication to establishing a work climate that fosters support. In addition, it is recommended to address practical concerns such as offering flexible work schedules and providing transportation support to meet the specific requirements of female officers. This demonstrates an acknowledgment of the need of maintaining a healthy work-life balance in promoting mental well-being. The results highlight the importance of taking a comprehensive strategy for tackling gender discrimination and fostering mental well-being in

police organizations. Although formal regulations and procedures are essential for eliminating prejudice, it is equally critical to create a supportive work atmosphere and undertake practical measures specifically designed for the requirements of female officers. Police departments can improve the overall wellness and effectiveness of their workforce by recognizing and dealing with the specific difficulties women officers encounter, fostering a more inclusive and supportive culture.

### REFERENCES

- Ahmed, T., Malik, G. M., Mustafa, N., Memon, H. A., & Abro, A. A. (2023). Exploring The Challenges Encountered By Women Working In Law Enforcement Agency: A Case Study Of Dadu Police Force. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 20(2), 989-1008.
- BagheriHosseinabadi, M., Ebrahimi, M. H., Khanjani, N., Biganeh, J., Mohammadi, S., & Abdollahfard, M. (2019). The effects of amplitude and stability of circadian rhythm and occupational stress on burnout syndrome and job dissatisfaction among irregular shift working nurses. *Journal of clinical nursing*, 28(9-10), 1868-1878.
- Bladek, M. (2019). From women-staffed to women-led: Gender and leadership in academic libraries, 1974-2018. *Journal of Library Administration*, 59(5), 512-531.
- Casad, B. J., Franks, J. E., Garasky, C. E., Kittleman, M. M., Roesler, A. C., Hall, D. Y., & Petzel, Z. W. (2021). Gender inequality in academia: Problems and solutions for women faculty in STEM. *Journal of neuroscience research*, 99(1), 13-23.
- Cramm, H., Tam-Seto, L., Mahar, A., Rühland, L., & Carleton, R. N. (2021). Firefighters and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Scoping Review. *Handbook of Posttraumatic Stress*, 264-295.
- Eisenbarth, C. A. (2019). Coping with stress: Gender discrimination among college students. *College Student Journal*, 53(2), 151-162.
- Eisenbarth, C. A. (2019). Coping with stress: Gender discrimination among college students. *College Student Journal*, 53(2), 151-162.
- Fairchild, K. (2022). Understanding Street Harassment as Gendered Violence: Past, Present, and Future. *Sexuality & Culture*, 1-20.
- Ismail, M. (2019). Experiences of Egyptian Female Journalists With Workplace Gender Discrimination.

- Kapur, R. (2020). Health and Well-being. Department of Adult Education and Continuing Extension Faculty of Social Sciences University of Delhi India.
- King Johnson, C. A. (2022). Whisper networks in organizations: Sexual harassment protection through informal connections.
- Menifield, C. E., Shin, G., & Strother, L. (2019). Do white law enforcement officers target minority suspects?. *Public Administration Review*, 79(1), 56-68.
- Morash M., Kwak D.-H., Haarr R. Gender Discrimination in the Predictors of Police Stress. *Polic. Int. J. Police Strateg. Manag.* 2006;29:541-563.
- Oludayo, A. O., & Omonijo, D. O. (2020). Work-life balance: The relevance of social support. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 19(3), 1-10.
- Ricciardelli R., Carleton R.N., Groll D., Cramm H. Qualitatively Unpacking Canadian Public Safety Personnel Experiences of Trauma and Their Well-Being. *Can. J. Criminol. Crim. Justice.* 2018;60:566-577.
- Seto, M. C., Rodrigues, N. C., Ham, E., Kirsh, B., & Hilton, N. Z. (2020). Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety symptoms and help seeking in psychiatric staff: Trouble de stress post-traumatique, dépression, symptômes d'anxiété et recherche d'aide chez le personnel psychiatrique. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 65(8), 577-583.
- Shane, J. M. (2019). Stress in Policing: Where Does it Come From?. In *Stress Inside Police Departments* (pp. 19-96). Routledge.
- Scheepers, D., & Ellemers, N. (2019). Social identity theory. *Social psychology in action: Evidence-based interventions from theory to practice*, 129-143.
- Siscawati, M., Adelina, S., Eveline, R., & Anggriani, S. (2020). Gender equality and women empowerment in the national development of Indonesia. *Journal of Strategic and Global Studies*, 2(2), 3.
- Søvdal, L. E., Naslund, J. A., Kousoulis, A. A., Saxena, S., Qoronfleh, M. W., & Münter, L. (2021). Prioritizing the mental health and well-being of healthcare workers: an urgent global public health priority. *Frontiers in public health*, 9, 679397.
- Suleman, Q., Hussain, I., Shehzad, S., Syed, M. A., & Raja, S. A. (2018). Relationship between perceived occupational stress and psychological well-being among secondary school heads in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *PloS one*, 13(12), e0208143.
- Todayak, N., Leban, L., & Hixon, B. (2021). Are women opting out? A mixed methods study of women patrol officers' promotional aspirations. *Feminist Criminology*, 16(5), 658-679.
- Triana, M. D. C., Jayasinghe, M., Pieper, J. R., Delgado, D. M., & Li, M. (2019). Perceived workplace gender discrimination and employee consequences: A meta-analysis and complementary studies considering country context. *Journal of management*, 45(6), 2419-2447.
- Van Der Feltz-Cornelis, C. M., Varley, D., Allgar, V. L., & De Beurs, E. (2020). Workplace stress, presenteeism, absenteeism, and resilience amongst university staff and students in the COVID-19 lockdown. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 11, 588803.
- Wolter, C., Santa Maria, A., Wörfel, F., Gusy, B., Lesener, T., Kleiber, D., & Renneberg, B. (2019). Job demands, job resources, and well-being in police officers—a resource-oriented approach. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 34(1), 45-54.
- Zhang, J., Jin, S., Li, T., & Wang, H. (2021). Gender discrimination in China: experimental evidence from the job market for college graduates. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 49(3), 819-835.