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Gender Discrimination: Beliefs and Experiences: A Comparative Perspective of Women and Men in the Delhi Police

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Abstract

Gender roles are learnt through the socialization process and subsequently extend to the work context where women and men are believed to have different characteristics and are therefore treated differently. The pervasiveness of workplace gender differences influence hiring practices, salaries and career growth opportunities for women. Gender-based work behavior differences are perceived to be much greater in male dominated professions like the police. While research suggests that there is no evidence that policewomen perform differently from their male counterparts in their day-to-day activities of police, negative male attitudes towards women in police significantly obstruct the advancement of policewomen. Induction of women in the police service in India is a recent change. This paper analyses the beliefs and unique experiences of women in a police department in Delhi, India. Using a comparative perspective, it examines the issues and challenges relating to women in police and the concomitant experiences of policemen, posed by the more recent entry of women in the service. Quantitative data, supported by in-depth interviews are obtained from a large sample of women and men from the rank and file of the police. The data suggest that gender based work behaviour differences are perceived to be predominant. Women are assigned peripheral roles and are yet to be integrated with the mainstream. These findings have significant implications for developing relevant human resource policies in police departments to deal with the changing demographics and for building a gender-inclusive organisation.

Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Perception, Police

Context

Gender roles and identities are learnt within complex family relationships and get reinforced through the socialization process, where socially ascribed behavior and responsibilities conform to the norms of each society (Dick and Cassell 2002, Ball and Wilson 2000, Karreman and Alvesson 2001, Chakravarti 1995). These socially constructed beliefs and expectations that people hold about the roles of men and women in society are seldom neutral. They are essentially an outcome of power relations that characterize society, where some are privileged while others may be suppressed or even marginalized. Underpinning these assumptions is the view that women and men are believed to have different characteristics and are therefore perceived differently. They further facilitate in creating occupational identities that are dominated by members of either gender. As a result, gender stereotypes pervade male-female relationships influencing the ways in which members of each sex are expected to behave and the ways

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in which their behavior is interpreted (Cohen and Huffman 2003, Knights and Richards 2003, Millward, Bryson and Forth 2002).

Theories of gender at workplace lay emphasis on the processes that sustain the status quo on gender (Acker 1990, 1999a). At the organizational level, these processes encompass construction of divisions, symbols and interactions between groups that result in gendered social structures and practices. However, ethnographic research suggests that organisational members also contribute in creating asymmetries in power between men and women (Ogasawara 1998, Britton 1997, P. Martin 1996, 2001). P. Martin (1998a, p 324) elucidates the significance of 'framing men as agents who actively create gender hierarchy at work'. Collinson and Hearn (1994 p.5) mention the need to 'make "men" and "masculinity" explicit [and] to talk of men's power'. Workplace discrimination is also explained by the context in which people operate. McDowell (1997) states that to a large extent, women face work related problems in cultures that promote masculine values and traits which prevent women from being perceived, as well as perceiving themselves, as fitting in the system (Knights and Richards2003, Katila and Merilainen 2003, van Vianen and Fischer 2002). The result of various studies (Powell and Butterfield 1994, Larwood, Szwajkowski and Rose 1988) also maintain that people may engage in discrimatory behaviors (even though they themselves may not hold negative prejudices) and give justification for it, if the same is exhibited by their superiors or those who have power over their careers. However, Reskin (2000) cautions that gendering is an unconscious process and is not necessarily based on overt opposition or hostility.

While equality within the workplace has been reinforced through various types of regulations, discrimination against women continues to exist on several dimensions that include occupation and economic gains (Fagenson 1993). The pervasiveness of gender differences in the workplace impacts hiring, salary and career growth opportunities for women. An adverse outcome of gender discrimination is that women are often evaluated as less acceptable candidates for challenging jobs (Scott 1994, Taylor and Ilgen 1981), as unable to handle important or sensitive tasks effectively and are believed not to possess the necessary attributes to achieve success in high status positions (Millward 2000, Heilman 1984). Senior positions continiue to be dominated by men despite a significant increase of women in managerial positions (Welting 2003, Burke and Nelson 2002, Solomon 1998). Women therefore continue to encounter not only a glass ceiling but a glass wall in the form of barriers arising from the culture and traditions of the organization (Catalyst 2001). Factors that are attributed to these differences include differences in education level and training (Fagenson 1993), gender-role socialization (Fels 2004, Manning 2002, Rosener 1991, Kent and Moss, 1994), stereotypes (Jackson 2001, Ely 1995, Mattis 1995, Webb 1991), counterproductive behavior of male coworkers that results in the exclusion of women from informal channels of communication and networks (Mattis 1995) and lack of influential mentors for women in management (Catalyst 2001).

Gender-based work behavior differences are perceived to be much greater in male-dominated professions like the police and the armed forces than other vocations like teaching, nursing etc. It may be appropriate to believe that with larger numbers of women entering the police service and the movement for equal opportunities, discrimination against women would have declined. However, as various researches reveal, the belief among the majority of the male officers is that policing is a man's job and women are not

physically or emotionally equipped to handle the hardships that are inherent to police work. Earlier studies undertaken by Marshal (1973) and Bell (1982) report that policemen perceived women to be emotional, irrational, illogical and lacking in objectivity to handle the day-to-day sordidness of street policing. These views have not changed over time. Martin and Jurik (1996) contend that male police officers associate women with social service, moral values, emotions and domestic roles and equate police with masculinity and build on the image of a 'masculine cop', to prevent the presence of women in the service. Women are therefore confronted with the belief that they (women) are not suited to a police job because of insufficient physical stamina to work in dangerous situations, fight crime and their inability to assume positions of authority in the face of challenges (Joyner and Preston 1998, Brown 1998, Brown et al 1993, Hunt 1990, Grennan 1987). A review of working practices among the police in England (The UK Equal Opportunities Commission 1990; 91) concludes that stereotyped deployment is prevalent where policemen are predominantly allocated outside duties, maintenance of public order and driving; whereas women are assigned duties in communications and work relating to children. According to Wertsch (1998), female officers are less accepted, feel isolated from their male counterparts and need to work harder to prove themselves. Prenzler (1996) and Brown (1998) found that policewomen are subject to unfair working conditions, including incidences of sexual harassment. Jones (1986) asserts that women in police tend to be at a disadvantage in relation to deployment, career advancement and opportunities for training, resulting in women being assigned peripheral roles. Based on a review of research on the differences and similarities between policewomen and policemen on various aspects, French and Waugh (1998) recapitulate the following: (1) policewomen appear to be at some professional disadvantage regarding variety of duties and promotional opportunities (2) there is no evidence that policewomen perform differently from their male counterparts in their day-to-day activities of police work (such as physical requirements, violence control) (3) in some instances, policewomen may be more successful at police work than their male counterparts (there are fewer complaints against them and their styles are less aggressive), and (4) the greatest opposition to female officers comes largely from their male counterparts. These studies conclude that women police perform as well on the job as their male counterparts. Notwithstanding the above conclusions, negative male attitudes towards women in police significantly obstruct the advancement of policewomen. Brown and Heidenshohn (2000) report that despite the fact that women police officers represent between ten and twenty percent of the workforce (varies in different countries), there are few women at senior police management positions, a trend that is commonly observed in non-police organizations as well (National Center for Women in Policing 2000).

While changing demographics in police organizations necessitates a shift in attitude towards women, male prejudices hinder the growth and efficacy of women. To gain recognition, policewomen have to struggle with the unhelpful attitudes of policemen, who consider themselves the natural incumbents of law-enforcement. Women continue to be treated differently, are considered to be appropriate only for certain roles and tend to be concentrated more at the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy (Joyner and Preston 1998). While female police officers are equally committed to their work as their male counterparts (Metcalfe and Dick 2002), they are often assigned obscure roles and are likely to experience gender discrimination and harassment.

The Study

The police organisation in India has adopted a policy to induct more women in the service which is an encouraging step to increase the representation of women. However, women constitute a small proportion of a largely male force. The issue however, is not of numbers alone. Entry of women in the workforce, poses added responsibilities on police departments. Women police are required to combine their home making roles with the demands of policing. They have to perform in a traditionally male oriented organization which views policing essentially as the sole preserve of men. Has the system addressed these challenges? Is the system sensitive to the unique needs of women, given the nature of the job? Are women a part of the mainstream or are they marginalised because of their minority status? Are concerted efforts made to build a gender-inclusive organisation that gives each organisational member an equal opportunity to compete and succeed?

Aim of the Study

In the light of the above concerns, this study examines the unique experiences of women in a male dominated organisation. Through a comparative lens, the aim is to capture the perceptions of men and women on the impact of women's entry in the service and the extent to which women believe they are integrated in the system.

Specifically, the objectives of the research are to understand:

i. Work related experiences of policewomen because of their gender
ii. How do men in police perceive the inclusion of women in the service?
iii. Factors that affect women in discharging their roles

Research Method

Sample

The study was carried out on a sample of police personnel from the Delhi Police department in the levels of Constable to Assistant Commissioner of Police. The sample comprised of representatives of the executive cadre, who had at least ten years of service and were posted on active field duties. Men and women were selected on a proportionate basis. The questionnaire data was collected from 478 police personnel of who 234 were women and 244 men (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Distribution

Rank	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
Assistant Commissioner of Police		0	5	2.05
Inspector	21	8.97	22	9.02
Sub-Inspector	25	10.68	51	20.90
Asst Sub Inspector	72	30.77	48	19.67
Head Constable	44	18.80	57	23.36
Constable	72	30.77	61	25.00
Total (N 478)	234	100.00	244	100.00

Data collection

Discussions were held with a cross-section of senior and middle level police officers to understand the issues and experiences of the department in relation to the objectives of the study. Based on the above, a bilingual questionnaire (in English and Hindi) was developed to elicit responses on the social background and issues concerning work and gender related experiences of employees. The questionnaire was pilot tested on a heterogeneous group of women and men representing different ranks of police personnel. In addition, the Perceived Work Experience Inventory (Indiresan 1994) was used for collecting data.

The questionnaire was personally administered in groups of 20-25 respondents. To gain deeper insight on the experiences relating to the objectives of the study, focus group discussions were held with ten groups, each comprising of ten to twelve women and men respondents, representing different levels.

Profile of respondents

Of the total sample, 46.55 per cent of respondents are in the age range of 31 to 40 years and 28.81 per cent between 41-50 years. Women constitute a higher proportion of the younger respondents: 8.51 per cent are below 25 years in comparison to 2.87 per cent in the case of men; 15.32 per cent women are between the ages of 26-30 years while this proportion is only 4.51 per cent among men. Thus, while 7.4 per cent of men are 30 years old and below, the proportion of women in this category is 23.8 percent. On the other hand, the proportion of men above 41 years is much higher (60.65 per cent), in comparison to 14.47 per cent of women. In fact, 85.53 per cent of women respondents are below 40 years. The younger age of women in the police is understandable since women have started joining the police force more recently.

Majority of the respondents (85.80 per cent, N 411) are married, while 7.93 per cent (N 38) have never been married and are single. 5.60 per cent (N 27) respondents are widowed. The proportion of married women respondents in the sample is 73.08 per cent while that of men is 98.36 per cent. 26 out of 27 widowed respondents are women. These women were inducted in the police on compassionate grounds following the death of their husbands, who were in the police service.

As regards educational qualifications, 52.40 per cent of the respondents have between nine to twelve years of schooling. 41.96 per cent are graduates and postgraduates. Women have higher educational qualifications than the men and an overwhelming majority (93 out of 156) of graduates is women.

The relationship between the rank and education indicates that except for one woman, respondents at the rank of Inspector, whether men or women have a college degree. Below this rank, there is a difference between the women and men. Of the 25 women Sub Inspectors, 23 have a college degree in comparison to 24 of 51 male Sub Inspectors. On the other hand, of the 72 women Constables, 35 have a college degree as against 7 out of 44 male Constables who are college graduates. Thus, college educated women are spread across all the ranks.

Measure of Perceived Work Experiences

While it is well acknowledged that perceptions differ, Indiresan (1994) reports that people perceive the same thing differently, when they concern one's own self, and when they concern others. To elaborate, women may report personal experiences that are quite different from those that they may attribute to other women, generally. Similarly,

men may also report different personal experiences from what they would attribute to other men or women, in general. Thus, two types of perceptions can be identified. One, experience that relates to one's self, referred to as 'Personal Work Experience'. The other is what one perceives as applicable to others, referred to as 'Perceived Work Experience'. The instrument on Perceived Work Experiences comprises of fifteen statements that have been grouped under three dimensions: Gender Subordination and Marginalisation, Gender Stereotype and Gender Discrimination and with five items in each dimension.

The instrument measures 'Personal Work Experiences' as experienced by the individual and 'Perceived Work Experiences', as seen by the respondent to be applicable to other women in general, using the following rating scale:

4. Strongly Agree   3. Agree   2. Disagree   1. Strongly Disagree

In both cases, a high score indicates support of the statements. The scores can range from 20 to 60 for the total scores and from 5 to 20 for each dimension. Higher the score, greater is the perceived subordination, discrimination and stereotyping

Results

The means of the total scores and the dimension scores were obtained and statistical significance of the means was calculated using the t-scores. Responses to 'agree' and 'strongly agree' have been combined.

To what extent do women and men differ in their personal and perceived experiences? The percentage of responses of women who support the statements relating to personal and perceived experiences are analysed followed by an analysis for responses of men respondents. Of the fifteen items, the four statements that are endorsed by a larger percentage by women are as follows:

Personal experiences of women
Percent of respondents
- I have problems balancing career and family   78 %
- My family suffers when I take my career seriously   66 %
- I am held back from exercising my authority   53 %
- I have no freedom to decide how and what I do in my job   51 %

Perceived experiences of women
Percent of respondents
- Women have problems in balancing home and career   87 %
- Women's families suffers when they take their career seriously 70%
- Women are held back from exercising their authority   64 %
- Women are pushed around in a job   59 %
- Women's achievements are linked to factors other than merit   59 %
- Competent women are perceived to be aggressive   59 %
- Women are interrupted when they are making a point   59 %
- Women's ideas are not taken seriously   59 %

The predominant concern expressed by the women is balancing home and career which gets reinforced in case they take their jobs seriously. Over 50 percent also believe that

they are constrained in exercising authority and have less freedom to take decisions relating to their work.

Analysis of data on personal and perceived work experience (Table 2 and 3) suggests that women believe that their personal experience of gender stereotyping, discrimination or marginalization at work is significantly lower to what they believe other women experience, indicated by a significantly lower mean score for personal experiences compared to the perceived experiences on all three dimensions. The women respondents believe that in general, women experience greater gender subordination, discrimination and stereotyping than what they are willing to accept as personal experiences. Fewer women acknowledge that they are ignored for challenging assignments or criticized for their work or that their achievements are under estimated. Only 32 percent of women respondents perceive that they are dominated by their male colleagues. However more than 50 percent of the women have endorsed all the statements as applicable to other women, except for the statement 'women are dominated by male colleagues' (46 per cent). A large percentage of respondents believe that women are pushed around in the job, that they are interrupted when making a point and that their (women's) ideas are not taken seriously. There also is a large number who feel that a women success is attributed to factors other than merit and that competent women are perceived to be aggressive.

Table 2 Personal Work Experiences

Dimension	Mean Values		t-values
	Women	Men	
Subordination	12.34	13.06	2.33*
Discrimination	11.02	12.00	2.97**
Stereotype	12.62	12.36	1.00***
Total	35.98	37.42	

* Significant at .05 level; ** significant at .01 level; *** not significant

Table 3 Perceived Work Experiences

Dimension	Mean Values		t-values
	Women	Men	
Subordination	12.87	10.80	6.72**
Discrimination	12.81	10.03	8.78**
Stereotype	13.92	13.13	2.90**
Total	39.60	33.96	

** Significant at .01 level

There is an interesting dichotomy in the responses of women; an inclination amongst women to distance themselves from believing that they themselves are subjected to inequality or unfairness. What can the reason be attributed to? Does a woman shy away from accepting that she herself is subjected to discriminatory behavior? Does it make her feel more competent and equal to men? There may perhaps be another reason for the above tendency. Low acceptance of an experience at the personal level and projecting it to others, perhaps results in a "not me" syndrome.

The top four responses on the personal experiences and perceived experiences of

men are given below:

Personal experiences of men
Percent of respondents
- I have problems balancing career and family   80 %
- My family suffers when I take my career seriously   75 %
- I am interrupted when I am making a point   57 %
- I am held back from exercising my authority   56 %

Perceived experiences of men about women
Percent of respondents
- Women have problems balancing home and career   87 %
- Women's families suffer when they take their careers seriously   71 %
- Women feel helpless in dealing with problems in the job   56 %
- Women are held back from exercising their authority   39 %

The perception of men respondents is converse to that of the policewomen. The total score for personal work experiences of men respondents is 37.42 as compared to 35.98 by women (Table 2). Men report a higher level of personal negative experiences compared to what they are willing to attribute to women's experiences in general. While it is generally believed that women experience subordination and discrimination at the workplace, the mean values for the personal experiences on the dimensions of subordination and discrimination for policemen is significantly higher than that of policewomen. Except for the first two statements, a smaller percentage of men are of the view that women face such problems of in the workplace. Only three statements have been endorsed by more than 50 percent of men. A small number believe that women's achievements are under rated or that there is any differentiation made while assigning jobs that are challenging. The data suggest that a large number of men respondents tend not to recognize that policewomen are held back from exercising authority, or that they are treated in ways that would inhibit them from effectively performing their roles, to the extent women tend to believe. It is possible that what women perceive as discrimination, subordination and stereotyping is not recognised to be significant by men.

However, the difference is not significant for the personal experiences of both groups of respondents on the dimension of gender stereotyping. Men acknowledge that women experience gender stereotyping and certain beliefs about women pervade amongst men in the organisation. For example, 56 percent of men affirm that women feel helpless in handling work related problems. Similarities in the personal and perceived experiences of both women and men are also observed on two statements, namely, 'I/women have problems balancing career and family', and 'My/woman's family suffers when I/she take(s) my/their career seriously'. However, a larger percentage (80 percent) of men than women (78 percent) are of the view that they have problems in balancing career with family responsibilities and 75 percent men as against 66 percent women believe that the family suffers when they take their jobs seriously. The same holds good for their perceptions of other women where equal numbers (87 percent each) of women and men agree that it is an arduous task to balance career and family. Interestingly, a larger percentage of men than women believe that they are held back from exercising authority,

that they have less freedom to decide what they do in their jobs and are often interrupted when making a point. The data suggest that women and men seem to have some similar personal experiences in the work place. This may be analysed in the context of the hierarchical structure of the organization and unquestioned procedures, wherein employees, particularly at lower levels feel they are unable to influence the situation.

Respondents were asked to rank the 15 statements in order of importance, for personal and perceived experiences. (Table 4 and 5 respectively)

Table 4 Ranking of Personal Experiences of Women and Men

Dimensions and items	Women		Men	
	Per Cent	Rank	Per Cent	Rank
SUBORDINATION				
I am held back from exercising authority	53	3	56	4
I am interrupted when I am making a point	48	5	57	3
I am pushed around in my job	40	9	54	7
I have no freedom to decide how and what I do in my job	51	4	55	6
I am dominated by colleagues of the opposite sex	32	13	16	14
DISCRIMINATION				
My ideas are not taken seriously	48	6	55	5
I have been ignored for good/challenging assignments	30	14	43	10
My achievements are under estimated	33	12	42	11
My achievements are linked to factors other than merit	34	11	46	9
It doesn't matter how hard I try, my work is always criticized	24	15	32	13
STEREOTYPE				
My family suffers when I take my career seriously	66	2	75	2
Any mistake I make is linked to my gender	41	7	16	15
If I am competent, I am perceived to be aggressive	35	10	41	12
I have problems balancing career and family	78	1	80	1
I feel helpless in dealing with problems in my job	40	8	48	8

As shown in Table 4, for their personal experience, women and men respondents assign similar ranks to all the items, except the item 'Any mistake made by me is linked to my gender'. While women rank this statement as 7, men give it the last rank of 15. Women perhaps experience a stereotype that attributes any mistake made by women, to their gender. However, when a man makes a mistake it is not attributed to his sex. In this

kind of an environment, women tend to become cautious and risk averse. They prefer what is tried and tested for fear of making mistakes and being singled out.

Table 5 Ranking of Perceived Experiences of Women and Men

Dimensions and items	Women		Men	
	Per Cent	Rank	Per cent	Rank
SUBORDINATION				
Women are held back from exercising authority	64	3	39	4
Women are interrupted when they are making a point	59	7	30	11
Women are pushed around in a job	59	4	38	5
Women have no freedom to decide how and what they do in their job	52	14	34	10
Women are dominated by colleagues of the opposite sex	46	15	35	8
DISCRIMINATION				
Women's ideas are not taken seriously	59	8	28	12
Women are ignored for good/challenging assignments	52	13	23	14
Women's achievements are under estimated	55	11	18	15
Women's achievements are linked to factors other than merit	59	5	38	6
It doesn't matter how hard women try, their work is always criticised	58	9	26	13
STEREOTYPE				
Women's families suffer when they take their careers seriously	70	2	71	2
Any mistake made by women is linked to their gender	55	10	38	7
If women are competent, they are perceived to be aggressive	59	6	35	9
Women have problems balancing career and family	87	1	87	1
Women feel helpless in dealing with problems in their job	54	12	56	3

An interesting finding for perceived experiences is that men assign a high rank of 3 to the item; 'Women feel helpless in dealing with problems in the job' while women rank the same item as 12 (Table 5). Here again, there appears to be a stereotype among men that women are helpless in dealing with problems on the job, a fact that women themselves do not accept. While only 35 per cent men report that colleagues of the opposite sex dominate women, they have given it a high rank of 8. On the other hand, 46 per cent of women also endorse this item, but give it the lowest rank of 15.

Data are also analysed to examine whether there are any differences in the personal experiences of personnel at different ranks. Amongst the women, the Inspectors, Sub Inspectors and Assistant Sub Inspectors report slightly higher levels of subordination, discrimination and stereotyping compared to what is reported by the constables and head constables. People at higher levels expect greater freedom and autonomy, which the service does not offer which constrains them from exercising their legitimate authority. As far as the men are concerned, there are no significant differences with respect to the rank and personal experiences.

For women respondents their personal experience is moderated by educational qualifications. Women with postgraduate qualifications experience greater degree of subordination, discrimination and stereotyping as compared to women with lower levels of education. Again, educated women are at the higher ranks and have greater expectations and higher levels of aspirations, which perhaps, are not being fulfilled. The same is not reflective for the men.

Discussion

This section is based on an analysis of the questionnaire data in conjunction with insights drawn from discussions with groups of police personnel.

Men report a slightly higher level of personal experiences of subordination and discrimination than women do. The general perception is that the social context demands conformity from women and, therefore, women would carry their feelings of suppression and inequity to the workplace as well; whereas men learn to be independent and are conditioned to exercise their authority. Feelings of subordination and discrimination amongst the men in the rank and file of the police could perhaps be attributed to the organisation structure that is inherently hierarchical, with strong emphasis on discipline and adherence to stringent rules. Because of their status of authority in the family, men are more prone to demand, expect and control, in the absence of which policemen may tend to feel they are captives of the work setting. On the contrary, men underestimate that these experiences are true for women. They do not believe that women are subordinated or discriminated against. Rather, they consider policewomen to be in a more favorable position because they are prone to taking advantage of their sex and seek exemption from facing the hardships of the job.

For women, the experience of being stereotyped is high. The reasons of which are: first, men carry the image that policing is a tough job and, therefore, women are unable to do justice to it. Second, men believe that the home making role is a woman's priority and they, therefore, doubt a woman's commitment to her job. Third, women themselves contribute to perpetuating stereotypes by perceiving themselves as new entrants and by seeking concessions. Perceptions also depend on the kind of treatment women receive at home. For example, if within the family, a woman's self worth is not recognised, the feeling of low self-esteem also extends to the workplace and society. Policewomen share the constraints they encounter in their family life. They are often reminded that they are not policewomen at home and are therefore expected to be obedient and subservient in the family environment.

However with regard to being 'discriminated' and 'marginalised' at the workplace, fewer women as compared to men, report that they have such personal experiences. Through their response to the questionnaire, they contend that despite not being subject to

such practices, these experiences are quite true for women, in general. These findings suggest that perhaps women are habituated to experiencing gender discrimination and subordinate treatment in their family lives and may also carry this mindset to the workplace. Therefore, even when they are discriminated against at the workplace, many are inclined not to acknowledge that such things happen to them. They do not perceive the treatment meted to them as out of the ordinary. Workshops on gender sensitisation highlight this dilemma where participants often take the position that, as far as their personal experiences in child rearing are concerned, they themselves do not discriminate between boys and girls or between sons and daughters. But they are aware that it happens "out there" in society, suggesting, perhaps, that they themselves are not part of that section of society. The discrepancy between personal and perceived experiences amongst policewomen reinforces the above phenomenon. They are reluctant to acknowledge that what affects others, also affects the self.

Further probing during discussions however, reveals several incidents where women experience discrimination. They are explicit in sharing that women in the department are at a disadvantage with respect to getting recognition for good performance and opportunities for advancement. Women feel that superior officers (men) are biased in assessing women and do not give due recognition or reward for good work. They also affirm that men are inclined not to take women's opinions and ideas seriously. A large number of women feel marginalised and discriminated against, with respect to assignment of duties, promotion and horizontal mobility. There is a general belief amongst them that they do not receive the same training as the men, a fact which places them at a disadvantage in terms of job knowledge and skills. The above experiences thus hold them back from exercising their authority that hampers participation in professional activities. Women also claim that they are not comfortable in self-projection where as men seem to be more adept at networking and projecting themselves and often take credit for work that may have been carried out by women.

During discussions, only few men admit that there is a gender bias and stereotyping against women. However, they are quick to justify it on the ground that such experiences exist in the larger society, as well as in the government, and the "police is just a part of the same system". They concede that women have relatively less freedom to decide on issues that relate to work because it is men who are the decision makers. They also acknowledge that men perceive women first as women, and then as police personnel and that women are ignored when it comes to challenging assignments. They claim it is not atypical for women to hold positions and assignments that are less visible within the organizations and involve less risk and breadth of responsibility. Women therefore have fewer opportunities than their male colleagues, to experience certain types of assignments that eventually results in their not gaining the overall exposure required for the job. Denying women access to higher levels of responsibilities creates a vicious cycle in the selection and development process.

The blame is occasionally placed on women themselves. It is pointed out that women are reluctant to accept tough or long hours of work. Men are of the opinion that harshness is inbuilt in the police system and women are not physically strong to bear the strain of policing. Assigning softer duties to women therefore reinforces the belief of the men that women themselves seek softer duties. This is also perceived by men colleagues as "favouritism" or "partiality" towards women and an acknowledgement of the weaker

nature of women. The most quoted example from men is that "women do not want to go on beat duties. They prefer to do desk jobs that involve regular work hours". The practice in Delhi police of assigning policewomen "softer" tasks, for which they are considered to be more suited, perhaps implies an assumption amongst decision-makers that such jobs are "appropriate" for women within traditional sex-role stereotypes.

The non- acceptance of women's experiences by male colleagues is likely to influence the ensuing treatment of women that can put them at a disadvantage. It is possible that those who treat women differently, are neither aware of it, nor of the impact of such behaviour. Often the behaviour itself could be perceived as trivial, but when it occurs frequently, it can have a cumulative effect. It takes time and energy for women to deal with such behaviour patterns if they occur on a regular basis. Experiences of stereotyping and discrimination tend to interfere with professional participation of women resulting in social isolation and restricting opportunities for growth.

The study emphasises that men need to accept that women experience feelings of discrimination and of being stereotyped. Likewise, women need to appreciate that feelings of subordination and marginalisation are not necessarily the domain of women alone. Men in police have similar experiences and feelings, the reasons for which are quite different.

To conclude, women police have the same tasks as their male counterparts. Legally also, there is no distinction between the duties of policewomen and policemen. However, the entry of women has created a new facet for the men in police. Policewomen face several dilemmas as a result of their stereotyped token status in a male-dominated organization. Male prejudices thwart the development and effectiveness of women in police. This is primarily due to the male perception that women have relatively less physical strength or aggression, which is needed to handle dangerous and violent situations. Despite the fact that physical strength is not related to police functioning and that there is no research to suggest that strength relates to the ability of an individual to manage a dangerous situation (Sherman 1973), the practice is to appoint policewomen to perform peripheral or 'soft' roles that are considered more suitable for women.

The data from the present study suggests that inclusion of women in the system does not necessarily lead to their acceptance by men in the service. Rather, beliefs and stereotypes lead to the exclusion of women from functioning optimally. The men in the system who consider women to be inappropriate for the police are perhaps doing so on the basis of their beliefs and assumptions, and not on their experiences. While policies concerning women may be favorable and senior police personnel and administrators believe that they do not make any distinction between women and men, perhaps inadvertently, their actions and decisions convey that women are not as capable as their male colleagues and are not expected to participate or achieve as much as the men. The indirect behavior discriminations impede the development of women's confidence and professional development. Although the doors are open to women in police, they continue to face a host of personal and social barriers. These are barriers that laws alone cannot remedy; they are part of the typical or 'normal' ways of relating to each other as men and women that regrettably, they are not even taken cognizance of.

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