

Work Life Balance of Female Police Personnel

Effulgence

Vol. 23, No. 1

January - June 2025

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Abstract

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) condition shows notable gender differences, with women frequently experiencing it more often and more severely than men. This study explores these disparities among female police personnel, focusing on psychological, social, and organizational factors that heighten. Psychological factors explore the factors like stress, happiness, emotions, fear. These factors affect the development of employees. Gender socialization and workplace culture significantly influence the experiences of female police personnel, who often face challenges such as biases, stereotypes, and social isolation. The study explores the impact of various job related factors of women police personnel on their work life. This study covers mainly the factors like psychological, demographic and financial factors. By analysing various views of police personnel, this study aims to focus and practise the policies which helps in gender equity, improving mental health and fostering inclusive cultural of the organisations. This study also helps to make organisational strategies and policies in such a way so the wellbeing of female police personnel can be improved.

Keywords: Female police personnel, psychological factors, social factors, organizational factors, posttraumatic stress disorder, work life balance.

INTRODUCTION

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) appears to disproportionately affect women, who experience it at higher rates and with greater severity than men (Tolin & Foa, 2006). This gender disparity is consistently observed across various studies on PTSD among the general population,

regardless of the research methods used. For instance, Breslau et al. (1998) reported a lifetime prevalence of 13%, while Norris (1992) found a 6% conditional current prevalence rate. Other studies, such as those by Breslau & Davis (1992) and Stein et al. (1997), reported chronic PTSD rates of 21.8% and 3%, respectively. Despite this body of evidence, gender differences in PTSD among military and police populations have been surprisingly under-

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researched (Pole et al., 2001; Sutker et al., 1995). According to Brewin et al. (2000), a significant disparity exists in the intensity of PTSD symptoms between civilian and military groups, though these differences were not associated with gender in military samples.

This paradox suggests that the higher vulnerability to PTSD among women might not be solely due to biological sex but also influenced by occupational and social factors that differ between law enforcement, military personnel, and civilians. Much of the earlier research on gender differences in PTSD has focused on trauma exposure categories for men and women (Pole & Gross, in press; Tolin & Foa, 2006). Studies by Breslau et al. (1999), Kessler et al. (1995), and Stein et al. (1997) suggest that men experience trauma as often as or even more frequently than women across most categories. However, women still show higher PTSD rates, even when controlling for types of trauma they are more likely to encounter, such as domestic violence or sexual assault.

The elevated incidence of PTSD in women does not seem entirely attributable to the nature or frequency of their trauma exposure. Gender differences in peritraumatic emotions, such as fear, helplessness, and horror, may be critical in explaining why women report higher levels of PTSD than men (Marmar et al., 2006). Some research points to peritraumatic dissociation—emotional states like depersonalization and derealization during or immediately after the trauma—as a strong predictor of PTSD (Ozer et al., 2003). Assessing emotional distress and dissociation soon after the traumatic event is predictive of future PTSD diagnoses, although the reliability of retrospective peritraumatic reports is sometimes debated (Kangas et al., 2005; Shalev et al., 1998).

Women are also more likely to meet PTSD Criterion A2, which involves intense emotional distress during the trauma (Creamer et al., 2005). This heightened emotional response could help explain why women

report more severe PTSD symptoms compared to men. While some feminist perspectives argue that emotional expression differs between the sexes due to socialization, other theories suggest that the cultural context and gender roles within specific environments, such as the workplace, might have a greater impact (Brody, 1985; Fischer, 1993).

In traditionally male-dominated fields like law enforcement, the culture often discourages emotional displays, particularly fear or distress during high-risk situations (Burke et al., 2006; Metcalfe & Dick, 2002). Female officers adhering to these norms might experience less emotional distress and, theoretically, a reduced risk of PTSD. However, this emotional regulation could come at a personal cost, potentially leading to unhealthy coping mechanisms like increased alcohol consumption or somatization, where emotional distress manifests as physical symptoms (Green & Lindy, 1994; Burke et al., 2006).

Despite an increase in the number of women in law enforcement, gender stereotypes persist, creating additional stressors for female officers compared to their male colleagues. Studies suggest that the unique psychological and emotional challenges faced by women, coupled with the pressures of the police culture, may contribute to higher levels of stress among female officers. However, these same factors may also make them less likely to engage in misconduct.

Differences in Psychological Profiles of Male and Female

Carol Gilligan's research focuses on the psychological development of adolescent girls as moral beings, highlighting differences between the moral development of males and females. According to Gilligan, women tend to develop an "ethics of care," which emphasizes compassion, interpersonal connections, and a sense of responsibility toward others. In contrast, men typically develop an "ethics of justice," which is centered around rules, legal principles, and individual rights (Mann, 2008).

Women often prioritize relationships and moral responsibilities over rigid norms, displaying a deeper understanding of others' feelings, which Gilligan (1982) attributes to their greater concern for maintaining social bonds and obligations.

Men and women approach moral issues differently. Men, often socialized to value toughness and independence, tend to adopt a judicial approach to ethics, adhering strictly to rules and focusing on personal freedoms (Gilligan, 1982). From a young age, boys develop organizational skills, a sense of fair play, and independence through competitive activities, which further solidify their rule-based mindset as they grow older (Mann, 2008). Consequently, men are inclined to view rules as universally applicable, regardless of the context.

Men's approach to problem-solving is often compared to solving mathematical equations, where they perceive each situation as having a clear-cut solution (Mann, 2008). On the other hand, women are generally more sensitive to the nuances of ethical dilemmas, striving to resolve conflicts without causing harm. Women's empathy and concern for others may influence their decision-making, particularly in professions like policing, where emotional responses could affect judgment. For instance, a female officer might show leniency towards a thief if she learns the theft was motivated by hunger, valuing compassion and consensus over strict rule enforcement. In contrast, male officers might apply uniform punishments without regard to individual circumstances, believing in impartial decision-making based on established norms.

This difference in moral reasoning can lead to distinct approaches within professional settings. Female officers, often driven by empathy and relational considerations, may find it challenging to make objective decisions free from emotional influence. They view morality as context-dependent, with each scenario evaluated on its unique merits. Male officers, however, are generally seen as more detached, allowing them to uphold norms

consistently without the influence of personal emotions or relationships (Mann, 2008). This divergence underscores how deeply gendered perspectives on ethics can shape behaviour in both personal and professional domains.

The Condition of Women Police personnel in Policing

The nineteenth century marked significant progress in the evolution of modern policing, but women were largely excluded during this period. It was not until the early twentieth century that women began to be appointed as police officers, and even then, their roles were limited and their numbers small. The onset of World War I brought about a gradual increase in the number of women in policing due to labor shortages. Despite these advancements, women in law enforcement were still underrepresented in leadership roles and specialized units. Resistance from police administrators and unions continued to hinder gender equality efforts, and female officers often faced biases and stereotypes questioning their abilities.

However, the presence of female officers brought notable benefits, such as improved support for female victims, fewer complaints, and reduced instances of misconduct. Affirmative action and strong equal employment opportunity laws have played a crucial role in advancing women within the police force. Further efforts, such as targeted recruitment, career development programs, and flexible work arrangements, have also contributed to increased gender diversity. In some countries, a gradual integration approach began with the establishment of dedicated women's units, which later paved the way for broader inclusion in the police workforce.

Culture within Policing Organizations

The culture within police organizations often leads to the marginalization of female officers. Research by Babin and Boles (1998) indicates that women are

generally more likely to comply with organizational rules and policies. Unlike their male counterparts, who often exhibit assertiveness and dominance, women tend to be more submissive and conforming in the workplace. Men are typically more vocal about their opinions, while women are inclined to adhere to established guidelines, often putting aside their personal views. This disparity in behavior results in men's perspectives being more frequently acknowledged and valued within organizational settings.

According to Mann (2008), attachment forms a core aspect of feminine identity, suggesting that organizational rules are often crafted without adequate input from women. In male-dominated environments, women may feel alienated from the prevailing culture and consequently suppress their voices to avoid conflict. This dynamic fosters a sense of compliance among women, who understand that their male colleagues are unlikely to support them in challenging the status quo. As a result, women often conform to the established norms, suppressing their emotions to fit into the organization.

Female police officers, like those in other male-dominated fields, face significant obstacles in adapting to a profession that is physically demanding and time-consuming. They often struggle with integrating into a policing culture that prioritizes traditionally masculine traits. This can lead to increased stress levels, as noted by Vartia (2001), especially when women feel constrained in expressing their views and lack supportive channels to voice their concerns.

Parnaby and Leyden (2011) use Merton's Theory of Anomie to explore the deviance in policing. They argue that ritualists, who adhere to institutional methods, often adjust their goals to make them more attainable (Parnaby and Leyden, 2011:256). The authors highlight that female officers rarely go beyond their assigned duties to meet traditional expectations, illustrating this through the example of women in policing. Female officers face the constant

challenge of identifying as either "policewomen (officer first, female second)" or "policewomen (female first, officer second)" as they try to navigate their roles in a male-dominated profession (Parnaby and Leyden, 2011:256). These identity struggles are not commonly faced by male officers, who are automatically perceived as "police" without needing to differentiate by gender.

Female officers also contend with stereotypes from their male counterparts, who often doubt their ability to perform tasks considered masculine. This leads many women to strictly adhere to institutional norms, viewing compliance as a strategy to gain approval and prove their competence (Parnaby and Leyden, 2011:257). Despite these efforts, the policing environment often does not provide female officers opportunities to demonstrate their skills. Male colleagues sometimes label groups of female officers as the "estrogen mafia," which further isolates women and undermines their ability to collaborate effectively (Parnaby and Leyden, 2011:257).

Research indicates that female police officers are more likely than male officers to face harassment, open hostility, and other negative social interactions while on duty (Morash and Haarr, 1995:689). This reflects the broader antagonistic culture within police organizations toward women. Furthermore, the negative impacts of the profession can have a more detrimental effect on women compared to men (Morash and Haarr, 1995). The study underscores that female officers often work in less supportive environments, both internally within their organizations and externally in their interactions with the public (Morash and Haarr, 1995:689).

According to a study involving 71 female police officers, many initially strive for specialized roles but believe that perceived biases hinder their progression (Holdaway & Parker, 1998). Similarly, research by Steel and Lovrich (1987), which included interviews with senior female officers in California and Massachusetts, found that while women have made progress in the field, true equality remains

elusive. These findings highlight the persistent gender barriers that continue to present challenges for women in policing.

CONCLUSION

Female police personnel continue to face significant challenges within the predominantly male culture of law enforcement. These challenges include bias, stereotypes, and unequal treatment compared to their male colleagues. Such a work environment often results in increased stress, harassment, and social isolation, which negatively impact the job performance and well-being of female officers.

Despite progress in increasing gender diversity and implementing affirmative action policies, the workplace culture in policing often still favors men, making it difficult for women to assert themselves, voice their opinions, and advance professionally. Gender stereotypes and societal expectations further complicate matters, as misconceptions about women's abilities in traditionally male roles lead to increased hostility and harassment.

In summary, although strides have been made in integrating women into law enforcement, substantial efforts are still required to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for female officers. To address these gender disparities, it is crucial to promote equality, challenge biases, and provide the necessary support to ensure that female officers can excel and make valuable contributions to their organizations.

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