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Police Response to COVID 19: Policy Implementation Practices and Challenges during First Phase of COVID-19 in Peshawar Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The eruption of Corona virus was first observed in the city of Wuhan, China on 31st December 2019. The official name of corona virus was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) as COVID-19 on February 11, 2020. The epicenter of the disease kept on shifting from China to all over the world. Countries including Pakistan have formulated different strategies to mitigate COVID-19. Lockdown and social distancing are adopted as a containment strategy for the pandemic by plenty of countries around the globe in order to mitigate the virus. The spread of COVID-19 has created social upheaval and distorted standards for all members of society, but its effects on first responders have been specifically reflective specifically the police department and the healthcare. The Police department had to remove local barriers in their daily work, encourage social distancing, and perform full-time jobs for which they were unprepared. Time to time the guidelines changed hence, the police department had faced challenges in implementation of the guidelines provided by the government especially during the lockdown. The aim of this research study is to evaluate the policies and guidelines for the police department. Further to examine the implementation strategies and identify the challenges faced by the police department during the COVID-19. This research study has used a qualitative approach by interviewing 35 police personals who had performed duty during the COVID-19 period. Thematic analysis has done through matrices method which provided the



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researcher to explore different themes in depth. The area for the data collection is selected Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as majority of the COVID-19 cases were reported from there. The main finding of this research thesis shows that the police department had faced human and financial resource shortage due to which their health being affected. They were not guided properly and were in vague while implementing the policies. Majority of the police personals were in fear of performing the duty as they were not provided enough resources. The duty hours were increased beyond their capacity hence their duty performance had decreased.

Keywords: COVID-19, lockdown, Police department, Strategies, Policies

Introduction

The eruption of Corona virus was first observed in the city of Wuhan, China on 31st December 2019. The official name of corona virus was announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) as Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on February 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). The virus erupted in China very quickly and soon it spread all over the world as people had traveled from China to other parts of the world including Pakistan. The epicenter of the disease kept on shifting. China was the focal point of the disease in its initial phases, near the beginning of March 2020, the epicenter of the disease switched from China to parts of Europe specifically, Italy. In April 2020 United States became the hotspot of the virus where infections had been on the rise. In April 2021, India and Brazil became the viral focal points causing devastation by record levels of infections and mortalities (Weiss et al., 2020). By the time of writing, total corona virus cases reported are 2.6 billion globally with 5.3 million deaths and 2.4 patients had recovered (World meter, 2021).

Challenges Faced by Law Enforcement: Policing in the Era of COVID-19

While on one hand people were confined to their homes as governments had imposed lockdowns, on the other hand, two important stakeholders i.e., the doctors and the police were leading the battle against the COVID-19. The Pandemic has created many challenges not only for the public health sector but also for the police department (Lopez, 2020). Policing is perhaps the most tough and challenging occupation which has frequently changing shifts, threats of violence, and a lack of public support (Hartley, Burchfiel, & Fekedulegn, 2011). Police department was directly involved as they were on the frontline during the COVID-19 thus, they had higher risk of getting infected (Bates, 2020). During the COVID-19, the policy of social distancing and restriction on movement within and between the countries have affected the lives of the people. These guidelines have added an extra task on the police department. In addition, police authorities had to perform operational tasks and at the same time protect themselves from infection.

Pakistan's Response to COVID-19 and Pandemic Trends

In Pakistan the first case of COVID-19 was reported by the Health Ministry from Karachi on February 26, 2020, another case was reported by the federal government



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in Islamabad on the same day (Ali, 2020). The country experienced a peak in the tally of reported cases in mid-June, 2020 with 6825 cases being reported in a single day on June 14, 2020 (Bhatti, 2020). However, the number of COVID-19 positive cases began to decrease and the proportion of hospitalized patients and COVID-19 related deaths have been declining since the beginning of July 2020 (Gul, 2020). Pakistan experienced the third wave of COVID-19 in April 2021 with the number of active cases and mortalities escalating quickly. The caseload has increased, burdening the health care system that is nearing saturation. Although slow but the vaccination process is also ongoing. Until mid of April 2021 1.4 million people had been vaccinated. The process of vaccination continues and the country is due to receive millions of doses of vaccines from Germany and China (Le et al., 2020). Like the rest of the world the government of Pakistan also imposed lockdowns across its provinces to curb the infection. In Pakistan, on March 24, 2020, the government imposed lockdown and maintained the closure of all points of entry and restricting domestic and international flights.

COVID-19 Impact on Pakistan Police Department: Challenges and Responses

The government of Pakistan on 19 June 2020 provided guideline to the police department of Pakistan. These guidelines gave data on the most proficient method to work and perform duty during the pandemic with lower risk of COVID-19 transmission (NCOC,2020). These guidelines were categorized into four groups. First it provided instructions on how to avoid exposure to the virus such as wear face masks, maintain social distancing, use hand sanitizers and use Personal protective equipment (PPEs). Second instruction were to protect family members when you are done with the duty. This included to wash your gadgets, and self-monitor for sign of illness. Third instructions were given in case the police personal expose to COVID-19 one should quarantine, and regularly monitor him/herself. Lastly the instruction was measures to be taken by the Police department such as encourage the officers to follow all SOPs. Incase an officer get infected, he/she should be given immediate leave, provide thermal guns and explore alternative housing options for the infected police personals (NCOC, 2020). Further guidelines provided in the month of July, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in collaboration of NACTA to mitigate COVID-19 (UNODC U. , 2020).

Research Objectives

- To assess the Government policy directives and guidelines for Police department to respond COVID-19
- To examine the implementation strategies of Police department in Peshawar, KP
- To identify the challenges faced by Police department in the implementation of policy directives and guidelines during the first Phase of COVID-19

Literature Review

The world has experienced a rigorous challenge in the shape of a Novel Coronavirus called COVID-19. The COVID-19 was first observed in Wuhan, city of China in



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December, 2019. Since then, the viral outbreak spread across various provinces of China and its neighboring countries (Muhammad et al., 2020). The pandemic was declared as COVID-19 on 11th March 2020 by WHO. The pandemic spread on a massive scale and became a health challenge as the world did not see it coming. Lack of preparedness, inability to learn from previous disasters, negligence to take timely steps to contain the spread of contagion, globalization and high interconnectedness of systems contributed to the massive spreading of the pandemic and its extensive health and economic impacts (Sadr and Wasson, 2020). Consequently, various containment strategies were adopted to stop the spread of disease and save lives. Halting the spread of the contagion was prioritized in spite of its economic cost to protect lives (Baldwin and Mauro, 2020). But the mitigation measures had social and economic implications the blow of which has been felt and continue to cause disruptions at the macro as well as the micro-level. Not only the countries' economic performance has been affected, people at the grassroots level also had to suffer the negative impacts of the pandemic and subsequent containment measures.

Police Department on the Front Line during COVID-19

As governments imposed restrictions on social life, police departments became first responders and were forced to deploy new safety and security measures. The Police Department is frequently called upon to protect public order and offer community services, such as enforcing public health legislation (Richard, 2006). To prevent the spread of the disease, public health rules mandated lockdown, quarantine, social isolation, and other preventative measures (Richard, 2006). The police department's approach was considerably different from prior calamities such as earthquakes and storms. The police department had to maintain the law and order as well as follow the standard operating procedures provided by the government. (Cave & Dahir, 2020). The police department had faced difficulties in implementing COVID-19 related policies due to lack of clarity in the guiding policies (Jennings & Perez, 2020).

Law Enforcement Adaptations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges to law enforcement agencies around the world that have required rapid adaptation to ensure both public safety and the well-being of law enforcement officers. Because police officers often interacted with people who may be asymptomatic carriers of the virus, the risk of exposure increased. As a result, governments have published guidance and strategies to reduce the risk of infection in police forces and communities. Common themes in the strategic exchange included the implementation of mass commandos, physical distancing and officer replacements.

Pakistan Police Department on the Frontline during COVID-19

Police in Pakistan is no exception to global trends. They were unprepared to fight the pandemic, but as soon as the country's first COVID-19 case came to light, they mobilized in support of the government (Malik, 2020). Many junior and senior officers and traffic police officers have been victims of COVID-19 in Pakistan (News,



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2020). In the first week of lockdown, the positive cases of COVID-19 started such as 13 in Punjab, 15 in Sindh, and 1 in KP (NCOC, 2020). Pakistan's National Action Plan predicts that police will play a key role in combating the pandemic by enforcing lockdown, increasing social distance and isolating local people (NCA, 2020). The NPA has asked the police to raise public awareness about the spread of COVID-19, but the documents did not contain clear guidelines on safety precautions and the content that the police will implement. The police station was not fully equipped for training and access to information and personal protective equipment.

Mitigating COVID-19 Risks for Police Personnel

In the Police station while dealing with the people or during patrolling it was recommended not to shake hands or have physical contact with anyone when needed as they might get infected. Further the police department was given instructions of maintain 3 feet distance and not to touch unnecessary surfaces however they were still at risk as they had to carry the suspect in the same vehicle in which they would go out on patrolling (Ali, 2020). On an occasion where there is arrest is necessary, health security has to be the primary consideration for the police. If the arrested suspect is contracted with COVID-19, he should be isolated from others (UNODC U. , 2020). Avoid direct contact with documents while performing investigation. In addition, use proportional police research resources to track people who come in contact with COVID-19 patients. In a televised speech, the Pakistani prime minister feared a significant increase in COVID-19 cases from May to June 2020. There are about 500,000 police officers in the country. The approximate state breakdown is 124,000 in Sindh, 37,000 in Baluchistan, 195,000 in Punjab, 80,000 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 12,000 in Islamabad (Rozan, 2020). These police organizations across the country needed immediate and coordinated support from governments, policy makers, civil society and international organizations, including the United Nations.

Methodology

Research Design

This research study has used a qualitative approach because the researcher is more interested in understanding the thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of the respondents. Research strategy is the procedure or tools for collecting data relating to the study. There are different strategies included in qualitative research. As narrative research according to (Creswell, 2013) is when the research pores over the lives of individuals to present stories related to their lives or events that they have witnessed. Further phenomenology study is where the researcher identifies the spirit of human experience about the phenomenon as described by respondents.

This research study has adopted the qualitative strategy, as the researcher used it to gain knowledge about the guidelines provided and challenges faced by the police department. Quantitative research on the other side is concerned with objectively measurable variables.



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Study Area

The area that the researcher has selected was KP, Peshawar. Peshawar is the oldest city and capital of KP province where the primary spoken language is majority Pushto. The majority of the people of Peshawar are Pashtuns. Peshawar is located at the eastern end of Khyber Pass and is nearly close to the Afghanistan border. The current population of Peshawar is 2.27 million at a 3.18% increase per year (Nations, 2020). Peshawar has hosted many Afghans in the time of the Afghan civil war in 1973 and has counted 20% of total Afghan that has been hosted by Peshawar (Unit, 2015). Peshawar has recorded the highest coronavirus positivity rate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 10 percent of the samples collected tested positive for Covid-19 (Yusufzai, 2020). A total of 1,305 people has died of the virus in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since the start of the pandemic in March. They include 614 residents of Peshawar, whose case fatality rate is four percent (Yusufzai, 2020). Thus, Peshawar being a hub of COVID, the researcher's interest developed to select the mentioned area for the study.



Source: Google Map

Population

In research studies, population is the pool of individuals from which a statistical sample is drawn for a study. The population which was selected for the study was the police department of Peshawar. The total number of police stations in Peshawar are 33 with a total of 90 chowkies. Each police station has an SHO (male/female) with one Sub-inspector SI and two Assistant sub-inspectors ASIs. The number of constables varies from 10 to 15. Peshawar Police Department protects people's lives, property, dignity, protect public order and enforce state laws to the best of your ability and without discrimination through modern, proactive policing and public participation.

Sample technique

For this research study, the researcher used purposive sampling. In purposive



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sampling, the researcher selected only those police personals who had performed duty during the COVID-19. For this study, the population from which the data was collected were police department. Further, these police department were divided into two belts i.e., Brown belt officers which includes officers of higher rank such as DPO, SP, ASP, DSP and Black belt officers which includes officers of lower rank includes SHO, ASI, SI, constables.

Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study (Faber, 2014). The sample size for this study included interviews with 35 police officers. Of the sample, preference was given to both the gender i.e., male and female to respond however there was lack of availability of female respondents to the interview questions. In the case of qualitative research, the figure of participants for data collection was kept limited so that the study could be done more suitably.

Tools of Data Collection

Data is an unorganized raw form of information that researchers gather to increase the probability (Yin, 2013). Researchers conduct several types of data collection on their type of studies which is further analyzed and interpreted. There are different methods for both qualitative and quantitative research. Focus group discussion, interviews, surveys, and observation are some of the methods used in qualitative research while experiment questionnaire is somehow the primary data collection method for quantitative research. In this research qualitative data was collected from the police department. For this purpose, the instrument used for data collection were a semi-structured interview which is most commonly used in social sciences. Open-ended questions were in a sense, a free hand to respondents to provide any respective answer, it did not limit them to options given to participants who are deliberately taken as purposely.

Analysis

(Sgier, 2012) has defined two types of analysis i.e. thematic analysis and interpretive analysis. The thematic analysis seeks to identify patterns in data contents. Certain themes are derived from the participants' responses. Interpretive analysis tends to explore a participant's personal experience in detail and how those participants make logical sense of that particular experience (Smith, 2004).

In this research study, the data is analyzed thematically where themes are derived and identified carefully through the matrices method. The matrix method is a way of summarizing and analyzing qualitative data in rows and column tables. It is possible to sort data by cross case and by theme. It facilitates systematic and comprehensive analysis of all standard datasets. The matrix method is based on the coding and interpretation of transcripts that can be obtained from detailed interviews or focus groups. The coding process generates a set of categories that follow a set of default steps that allow analysts to interpret the respondent's response. Therefore, these interpretations allowed researchers to draw conclusions that were the answers to their



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research questions.

Analysis and Findings

General Information

The basic police characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 4.1. The sample consisted of officers of lower and higher rank from the police department who had performed duty during COVID-19 period. The research chose a total of 35 respondents both male and female. 16 out of 35 (46%) respondents were having matriculation to FSc education, 11% percent reported to have 14years of education and 43 percent of the officers were graduate with higher education either BS, MS or PhD. Further the respondent were categories into two groups. First, Brown belt officers which included all the higher rank officers such as DPO, SP, ASP, DSP. Second, Black belt officers which include SHO, ASI, SI, and constables. In this study the 20% respondents were brown belt officers and the rest black belt officers. Further the income of the officers is observed as 60% of the respondent income is between 25 to 44 thousand rupees. 11% of the respondent have income between 45-54k and 9% with income between 75-94k. 20% of the respondents have income more than 95 thousand rupees. Respondents belonged to different age groups with 20% of respondents aged between 20 and 30 years, 43% of respondents were 31-40 years old, 23% respondents were 41-50 years old while 14% were above 50 years old.

Table 1: Demographic details of the respondents

Demographic details of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	33	94
Female	2	6
Marital Status		
Married	31	89
Unmarried	4	11
Education		
FSc	16	46
BA (14 Years)	4	11
Bachelor(16 years)- PhD	15	43
Designation		
Brown Belt (DPO, SP, ASP, DSP)	7	20
Black Belt (SHO, SI, ASI, Lower Cadre	28	80
Age		
20-30	7	20
31-40	15	43



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41-50	8	23
50 Above	5	14
Total	35 Respondents	100%

Table 2: Guidelines and Notification revised according to situation

No	Date	Department	Guideline's title
1	March, 2020	Ministry of Health Services.	Social Distancing during COVID-19
2	March, 2020	UNODC	Pakistan's Police preparedness for the new Noval virus
3	March, 2020	World Health Organization (WHO)	Guidelines for PPEs
4	June,2020	NCOC	Law Enforcement Agencies safety in COVID-19
5	July, 2020	UNODC	Protection Against COVID-19
6	August, 2020	NCOC	Guidance for Smart Lockdown
7	August, 2020	NCOC	Market closure After 8
8	November,2020	Interpol	COVID-19 Pandemic protecting police and communities

Implementation Practices and Challenges

The implementation practices and challenges faced by the police department of Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic have been multifaceted. Initially, the department swiftly adapted its operational strategies to enforce lockdown measures and ensure compliance with public health guidelines. This involved deploying personnel to monitor public spaces, enforce social distancing, and restrict non-essential movement. However, the police faced numerous challenges in executing these duties effectively. Limited resources, including personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitization supplies, hindered their ability to safely carry out their duties. Moreover, the inherent risk of exposure to the virus posed a constant threat to police officers' health and safety. Balancing enforcement with community engagement proved challenging, as misinformation and resistance to pandemic-related restrictions often led to tensions between law enforcement and the public. Additionally, navigating the complex socio-political landscape of Pakistan, where societal norms and cultural practices sometimes conflicted with public health directives, presented further



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hurdles. Despite these challenges, the police department has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in its response to the pandemic, collaborating with other government agencies and community stakeholders to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and maintain public order.

Policies and Notifications to the Police

A common complaint among all officers was that the police department were neglected and were not taken into consideration while formulating lockdown policies. The respondent has stated that the government had taken very little input from the police while formulating policies. The police department were never asked about what challenges they might face while combating the COVID-19. When the officers were asked about their level of input in the policy making or formulation of guidelines, they stated that the department were issued only orders to follow. The ministers had discussed and formulated the guidelines without consulting us (Brown belt officers, 2021). Therefore, from the results of the respondent it is highlighted that one of the main challenges that the police department had faced during the COVID-19 was the implementing policies regarding health restrictions.

Lack of Clarity in the Notifications

It is explored from the respondents that lack of support and guidance provided by the government had created drastic problems for the police. When the respondent was asked, they documented that the police department was in complete disarray. The department had received more than 6 notifications from the provincial and federal government that were all contradictory in the first month of lockdown. Further, they added that they were never consulted at any stage during policymaking.

Other officers have shown sorrow about the un-clarity within these notifications. They were unable to properly communicate to the lower cadre officers about the policy changes. The notifications were primarily in English. They should have been written in the local language for our lower cadre police officers who cannot read English correctly. The terms were difficult to translate. (Brown belt officers, 2021). Further, the government were revising notification which were itself a challenging for the police department to implement.

“The government was revising notifications on daily basis. It was very confusing for us as some guidelines were about barring but these exemptions were also confusing. Such as enforcing lockdown and don't allow any individual out of home, whereas the next notification would be to allow people who would go out to buy daily groceries. Confusion was to allow whom and not to allow whom. The health department was also not so productive as they were not testing the officers properly (black belt officers, 2021)

Thus, from the above respondent's view, it is concluded that a lack of consultation between policy makers and police department took place. There was a gap between what was expected and what was delivered by the policy makers. The department however went for informal practices and somehow managed.



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Lack of Civil Administration and Police relation

In another interview, the police department admitted that they were instructed to use informal means when dealing with citizens. After full lockdown, a concept of smart lockdown took place. The police officers had asked to depend on traditional practices while monitoring traffic and controlling crowds with limited resources. The civil authority was issuing orders without consulting the police department. They were doing what they asked. When the policies changed to enforce smart lockdowns, the police were expected to seal certain localities. Police had to blockade various areas by erecting huge barriers to stop the movement of people and traffic.

Since from the literature it is highlighted that there was a lack of clarity in notifications which has raised communication gap between the civil administration and the police department. When the department was confused while implementing the policies, they relied on informal practices such as they had placed barriers on the road to prevent local people movement. Further from the respondent it was found out that one of the biggest hurdles that they faced was in inflow of information. Later one brown belt officer had stated that he knew about the limited availability of the resources during the COVID-19. He stated that he had asked the lower cadre officer to manage somehow as they had no other option left.

Limited Financial Resources and its Availability

During this novel COVID-19 pandemic, there are numerous demands rising at police agencies around the world. Special Funds are allocated to the police by the provincial and federal government to fulfill their needs such as purchasing personal protective equipment such as Masks, gloves, thermometers, special suits, hand sanitizing wipes, and hand sanitizer. However, the department of police had struggled to obtain funding from the federal government for police welfare during the COVID-19. Although some local governments have agreed to provide financial assistance but federal support was missing. When the respondent was asked about the financial resources, they stated that they had struggled to get funds for our department. They had to arrange personal protective equipment by themselves. Majority of the respondents claimed that they had somehow made their own source of network to get personal protective equipment because there was no supply of PPEs from the government side and the support was minimal. The police department had to rely on other private organizations for the availability of PPEs. When the respondent was asked, they concluded that they had to turn towards the private sector for help such as NGOs for allocating funds.

Ensuring law and order

One of the main challenges that police faced during the early stage of COVID-19 was to maintain healthy relations with the community by ensuring that every individual is following proper SOPs. However, the key strategies and the right incentives needed to build these relationships were often missing such as going outside during the lockdown, not wearing masks, social distancing. To enforce lockdown, the government applied a violation section 144 of the criminal procedure code which prohibits more



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than four people together at one place in an emergency situation. Besides these frameworks, people went out by violating public order.

“During the first phase of COVID-19, it was very difficult for us to implement the public orders as we were not given clear guidance by the government. We had no clear orders regarding public health restrictions” (Black belt officer, 2021).

As lockdown was imposed by the government, the police majority of the police department documented that; Some influential groups had challenged the authority of the police such as some clerics had opposed the SOPs especially the restrictions imposed on the religious congregations. They had struggled a lot to prevent those from going to the worship areas.

However, the government had to soften the SOPs and allow the people to go out to some extent but by completely following the SOPs. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed great pressure on law enforcement to confront longstanding issues such as police use of force and arrest to showcase department efficacy. One critical thing that arose from the study was that one of the respondents had said that

“I was unable to ask the local people to follow the SOPs nor was I able to arrest if somebody had violated the rules as per section 144 due to my personal acquaintance. Some were of my tribe whereas some were my neighbors” (Black belt officers, 2021).

Maintenance of Law and Order

The crime rate during COVID-19 during late 2019 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was not different than as it was before. According to National Police Bureau, a total of 178109 crimes were recorded (*table 1*) out of which 9401 crimes were related to domestic violence during the lockdown (NCOC, 2019). The police were ordered that no unnecessary arrests should be made depending on its intensity. It was uncovered that a larger part of the people kept under these arrangements, were delivered presently without being charged. In spite of the fact that police were requested by law to capture violators, officials and government authorities perceived the powerlessness of the police to hold people in squeezed spaces inside police headquarters, given the sheer quantities of infringement occurring.

However, one police officer had stated that

“I had the duty at the station where I had received different crime reports. I had to perform my duty regardless of the intensity of the crime. However, I was guided by the SHO to avoid unnecessary arrest at different road points” (Black Belt officers, 2021).

While recognizing a range of offenses warrants arrest and detention, COVID-19 did not provide any cover to those who had committed serious crimes. Respondents had claimed that they had done different arrests of the accused of heinous offenses such as robbery and killing at the area near Tehkal.

“I had ordered by the government in early March 2020 to ban all the visits of the families of the prisoners. I also had stopped the lawyers to meet with their clients. Moreover, I had ordered my police personals not to go out of the prison



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premises till further notification. Since there was a constant influx/intake of accused at the prison, I had no option but to violate all the SOPs since I had a prison which is overcrowded” (Brown belt officers, SP prison, 2021).

Police Health and wellbeing

The respondent of police said that during the lockdown the violators had to be transported in the same police vehicles available in which we had to petrol around the city. When they were asked about the fear of duty 54% of the respondents said they were in fear of performing duty.

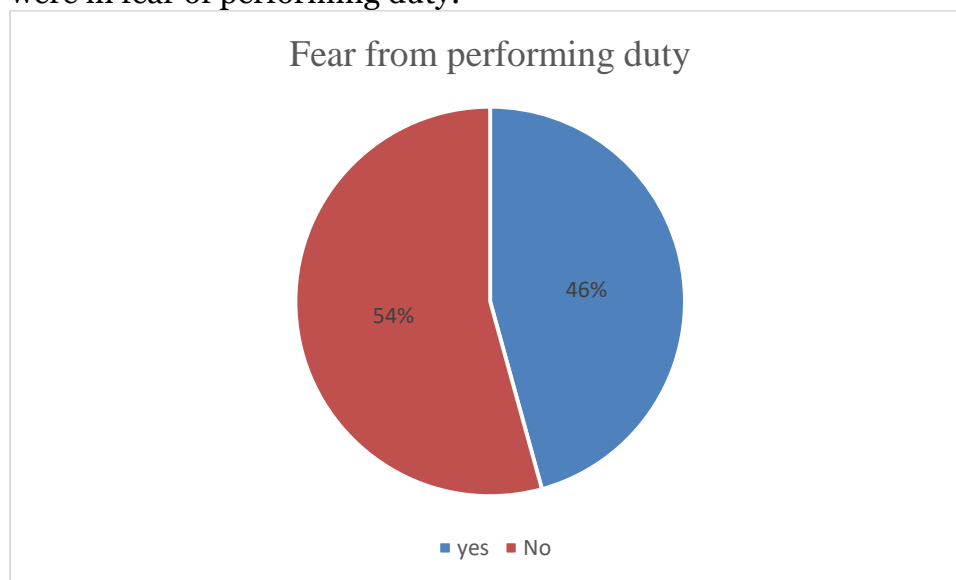


Figure 4.7 A. Fear of performing duty

The Lower cadre police officers also transported the accused during this period in police pick-ups with limited gasoline, and sometimes officers used their own private automobiles while taking the accused. they would sit together without any precautions. The police did not know who is COVID-positive. (Black belt officers, 2021). In Peshawar till now, 151 police officers tested positive and 13 died, In Mardan, 151 contracted the disease, while 10 died, whereas in Kohat 172 tested positive and four died (Sheeba Haider, 2021). Upon asking from the respondents who were infected by the COVID-19 stated that

“When the virus erupted, I was very worried. I was given PPE but I had arrested different violators and I had no clue whether they were infected or not. In late June, I was COVID positive. I had quarantined myself and started self-medication. Since I have more than 10 households in the house, 3 of my households also got infected which was a very critical situation for me and for my family” (Black Belt officer, 2021).

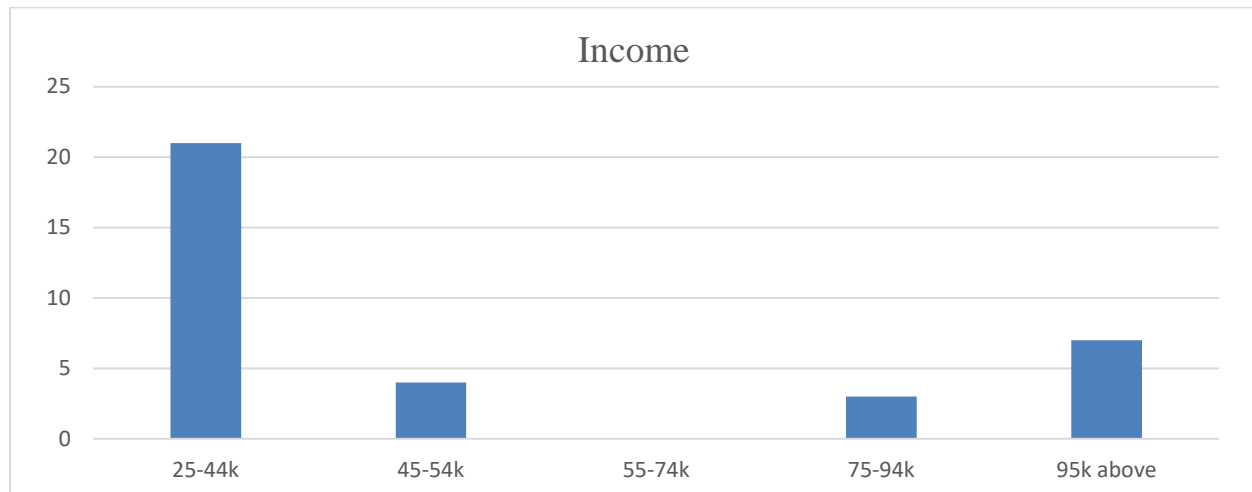


Figure: 4.7 B

Human Resource: Personnel Shortages and Increased Duty Hours

Another major obstacle faced by law enforcement during the pandemic is the reduction in personnel of police officers. The lack of available personnel due to absenteeism or illness puts extra pressure on the pool of available officers and can limit even the simplest police activities.

“We had resource shortage and had limited staff. Since we were on the frontline and had to maintain the decorum, so on daily basis the police personals among us got infected by the virus and they were quarantined. So, we had to somehow manage our duty with limited staff” (Black belt officers, 2021)

In addition, working in a situation where there is lack of officers can impact on performance of the police department. The additional workforce has created an extra burden on the police department physical ability of performing duty. When the respondents were asked, they claimed that during the COVID-19 outbreak, they had performed my duty. Some got infected by the virus. Further majority of the police officers added that they had quarantined themselves and took leave from the duty as they had no other option. An officer added that

“We were only few police personals who would perform the duty as the rest were ill and were quarantined. I myself got ill due to extra duty hours. I was not capable of performing the duty properly” (black belt officers, 2021)

Regarding the duty hours, when the senior officers were asked, they talked about the shortage of staff that Daily one of the police were getting infected and were sent to quarantine. They had to increase the duty hours of the lower cadre. They added that they were personally in stress and had performed the duty.

Conclusion

The eruption of COVID-19 has not only made challenges for the healthcare but also for the police department. The study focused to assess the government policy directives and guidelines for Police department to respond COVID-19 as police department were



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on the frontline along with healthcare against COVID-19. Countries around the globe had formulated different strategies to mitigate COVID-19. Lockdown and social distancing were adopted as a containment strategy for the pandemic to mitigate the virus. However, the guidelines kept on shifting as COVID-19 was going through different stages. Firstly, lockdown was imposed and all international flights were suspended. Later the focus shifted from lockdown to smart lockdown along with suspension of all educational institutes and business. The initial guideline that government had given to the police department were to avoid exposure to the virus, protect family members after performing the duty, in case of exposure to the virus make sure quarantine yourself and lastly to encourage every individual to follow all Sops. The Several guidelines were given to curb the spread of virus including wearing of masks, gloves, using hand sanitizers and maintain social distancing. All these guidelines had to be implemented by the police department. The study pointed out the police efforts in mitigating the virus through social distancing and lockdown with limited resources. However, this study has pointed out that implementing these guidelines were itself a challenge for the police department. This study has highlighted major complaints of the police department during the COVID-19. These complaints included ignorance of government, proper financial support, lack of knowledge, lack of staff which has affected their duty. When the lockdown started, very little input was taken from the police by the government and civil administrators. The government did not ask what sort of challenges might the police department face. Further the police department had received different contradictory notifications time to time which itself was a challenge for the police department as they were vague of how to implement.

On one hand where people were confined to their homes as governments had imposed lockdowns, on the other hand there were two important stakeholders during the COVID-19 period i.e., the doctors and the police department. The police department had played the major role by implementing the SOPs. During the implementation of SOPs, the department had faced a lot of challenges from both the government and citizens. The government had provided guidelines which were contradictory. The police department was not taken into consideration during policy making. They were asked to perform duty along with following SOPs which included wearing of masks, protective gloves, using hand sanitizers and maintain social distancing from the suspected ones. From citizens' side, the police department have documented that the citizens refused the government guidelines such as they were not wearing masks, went out during the lockdown, and intentionally broke the Standard operating procedures (SOPs). Further this study has highlighted the issue of financial resources. It is explored that extra financial resources such as funds were allocated for the police department during the COVID-19 however the officers had struggled to avail those resources. The personal protective equipment that was given to the police department were limited such as masks and hand sanitizers. In addition, this study has highlighted the issue of Police department health and wellbeing. The virus has affected the wellbeing and health of the police officers who had lived in congested houses. It is stated that majority of the black belt officers had limited income where as the number of households were more. As a result, they had more chance of getting infected. The



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number of crimes had somehow decreased during the outbreak of COVID-19 as people were limited to stay at home. However, the police department had faced a challenge of arresting some suspects because they did not know who were COVID positive. They had no option but to violate social distancing. One major issue that the department had faced was the non-cooperation of community in some places. They would come out of their homes in some lumps areas some clerics violated the instructions by going to their religious congregations.

This research study suggests focusing on identifying new and better police intervention techniques for preventing the spread of disease that may arise in the future. Because the pandemic is a global issue, and many countries are deploying police services to enforce social separation and lockdowns, additional research into the impact of police interventions across diverse societies and over longer periods of time is required. The police force needs to be prepared to function in a proactive manner. Because they are the government's implementing hands, the police department must be considered while establishing policies.

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