

Gender Mainstreaming In The Police Organisations: Bangladesh Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Due to the nature of the job, the traditional policing has always been considered as an ‘act of masculinity’. But, modern day policing includes many attributes such as community policing, technological knowledge, attending of both victims and offenders with empathy and at the same time the traditional crime fighting skills. This changing role of policing has resulted in the increased participation of the female police worldwide. Bangladesh is also not devoid of this reality. But, in spite of having different steps to promote female participation in the police organisations, the integration is becoming harder. The current study has tried to explore the state of gender balancing from the perspective of a developing country like Bangladesh by analysing the current situation and identifying the barriers to integration for the females. Analysing collected data from different sources, it has been found that the women are not treated equally as the men in the police organisations in terms of different service benefits such as the distribution of duties, training, promotion, rewards and so on. Different factors such as social and religious culture, family orientation, male-dominated organisational structure act as the negative factors for bringing the women to mainstream police duties. And, the absence of government’s distinct policy in those areas is also playing an adverse role. Since Gender mainstreaming focuses on policy change for women equality, addressing the identified factors can contribute to formulate appropriate policy, which can lead to the doorways of gender equality in Bangladesh Police.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Equality, Police Organisation, Women Police, Female Participation, Gender Discrimination, Socio-Religious Culture

1. INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, the female comprises a significant portion of the total population. So, the improvement of the gender situation is one of the prerequisites for the development of the country. For this, the government of Bangladesh has adopted female development policy to promote gender participation in both public and private spheres (National Women Development Policy, 2011). Similarly, as law and order situation is one of the main pre-conditions for development, it is imperative that the police organisations function properly with the representations from all corners of the society.

The concept of ‘gender mainstreaming’ has gained much popularity within a short span of time which promotes gender equality. Nevertheless, the absence of ‘gender equality’ is very much visible not only in the developing countries but also in the most advanced democracies, the degree and forms may vary according to the contexts. So, to address this inequality, ‘gender mainstreaming’ is a potential tool (Kozama, 2012). For this reason, to understand gender mainstreaming in Bangladesh Police, analysing the gender situation from divergent perspectives is needed.

The government of Bangladesh has taken different measures to increase the participation of women in police and make the working conditions of the female police members better. But, how much gender equality has been attained is still an enigma. Although the salary structure of the female officers is same as their male counterparts, some areas like deployment on the operational assignments, where the officers are entitled to some ‘fringe benefits’ and considered to be the more prestigious, are less accessible to the females. Again, although the female police are demonstrating utmost sincerity and professionalism in discharging their duties both in the home and abroad, their performance is very often underrated (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2015).

This study will begin with the background of female policing in Bangladesh. Then it will discuss the theoretical perspective of the issue and will identify the objectives followed by limitations and research design of the study. After analysing the collected data, the conclusion will be drawn based on the findings of the discussion.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Due to the 'coercive' nature of the police work and the 'crime fighting' image, the traditional policing is translated as an act of physicality, which eventually "leads to the assumption that policing is naturally a man's job" (Chan, Doran, & Marel, 2010, p. 426). For this reason, in spite of having increased female participation in the police force, the integration is becoming harder, and this is also true in the case of Bangladesh. Although the history of female police is not very new, the true representation of gender is still questioned there.

Evidence from developed countries shows that compared to the male police officers the females are less vehement, use less unnecessary violent force and less prone to be in confrontation while dealing with people. Moreover, they have higher moral and ethical values, possess good communication skills especially in dealing with women and children, maintain good community relations and demonstrate better managerial and leadership qualities (Silvestri, Tong, & Brown, 2013). The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) research report found that in spite of having good interpersonal communication skill and more adaptability to community policing, the female police are less likely to be assigned to responsible positions in the South Asian countries including Bangladesh. This is not because women are not always willing to, it is because the organisation does not allow them (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives, 2015).

Bangladesh Police is the prime law enforcing agency, which is responsible for maintaining the internal law and order situation of Bangladesh. There are three entry points in the police department of Bangladesh into which recruitment process takes place. They are Constables, Sub-Inspectors (SI)/Sergeants and Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP). The Constables and SI/Sergeants are the junior non-cadre ranks, and the ASPs are the senior cadre officers who are recruited through the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination. In 1974, Bangladesh Police recruited its first batch of female police officers in 14 non-cadre posts. It was the beginning and after that in 1986, the first female officer in the cadre post joined by passing the prestigious Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination. She was the first ever female officer to join in the supervising post. Since then the female participation has been increasing day by day. As of 2015, the total number of female officers was 8827, which was 6.03% of the total strength of Bangladesh Police (Bangladesh Police Women Network, 2016). Like other South Asian countries, Bangladesh is also recruiting more female police officers, and the aforementioned ratio reflects the fact. But, only the increased number does not necessarily indicate that the gender mainstreaming process is moving to the right direction (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives, 2015). Examining the practical situation from different points of view can give an idea about how much gender equality has been established in the police organisations of Bangladesh.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The foundation of this study is based on the concept of gender mainstreaming. As a theory, gender mainstreaming is contested and relatively new. It was adopted by the United Nations in 1995 at the conference on women in Beijing and later taken up by the European Union. In principle, it is a process which aims to promote gender equality by reviewing all mainstream policy frameworks (Walby, 2005). Establishing gender equality by entrenching gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes and public policy is at the heart of the gender mainstreaming concept. It is an embedded strategy which focuses on bringing changes associated with policy practice by concentrating on organisational structures, culture and behavioural patterns (Daly, 2005). Since gender mainstreaming focuses mainly on gender equality, examining gender situation using some key factors can give an idea about to what extent an organisation or institution have applied the principle of gender mainstreaming in practice (Kozama, 2012). For this, some issues have been discussed in this study to measure the gender policy implementation in Bangladesh Police.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has tried to measure the gender equality in Bangladesh Police. As mentioned earlier, in the past few years the number of female police members have increased rapidly. So, discussion has been made on what are the positive and negative aspects faced by the female police members since joining and what is the attitude of the authority towards them. In short, the objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the present status of female police members in the Bangladesh Police in terms of gender equality.
- To find out the barriers to integration in the organisation for the females.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Gender studies in Bangladesh are not very new. The government is also very cordial in terms of promoting gender equality, which is reflected well in the recent education advancement of the female population and increased female participation in every domain of the national life (Hossen, 2014). But, there are very limited studies in defining the relationship between gender and policing in the context of Bangladesh. There are some academic literature regarding the female participation in the Bangladesh Civil Service, which are the senior cadre posts. Those studies aimed at examining the issues related to the women working in the Bangladesh Civil Service and the facts such as promotion, recruitment, placement and training, where they are deprived compared to their male colleagues (Zafarullah, 2000; Ferdous, 2014). But, they did not attempt to identify the problems confronted by the female police officers in particular. Since the police organisations are comprised of both cadre and non-cadre officers, it needs different approaches in determining their problems. In this regard, this study is new, which will open up newer dimensions in the arena of gender balancing in the Bangladesh Police.

6. LIMITATIONS

Due to time and resource constraints, small sized data have been collected only from Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh. So, this study necessarily does not reflect the situation of Bangladesh as a whole. Moreover, there are legal restrictions in publishing official documents according to The Official Secrets Act, 1923 (Act No. XIX of 1923: Section 6 (2)) (Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, 2016). So, only the published documents have been consulted in this study.

7. RESEARCH APPROACH

For the purpose of this study, mixed method approach combining face-to-face interviews and sample surveys have been adopted. At the same time, secondary data have also been discussed. As mix method approach allows the researcher to bring a full picture of a situation by combining more than one methods, the study has tried to analyse the situation by collecting data from various sources in order to discuss the issue in detail (Denscombe, 2010).

In this study, officers who have experiences of working in the police organisations for at least five years have been selected for the survey. The respondents have been selected from Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), the prime organisation for keeping the law and order situation of Dhaka city. Apart from this, male officers of junior ranks were interviewed. Senior police officers who are the monitoring authority of the female officers have also been selected for the interviews. To understand the service receivers' point of view, people who came to the police stations for receiving service have been interviewed. And, secondary data have been consulted to fill up the gap of the information.

7.1. The Survey

Among the total 1531 female police members of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), 1495 are of the rank of Sub-inspector to downwards, so most respondents have been selected from these ranks (Mukta, Personal Interview, December 24, 2016). The sample was a non-probability purposive sample, and the sample size is 80 which is around 5% of the total female strength of the DMP. The rank composition of the respondents was; Constables 50, Assistant Sub-Inspectors (ASI)/Nayek 10, Sub-Inspectors (SI)/Sergeants 10 and Inspectors to above 10. As the nature of the study is exploratory, purposive sampling was used because this type of sampling puts the emphasis more on the opinion of the respondents than on their number (Teddlie & Yu, 2009).

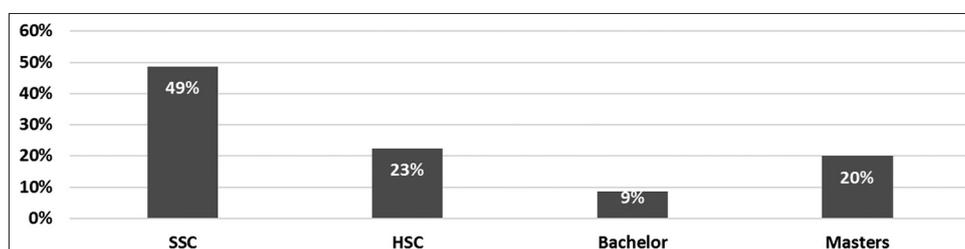


Figure 1: Educational qualification of the respondents

The respondents were requested to put their opinion on a provided questionnaire (Appendix- 'A'). The respondents are from different operational and non-operational divisions of the DMP.

The educational backgrounds of the respondents were as follow:

From the above diagram, it can be seen that the majority (49%) of the female respondents' educational qualification is Secondary School Certificate (SSC), while a good number (23%) of them have Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC). Around 20% of them have Master Degree.

Regarding their marital status, 68.4% of them are married, while 27.2% of them are unmarried. Around 4.4% of them are divorced or widowed.

Regarding the preferred posting of the respondents, a good portion of the junior ranks has opted for non-operational assignments, while the senior officers have preferred the operational posts. Operational duties include law and order duty, patrol duty, assistance to arrest, investigation, interrogation and so on and non-operational duties are comprised of clerical assignments, assisting in office works and report/record writings in different police offices. The junior officers have preferred non-operational work due to family engagements and other personal issues.

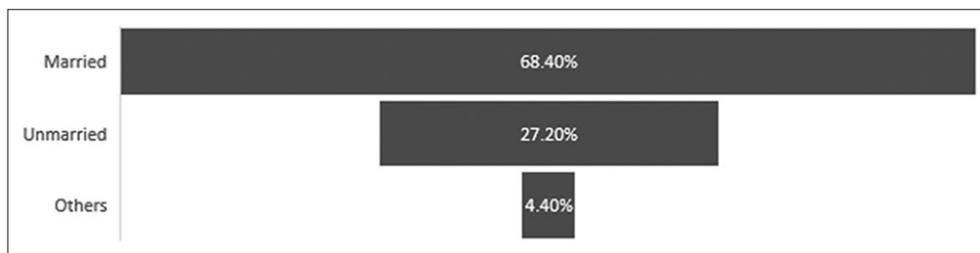


Figure 2: Marital status of the respondents

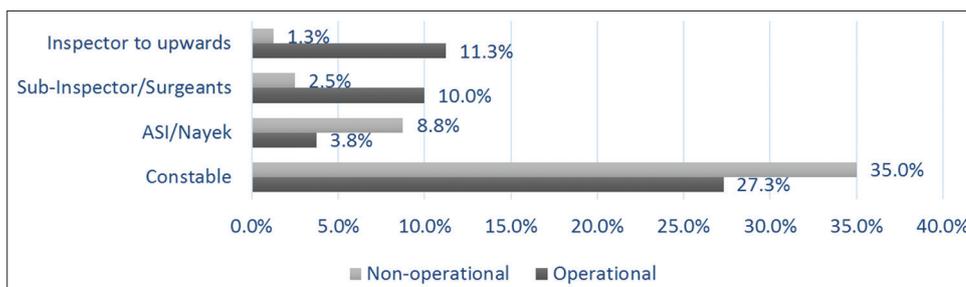


Figure 3: Preferred assignments of the respondents

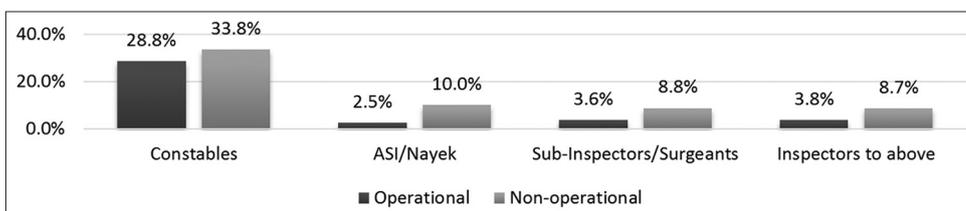


Figure 4: Current assignments of the respondents

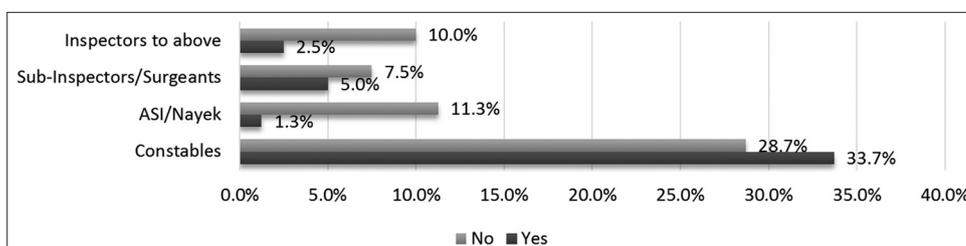


Figure 5: The respondents assigned in preferred duties during service tenure

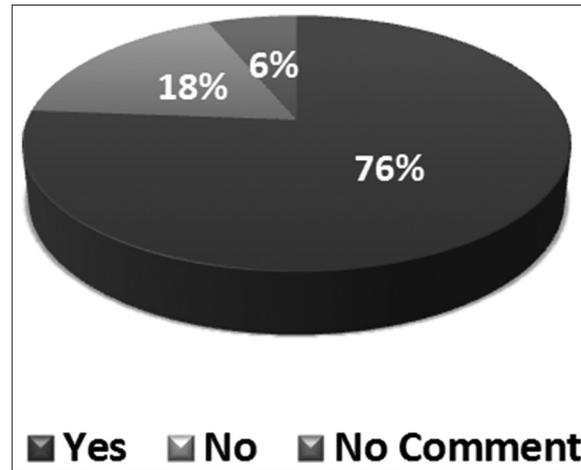


Figure 6: Discrimination from the authority due to Sex

But in the case of their current postings, it can be seen that the majority of both junior and senior officers are posted in non-operational assignments.

Since the junior ranked officers prefer the non-operational postings, it can be seen that during their service tenure most of them got their preferred posting, i.e. non-operational posting. But in the case of senior officers, whose preference are operational duties, the ratio of officers posted in their preferred assignments is low.

When they have been asked whether they face any discrimination regarding posting, training, reward and other facilities because of their sex, around 76% of them have responded in affirmative, while only 18% of them reply in negative and 6% refrain from answering.

So, the survey findings suggest that, whether it is preferred or not, the females are posted mostly in non-operational assignments, which are considered to be less important and less prestigious as a police officer.

7.2. Interviews

Face-to-face interviews have been conducted with both senior and junior levels of male police officers. Seven officers from supervising level have been asked about different gender issues, while ten junior level police officers have been asked about their perception on their female colleagues. Senior police officers have been questioned whether they feel comfortable and confident in assigning females to responsible positions. Their opinions have also been sought on how do they evaluate the performance of the female police officers. In addition, among the female respondents, some of them have been interviewed to talk about different issues apart from the questionnaire.

On the other hand, 13 service receivers have also been interviewed to assess the performance of the female police officers. Among the service receivers, five have had experiences of contact with the female police officers. They have been asked on different issues related to the policing by females. They have also been questioned about what do they think about the social and cultural aspects of females working in the police.

From the interviews with both the service receivers and the supervising authorities, it has been found that their perception towards females' potentiality and performance is not very positive.

7.3. Secondary Data

Relevant reports from government and non-government organisations have been discussed in this study. At the same time, findings of the studies from different contexts on policing and gender have been consulted where deemed necessary.

8. ANALYSIS

From the collected data, it can be seen that the female police members face varied sorts of discriminations from the organisation. At the same time, there is also adverse attitude from the family and the community, where they render their services. So, the

problems of gender integrity can be classified into two categories from the organisational perspective, which are internal and external. The internal factors are those which they face from inside of their department, while external problems are those which are confronted by them from outside of the organisation.

8.1 Internal Factors

The male-culture within the organisation also plays an important role in turning the females down. The organisational structure and culture play an important role in implementing gender equality policy (Lippe, Graumans, & Sevenhuijsen, 2004). Studies from different contexts suggested that it is the males who hold the top managerial positions mostly in the organisations and this issue acts as one of the barriers to women equality (Pillai, Prasad, & Thomas, 2011). Similarly, in Bangladesh Police, most of the senior supervising officers are male. For example, among the 64 districts of Bangladesh, only 02 are commanded by the female Superintendent of Police (Hossain, Personal Interview, December 26, 2016). This type of structure induces the male friendly environment within the organisation, which ultimately creates hurdles to female advancements.

In addition, while interviewing the senior police officers, the majority of them think that the females are not very much capable of dealing hostile situations effectively. Sometimes, the authority thinks that deploying female officers to the field level is not safe because they themselves need extra security which requires additional resource and management. This problem eventually undermines the total quality of the operations. Moreover, the junior ranked male officers are found to be not very loyal to their female bosses.

At the same time, according to Ehiemua (2014), the females in the police department are often used as ‘spare tire’, which means they are assigned to those duties that cannot be performed by the males such as body search of the female suspects, accompanying female victims of sexual abuse and so on. In the case of Bangladesh, this statement is also true. In the DMP, the females are thought to be suitable for posting in the Women Support and Investigation Division, a special unit responsible for dealing with domestic violence and sexually abused victims, who are women and children. For example, in DMP among 61 senior officers who are of the rank of Superintendent of Police or above, only 02 are female police officers. And, those superintendents are not assigned to any operational unit, rather one of them is working as the head of the Women Support and Investigation Division (Mukta, 2016).

Moreover, during discussions with the senior police officers, it was said that many male supervising officers do not feel comfortable working with junior female colleagues. According to one senior officer, “Sometimes it is not very easy to communicate with the female officers. They tend to be more emotional compared to the male”. Female officers are not always ready to accept criticism of their wrong doings. Besides these, there are child birth or other physiological issues for which they need long term leave, which breaks the rhythm of regular work.

In addition to this, the females also need some extra facilities such as toilets or rest rooms during long duty hours. But, these types of facilities are not available in every duty areas. The male members can use the toilets of the shops or houses adjacent to the duty areas, but it is not easy for the females to go into those places. For this reason, it sometimes looks inhumane to deploy the females in those places. So, the authority has to take into consideration these issues while deploying them to duties and their placements are mostly made in the less important spots.

Again, the promotion, posting or other types of discriminations by the male colleagues are not an uncommon issue. Although there are quotas reserved for females in the entry levels, the promotion system is not so women-friendly. The performance appraisal system is outdated and inconsistent, and often the transparency is questioned (Zafarullah, 2000). The females do not have equal access to training, reward, foreign tours or other facilities. According to one senior female officer, there is no privileged policy for posting, training or other amenities for the females, and also there are not any specific criteria for selection of those training or tours. This might be the reason for the deprivation of the women from those benefits.

8.2 External Factors

Socio-religious culture is one of the main external factors that plays a vital role in deciding the role of women not only in the police force but also in all areas of the national life. The male-dominated social structure feels more comfortable to see women within the domestic boundary rather than working outside. Moreover, in Bangladesh more conservative version of the religion is practised compared to the neighbouring Muslim countries, which adversely affects the female advancement in the fields such as migration, formal jobs and so on (Ullah, 2007). And, the patriarchal family structure also pushes the women down to be

within the domestic sphere. This status is so embedded in the norms and values of the society that it sometimes compels female to do those works which are considered to be only suitable for the females (Hossain, 2015).

Similarly, the interviews with the community people also support the fact. During the interviews, they have answered that they do not feel confident enough in getting service from the female police officers, rather they feel more comfortable in dealing with the male officers. Although studies from some advanced countries showed that the increased participation of female police officers lead to fewer complaints and force related allegations from the community (Porter & Prenzler, 2015), but in the case of a developing country like Bangladesh the scenario is much more different as the females are mainly deployed to desk work where the scope of public function is very limited, and their dealings with public cannot be judged in a proper way.

Moreover, the social stigma may affect the discharging of the duties for the females adversely. As found by Natarajan (2014), the female police in the Tamil Nadu state of India do not feel comfortable in traffic duties. One of the main cause might be that they are ridiculed by the public while performing duties on the street. In the case of Bangladesh, in addition to public ridicule, the female officers feel helpless when they try to take legal actions against the traffic rules violators as because people are not used to deal with female traffic police and often try to ignore their command.

In addition, it can be noted that the interviews were conducted in the Dhaka city, where the literacy rate is higher, and the attitude of common people towards a female is more positive compared to the other parts of the country. So, in the case of rest of the country, the perception of the common people to the female could be even more negative.

Apart from this, the female police officers have lots of personal involvements. The responsibilities of family management and to look after the family members are mostly vested upon the female members of the family (Ehiemua, 2014). In the case of Bangladesh, the situation is much more extreme. During interviewing the junior officers, the females uphold this issue. Two police couples were interviewed to assess how much responsibilities are shared by the male-female partners of a family working in the same profession. Both the couples admitted that it is the females who mostly take care of the family members although their husbands work in the same position. This also makes the female to think of choosing less important duties, which will demand her less involvement in the job and give more time to look after her family. The junior ranked female officers opined that this is the main reason for preferring non-operational duties.

9. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it can be said that both socio-religious culture and organisational practices act as the barriers to achieve the expected level of women equality in Bangladesh Police service. It is quite evident that there are still clear discriminations regarding promotion scope, training, posting and other service benefits which create frustration among the female officers. Since the problems exist in different spheres, it needs a collaborative approach from the family, the society and the organisation as a whole to address those impediments.

First of all, reviewing the current policies, the government should enact time befitting service policy and monitor its proper implementation which will ensure equal treatment for both male and female. Then, the organisational culture should be re-oriented. Though it is not possible to do so by overnight, the practice should be started. If more and more female officers are posted in the responsible positions, the situation can be improved.

Besides, the family and society also have a major role to play. Without changing the treatment of the society towards women, it is difficult to improve their condition. Since the nature of the police job is of a special type and demand more time, the family members should be more supportive to the female members working in the police organisation.

Moreover, the females also need to prove themselves that they really deserve equal treatment from the authority. For this, they have to take steps forward and share the same responsibilities as the males and have to have more professionalism. Although in the junior ranks, there is a tendency, to some extents, to avoid rigorous duties because of their family responsibilities and other personal issues, the majority of the female respondents from the survey affirmed that they are eager to undertake challenging responsibilities and ready to face difficulties of policing job.

Finally, during the interviews, some male officers seemed quite hopeful about their female colleagues. According to them, although the females are comparatively new comer to the department, many of them are doing significantly well. And,

if proper attention is given to the issue, the situation is expected to be improved. Thus, it can be said that the process of gender mainstreaming in Bangladesh Police is moving forward, though not at a good pace. Well-specified service policies, accommodating socio-familial culture and women friendly organisational practices can push the gender equality in the right direction.

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APPENDIX-‘A’

Questionnaire

Sl. No:

Date:

Place:

This questionnaire will be used for academic research only. Respondent should answer without any fear or hesitation.

1. Age:
2. The length of Service:
3. Education:
 - i. SSC
 - ii. HSC
 - iii. Bachelor
 - iv. Masters
4. Marital Status:
 - i. Married
 - ii. Unmarried
 - iii. Others
5. Preferred Duties:
 - i. Operational -Law and order, traffic duty, patrol duty, investigation, check-post duty, etc.
 - ii. Non-operational- service delivery officer, desk job, report writing, etc.
6. The reason for Preference:
7. Assigned in the Preferred Posting during Service Tenure:
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
8. Current Assignments:
 - i. Operational
 - ii. Non-operational
9. Is there any discrimination in the allocation of duties, training, UN deployments, etc. in terms of sex?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. No Comment

Thank you for your cooperation.

Name and Signature of the Interviewer