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COMMUNITY POLICING: ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE COMMUNITY POLICING COMMITTEES IN DISTRICT KOHAT, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the major issues faced by the Community Policing Committees (CPCs) which are functioning at the district level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. These Committees are an organizational strategy of KP police to help materialize the Community Policing ideals in the province. The primary function of these Committees is to bridge the gap between the police and the local community through the active participation of community members in crime prevention efforts, dispute resolutions in an amicable manner, and helping police in the maintenance of law and order situation. Using a qualitative research design, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews from 32 participants including police officers and members of the Committees, which was analyzed through a thematic analysis approach. The study explored a number of key issues faced by these Committees that hinder its effectiveness. These issues include the lack of financial incentives for members of the Committees, insufficient financial and logistical resources, the lack of merit-based selection of the Committee members, inadequate power of the Committees, less conducive work environment, and disinterest of both Committee members and the police officers in the Committees' proceedings. Resultantly, the Committees have failed to deliver its functions as envisioned in the Community Policing ideals.

Keywords: *Community Policing, Community Engagement, Dispute Resolution Council, Public Liaison Councils, Trust-Deficit, Corruption.*

1. Introduction

Community Policing (CP) is a philosophical approach that emphasizes the involvement of community members in the policing efforts to create a safer and more secure environment through collaboration between law enforcement agencies and citizens (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988; Friedmann, 1992). The term community policing is heterogeneous and lacks a uniform definition in the existing literature. There is a 'no one size fits all' community policing approach. Police agencies worldwide have devised organizational strategies to help materialize the CP ideals depending upon their socio-cultural and structural environment. Similarly, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police in Pakistan have also adopted their operational strategies to conform to the community policing approach. To that end, it has established Community Policing Committees (CPCs), such as Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) and Public Liaison Councils (PLCs) at the grass-roots level, which have the potential to engage responsible citizens in the peace-building process of the province.

Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) is fundamentally a public service project that was introduced in the KP police system in the year 2014 to resolve local and petty disputes of a civil nature through the '*Pakhtunwali*'¹ code of conduct. It aimed to provide an alternative dispute resolution mechanism on the analogy of the age-long *Jirga*² system of *Pashtun* culture, *panchayat* in Punjab, *Faisalo* in Sindh, and *Balaochi Jirga* in Baluchistan (Dahlan, 2020; Jardine, 1996; and Warsi, 2017). The necessity of DRCs at the gross-root level was primarily driven by the abject failure of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to provide swift justice to common people, particularly in civil and petty criminal cases (KP Police Department, 2015-16; Nawab et al., 2019).

Each DRC forum is composed of 21 dignified and apolitical members selected from a cross-section of society, including revered community elders, religious leaders, businessmen, journalists, and retired professionals. The District Police Chief, in collaboration with the Civil Society, selects members of the councils for two years after due verification of their credentials and eligibility through intelligence agencies (KP Police Department, 2015-16). Theoretically, each DRC council has to operate in such a way that seven panels are constituted out of its 21 members with three members in each panel. They will be given a dedicated jury room inside the police station, where a police officer not below the rank of Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) along with supporting staff will be available to help the council in recording the statements of disputant parties, the decision of the penal, and the overall documentation process for onward submission to District Police Officer (DPO) office. The Council's members have been permitted to take any case themselves; rather, he or she may recommend cases through the police (KP Police Department, 2015-16).

In the same vein, the idea of Public Liaison Councils (PLCs) as an organizational strategy for community policing has long been employed, however, with different nomenclature in the policing systems worldwide. The traces of PLCs go back to the growing trend of Community Policing (CP) initiatives in the US in the late sixties and eighties, in other parts of the world (Finegan, 2013; Bennett, 1990; Bennett, David & Farrington, 2013). The US policing system introduced Citizen Volunteer Councils (CVCs), which were a formal advisory body working in close collaboration with law enforcement agencies to assist them in CP strategies. Likewise, in the analogy of the US, the idea was then picked up by the United

¹ Pashtunwali literally means the way of the Pakhtuns, and is a tribal honour code that has governed the Pakhtun way of life for centuries.

² A Jirga is a tribal assembly of elders which takes decisions by consensus, and is very popular with the Pukhtoon population of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Kingdom in 1982 and implemented in the form of Neighborhood Watch Committees (NWCs) in England and Wales (Yarwood & Edwards, 1995). NW serves as the 'eyes and ears' of the police by keeping a vigilant eye on any suspicious behaviour occurring in their neighbourhood and reporting it to police (Rosenbaum 1987; 1988; Bennett 1990; Laycock and Tilley 1995; Gresham et al. 2004; Bullock 2014). Alongside the US and UK, the police system of Japan established the 'Koban'³ Council in the year 1991. As of 2019, there were around 12,000 Koban Liaison Councils in Japan (National Police Agency Japan, 2019). Following the successful practice of this program around the advanced world, many of the South Asian states including India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, were also quick to adopt this program in some of their provinces.

In Pakistan, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police, under the police reform ordinance of 2017, has established Public Liaison Councils (PLCs) as its organizational strategy for CP in each district across the province. Currently, the KP police department claims to have established these PLCs at the Union Council level. The members of PLCs are supposed to be comprised of 6 to 8 members being appointed for a period of two years. Out of the total members, 50 percent will be selected from elected representatives of local government and the rest of the 50 percent are the general public like business leaders, civil society, and other community stakeholders representing their community. The PLC members are expected to be actively involved with their police personnel to prevent crimes and maintain peace and stability in the community.

The police department, on the other hand, is supposed to provide a separate office for the Council within the premises of the police Station. The concerned SHO is bound to conduct fortnightly meetings with PLCs, and to maintain records of every such meetings. The selection of its members shall be made by the DPO through the SHOs of the concerned locality. The SHOs are then supposed to make a consultation with the community stakeholders and civil society members regarding the selection of PLC members, verify their credentials through the intelligence agencies, and forward it to the DPO for onward selection of its members. The whole selection process shall be made based on merit as outlined in the policy.

Theoretically, these two Community Policing Committees (CPCs) serve as a mechanism to connect the police with the community, enabling local residents to take an active role in addressing security issues, mediating conflicts, and supporting law enforcement initiatives. However, in practice, there are numerous issues attached to the smooth and effective functioning of these

³ Koban is a police box which is subordinate unit of a Police Station in the policing system of Japan

Committees, which have been given a detailed account in this paper.

2. Literature Review

As per the tenet of community policing philosophy, responsible citizenry is required to contribute their volunteer collaboration to the police to help resolve community issues, prevent crimes, and foster peace and stability in their respective communities (Maguire and Wells, 2009). Literature shows that usually these community policing committees/ councils / boards work on a volunteer basis and are not compensated for the services they render (Maguire and Wells, 2009; Clark & Friedman, 2020). However, there are instances where some financial support is provided to cover its administrative costs, such as publicizing meetings, setting agendas, taking notes, and facilitating conversations, which can lead to more efficient and effective operations (Clark & Friedman, 2020).

Alongside the administrative cost, literature has cited certain benefits of financial support to the CP council members. The purpose of financial honorarium to members may include: 1) it may attract a wider range of individuals, including some who might not be able to contribute because of monetary constraints, thereby encouraging exclusivity and diversity within the advisory council; 2) it can help to elevate council members' status and highlight the value being placed on their contributions, which result in greater professionalism to their CP program (San Francisco Police Department, 2024); 3) it additionally makes easier to attract and keep dedicated citizens who will commit their time and energy to the program, preserving the advisory council's sustainability (Maguire and Wells , 2009).

Similarly, the lack of merit in the selection of members for the community policing committees/councils can have significant negative effects on its performance and credibility. When members of the Councils are inducted on favoritism and political intervention without observing the merit criteria, it can lead to a lack of expertise, diversity, and representativeness within the Council. This can result in a limited range of perspectives and skills, hindering the Councils' ability to provide valuable input and suggestions to the police department and the community (Neild, 1998). Additionally, the legitimacy and confidence of the public in the Council's (PLCs, DRCs) judgments and operations may be impacted by the lack of merit-based selection. If the wider community believes that the Councils' members were not chosen based on their credentials or relevant experience, they might start to question the Councils' credibility. This mistrust may make it more difficult for the Council to interact with the community and positively impact policing procedures (Neild, 1998).

Moreover, Community Policing Committees (CPCs) require formal power, through which they can harness the resistance or

callousness of police personnel in terms of ensuring the production of belligerent parties or influence the decisions of police agencies (Reece and Macy, 2015). The lack of power within these committees/councils can hinder their ability to hold organizations accountable, engage with the public meaningfully, and influence policy decisions effectively (Applegate, 1998; Clark & Friedman, 2020). Besides this, the best feasible infrastructure is the bedrock of any operation, including community policing programs, to get to the desirable ends. A lack of feasible infrastructure for community policing initiatives can hamper the successful execution of community policing program by compromising community participation, raising difficulties for its effective operations (Nicholl, 1999), affecting the morale of police officers (Lewis, 2022) risking the sustainability of the program, and reducing community trust and cooperation (Nicholl, 1999; Grace, 2022; and Narayan, 2023). Addressing these infrastructure requirements is crucial to the development of sustainable and effective community policing operations (Twyman, 2022; Maguire and Well, 2009).

Moreover, the police-citizen relationship is one of the most important elements in modern policing (Brandl, Frank, Wooldredge, & Watkins, 1997; Carter & Radelet, 2002; Wu, Sun, & Triplett, 2009). The negative attitudes of police officers towards CPCs can significantly impact the participation level and interest of the Committee members. Nevertheless, community policing has come under criticism for failing to empower and share power with the public, instead acting as a tool to respond to a police crisis of legitimacy and cover the police's accumulation of power and authority (Boostrom & Henderson, 1988; Buerger, 1994; Crank, 1994; Saunders, 1999).

Finally, the literature has also cited a disinterest on the part of police to discourage members participation in the Community Policing Forums (CPFs) (Skogan & Hartnett, 1998; Peak et al., 1992; Christopher, 2008). While, CPCs cannot deliver unless both of its entities equally profess its need and importance for the order and peace of society. This lack of interest or ill-well on either side is supposed to compromise the overall performance of the committees (Greene and Decker 1989; Brooks et al. 1993). However, the attitude and well of the police officers at the helm, being the host entity, is considered highly important in this regard.

No study till date has explored the various issues faced by community policing committees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This present study intends to fill this research gap by diving deep into the various administrative, social, and financial issues faced by CPCs that hindered their performance in ensuring successful community engagement in the policing sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a case study design, to explore the challenges faced by the Community Policing Committees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. District Kohat was taken as a single case study design to get intensive, in-depth, and all-encompassing information about the study objectives with much observation time as suggested by Siggelkow (2007) and Gerring (2007) in such a situation. The data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews, which facilitated flexible discussions and enabled the researchers to capture detailed perspectives from the participants (Burgess, 1981; Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2007). A purposive sampling approach was adopted to select a total of 32 participants, comprising 16 police officers and 16 community members who were representatives of the Community Policing Committees. The interviews were conducted in the local language to ensure clarity and comfort for the participants. The data collected, along with field notes, were meticulously transcribed using a "naturalized" approach (for detail, see Bucholtz, 2000 & Lapadat, 2000) and subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis in six phases, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

4. Results and Discussion

The data analysis led to a number of themes regarding the issues associated with the functioning of the CPCs in the study area. The following sections explain these themes, using verbatim quotes from the transcripts to substantiate the discussion.

4.1. Lack of remuneration for the committee members

It was found that the members of these committees were not provided any remuneration, like monthly honorariums or stipends or any transportation allowance or daily allowance to the committee members. According to participants, most of the committee members come from far flung areas in public transport or personal conveyance and their whole day is consumed in the committee office or sometime in the field while visiting the spot of the dispute, which incur a considerable burden in terms of time and money on them with no monetary return. Regarding the non-remunerations, one of the Police Officers viewed:

“Some of the committee members, though, may be affluent enough but the financial status of majority of the committee members, particularly in PLCs are not sound to do away with the such a burden; due to which their interest and participation level is effected”.

Another participant who was Deputy Superintendent Police (DSP) by rank elaborated

the same issue as:

“The main reason behind the dysfunctional status of our PLC is non availability of budget, no remuneration and no facility by the government. If compensation is being placed for the PLC office and its members, there is possibility that it would perform well”.

However, majority of the participants representing the Community Policing Committees (CPCs) viewed that they don't care for monetary benefits and participate in the affairs of the Committee/Council voluntarily just to have the gratefulness of Allah almighty. As one of the participants reported:

“It is a sacred job which is performed out of passion. They are doing it ‘fe sabeel lellah’, purely in the path of Allah; seeking His gratefulness and gratitude; for the purpose of peace and stability in the society. It does not require any financial gains”.

Likewise, another participant added similar viewpoint with the other-way around:

“If remuneration were got attached with its membership. Then people will come for self-interest, which will compromise community interests”.

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to mention here that the views discussed above represent mostly ‘well to do’ and affluent committee members who did not need financial gains out of their services. However, there were some committee members who were financially not so sound and presented other side of the coin too. They highlighted that the reason of non-participation of the majority of the committee members is non-compensation. As one participant who was a PLC member sounding very reasonable person reported that:

“If a committee member has to visit the PLC/DRC office once a week, his total expense will reach to 3 to 4 thousand per month. Whereas, there is no remuneration from government in addition to the no such respect from the police officials in Police stations Tell me in that scenario, who would be that much bothering person to participate actively in the affairs of the committees”.

To conclude, rewards and remuneration to the PLC/DRC committee members emerged as one of the critical issues affecting their functionality and reducing their participation level.

4.2. Lack of merit in the selection of committee members

The lack of merit in the selection of members for the community policing committees/councils can have significant negative effects its performance and credibility. In the instant study, participants stated that merit is usually followed in the selection of PLC and

DRC members; however, there were few strong assertions from the participants representing police officers that merit is not properly followed in the selection of these committee members - its members are either selected through the influence of local politicians or comprised of the 'touts' of police. As one respondent who himself was an SHO boldly asserted that:

"The members of PLC are corrupt by themselves. They are collection of local 'badmashan' (criminals). They will come to police station as if it is their own 'betak' (lounge) and will be sitting on chairs for long hours without any reason".

Besides this, the participants representing the community members also acknowledged that merit in the selection process of the Committee members was not properly observed.

As one of the participants, who was a member of PLC and DRC both, explained why some members do not take much interest in proceedings of these committees.

"Most of the Committee members were professional 'Jirgamaar' (mediators), who were accustomed to taking 'machalka' (surety bond) started losing interest in such a free venture".

He further added that:

"Most often, they were observed motivating the disputant parties to a private place, where they could take bribe from them".

Besides this, the participants representing the Committee members blamed the police that they have placed their own 'touts' in these Committees, who take money from the disputant parties for police on different pretexts. Interestingly, it was observed that most of the Committee members would privately label each other as 'tout' of police working for '*paidageri*' (making unfair money) for the SHOs.

Furthermore, it was observed that most of the committee members were either part of the parallel traditional '*jirga*' system being practiced at community level or have been part and parcel of it; where, '*machalkas*' or other money-making stuff including luxurious food etc. are involved. Whereas, being member of these official Committees brings no such direct or indirect financial benefits; which leads to conflict of interests. In such situation, such members of the Committee either lose their interest in these activities or start seeking the same monetary interests through mal-practices in these government led CP committees.

4.3. Lack of power with the CP committees

The lack of power within the community policing committees (PLCs

and DRCs) can impact community policing programs by limiting the committee's ability to effectively engage with the public and strengthen police-community relations. The participants of the study viewed that the members of these committees are not endowed with the 'power' required for the implementation of their decision made in the dispute resolution. It is generally believed that people don't value the decisions until it is not realized to them that any kind of arrogance on their part or non-cooperation with the committee may result penalty on them. Whereas, in the traditional 'Pakhtun Jirga' at community level, the same loop-whole is being addressed through taking 'machalka' or "Harjana", a significant amount of money or gold from the parties to regulate their behavior. As one participant, an ASI in police put it this way:

"If government really want effectiveness of Community Policing Committees, it needs to give the required power to them as the psyche of our people is that it does not honor the decisions of powerless committees".

While the same theme was explained by another participant, an SI in police station by putting it:

"The committee members need to be given power; they have no authority. 'Ye log be ikhthiar hoty hyn' (these people are powerless); government needs to induct local 'jageer dar and malak' type people (Landlords and other influentials) who are fair and having influence; motivate them to be part of these committees; who, while, resolving disputes sitting in their own hujra should better come forward and join this government led dispute resolution system".

To decode the above statements of the participants (police officers), one can easily sense the realization in the police personnel regarding the lack of power and authority with the Committees'/ councils' members. They know it perfectly well; however, high ups in the police department would not share their powers with the public due to their own vested interest in the status quo.

4.4. Lack of feasible offices for the CP committees

A best feasible infrastructure is the bedrock of any operation including community policing program including to the desirable ends. The current study found that there was a lack of separate spacious offices in the police stations where meetings of the Committee were to be held for the dispute resolutions along with other CP assignments. It was also observed that out of all 11 police stations in the study area, only 4 police stations had proper PLC offices. However, as observed and reported by the participants, there was no mechanism of the cleanliness and maintenance of the PLC offices. As one of the participants who was serving as Sub-inspector on the operational side put it:

“We have a huge shortage of proper building and proper space therein for accommodating the new initiatives of CP. Currently, district Kohat has only three Police stations with proper PLC office that have been established on the government expenditure, while the rest of Police stations are operating in quite old buildings or perhaps the left overs of British era”.

In the same vein, there are two functional DRCs in the study area: one in the main city and the other is in tehsil Lachi. The building of the former is quite spacious providing a feasible environment; however, the office of later one was established in the old quarter attached to the police station and was quite trodden reflecting the opposite view of the former. Such unfeasible environment of the DRC office cannot deliver effective services to the community and reflect the non-seriousness of the quarter concerned. Nevertheless, it is pertinent mention that the buildings of some of the police stations were too crippled which were in no way suitable for any operation; leave aside, the effectiveness saga of community policing. Spacious and purpose based feasible building is the prerequisite for bringing effectiveness in these committees.

4.5. Low Participation level of the committee members

Most of the community policing committees in the district were found to be completely or semi-dormant. Out of the total 11 police stations, the PLCs of the seven police stations were completely dormant having no practical implementation on the ground. While, the rest of the four police stations, where PLCs were, somehow, active and had only 30-40 percent of average attendance on the part of its members. However, the participation level of committee members in the affair of DRCs was found considerably satisfactory. The participants of the study representing community members acknowledged that most of their fellow members don't take interest in the affair of the committee; they don't have spare time to come to PLC office every week and spend their time on dispute resolution without any financial gain. They further viewed that in this age of inflation, every person is after his bread and butter. They are busy in their own businesses. Many of them have got themselves nominated just for namesake to be considered as notable in the community, however, don't like to participate in the affair of the committee.

Besides this, the participants reported that SHOs don't take interests in the affair of PLCs; they don't keep check and balance on the committee; they do not encourage committee members for participation. On the other hand, it was observed and reported that those members participating regularly in the Committee's meeting too were not happy with the attitude of the police. As one of the participants, who was a member of PLC and DRC both viewed that:

“The main reason of the low participation of committee members is the cold attitude of the concerned SHOs who don't materialize their summon well in time”.

Moreover, the participants representing the community members also reported that the petty disputes of the public are the main source of extra money going to police pockets. While, with the inception of these committees, the SHO's were bound to refer such petty disputes to the committee; and committee would resolve it so easily without any expense on the disputant parties. That early resolution of community's petty disputes were a sort of cut mark for police '*paida-geri*' (money making), which was not liked by the concerned SHOs. As one of the committee members stated, disputes are sources of money making for police.

“Da halqo nehairi ke da police khair v” (People entangled in dispute is a blessing for police).

He further added that:

“Whenever you come to the Police station, you will find them busy being engaged with the disputant parties themselves, without bothering to contact PLC members getting involved in it. Actually, they are expert in this shady business, making a huge sum of money out of it”.

As reflected in the above statement, the committee members have put forward serious reservation about the conduct of police in terms of dispute resolution job, which according to them, is not a police job; however, police is doing it for the sake of earning extra money. They viewed that police can easily know that which cases can have them 'money' and which one is a liability. They will never ever refer such kind of cases to the committee that have – in their mind – a 'money making factor' therein. Regarding this conduct of police, another participants stated that:

“We know very well the trickery they (police) are doing with us and with the people; however, we are still involved with them in these committees just for the purpose of public welfare. We are doing our efforts to escape our poor community people from their clutches”.

However, while the same point was discussed with the police personnel, they viewed that, as per law, there is no such restriction on them in facilitating people for informal settlement. According to them, their high-ups rather appreciate this endeavour purely made on humanitarian grounds. Additionally, they came up with their own set of observations on the conduct of committee members to justify their practice of direct involvement in the resolution of disputes. In other words, a communication gap and trust deficit

was observed between police and the committee members and the vested interests of police that had resulted the low participation of the Committee members.

Moreover, about the less involvement of committee members, the Committee members reported that police don't give them due respect. They were found not happy with attitude of police. With a few exceptions, it was observed that they were not provided with separate PLC office. It was reported that the furniture and computers that were donated by UNDP were also taken by police for their own offices. As one of the participants reported:

"We had a computer in PLC, and now its whereabouts is not known. A large part of the budget was allocated for the strengthening of this PLC, but nothing is in sight. As per rules, the SHO must be sitting in the meeting of PLC, but we are not even provided with a junior 'Mukharar' (clerk) to record the minutes".

Likewise, another participant viewed:

"If you ask me whether the purpose of PLCs is achieved or not? Let me tell you, it is achieved 100% in terms of fulfilling the self-interests of police themselves, while public interest may be rated as 40 to 50 %".

Participants viewed that committee members would come from far-flung areas on their personal expenditure subsidizing their personal commitments; however, when they observed the disinterest and the lack of support on the part of police; they get discouraged and lose their dedication in the committee. In this connection, one of the participants commented:

"If a member comes from a far-flung area on his personal expense and he can't find any respect here in the Police station, then no one is that fool that would come here receiving nothing in reward".

4.6. Disinterest of the SHOs in the meetings of PLCs/DRCs

There is no denying the fact that community policing committees cannot deliver unless both of its entities equally profess its need and importance for the order and peace of the society. Lack of interest or ill-will on the either side is supposed to compromise the overall performance of the committees (Greene and Decker 1989, Brooks et al. 1993). However, the attitude and well of the police officers at the helm – being the host entity – towards these CP committees is considered highly important in this regard. To that end, the participation level of the police officers in these committees was discussed with the participants to know about the overall mood and well of the police department in terms of the community policing approach.

As mentioned earlier, out of the total 11 police stations, the PLCs of the seven police stations were completely dormant, having no practical implementation on the ground. The rest of the four police stations, where PLCs were somehow active, had only 30-40 per cent of attendance, on average, on the part of its members. The kind of bleak picture in terms of the performance of PLCs reflects that the nature of mood, disposition and will of the police officers at the helm, particularly of the SHOs towards the need and importance of PLC subject in community policing approach.

The participants of the study representing the Committee members viewed that the effectiveness of these committees, to the greater extent, is dependent upon the attitude of particular SHO posted in the police station. If he was found sensitized with the importance of these committees, then there comes a soul in their committee; he takes interest and engage them in disputes resolution, and the committee too respond well. Otherwise, it serves as no more than a nominal body rendering no considerable performance. As one of the participants, who was a member of PLC and DRC both and was chairman of the PLC office, put it:

“The last 3 SHOs who served in our police station were least interested in the functioning of PLC. They would directly coordinate with the parties and would do ‘Lubjab’ (taking bribe) behind the closed door of their office. Many cases in their tenure were lurked pending, which were not forwarded to us”.

He added further that:

“Whereas, the current SHO is taking personal interest and has forwarded all the pending cases to PLC and is facilitating us to resolve it”.

According to the Committee members, while going by the book, SHOs cannot keep cases on hold without forwarding it to the committee; however, they viewed that there is no check and balance system, and none of their senior officers bother to ask them regarding their performance in respect of PLC office. In this connection, one of the participants, who was a member of PLC and DRC both, suggested that:

“The high ups like DPO and DIG are required to take notice of this non-seriousness on the part of SHOs and should personally conduct surprise visits/inspect to the PLC meetings on regular intervals and to check the performance of each police station in terms of engaging PLC members in the community matters”.

The above suggestion is pretty attractive and convincing in terms of reinvigorating the soul in the starved skeleton of PLC offices; however, it is possible when there exist some will at the top. The

current scenario reflects the lack of will across the hierarchy of rank and file of the police department, or there exists some vested interests among the circle of police hierarchy.

Besides this, the participants representing the community members also viewed that PLC offices are located in the building premises of police stations; the frequent visit of PLC members and their presence in police stations was perceived as a threat to the interest of police. As they would not be able to do 'lubjab' (money deal/bribery) with people. As one of the participants viewed:

"Police don't like PLC members to be part and parcel in their way of policing. PLC members are a kind of 'watch-dog' on them, due to which they are not able to do their 'paidageri' (generating money) from or 'lubjab' (money deal) with the disputant parties and criminals".

In the initial days of these CP committees, the committees' members would always be hovering around in the committee office located in the police stations, due to which the 'privacy' of the police was getting affected, as they couldn't compel people to give them a 'chay-pani' (bribe money). It was perhaps the excessive surveillance of the committee members over their neck due to which police was under pressure and started discouraging the committee members through their attitude.

Nevertheless, the Committee members also viewed that SHOs hold individual interaction with some of the committee members on a need basis or have personal connections with some of the committee members; however, they attend the meetings of PLCs very rarely. Only a senior constable is deputed for the affairs of the PLCs on routine basis. They viewed that the personal interest and participation of SHOs are very important, and his presence and active involvement have proven results. As one of the participants put it:

The SHO is rarely available to us. He doesn't have time for us and provides only a senior constable to look after the affairs of the PLC office".

Additionally, some participants representing the police officers' version viewed that the position of the SHO is very busy due to which they do not have spare time to attend every PLC meetings; otherwise, they maintained that the police know the importance of these committee, as it helps them in preventing crimes and lawlessness situation from the society. On the other hand, excessive crimes and lawlessness in a particular community represent that the concerned SHO is incompetent to maintain his hold over his beat areas. Therefore, in order to hold control over their respective police stations, SHOs usually involve the committee members in policing for their own personal reputation

in the eyes of high-ups and society at large. To sum up, the overall participation level of SHOs in the meetings of PLCs was found not satisfactory. This lack of interest and participation on the part of SHOs is one of the major factors for the dormancy of these community policing committees.

5. Discussion

There are currently two Community Policing Committees (CPCs) – Public Liaison Councils (PLCs) and Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) – operating at the grassroots level in every district, facilitating the broader goals of the Community Policing (CP) approach in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Theoretically, these CPCs seem pretty comprehensive strategies of CP capable of achieving the desired objectives; however, as per the researchers' observations and the testimonies of the participants, some critical issues existed that were instrumentally inhibiting the effectiveness of these Committees.

Representatives of the police officers viewed that there was no specific budget for police stations regarding the operational cost of CP committees. All the day-to-day expenses, refreshments cost, and even cleanliness of the PLC office were to be made from the joint contribution of its members, which affected the participation level of the Committee members. The philosophy of community policing is mainly based on the volunteer support of citizens with law enforcement agencies as a part of their civic responsibility (Maguire & Wells, 2009). However, there are instances where some financial support is provided to cover administrative costs, such as publicizing meetings, setting agendas, taking notes, and facilitating conversations, which can lead to more efficient and effective operations (Maguire & Wells, 2009; Clark & Friedman, 2020). Alongside the administrative cost, the study conducted by the San Francisco Police Department (2024) also endorses the findings of the current study by citing certain benefits of financial support to the CP council members.

Besides the benefits of remuneration to the Council members cited above, the JLOS⁴Justice for All, in their report published in 2021, have found that offering financial support to individual committee/council members may potentially jeopardize the independence and objectivity of the council members, as their decisions may be influenced by financial incentives rather than solely focusing on community interests (JLOS, 2021; UNDP, 2020). Additionally, with the monetary gain in sight, there is a potential risk of political intervention and bypassing the merit in the selection process (UNDP, 2020). Therefore, it's crucial to strike a balance and ensure that remuneration does not result in undue influence or politicization of the advisory council.

Additionally, the participants ascertained that merit is usually

⁴ Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies

followed in the selection of PLC and DRC members; however, there were few strong assertions from the participants of both categories who reported that merit is not properly followed in the selection of these committee members. It was pointed out that members of the committees are either selected through the influence of local politicians or comprised of the 'touts' of police. The study of Neild (1998) also reported that in Los Angeles, the police department picked up unrepresentative membership for the community policing advisory boards and then started to discourage the efforts to broaden its scope with a caveat that doing so would politicize the affairs of police. The findings of the instant study and those mentioned earlier reflect the resistive tactics of police agencies (personnel) that do not want to flourish these CP Committees/Councils/Boards.

Moreover, it was found in this study that the members of these committees are not endowed with the 'power' duly required for the effective implementation of their decisions made in dispute resolutions. The literature has also cited that the lack of power within the community policing committees (PLCs, DRCs, and PSC) can impact community policing programs by limiting the committee's ability to engage with the public and strengthen police-community relations effectively. These committees require formal power, through which they can harness the resistance or callousness of police personnel to ensure the production of belligerent parties or influence the decisions of police agencies (Reece & Macy, 2015; Applegate, 1998). Moreover, the lack of power within these committees/councils can hinder their ability to hold disputing parties accountable, engage with the public meaningfully, and influence policy decisions effectively (Applegate, 1998; Clark & Friedman, 2020).

Furthermore, barring the few Police stations where an NGO established the offices of Committees, there was no separate spacious office in the police stations that could be utilized for the meetings of the CP committees. Previous studies have also addressed the importance of feasible infrastructure for the successful execution of the community policing program. The lack of a conducive environment may raise difficulties for the citizens' participation in community policing programs (Nicholl, 1999), affecting the morale of police officers (Lewis, 2022), risking the sustainability of the program, and reducing community trust and cooperation (Nicholl, 1999; Grace, 2022; and Narayan, 2023). Addressing these infrastructure requirements is crucial to developing sustainable and effective community policing operations (Twyman, 2022; Maguire and Well, 2009).

Furthermore, the study found the insensitivity of the senior police officers in the affairs of these CP committee due to which the PLC office of most of the police stations were either completely non-functional or less effective. There might be hardly an SHO or DSP, who would bother to attend the meetings of these CP committees.

This trend of insensitivity, callousness, and resistance across the rank and file of police, including the upper echelon, is not new to be surprised. For instance, Schaffer (1980), who conducted his study on Scotland's police – one of the pioneering States that introduced the CP program – writes in his book that if senior police officers are callous and insensitive to embrace the program, there will be a lack of prioritization, staff scarcity issues, and insufficient training arrangements for officers (Schaffer, 1980; cited by Frank, 2023). Besides this, the study of Long, Wells, and Leon-Granados (2002) conducted in one of the law enforcement spaces (jail) in the US reports that the meetings regarding community policing between police and community support groups were often postponed or cancelled; if it were held, the participation of police personnel was often limited thereby wreaking significant impact on the community policing project.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the issues associated with the Community Policing Committees (CPCs) that has negatively impacted the goals of Community Policing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study found that the responsible and fair citizen may not always be affluent and may have spare time for the Committees' affairs. The non-provision of financial remuneration or honorarium for the committee members had probably compromised the effectiveness and objectivity of these Committees. Additionally, the taken-for-granted approach of the senior police officers in the selection of the Committees' members had fetched a vocal minority, lacking citizens' trust, in these Committees. This non-adherence to merit-based selection in the CPCs has hampered the effectiveness of these Committees. Besides this, the Committees' members were not entrusted with the required power and authority, so most of the participants perceived these Committees as toothless entities unable to wreak out significant impact. Moreover, the non-availability of the favorable working space for the meetings of the Committees' members in many police stations was posing significant logistical and operational challenges. Finally, the disinterest of the police officers and the Committee members alike in the participation of the CPCs meetings was found not attended by the senior police officers due to which the whole venture was getting ineffectual thereby creating no significant impact in the study area.

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