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A Sociological Analysis of Community Policing and Social Mobilization

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Original Article

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Community policing, Social mobilization, Procedural justice, Cultural barriers, Institutional weaknesses, Marginalized neighborhoods, Pakistan, Public trust, Police-community relations, Participatory policing.

Abstract

This study examines the issues and success of community policing and social mobilization in underprivileged regions of Pakistan with regard to the constraints and the possibilities of such projects. With a qualitative-based approach, the study will involve 15 in-depth interviews, including 5 police officials and 5 community members, and 5 other key community members to make the perspective of the community as diverse as possible. The study also uses two mini case studies which have been backed by the close observations of police-community interactions and community meetings thus giving an overall picture of the dynamics involved. The results provide insights that there is a high level of inhibition to effective community policing that includes irregularity in police presence, institutional and training barriers, and cultural expectations that inhibit participation especially among women and the marginalized groups. Although it requires proactive engagement, police interactions are usually reactive and crisis-based, which destroys trust and cooperation between the police and the community. The study reveals the need to have context-specific inclusive strategies that can improve the effectiveness of community policing. The research proposes that more proactive, fair and transparent policing may enhance community safety, trust and social cohesion through eradication of cultural, institutional and procedural barriers.

Introduction

The socio-political instability, ineffective law enforcement and the lack of resources has increased the level of public safety and social cohesion issues in the world and more specifically in low and middle income countries. One of the most underestimated outcomes of these difficulties is the problems in community policing and social mobilization that have severe implications on the local security, social trust, and civic engagement (Jawad, 2025). Community policing is an approach that transforms the conventional forms of law enforcement by focusing on the need to work together between the police and the communities they are operating. Community policing is based on the principle of partnership and places an importance on the proactive nature of the law enforcement in solving the problems of the community, not just crime enforcement. Community policing has a long historical background with the introduction of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel who

stressed the philosophy that the police are the populace and the populace the police (Peel, 1829). This principle is the basis of the contemporary idea of community policing, which is oriented on crime reduction and enhancement of the police-community relationships by means of involvement and collaboration (Skolnick, 1988; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 2009). The change to community policing gained more momentum in the U.S. following the racial riots of the 1960s when police legitimacy was doubted to the point where a community-focused approach to policing was needed (Sherman & Eck, 2024). The 1980s was the time when community policing strategies, such as decentralizing law enforcement, problem-solving, and participation of masses became accepted globally (Cordner, 1998). The implementation of community policing models in most of the countries such as Pakistan has been perceived as a method of increasing trust and cooperation between the police and the citizens particularly in those places where there has always been a historical distrust (Bahadar et al., 2019).

The studies on community policing and social mobilization in Pakistan have been focused on the implementation of the program and institutional barriers (such as resource shortage, the inconsistency of support on the policy level, and the absence of training of officers and community volunteers) (Khan et al., 2021; Hussain and Shah, 2020). The impact of the community perceptions, cultural norms, and social hierarchies on participation and trust-building, as well as the long-term effectiveness of the policing efforts, has been understudied. Although, increased accountability and crime reduction have been recognized to be positively influenced by inclusive community engagement on a global platform, empirical research into how local socio-cultural aspects influence the engagement in and outcome of community policing initiatives has not been well-investigated, especially in marginalized neighborhoods. This is especially significant in Pakistan, where hierarchical social systems, patriarchal systems, and distrust in institutions of the state interlock to make it difficult to cooperate in the pursuit of public safety.

The socio-cultural situation in Pakistan makes the situation even more complicated. In most semi-urban and urban areas, people are too afraid of harassment, revenge, and social stigma and are unwilling to interact with police. The women, youth, and ethnic minorities, who are marginalized groups, are usually sidelined in safety efforts, which perpetuates inequality and restricts their control over local security policy (Ali & Rizvi, 2017). Also, there is a limitation of civic participation due to the absence of formal procedures of community participation, poor awareness of the rights and duties and absence of trust towards legal institutions. Research indicates that mobilization attempting to occur in the absence of mutual understanding or trust leads to the failure of the intended results, as well as the lack of social cohesion when people are excluded or distrust (Sherman et al., 2020).

The research preempts the agency of community members as its participants rather than merely as passive consumers of policing services by considering some of the strategies they use to improve the safety of their neighborhoods, whether in the form of volunteer patrols, attending awareness programs, talking with the police, and gender community-based problem-solving and problem-solving. Though these strategies are effective to enhance the safety of the people, they are usually limited by structural factors, fear of retaliation and social injustices. This study puts into focus the systemic problems in participatory policing and the necessity of inclusive, context-specific interventions due to the focus on the experiences of residents.

Objective of the Study

- i. To identify challenges and barriers to effective community policing in marginalized neighborhoods in Pakistan, focusing on cultural and institutional factors.
- ii. To explore how inclusive and context-specific approaches can enhance trust and cooperation in community policing.

Literature Review

The theoretical framing of the present study is based on the social capital, collective efficacy and community policing lenses, which highlight the role of structural inequalities, power relations and social cohesion in influencing the safety outcomes (Putnam, 2000; Sampson et al., 1997). Such views can be used to understand why conventional policing strategies are not very effective in lowering crime levels in disadvantaged communities and why community-based interventions can be effective in increasing community safety levels. The framework also shows the effect of social structures and the lack of trust to make people vulnerable, which affects the willingness to participate and the effect of mobilization programs. These structural dimensions are what must be understood in terms of analyzing the interaction of community dynamics, the responsiveness of institutions and strategies of participation to impact the outcome of safety.

Empirical data shows that community involvement and participatory policing programs may help a great deal in crime reduction, improving social safety, and building social capital, but their potentials are often limited by the structural inequalities, mistrust, and socio-cultural obstacles (Skogan, 2006; Braga et al., 2014). In low- and middle-income nations, whereby institutional policing ability is not well established and the administrative framework is weak, the lack of communal policing programs increases vulnerabilities and marginalized communities are left out of proportionately. With growing urbanization and population strain, the necessity to explore the power that community policing and social mobilization have in enhancing safety, trust and civic participation becomes more pressing.

Social instability, inter-neighborhood conflict, and suspicion of law enforcement are some of the challenges that have become a major challenge to the security of the people in Pakistan. Local police are commonly seen as inept, inaccessible, or corrupt by the members of the community and restrict their involvement in safety efforts on a neighborhood level (Naseem & Khattak, 2019). Even in most urban and semi-urban environments, formal policing is ineffective in crime prevention, so it has to be incorporated with allied techniques like community mobilization, neighborhood watch, and civil society alliances. The current literature points to the fact that in the absence of an active community engagement, law enforcement becomes a reactive strategy instead of a preventive one, which weakens the social cohesion and accountability (Akanbi, 2020; Choi, 2019). These gaps can be used to show the central role of encouraging participatory processes to enhance citizens to work with police in the context of social weaknesses.

Community policing is successful through the core pillars including partnerships, problem-solving and decentralization. The partnerships are developed not only between the police and community but also with the local business, non-government and government agencies. Such relationships are necessary in addressing community problems like crime, social disorder and community health (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 2009). Issues of problem-solving, which is one of the primary principles of community policing, is the transition toward creating a reactive law enforcement to the one that examines the causes of crime and provides a specific intervention (Young and Tinsley, 2008). Decentralization of the authority to make decisions enables the frontline officers to become more involved in the community and work on the problems that are specific to local communities (Skogan & Hartnett, 2019). In spite of the theoretical and practical merits of the community policing, there are some major impediments to the application of the policy especially in Pakistan. The problems of corruption in police, lack of resources, and police culture are some of the issues that compromise its efficiency (Wassan, 2023). Also, social and cultural dynamics in some communities such as gender-based exclusions and social hierarchy is another challenge in engaging inclusively (Ali & Rizvi, 2017). Such obstacles prevent building trust between the police and marginalized communities, including women and the youth who are frequently left out of the safety programs (Sherman et al., 2020).

Further, the efficiency of community policing in crime reduction remains to be controversial. Although community-based plans have been indicated to enhance the feeling of being safe and create more civic participation in the prevention of crime (Macdonald, 2002), its effectiveness with regard to the reduction of violent crime remains unclear. Other reports indicate that although community policing can be a contributing factor to better police-community relations, its actual effect on the level of crime is minimal (Skogan, 1994). Community policing should be evaluated based on the success of crime reduction, but also the degree of trust, community unity, and a sense of personal ownership to the community safety (Brogdon and Nijhar, 2005; Mazerolle et al., 2020). Community policing has also been promising in the framework of Pakistan, specifically in such regions as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the state of political and institutional relations between law enforcement and communities has been enhanced (Bahadar, 2019). Nevertheless, these reforms are constrained by the inconsistency of support at the higher authority and the established system of corruption in the police force. To maximize the potential of community policing, these institutional obstacles have to be overcome and community participation should be inclusive, transparent and properly resourced.

Therefore, the literature demonstrates that, although community policing can minimize crime and increase the levels of trust among the citizens, it depends on the ability to address serious structural, cultural, and institutional obstacles. In such countries as Pakistan, where the role of socio-cultural norms and historical mistrust plays an important role in shaping community-police relations, the success of community policing is the ability to overcome those barriers with the help of the context-based strategies to achieve inclusiveness, engagement, and transparency. The experience of numerous researches indicates that effective community policing implementation is a long-term investment in the reform and the establishment of the sustainable cooperation between the police and the service community.

Research Methods

The research design used in this study was qualitative, as it was selected to investigate the issue of community policing and social mobilization in Pakistan, where the police-community relationships were sensitive and as such, lacked an open discussion. The collection method used 15 in-depth interviews by collecting data of 5 police officials and 5 community members and supported by two mini case studies. The research also employed first-hand observation in the police-community interactions and community meetings to give more evidence on the dynamics between the two groups. The probing questions used in the interviews, which centered on safety perceptions, policing experience, attendance of the safety programs, social norms, obstacles to participation, and police legitimacy, were used to enable the interviews to bring more insight and allow the respondents their privacy. Informal discussions were collected into mini case studies that provide in depth context specific information about social norms, community trust and policing practices. The study was carried out in lower Dir neighborhood, KPK, with different levels of police presence and citizen trust, selected on the basis of their socio-economic weaknesses, a history of conflict, and various socio-cultural norms. The privacy and safety of the participants were preserved as they were recruited through the convenience sampling technique using local networks and leaders, as well as, in various age, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds. Data were also compared by thematic analysis and patterns that were identified in both interviews, case studies and observations and were captured according to themes like social trust, institutional responsiveness, cultural norms and community participation in policing. Ethical principles were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, and adjustments were performed to allow anonymity and avoid harm. The purpose of the study was to solve the matters of community policing and social mobilization as well as encourage privacy, empowerment and healthy conversation between communities and the law enforcement.

Results

The findings were drawn using thematic analysis of the field data collected in relation to the key informant interviews, participant observations, and discussions with communities organized in selected neighborhoods and policing jurisdictions. The discussion shows the sophisticated interaction of institutional restrictions, social beliefs, interpersonal trust, and behavior patterns which constitute the community policing and social mobilization practice. Each of the themes gives a deeper insight into the wider socio-cultural, rule-making, and security interactions between residents and police officers in the area of the study.

Inadequate Police–Community Interaction and Limited Accessibility

It has been shown through the data that the interactions between the police and the community which form the core idea of community policing are insufficient, chaotic and symbolic. The respondents said that the presence of the police in their neighborhoods is irregular and mostly responds to emergencies, but not acting proactively. The community members stressed the need to have routine patrols, door-to-door interactions, and frequent check-ins, which they believed was wanting in normal policing (Wassan, Bhatti, Ahmed, Oad, & Detho, 2023). This loophole implies that there is a need to have a more regular and aggressive police presence, but it is not clear what causes the absence of such interaction. One must consider certain agents of this absence, including whether the police were not present at the right time, whether they arrived in time or belatedly, or whether they could not engage because of certain systemic or logistical issues (Wassan et al., 2023). Besides, certain contradictory data occurred: on the one hand, a part of community members stated that they felt scared of the police, and, on the other hand, others characterized them as friendly or nice (Wassan et al., 2023). This contradiction makes one question the different dynamics between the police and the different community groups and therefore this may call forth a further research on the concept underlying the different mixed perceptions. Such contradictions should be resolved to learn more about the nature of the police-community relationships and obstacles to effective interaction (Wassan et al., 2023).

One respondent was a community member and said:

The police do not arrive until something has taken place. They do not come to visit us so often, and we do not know them personally. (C-6, 41)

The residents were found to be reluctant in approaching the police stations due to fear or due to covert negative experiences or bureaucracy. Some of the women have claimed that police stations were male-dominated areas that they find intimidating thus restricting their access to both protection and justice. In most situations, individuals wanted to solve minor conflicts informally since they considered the police unreachable or unresponsive.

Inaccessibility of contacts of contact acted as a big setback to the community because it could not be able to report any crimes to the law enforcers, express any concerns or join hands in crime prevention. In some areas with police posts, they were usually not staffed well or had no policy of reaching out to the community. The survey participants stressed that the lack of recognizable police officers or organized community gatherings undermined the trust and the communication process.

Such a poor level of accessibility did not only limit operational effectiveness, but also created emotional and psychological barriers. The members of the society were abandoned, unsecured and they were not sure who they could go to when the need arose. A female respondent said:

Even to go to the police station we feel afraid. They are not nice to us, and so we never bother to visit except when it is a serious situation. (F-11, 32)

The findings of this study reveal significant barriers to effective community policing, aligning with broader regional trends that suggest institutional and training constraints, as well as a lack of organizational prioritization, hinder police-community collaboration. The absence of accessible and approachable policing structures increases the social distance between the police and the community, complicating efforts at crime prevention and community mobilization. The lack of consistent police presence and proactive engagement, as highlighted by the community members, reflects a broader issue of police availability and reliability. It is essential to address the underlying reasons for this disconnect, such as whether the police were perceived as unavailable or unapproachable when needed, or whether alternative forms of support were sought due to a lack of trust or confidence in the police. Additionally, exploring why certain individuals refrained from seeking police assistance, whether due to fear, perceived inefficacy, or a preference for alternative solutions, can provide further insight into the root causes of these strained relationships. Understanding these dynamics is critical for developing strategies that enhance the effectiveness of community policing and foster better collaboration between the police and the communities they serve. The inconsistencies in the community's perceptions of the police, ranging from fear to a more positive view of their approachability, further highlight the complexity of the issue and the need for a more tailored approach to rebuilding trust and improving interaction.

Weak Communication Channels and Absence of Structured Engagement

According to the data, the interaction between the police and the community, which is the primary conception of the community policing, is inadequate, chaotic, and symbolic. Majority of the respondents asserted that the police are not equally present in their localities and to a large extent, crisis oriented. According to the members of the community, regular patrolling and door to door interaction or regular check in are key areas of community policing that was very much not evident in the day to day mode of policing.

One of the respondents was a community member and he stated:

The police arrive too late, after something has occurred. They do not even pay us a visit so frequently and we are not acquainted with them on a personal level. (C-6, 41)

The residents were also identified to be hesitant in visiting the police stations because of fear or because of negative experiences or bureaucracy under the carpet. Others of the women have argued out that the police stations were male domains that they find threatening thereby denying them protection and justice as well. In the majority of cases, people did not want to resolve the minor conflict formally as they believed that they could not reach the police or are not responded to.

The inaccessibility of the contacts of contact was a huge setback to the community since it could not report any crime to the law enforcers, raise any concern or unite to prevent the crime. In certain sections where police posts were available they were not typically well staffed or did not have an outreach policy to the community. According to the participants, *the absence of familiarized police officers or community meetings weakened the trust and the process of communication.*

This low accessibility level not only hindered the effectiveness of operations, but also provided barriers on the emotional and psychological level. The people in the society were left alone, insecure and they did not know who to address to whenever the need arose. A female respondent said:

We are afraid even to visit the police office. They are not pleasant with us and we never have the trouble of going there unless it is a serious matter. (F-11, 32)

These findings are typical of the broader regional trends which indicate that community policing is often suppressed by institutional and training factors as well as by organizations which do not focus on it. The absence or unavailability, accessibility of the policing structures enhances the social distance between the police and the community thereby making crime prevention in partnership with the police and the community difficult to achieve.

Cultural and Social Barriers Limiting Community Participation

The Primary data also indicate the impact of culture and societal statuses, as well as neighborhood-based power dynamics, in relation to engagement in policing initiatives. According to many of its residents, only the influential men, local leaders, or politically inclined and connected people would be able to communicate with the police excluding the ordinary citizens especially women and youth.

One of the young participants stated:

Meetings are attended, but only by the elderly or the influential individuals. There is no inclusion of youth and women. (Y-4, 20)

Cultural constraints did not allow the women to attend any of the public meetings in conservative areas hence limiting their exposure to safety information and creating the inability to express their concerns. Poorer respondents believed the police treated them less respectfully, which is a larger reflection of the patterns of bias based on social economic status.

These obstacles gave perception of being excluded, helpless and uninvolved in the process of policing. The marginalized groups complained that they did not have a lot of control in laying out safety within their communities. These structural imbalances make the disparity between the expected performance and the reality of the police even greater.

A female respondent noted:

We also want to discuss our issues, however, no one listens to us. Decisions are made by men and police all the time. (F-16, 35)

This is the place that the community policing is not effective without taking into consideration cultural, gendered, and socioeconomic dynamics that provide a cultural and gender narrative and create silences.

Lack of Resources, Training, and Institutional Support for Community Policing

The respondent view shows the influence of culture and the societal statuses, and the power relations in the neighborhoods on the participation in the policing programs. Based on what many of its citizens believed, only the powerful men, local leaders or political minded and politically connected individuals would be in a position to communicate with the police without the common citizens particularly women and the young people.

One of the young respondents said:

It is attended during the meetings but only by the senior citizens or the powerful. No inclusion of youth and women. (Y-4, 20)

The women in conservative places were not able to attend any public meetings because of cultural restriction resulting in their exposure to safety information being limited and the incapability to voice their concern. The less affluent respondents thought the police were less respectful towards them, and this is a greater replication of the tendencies of bias according to the social economic status.

These hindrances created an illusion of not being part of the policing process, powerless and not participating. The sidelined groups lamented that they lacked much power to designate safety in their societies. These structural imbalances cause the gap in the projected performance and the actual situation of the police to be even bigger.

A female respondent noted:

We would also like to talk about our problems, but nobody hearkens us. Men and police make decisions constantly. (F-16, 35)

It is here where the ineffectiveness of the community policing without considering the cultural, gendered, and socioeconomic dynamics that can give a cultural and gender narration and cause silences.

Fear of Crime, Safety Concerns, and Community Perceptions

The theme of fear of crime became an important issue in everyday life. Although a few respondents said that they felt relatively safe in the daytime, most said that they were anxious especially at night. Poor lighting in the streets, poor patrolling and poor response time allowed people to feel insecure.

A respondent explained:

We are good in the daytime but not good going out at night. The amount of police is lower, and we do not feel safe. (C-19, 27)

Women explained their increased fear because of the risk of harassment, absence of women police, and safe places. The young people also expressed some issues of street crime and gang violence. A number of members of the community reported that they have seen measurable improvements in their safety during the last year, but those were not prominent enough to change distrust that has been present in the community.

A woman shared:

We do not feel a hundred percent safe even though the situation does improve. Police presence should be increased. (F-8, 30)

The emotional and behavioral outcomes of fear of crime included limitations on movement, shyness to come out in social places, and lack of willingness to participate in such community activities. This indicates that community policing had not yet attained the reassurance effect that would result in the development of community confidence.

Weakness of Community Safety Programs and Social Mobilization Efforts

The community safety program neighborhood watch programs, awareness and meetings, or community patrols were observed to be small in scale and frequency. It was noted that programs were held haphazardly, with many of them associated with projects funded by the donors or temporary campaigns.

A local teacher said:

Once we had awareness session, however there was no follow-up. Human beings lose their memory of things that are not ordinary. (T-2, 34)

According to the respondents community safety programs do not have any impact on the long-term behavior unless there are sustained efforts over a long period of time. Lack of proper coordination between the local leaders, the police, and the community groups also affected the social mobilization.

Even the police officers themselves admitted the gap:

We are attempting to organize the community but, it is also hard without the adequate planning and collaboration. (PO-11, 37)

This theme shows that lack of social mobilization takes place due to inconsistent programming, weak institutional support, and low community ownership. Mobilization involves long-term efforts, not something of an hour.

Perceptions of Police Behavior and Procedural Justice

Police conducts became one of the most powerful aspects that influence the public trust. Most of the respondents cited rude conduct, discrimination, slow response or lack of respect especially to the poor, young people, and women.

A male respondent explained:

Police treat differently in accordance with status. Provided you are influential, they listen. Otherwise, they ignore." (C-14, 36)

A woman added:

Police are sometimes screaming or they do not listen. It does not make us want to visit them. (F-5, 28)

All these experiences demonstrate that procedural justice fairness, respect, transparency, and equal treatment are weakly exercised. The negative behavior is not only a factor that influences individual cases but also determines the overall attitude on the right to conduct policing. In the absence of procedural justice, community policing will not be effective despite the amount of programs organized.

Case-01

Mr. Ali Khan is a 29-year-old young police officer working in an urban district in a middle-income family. A tall, fair-complexioned, confident looking, and calm and observant man, he is a confident demeanor. Ali is a newcomer in the field of community policing trained recently and has developed a belief system that conversation and collaboration are better in ensuring the safety of the population than a firm, hard-line approach. His passion and willingness to explore new things prompted him to start a community engagement campaign in collaboration with a group of fellow minded researchers, all of whom were aged between 25 and 35 years old, to improve the connection between the police and people living in the neighborhood. Ali and his fellow officers went to various neighborhoods every week and conducted open talks with shopkeepers, youth groups, and women associations. These meetings gave the residents an opportunity to air their grievances of petty crimes on the streets to inadequate street lighting. The terms Ali stressed were listening and cooperation, which guaranteed the community members that they played an important role in making their localities safer. With time, the residents started to have confidence in the young officers and were also willing to cooperate.

As a result of this interaction, small neighborhood committees were organized which served as a liaison between society and the police station. With the coordination of Ali, these committees have been able to lobby the installation of new streetlights and the introduction of a volunteer safety watch program, the one that is under the joint leadership of the police and the residents. Practical experience of Ali shows that community policing does not need to stay stuck in the old enforcement functions. His effort changed the attitude of the police as the figure of authority to the collaborator in the community action and thus brought young people and community members to cooperate and work together to achieve a common safety and social wellbeing.

Case-02

A young female police officer, Ms. Sana Ahmed, 27, is a representative of the lower-dir family who is living in one of the densely populated urban neighborhoods. She is a medium height female who has a wheatish complexion, expressive eyes and composed personality. After recently attending a special course in community policing, Sana gained an active interest in the establishment of trust between the police forces and the disadvantaged young populations. She was of the opinion that sustainable peace would only be realized when the social issues are resolved collectively and not by the use of fear or power. In her service, Sana started to hold weekly interactive meetings with the local women, schoolteachers, and unemployed youths to talk about their safety and how they can enhance security in the neighborhood. Most of the youths who were initially reluctant to meet the police, overtime started attending the meetings having known that Sana is sincere in his desire to listen and understand their issues. Such discussions highlighted some common themes like street harassment, inadequate lighting in alleys and the unavailability of recreational facilities to the young people.

Having identified these common areas of concern, Sana encouraged the community to establish youth volunteer groups which could collaborate with the police to report on cases, create awareness and surveillance of the people in the neighborhood. Provided with her leadership, the local authorities accepted the installation of new streetlights and volunteers held awareness walks with the concept of peaceful coexistence and civic responsibility. The experience of Sana shows that youth-led community policing can be the key to the relationship between the police and the citizens. Her actions resulted in improved security in the neighborhood areas, as well as inspired local women and youth to take charge of the wellbeing of their communities demonstrating that compassion and integration can make policing a potent instrument of social integration.

Discussion

The results of the given research indicate that there are a number of interdependent issues that slow down the efficiency of community policing and social mobilization activities in Pakistan, especially in underprivileged areas. One of the major concerns that have been noted is the poor and reactive attitude of the police-community interactions. Although the main tenet of the community policing is proactive participation, the research indicates that the presence of the police is usually intermittent, crisis-based, and non-routine. It coincides with the available literature, which emphasizes the fact that inadequate engagement and lack of shared interaction between the law enforcement and the local population can fatally impair the ability of the latter to trust the former and to cooperate (Naseem & Khattak, 2019; Akanbi, 2020). The inability of the police to create a consistent visibility and communication with the members of the community makes the feeling of insecurity and lack of attachment to the law enforcers even greater.

One of the most important obstacles to involvement is the cultural norms and social norms that influence communication between the police and the members of the community. In traditional localities, women and the young people are former and thus excluded by the patriarchal set up in regard to community safety programs. Such gendered and hierarchical marginalization leads to no representation in policing decision-making and a lower sense of collective efficacy (particularly in the case of the most vulnerable populations). These trends reflect the international studies of the issues related to inclusive policing, where the cultural background and social disparities prevent the engagement in community-based safety initiatives (Ali and Rizvi, 2017; Sherman et al., 2020). Women, especially, did not want to relate to male dominating police structures, which they believed were threatening and not friendly. The lack of women in the police force and cultural-competent approaches to engagement also contributes to the marginalization of women in policing and safety-related discourses (Bradford, 2014).

Besides, community policing is also hampered by institutional and resource-related barriers. As it was seen in the study, police stations in some neighborhoods were either understaffed or they did not have clear policies on community outreach, and this disengaged them with the community. These organizational gaps represent systemic issues with the policing system, in which the insufficiency of resources and institutional support limits the effectiveness of community policing approaches (Khan et al., 2021). The absence of long-term programming and coordination between the community leaders, law enforcement, and residents further diminish any potential mobilization as one-shot or short-term programs will not lead to trust and cooperation.

Another aspect that was mentioned in the study is the importance of procedural justice and the actions of the police in influencing the attitude of the community towards law enforcement. The participants have often stated that they had been discriminated against and disrespected by the police officers, especially due to their social status and gender. Such bad experiences destroy trust in the people, and make them have perceptions of injustice, which becomes an even bigger barrier to the community and the police. These findings are supported in the literature, which demonstrates that the policing behavior and the perceived justice of police actions are the critical elements in the development or destruction of trust in police institutions (Bradford, 2014; Blair et al., 2021). Without procedural justice, i.e. fairness, respect and equal treatment, community policing activities are not likely to lead to trust and cooperation that can enable crime prevention and social mobilization (Choi, 2019). Overall, the research results of this paper highlight the intricate nature of the cultural, social, and institutional aspects that restrict the effectiveness of community policing and social mobilization programs in Pakistan. Although community policing brings forth great opportunities towards improving the safety and trust of the people, its success is limited tremendously due to poor police presence and lack of culture, weak institutions and procedural injustices. The findings add to the literature on the community policing in low-resource environments and indicate that inclusive and context-specific strategies are needed to overcome both the structural and cultural factors that limit effective community-police partnerships.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, the study has provided an overview of the major challenges of community policing and social mobilization programs in Pakistan especially in marginalized areas. The results highlight the essence of the regular police presence and active involvement in building trust and cooperation between the police and the local communities. The study however, also indicates that the culture of the society, like patriarchal systems and gendered omissions, as well as institutional constraints such as lack of resources and proper outreach policies are a major barrier to the success of such initiatives. In addition, procedural justice and decent police treatment are important towards establishing trust and participation of the community in the policing activities. In order to improve the effectiveness of community policing and social mobilization, structural, cultural, and institutional barriers in this regard should be addressed with the help of inclusive interventions of context-specificity and empowerment of every community member. The law enforcement agencies and policymakers should focus on the long-term engagement, equal involved participation, and procedural fairness to support the long-term safety and social cohesion.

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