Policy Brief

LOW CRIME CONVICTION AND CAPACITY CHALLENGES OF POLICE IN PUNJAB: A MIXED METHOD STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

This study explored and generated evidence for understanding the pervasive challenges contributing to low crime convictions and the capacity constraints faced by the police in Punjab, specifically in Rawalpindi through case file analyses, FGDs with police personnel and interviews with all major stakeholders highlighted various aspects that needed to be modified with in Pakistani criminal justice system. These aspects are related to all major stakeholders including police personnel, judiciary (judges, lawyers, and prosecutors), court staff, key informants (complainants and witness) and general public. The recommendations extracted in present study not only focus on improvement of crime conviction and resolving capacity constraints faced by Pakistani CJS but also points to a need of improving the overall effectiveness and public perception of CJS.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method approach was used. The policy reforms are extracted both from the quantitative and qualitative data. This involved robbery and murder crime data (2013 – 2023) 20 case files of murder and robbery, 3 FGDs with police personnel and 15 interviews from all other major stakeholders (judges, lawyers, prosecutors, complainants and witness).

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are organized into three major categories; improvement in investigation procedures, gaps in documentation, need assessment of resources, continuous professional development and monitoring, and enhancement in police image. One of the key findings related to policy recommendations and reforms is that the legislation of Pakistani criminal justice system requires amendments and modifications from grassroot level. The amendments that have taken place already often focus on the macro level thus the issues at the micro level remain intact. The

major policy reforms/ recommendations extracted from the findings of case files, FGDs and interviews are presented in the following sections:

Improvement in investigation procedures

In order to enhance the investigation procedures in Pakistani criminal justice system the major areas that need immediate and comprehensive reforms include methods of evidence collection and its submission and enhancing critical thinking among police personnel and prosecutors.

Evidence collection method

The methods utilized by investigative staff to collect the evidence especially in cases of murder needed following major considerations:

Need Assessment of evidence collection: Conduct a thorough assessment to identify current strengths and areas needing improvement in evidence collection methods among investigative staff including police officers, evidence collection teams and prosecutors.

Training Delivery: Roll out training sessions in various formats, such as workshops, seminars, online courses, and practical exercises, tailored to different levels of experience for collection of evidence.

Integration into Practice: Encourage the application of learned skills through regular practice exercises, case studies, and ongoing mentorship and support from experienced peers.

Evaluation and Feedback: Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the training program through feedback from participants, performance metrics, and observed improvements in case outcomes. Make necessary adjustments to the program based on these evaluations.

Submission of evidence for forensic evaluation

In terms of forensic evaluation of evidence, it is essential to enhance the availability and accessibility of forensic resources. Establishing small-scale forensic evaluation cells or units within police departments could significantly improve the current situation. These units should be equipped with fundamental tools and techniques necessary for the initial evaluation and preservation of evidence. Proper evidence preservation at this preliminary stage is critical, as it ensures that the evidence remains intact and uncontaminated before being sent for comprehensive analysis.

Critical thinking

In police investigations, critical thinking is a vital skill that enables officers to effectively analyze information, evaluate evidence, and make informed decisions. To enhance their critical thinking skills, police officers should receive training that emphasizes the importance of objective analysis, effective communication, autonomy, time management and open-mindedness.

Gaps in Documentations

To address the documentation gaps within the Pakistani CJS, it is essential to establish a standardized documentation pattern that clearly outlines the procedures and requirements for documenting various aspects of police work. This pattern should cover the recording of incidents, arrests, investigations, witness statements, evidence collection, and case progress in a systematic and organized manner. Most importantly, training and monitoring programs on proper documentation practices should be provided to all personnel to ensure that they understand the importance of thorough and timely documentation in facilitating effective communication, decision-making, and legal proceedings. Moreover, the stakeholder's transition from out-dated documentation methods to modern and technological solutions needed to be monitored regularly to ensure that the updated methods are effectively integrated into the system by all members of the police force.

Need Assessment of Resources

The first step to enhance the availability and proper utilization of resources is to identify what resources are present and what resources are absent. It is also necessary to develop strategies to enhance the resources and their utilization such as in terms of human resource strategies including recruitment drive, incentivization, and workforce optimization in a systematic and documented manner. In term of technological integration, strategies such as forensic evaluation units, digital case management, access to modern tool can be utilized. For infrastructure enhancement strategies such as court expansion, secure storage facilities, witness and complainant protection can be utilized. For training and capacity building strategies such as regular training programs, specialized training, collaboration with institutions may be employed.

Training of stakeholders

In order to address training gaps of all major stakeholders comprehensive training programs need to be developed for all stakeholders not only police personnel. These programs should cover essential skills such as systematic forensic investigation, crime scene techniques, interrogation techniques, investigation strategies, and the use of advanced investigative technologies. Specialized training embedded in the local organizational structure should target specific departments or units such as Traffic police, Police Stations, Patrolling, Counter Terrorism, and the Federal Investigation Agency, focusing on enhancing skills for handling complex cases and specialized duties.

Improving current programs through collaboration with institutes, legal experts, and trainers will enhance understanding of investigative processes, evidence handling, and case formulation.

The major modifications that may help the betterment of training among stakeholders include:

Standardization of Reporting Formats: Introduce standardized templates and guidelines for police reports and court documents. Conduct training sessions for officers and legal staff on the use of standardized formats, emphasizing clarity, consistency, and adherence to legal requirements.

Enhanced Training Programs: Develop specialized training modules for investigation officers, report writers, prosecutors, and other relevant personnel. Collaborate with academic institutions and international experts to design comprehensive training curricula covering modern investigative techniques, digital forensics, ethical standards, and effective report writing.

Improvement in Time Management: Implement protocols and tools to streamline case timelines and reduce delays. Introduce case management plan or software to track and manage case progress, establish clear deadlines for evidence submission and court hearings, and conduct further steps towards completion.

Upgrade of Equipment and Methods: Invest in modern equipment and update methods for crime scene investigation, evidence collection, and forensic analysis. Allocate funds for the procurement of advanced forensic technology, ensure regular maintenance of equipment, and establish partnerships with technology providers for ongoing updates and training.

Ethical Guidelines and Record Keeping Practices: Develop and enforce ethical guidelines for record-keeping practices. Conduct workshops on ethical considerations in data management and record-keeping, create secure digital repositories for case documents, and establish audit mechanisms to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

Continuous Evaluation and Feedback: Establish a system for ongoing evaluation of procedural improvements and feedback mechanisms. Conduct regular surveys and feedback sessions with stakeholders, including officers, legal professionals, and community representatives, to identify areas for improvement and measure the impact of implemented changes.

Continuous Professional Development and Monitoring

Foundation building for police personnel is of utmost importance as they are the tools for reducing low crime conviction. The enhancement of the foundational skills of police officers in critical thinking, decision-making, and ethical practices, while establishing effective systems for time management, documentation, and ethics is necessary.

To ensure continuous learning and system enhancement case-based learning and problem-solving exercises relevant to local law enforcement challenges may be used. Worksheets or practice sheets based on critical thinking, problem solving and decision making will help in implementation of learning knowledge. In addition to that e-learning and utilization of mobile phone will be encouraged to resolve new challenges related to technology.

Enhancement in Police Image

To enhance the image of the police force in Pakistan, it is crucial to integrate the principles of procedural justice into everyday policing practices, focusing on fairness, transparency, and respect in all interactions with the public. Implementing comprehensive training programs that emphasize effective communication, neutrality, and cultural sensitivity will foster positive public-police interactions. Developing policies that prioritize transparency and accountability, along with community outreach initiatives, can build trust and encourage cooperation from the community.

Establishing feedback mechanisms will allow for continuous improvement based on public input. These measures will not only improve the public perception of the police but also lead to increased case reporting, as community members will be more likely to report crimes and cooperate with law enforcement, thereby enhancing overall public safety and trust in the police force. Promote community-oriented policing approaches that emphasize building trust and collaboration between the police and the communities they serve. Encourage officers to engage with community members, address local concerns, and work together to prevent crime.

CONCLUSION

By implementing these practical steps, the police force and legal system can effectively address the identified gaps, improve operational efficiency, enhance transparency, and accelerate justice delivery. Continuous monitoring and adoption of these strategies will be essential to sustain improvements over time and meet evolving challenges in law enforcement and legal proceedings.