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Exploring The Opportunities Of Female Police Officers: A Case Study In Gambella Town.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research was to explore the potential opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town. To this end, two specific objectives were designed. These are, identify the institutional opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town and identify the social opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town. The researcher used case study as a research strategy/design/ which is related to interpretive philosophical assumption. Purposive and convenience (availability) samples was employed in order to select key informants. Nineteen (19) police officer (16 females and 3 males) were taken as participants for the in-depth interview and the 16 participants used for the three focus group Discussion. The researcher used also document analysis as the sources of data collection for this study. Qualitative data analyzed thematically based on the research an objective that was guided by the study. The finding of this study showed that. Even though there exist many challenges for female police officers, there found opportunities for them in this study. The government encourages females to join the police department even though the quota is less as compared to males. The affirmative action policies adopted by many police departments significantly is important to increase the number of female police officers in Gambella Ethiopia. The department also creates favorable conditions for females by allowing them to not to do jobs at night and assist them to perform more administrative jobs during the whole pregnancy period. In addition, getting assignment on their preferred site is also another opportunity for female police officers. Socially, since women police officers are more trusted by females, on their GBV fruitful work, they gain better response from the society.

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Key Words: Female police officers and Gambella town.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The development of modern professional policing in the nineteenth century was an extremely important social innovation but one that failed to include women. Female police were first appointed in a sprinkling of locations in the early decades of the twentieth century including Portland Oregon in 1908, Los Angeles in 1910 and Toronto in 1913, further expansion occurred during the First World War largely due to labor shortages (Heidenson, 1992).The first women police were appointed in 1959, four decades later than the united kingdom. Pioneer female officers were usually limited to very small numbers with in women police units working pre-dominantly as assistants to male detectives (ibid).The 1950s and 60s saw the beginning of gradual break out of the environment as women entered juvenile aid units and school traffic squads, eventually joining mixed patrol teams in the 1970's (Heidenson, 1992). Recent research indicates that in most developed democracies the percentage of sworn women police remains at or below one quarter with much lower numbers in management ranks and with women from racial or ethnic minorities suffering greater marginalization. The women police movement of the early twentieth century was only successful in creating very small space for female officers by making their role an extension of social welfare work. Women police were often unsworn, appointed on lower pay rates, without any rank structure and without a pension scheme, and they were subject to dismissal if they married (Leger, 1997).

According to Sahgal (2007), stated that policing is a demanding job which involves long and uncertain hours of duty. However, over the past few decades the police workforce has grown much more diverse with regard to gender and race. If we take India as an example, while all the postings and ranks in the police are common to both men and women, women are still under-represented in the police force and are not assigned to field missions to the same extent as men (Sklansky, 2006).

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The modern version of the Ethiopian police force was established by Emperor HaileSelassie by section 18 of proclamation No.6 of 1942. The first five women police officers were recruited and *trained as police officers. They were all Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) and the duration of* the course was from 22 December 1953 to 22 March 1954. These police officers were Constables Aselefech Teklemichael, FikrteMokennen, AlmazTaddesse, Menbere Gedion and Yeshiemebet Zewde. After graduation they were promoted to the rank of second lieutenant (Beyene, 1964). The criteria were competition and examination. Since then many women police officers have been trained and promoted to officer's rank. However, at that earlier period women police were not allowed to attend regular cadet courses, the reason being that the belief existed that women police could not withstand the hardship of the cadet course training.

In Gambella regional state, due to many constraint factors, females are not interested to join in community police officer job, Even the researcher concern on the matter and preferred to explain if there are opportunities in the sector, so that such kind of discouragement will exacerbate to encouragement. Therefore the researcher decided to explore the potential opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The women police officers face different challenges on their work condition, the researchers have examined the role of women in policing since the 1970s. Much of this research has focused on the abilities of police women (Sherman, 1975), while other studies have focused on the unique problems that women face in this traditionally male dominated field. In particular, women as a group have historically faced opposition to their entry into the profession. Research in both the United States and Europe indicates that police forces experienced a great deal of conflict when first allowing women entry into the field (Brown, 1997). In addition this research suggests that opposition continues to the present day where female officers experience resistance from both male officers and some sections of the public (Brown, 1997). The resistance manifests itself in sexual harassment, gender discrimination in assignments and promotion, and a general

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lack of concern for integrating women into police departments. The official website of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD, 2008) reported that, some of the earliest females in the field served as matrons or workers who were employed in prisons and penal institutions to care for female prisoners. The matrons first appeared in policing positions as early as 1845 in local jails and were a long way from being considered viable employees for real police work (Thistlethwaite and Wooldredge, 2010). Numerous research studies have been conducted relating to different aspects of women in the police. For instance, growth and development of women in the police (Surender, 2010) their career aspirations, motivations and gender discrimination. (Sahgal, 2007) their job expectations and adjustments. (Pattanaik and Worley, 2011) their role in police and administration, These studies are gives much infuses on the opportunities of female police officers but not much on the institutional as well as social opportunities enjoyed by them in the community police. Thus, this study is aimed to fill this critical gap.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objectives

- Explore the potential opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- Identify the institutional opportunities that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town
- Identify the social opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the institutional opportunities that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town

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- What are the social opportunity that benefits the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study was generated awareness and interest to the police department on the working conditions of female community police officers in Gambella town, local government, NGo's .Since there has been no or little information on this area, this study will serve as a secondary source for further studies of related topics.

2. REVIEW RELATED LITRATURE

2.1 History of women's in police work

Women have been in some form of policing for more than 150 years; however, they were initially restricted to social service roles out of which they were not allowed to be promoted. The official website of the LAPD. (LAPD, 2008) reported that some of the earliest females in the field served as "matrons" or "workers," who were employed in prisons and penal institutions to care for female prisoners (Women in the LAPD, 2008). These matrons first appeared in policing positions as early as 1845 in local jails and were a long way from being considered viable employees for real police work (Thistlethwaite and Wooldredge, 2010). Other early positions for female police included "clerical, juvenile, guard duty and vice work" duties, where they were forbidden from performing "basic patrol duties" (Price, 1996). Not only that, but these early female police officers received lower wages and at the same time, were also required "to meet higher standards for police employment" (Price, 1996). Perhaps these higher standards would ensure the low numbers of women in the field, keeping it predominantly male and using females only where it seemed to be advantageous. Additionally, Anderson (2003) reported that female police officers did not have any procedures in place to be promoted, limiting their roles even further. These types of practices set the tone for inequality in the field, not only in hiring females for limited positions but also setting different standards and wages for males and females (Price,

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1996). In 1905, the first female *officer*, Lola Baldwin, was hired by the police department of Portland, Oregon (Thistlethwaite and Wooldredge, 2010). Thistlethwaite and Wooldredge indicated that Baldwin was given the responsibility of protecting Portland's young women, perpetuating the social worker role, rather than a police officer role. It was not until 1910 that the first woman *police officer* with arrest powers, Alice Stebbins Wells, was appointed (LAPD, 2008). This feat, however, was not the end of gender inequality in policing. Wells, when presenting her badge to obtain a free ride to work on the trolley as all police officers were afforded, was informally accused by the conductor of misusing her husband's identity because he did not believe the badge was hers (LAPD, 2008). This incident demonstrated that women were not recognized as bona fide agents in the field of policing. Even after Wells' and other female police officers' achievements in policing, females were still excluded from patrol work 55 years later; females were still assigned (or restricted) to social work, clerical, and dispatch positions (Thistlethwaite&Wooldredge, 2010). Anderson (2003) reported that although women were present in law enforcement they were placed in "women's bureaus" that "operated separately from the rest of the police department," denying them full equality with their male counterparts. Even worse, women were given full police powers, *but* were limited in using them (Anderson, 2003).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The study was mainly employed descriptive qualitative approach. The need to utilize qualitative approach to this study basically arises from the exploratory and descriptive nature of the research. As a feminist researcher Shulamit and Reinharz (1992) asserted that qualitative approach produces non standardized information that allows the researcher to make full use of differences among people and it shows a valuable reflection of reality.

3.2 Design of the Study

The researcher used case study as a research strategy which is related to interpretive philosophical assumption. The case study is one of several ways of doing social science research.

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As Kitchin and Tate (2000) claimed that since the case study research seeks to extract meaning from the data it focuses on detail and natural order of events.

3.3 Target Populations

According to the information that the researcher obtained from the sampling frame of gambella police commission, there are 6 police stations in Gambella town administration and in all the police stations there are 322 police officers are found. Of them, 64 female police officers are found. Out of these 16 female police officers were targeted as populations of this study and only female police officers working as a police officer was participated.

3.4. Data Source

To gather relevant data, the researcher used both primary and secondary data. The researcher was mainly used primary data sources because it gives firsthand information about the working condition of female police officers and the sources of the data will be collected from the participants of interviewees and focus group discussants.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

For the purpose of collecting data, qualitative tools were employed in-depth interview, focus group discussion, and document review. The detailed justification and use of these tools presented as follows.

3.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Coding of data was done manually. The qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on the research objectives that guided the study and the conclusion was made with reference to the main objective.

3.7. Ethical Consideration

The researcher was followed logical procedures in every stage of data collection processes. The researcher was getting the willingness to participate on the study from all concerned Gambella administration police office.

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3.8. Trust Worthiness

To ensure the trust worthiness of this study, the researcher was employed using easy and simple language and description to convey the findings and triangulating of different data sources of information by examining evidence from the source and used it to build a coherent justification for themes

4. RESEARCH FINDING

4.1 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE POLICE OFFICERS

Even if exist many challenges for female police officers in Gambella town, there found also few opportunities for them in this study. The opportunities for female police officers are explained in detail as follows:-

4.1.1. Institutional Opportunity

4.1.1.1 Free access of the job

During interview almost all participants of female police officers indicated that the government encourages females to join the police department even though the quota is less as compared to males. They said that the government declared in its proclamation that the selection and training policy is as convenient for female police officers as for male police officers. The selection and training proclamation is identical for both sexes. This is a great opportunity for women's as policing is one field of specialization. In addition it creates awareness for the society that females can perform jobs like policing effectively.

4.1.1.2 Maternity leave

The research revealed that woman police officers are enjoying when it comes to maternity leave. To strengthen this idea, a women police expresses during interview that the department allow for females to not to do jobs at night and to perform more administrative jobs during the pregnancy period and even up to 5 months after pregnancy period." This is a big opportunity for female police officers. In congruent of the above idea, Martin (1989) noted that Female police

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officers have been found to leave the policing field at a higher rate after pregnancy. Their fore, giving a chance like the above may make females to stay on policing profession.

4.1.1.3 Avoiding Night shift for women police officers

During interview and the focus group discussion, most of the participants indicated that women Police officers are getting a privilege on night shift at home. This situation leads them to feel encouraged in the sector.

In general the attention paid for women on these matters makes them very happy to stay in their job. Martin (1989) says giving special attention for women police officers must encouraged them to stay in the profession.

4.1.1.4 Site placement opportunity

This research revealed that, female police officers are getting a special privileged on assigning in very simple site. The police commission on considering female police officers burden, they assigned them which are relatively simple. As it indicated on the above participants, site assignment has its own influence on their working condition; those sites which are believed to be difficult in different circumstances are assigned for male security guard who possessed the guns. However, this arrangement is not fixed rather it is true when there are sufficient security guard. Likewise Sefalafala &Webster (2013) also reported that some companies preferred to assign women's on day shift rather than night shift but when they are placed on night shift ,they are placed indoor and often with other men.

4.1.2 Social opportunity

4.1.2.1 Better Response from the community

The study revealed that having more women in the community police sector is essential for the resident safety, because they are serious about combating Gender Based Violence (GBV).According to the data collected from FGD (Focus Group Discussion) almost all participants agreed up on that "Gender based Violence survivors are reluctant to trust men police officers in Uniform, so the role of female police officers are Essential for the community, Due to this mere fact the community gives them good response particularly to female police officers.

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5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The objective of the research was to examine the opportunities for female police officers in Gambella town. Women constitute approximately half of the country's population in the world and therefore have the right to make up half of the decision making bodies but, are discriminated in assorted field of economic ,social and political life and are more subjected to multifaceted problems because of gendered social structure.

The interviewee and focus group discussants of this study identify opportunities female police officers even if they are facing enormous challenges, they are also enjoyed some opportunities, these opportunities were, the existence of maternity leave, assigning them in a simple site, the free access of job and women in the community police sector is essential for the resident safety, because they are serious about combating Gender Based Violence (GBV).

Overall, the researcher concluded that, the working condition of female police officers in Gambella town was filled with full of challenges but with limited opportunities. This situation would make their life difficult, cognizing of this fact; we can also ahead predict that the existing improvement of Ethiopia women to involve in police officer profession would be reversed soon unless we take some appropriate measures.

Recommendations

Based on the above finding, the following recommendations are forwarded:

- Gender discrimination was one of the basic challenge and to solve it, The Gambella police commission should treat female and male security guard equally whenever benefit and materials are provided
- Promotion related problems were the other challenge affecting female police officers; therefore, Gambella police commission together with other body should give equal chance on career promotion.
- Shift leaders need fill the efficiency of female police officers objectively based on predetermined criteria.

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- Police coordinators and directors in the police office should be flexible and solve female police officers problems.
- Gambella police commission Gender office should expand their service to reduce the incidence of gender based violence on female police officers
- Encourage and educate female police officers husbands to get involved in the household activities to minimize the burden of women and avoid conflicts
- Gambella police commission top management should encourage female police officers to come to position like shift leaders and participate in decision making.
- Strong capacity building on gender equality need to provide to the top regional police administrators in collaboration with Gambella University.

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