

Role of Conformity in Misconduct Behavior among Policeofficers

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Abstract: Police organization can be considered as a social organization that comprises of individuals collectively performing a significant activity, there are significant interactions between the individuals which further leads to their identity formation. The current study was conducted to assess the role of conformity in misconduct behavior among police officers in Kerala. The study aimed to assess the conformity among police officers and to explore whether conformity plays any specific role in police misconduct behavior. The study was conducted on 125 police officers from Kerala. A mixed method design was followed. In the quantitative phase a survey questionnaire on conformity was administered on them. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with those scoring highest and lowest in conformity to understand their misconduct behavior. SPSS statistics 20 was used for the analysis of quantitative phase and thematic analysis was used for the qualitative phase. The result indicates significant inter correlation between the items in each section of the survey questionnaire and found that conformity of police officers could be better explained by using normative influence, informational influence, ingratiation, identification and internationalization. Qualitative phase identified two global themes-conformity and misconduct behavior. Misconduct behavior was found to be not prevalent as in older times. Changes in the required educational qualification and increase in female police officers are some factors that had led to this decline. The police officers does conform to the superiors and colleagues as the part of discipline exist in the department.

Key words:Police officers, Conformity, misconduct behavior

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I. INTRODUCTION

Policing cannot be considered as just a job as it has important purpose in the society. Police officers are responsible in balancing the rights and safety of individuals, families and communities in order to secure the society. Policing involves dealing with both worst individuals who behaving worst, as well as with good individuals facing very bad situations in their life.²⁶ Police organization can be considered as a social organization that comprises of individuals collectively performing a significant activity, there are significant interactions between the individuals which further leads to their identity formation. They will also hold some special norms and values that are unique to the group and hence it can be considered as a subculture. This occupation provides a space for some deviant behavior in group members.² Occupational deviance can be studied by examining three important elements: opportunity structure and techniques of rule violations within it, socialization through occupational experiences, and reinforcement and encouragement from peers.² The occupational deviance of police include Corruption of Authority which is in the form of Free Meals, Services or Discounts and Liquor, Money Kickbacks, Opportunistic Thefts from victims, burglary or Unlocked Buildings, Shakedown of Criminals, Protection of illegal Activities of Vice Operators or Businessmen, the forms of fix that includes Traffic Fix, Misdemeanor Fix and Felony Fix, Direct Criminal Activities like Burglary and Robbery, and Internal Payoffs.²

Conformity

According to Parson, Conformity is defined as behavior or actions that are shown in accordance with certain standardized norms and that will results as a common culture.¹⁹ Generally conformity is the change in behavior as a result of the influence of other people. Nature of influence does not matter and conformity encompasses both compliance and obedience. According to Crutchfield, conformity is defined as “yielding to group pressures” or behavior change is the response to real or imagined group pressures and the group pressure may include bullying, persuasion, teasing, and criticism.⁷

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) put forward the concept of informational influence and normative influence which underlies the reason for why people conform. Informational influence occurs when individuals change

the behavior in order to be right, where they rely upon other individuals who they believe to have high knowledge and hence they conform to these individuals. Whereas in normative influence, individuals conform in order to avoid punishments or to gain rewards. Task difficulty, group size, individual differences, unanimity, group cohesion, situation characteristics and cultural differences are the main factors that determine conformity.⁸

Kelman (1958) distinguishes conformity into three types: compliance, identification and internalization. Compliance is the lowest level of conformity and the change is a short term feature. The individual change the way they act but not their private beliefs. Identification involves middle level conformity and the individuals change their public behavior and private feeling only in the presence of others and thus the change not permanent. The deepest level of compliance is internalization it is long term and it is the permanent change in the public behavior and private feeling.¹⁴

There are several theories that explain the role of conformity in a group. One of them is social impact theory proposed by Latane. It emphasize on the importance of strength and immediacy for explaining social influence, rather than relying on the number of sources. The theory proposes that the social influence experienced by an individual in a group setting depends on strength, immediacy and number of people in the group. The theory is capable of explaining persuasion and obedience.²⁰ Social influence theory emphasis on the causes that lead to behavior change and it goes parallel with social learning theory proposed by Bandura, i.e., learning occurs in an individual through observation, imitation and modelling other individuals. Observation of others behavior, attitude and outcomes results in learning that takes place within an individual. The behaviors learned through modelling helps to form an idea about the performance and used as the guide for the action.²¹

Asch's Experiment conducted by Solomon Asch(1951) is one of the classical experiment in social psychology to investigate on conformity. He gave emphasis on the extent of group pressure exerted by majority group and would leads the group members to conform. The study shows that participants were under normative influence, where they conformed to the group in order to fit in and to avoid rejection. And later investigated the situational factors that influence conformity. The study results found that group size, lack of group unanimity, task difficulty and private answers has greater influence on conformity.¹⁷

There are studies that has been done on misconduct behavior and conformity. Studies reveals that misconduct behavior is influenced by organizational justice and it is inversely associated with police misconduct and officers who view their organization as just and fair they are less likely to engage in misconduct behavior and adhere to code of silence.²³ Perceptions of fair treatment by supervisors and trust in supervisors are positively associated with compliance as well as the procedural policies helps to implement police policies and prevent police violence.¹¹

Conformity occurs only in some specific situations where they may not conform to every group norms. Motivations that include in group identification, context of group that is the group threat, effects on the decision to conform.¹⁰ Attitude change occurs as individuals change their opinion in order to conform to other group members.¹⁶

Social learning theory provides a useful explanation of police misconduct. Study suggests that peer associations, attitudes, reinforcement and modeling are the predictors to misconduct.⁶ Positive peer pressure play a role in proper ethical decision making by police officers.²⁶ Socio ecological factors and autonomy measures are also capable of explaining variance in police behavior.¹⁸ Studies also suggests that low self-control and revised self-control were both significantly related to past police misconduct and the likelihood of future police misconduct.⁸

Due to high conformity level Conformity has a downside as there are many instances that conformity makes good people to do evil things. This has been pointed out through Zimbardo's prison study and found that it is not the personality traits but it is the situation that determines individual behavior.⁴ He suggests that the situational pressure that includes conformity pressures is responsible for evil behavior. The situations may be so strong than our ability to resist or remain true to our values. In extreme situations Conformity even results to psychological trauma, physical harm, and in other cases it has promoted social justice and/or injustice.⁴ Peer group will not report the misconduct behavior shown by police officers.

One study proposed that medical error is the result of conformity which further leads to organizational silence. It is the peer pressure that makes individual to conform to inaccurate information communicated by a member of a team and this collective implicit agreement of a non-response or inability to speak up undermines a group member's ability to act professionally and puts the safety of the patient at risk.³ The organizational silence is similar to the concept of code of silence in policing. Due to high conformity level, the peer group may not report the misconduct behavior shown by police officers.

There are a number of studies that studies police misconduct behavior based on social learning theory, developmental perspective, social control, organizational justice. There are researches that examined the relation between authoritarianism and police misconduct¹² but the effect of conformity is not been explained. As the concept of code of silence, the misconduct behavior could be acquired through group pressure or just

they show in order to identify as the group member by others. It can be compliance, identification or internalization. Hence through the current research it aims to find whether the misconduct behavior depends on the individual decision to conform or not conform to the department.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Aim of the current research was to explore the role of conformity in misconduct behavior among police officers. For the purpose of the study a total of 125 police officers was selected by using convenient sampling.

Study Design: Explanatory sequential design

Study Location: This study was conducted in Kerala

Study Duration: October 2017 to November 2018.

Sample size: 125

Subjects & selection method: For the purpose of the study, by using convenient sampling method a total sample of 125 was chosen. In the quantitative phase the survey questionnaire was provided. From them a total of 8 sample was selected for the semi structured interview. The selection was done based on the scores they obtained on the survey questionnaire (high = 4 and low = 4).

Inclusion criteria:

1. Police officers who have work experience of more than 5 years.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Police officers outside the state Kerala are excluded from the study.

Procedure methodology

Following the consent from the sample were obtained, an explanatory sequential design was followed in this study that comprises of both quantitative and qualitative phases. The first phase of the research was quantitative in which a survey questionnaire on conformity was given. The sample who obtained highest and lowest scores in the quantitative phase are selected for the second phase. The second phase of the research was qualitative method where a semi-structured interview was conducted to explore the variables conformity and misconduct behavior.

Statistical analysis

For the quantitative phase SPSS software version 21 was used to do the normality test and Pearson correlation coefficient to assess the inter correlation for the obtained data. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic network analysis. The themes emerged will be analyzed and interpreted. Thematic network analysis involves: forming basic themes, organizing themes and finding global themes.

III. RESULT

Phase I

The first phase of the study, quantitative analysis was done in order to find the inter correlation between the items in the survey questionnaire. Each items in the five sections of the questionnaire were analyzed by using Pearson correlation coefficient.

Table no 1: Shows the survey questionnaire with the items grouped in five sections. Section A normative influence, Section B informational influence, Section C ingratiation, Section D identification and section E internalization.

Table no 1:Survey questionnaire

Section A
A3. I feel I would be isolated if I did not agree with whatever my colleagues are saying.
A4. I feel embarrassed when my colleagues tease me for not agreeing with their opinions.
A5. I feel that my colleagues will hate me if I disclose my opinions and viewpoints, which are contradictory to their opinion.
A7. I believe that if outcomes are good, I can break the rules of my department.
A8. I have come across situations where I felt like reporting some mischief that has happened but could not report it
A9. I fear that my opinions might be wrong and hence I am not confident to open up.
Section B
B2. According to me, disobeying my superiors is an offense.

B3. I feel my colleague's opinion would never be wrong.
B4. The decisions taken by my colleagues are better than mine.
B5. My superiors would never guide me to do wrong.
B7. My decisions are not influenced by my colleague's opinion.
B10. I feel like being inferior when I obey instructions or advices my colleagues.
Section C
C1. In front of my superiors, I speak in favor of them to gain a good impression.
C2. I follow the code and conduct of my department because it will benefit me.
C3. I indulge in certain activities, in order to impress my colleagues.
C5. I do certain things intentionally to get rewards from others.
C6. I cover up my real emotions in order to be accepted by my colleagues.
C7. I sometimes imitate the actions of my colleagues if that brings positive outcomes.
C8. I find it difficult to perform some actions, because of my fear of being bullied by my co-workers.
C9. Sometimes I end up doing activities that are against my will, in order to avoid criticism from my superiors and colleagues.
C10. I follow certain rules against my wish, due to the fear of negative consequences.
Section D
D1. I usually suppress my emotions and listen to my colleagues even if I disagree with them.
D2. In order to avoid arguments, I tend to suppress my opinions.
D3. I will eventually adapt and go with my colleagues' opinion even though I am against it.
D4. I sometimes feel helpless about certain things that happen against my will.
D5. I conceal the mischief done by my colleagues.
D6. I sometimes withhold true information in order to save my colleagues.
D7. I support my colleagues even if they do things/acts that are wrong.
D8. I find it difficult to say no to my colleagues if they ask me for some help.
D9. It is always good to obey my superiors
Section E
E1. I tend to accompany my colleagues when they plan for a midnight party.
E3. I strongly hold on to my opinions and wishes.
E5. I stand alone in my opinion, even if a majority of my colleagues are opposing it.
E6. I consider obeying my department rules as my privilege.
E8. The rules are for obeying and breaking the rules are against the morality.
E9. I don't think the rules are part of my life.
E10. In order to gain approval and acceptance from my superiors and colleagues, I obey the rules and instructions

Normative influence

Table no:2 Shows inter correlation between the test items under normative influence. The results reveals that police officers conform to the department in order to gain acceptance from other group members. They experience a fear to disclose their opinions as they are afraid of getting hatred, and thus they will agree to whatever the colleagues are saying in order to avoid isolation A5-A3 ($r=-.455$; $p=.0001$), they do not have enough confidence to open up their opinions in front of others A5-A9 ($r=.292$; $p=.001$). And they also get embarrassed when the colleagues tease for not agreeing with them A5- A4 ($r=-.550$; $p=.0001$). And may be because of these embarrassment or fear of getting isolated they had come across situations where they could not report the mischiefs done by others A5-A8 ($r=.409$; $p=.0001$). Since A5 negatively correlates with A7, the individuals believe that they could break the rules if outcomes are good and thus, individuals who has tendency to withhold their opinions and views in order to gain acceptance from others, they may even break the rules for good outcome A5-A7 ($r=-.250$; $p=.022$). Thus the results shows that the police officers has the tendency to conform to others to gain approval.

Table 2: Shows inter correlation between the items under normative influence

Items	Mean	S.D.	W	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9
A1	.89	.317	.365									
A2	1.27	.836	.767	.116								
A3	2.08	.964	.815	.241**	.013							
A4	.42	.495	.626	.094	-.061	.488**						
A5	1.45	1.058	.824	.031	-.066	.455**	.550**					
A6	.90	.306	.350	.128	.048	.083	.128	.120				
A7	.69	.465	.583	-.075	.137	-.250**	-.202*	-.205*	-.173			
A8	.99	.996	.783	.099	-.143	.354**	.301**	.409**	.182*	-.388**		
A9	1.58	1.116	.852	.024	-.022	.152	.220*	.292**	.341**	-.008	.137	
A10	.95	.897	.822	.208*	.351**	.219**	.064	.167	.128	-.133	.171	.125

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Informational influence

Table no 3: Shows inter correlation between the test items under informational influence. The study results that the police officers think that their colleagues’ decisions are better than them and they don’t feel that their colleagues be wrong B4-B3 (r=.185; p=.039), Even though they obey their colleagues, they don’t feel like being inferior B4-B10 (r=.266; p=.003). Thus it’s clear that they rely on colleagues by thinking that their opinions are right and believe that they took better decisions B4-B3 (r=.185; p=.039). Since B2 and B5 are positively correlated, it shows that as they think that their superiors would not guide them to do wrong, they should obey them as well and thus they consider disobeying the superiors as an offence B2-B5 (r=.427; p=.0001). The result suggests that police officers tend to conform through informational influence as they seek information from their colleagues and superiors.

Table no 3: Shows inter correlation between the test items under informational influence

Items	Mean	S.D.	W	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9
B1	.84	.368	.440									
B2	2.84	.874	.729	.070								
B3	.24	.429	.530	.143	.146							
B4	1.20	.609	.709	.108	-.106	.185*						
B5	2.76	.766	.707	.092	.303**	.152	.000					
B6	.30	.476	.589	-.050	-.137	-.153	-.011	-.003				
B7	1.31	.954	.818	.097	-.007	.427**	.253**	-.040	-.187*			
B8	1.85	.942	.775	-.001	.019	-.029	-.017	.005	-.043	-.180*		
B9	1.59	.899	.707	.094	-.135	-.162	.091	-.155	.077	-.057	.259**	
B10	2.73	.787	.380	.071	-.134	-.068	.266**	.025	.152	-.090	-.100	.150

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Ingratiation

Table no 4: Shows inter correlation between the test items under ingratiation. The findings suggests that the police officers are unable to perform certain behavior as they are afraid of being bullied for those actions and they exhibits certain behavior in order to gain impression from others C8-C1 (r=.587; p=0.0001) and they even speak in favor of superiors. They may cover up their real emotions to get accepted by their colleagues C8-C6 (r=.489; p=.0001). They are afraid of the criticisms and as a result they end up doing things that are against their will C8-C9 (r=.200; p=.0001). And as they focus on their behaviour outcomes and they follow the rules only for the sake of avoiding negative consequences C8-C10 (r=.218; p=.014). They follows the code and conduct of the department since they benefits him and they will imitate their colleagues’ actions as it could results in positive outcome C2-C7 (r=.200; p=.001). They intentionally perform activities to gain reward or impression from others (r=.238; p=.008). Thus, the results shows that police officers gives importance to their behavior outcomes and thus they cover up their emotions, intentionally does activities to gain a good impression.

Table no 4: Shows inter correlation between the test items under ingratiation

Items	Mean	S.D.	W	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9
C1	.31	.677	.515									
C2	2.74	.784	.724	-.026								
C3	.35	.699	.557	.329**	-.168							
C4	.11	.341	.357	.022	.021	.172						
C5	.76	.756	.693	.069	-.162	.238**	-.083					
C6	.34	.595	.600	.298**	.071	.179*	.091	.181*				
C7	.87	.335	.392	-.213**	.300**	-.047	.056	.037	.136			
C8	.42	.625	.660	.587**	.028	.216*	.120	.162	.489**	-.090		
C9	1.51	1.060	.879	.315**	-.050	.092	.041	.044	.121	.027	.200*	
C10	2.16	.987	.866	.106	-.008	.046	-.054	-.099	.182**	.014	.218	.276**

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Identification

Table no 5: Shows inter correlation between the test items under identification. The results shows in order to get identified in the department, police officers exhibits certain behavior. They may suppress their opinions to avoid arguments with their colleagues and this could be manifested in the decision to conceal the mischief done by their colleagues D5-D2 (r=.316; p=.0001) and they even withhold true information to save them D5-D6 (r=.551; p=.0001) and they would support them even though they are wrong D5-D7 (r=.324; p=.0001). Through suppressing their opinions, they eventually get adapts and go along their colleague’s opinion D5-D3 (r=.204; p=.022). At the same time they may feel helpless about the things that happens against their wish D5-D4 (r=.183; p=.041). Since D5 is negatively correlated with D9, the individuals won’t think it is good to always obey the superiors. As they think that obeying superiors is not a must, chances are high to conceal and withhold others mischiefs and mistakes D5-D9 (r=-.186; p=.037). Even though they suppress their emotion and agree with colleague’s opinion, they will not support them to do wrong actions D1 and D7 (r=-.377; p=.0001). Thus the result shows that police officers has greater wish to get identify with the group and so they suppress their opinions and offer help to their colleagues.

Table no 5: Shows inter correlation between the test items under identification

Items	Mean	S.D.		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9
D1	2.85	.554	.470									
D2	.94	.840	.816	-.160								
D3	2.35	.854	.834	.063	.110							
D4	1.25	.726	.816	.235**	.053	.196*						
D5	.60	.813	.727	-.100	.316**	.204*	.183*					
D6	.46	.500	.634	-.010	.243**	.112	.064	.551**				
D7	.14	.434	.369	-.377**	.180*	.080	-.140	.324**	.252**			
D8	.92	.272	.300	.132	-.128	-.155	-.144	-.073	-.085	-.174		
D9	.94	.330	.347	-.142	-.102	.195*	-.135	-.186*	-.115	-.104	.032	
D10	2.35	.826	.827	-.005	-.142	.326**	.082	-.077	-.060	.082	.055	.261**

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Internalization

Table no 6: Shows inter correlation between the test items under internalization. The study results indicates that the police officers holds on to their own opinions and wishes and thus even if the majority stands against them, they tend to follow their own opinions E5-E3 (r=.341; p=.0001). And thus they won’t always accompany their colleagues where ever they plan to go E5-E1 (r=-.328; p=.0001). And those who accompany with colleagues for party, have a tendency to obey the rules and instructions in order to gain approval and acceptance E1- E10 (r=-.223; p=.013). The individuals who consider obeying rules as their privilege, they believe that the breaking the rules are against their morality E6- E8 (r=.221; p=.013). These findings suggests that even though they tend to conform to the group, they give importance to work rules and ethics and have strong opinions that restrict them from engaging in certain activities.

Table no 6: Shows inter correlation between the test items under internalization.

Items	Mean	S.D.	W	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
E1	1.13	.907	.780									
E2	.94	.263	.317	.064								
E3	1.10	1.038	.809	-.357**	.021							
E4	.10	.296	.334	.044	.070	.151						
E5	1.17	1.022	.775	-.328**	-.115	.341**	.106					
E6	3.05	.607	.720	-.070	.168	-.174	.154	-.078				
E7	.97	.177	.168	.126	.134	-.202*	-.095	.119	.090			
E8	.98	.126	.104	-.053	.459**	-.049	-.175	-.104	.221*	-.023		
E9	.97	.177	.168	.076	.134	.018	.059	-.193*	.240**	-.033	.339**	
E10	1.93	1.193	.875	-.223*	-.090	.039	-.003	.156	-.084	.066	-.169	-.126

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Phase II

The qualitative part of the research explored conformity and misconduct behavior among police officers in Kerala. Altogether, across the study two global themes were derived – conformity and misconduct behavior. Under the global theme of conformity three major themes were recognized: Discipline in force, Satisfaction in colleague’s performance, Actions that done against their will. The global theme consists of five organizing themes, awareness about difficulties caused to common people, Opinion on 3rd degree punishment, Role of police officers punishment in crime reduction, Abusive language in police department, Opinion on bribe. The thematic network is illustrated in table no 7

Table no 7: Thematic network analysis

Global themes	Organizing themes	Basic themes
Conformity	Discipline in force	Existence of police force
		Will abide to the superiors instruction
		Will follow the instructions if it is legal
	Satisfaction in colleague’s performance	Not fully satisfied
		Try to rectify colleagues mistakes
		There are irresponsible police officers
	Actions that done against their will	Will follow legal instructions
		Felt helplessness
	Misconduct behavior	Awareness about difficulties caused to common people
Being stressed		
Opinion on 3rd degree punishments		Practiced at olden times
		Never practiced at present
		Use of scientific techniques
Role of police officers punishment in crime reduction		Court proceedings must be followed
		To have a fear to indulge in crime punishments could be given

		Punishments given by the court must be increased
	Abusive language in police department	Decreased due to the presence of women police officers
		Educated police officers
		Depending on situations
	Opinion on bribe	Police officers are financially stable as they are paid well by the government
		Received at past but not at present
		Does not disclose police identity to the public during off times
		Thought about the Consequence

Conformity

Discipline in the force

The participants reported that the entire force exist on discipline since, police is a disciplinary force. Hence they abide to their superiors instructions and consider disobeying as opposing discipline. And they believe that their superiors will not force to do illegal actions and thus all legal instructions from superiors will be followed. It was reported that:

“Discipline is very important... The existence of the Police Force is on discipline. The Force will exist only by safeguarding discipline along with higher officials, subordinates and co-officers. If the instructions from the senior officer is not obeyed... the force will not exist.” (P 19, 2018)

Satisfaction in colleagues performance

The results reveals that eventhough some participants are satisfied with their colleagues performance, some participants reported that there are number of irresponsible police officers in the department who degrades the entire force. They also reported that if the colleagues performance dissatisfactory, they try to rectify those mistakes by directly pointing it out. It was mentioned that:

“Except one or two percent, activities of all other subordinates are satisfactory.... Some are doing good job, police do good job for the public by ignoring their family.... There is only a small percentage of them, who do not take any responsibility.” (P 19, 2018)

Actions that done against their will

From the data it was reported that there are some situations where participants has to do certain actions agnaist their desire. They reported that they feel helpless at certain situations because those situations are out of their control. And some participants reported that duties done was not because of pressurising and nobody compels to take up actions agnaist their will and they follow the superiors orders if those are legal. It was reported that:

“There is already an order of the D.G.P. that you have to do only the legal directions of the senior officials. Formerly the system was.... First obey and then complaint. That was changed.... We are not bound to obey illegal directions. Therefore the senior officials are not prepared to do so....”(P 19, 2018)

Misconduct behavior

Awareness about difficulties caused to common people

The participants reported that they doesnt intentionally cause any difficulties and try to be polite while dealing with people. It was also reported that there are certain situations in which, they cause some obstacles to common people. These difficulties may happen as the part of their official duty or because of the stress they experience due to the work pressure. It was reported that:

“There are some instances.... In the part of my official duty, I have to obstruct many person.... During the time of vehicle checking I have obstructed the persons who got to Hospital, persons who are said to be to Hospitals.

This is the part of my offered duty.... and may cause inconvenience to others. These are not done purposely, it was part of my official duty..." (P19, 2018)

Opinion on 3rd degree punishments

In the current data, most of the participants reported that third degree punishments were employed at past while dealing with the criminals, but at present it is not so prevalent as before. The intensity of punishments are reduced and those earlier punishments are replaced with scientific techniques and questioning methods. It was reported that:

"Here existed bodily torture in police in olden days. Not now.... In order to prove truth punishment is essential to some extent. But not exist as in olden days... Small punishment is essential for telling the truth..." (P 29, 2018)

Role of police officers punishment in crime reduction

Participants reported that some amount of punishments are needed while dealing with criminals. They said punishments could induce a fear in criminals while doing criminal activities that make them to rethink before engaging into it. Some participants reported that court proceedings must be strictly followed and proper punishments must be given by the court and they also suggest that the changes must be made in the current practice of law and punishments given to the criminals must be increased. One of the participants reported that: "Then above all a punishment given by police in public and if they had an impression that if a person is caught by police...., he will be beaten up is created it will help to reduce crime.... If somebody knocks the house's and if they had caught by the police and got punishment...they may think about those punishments and will rethink before knocking a house's door..." (P 73, 2018)

Abusive language in police department

From the data it was reported that usage of abusive language in the department get declined to a greater extent. At present the officers try to be polite and deal gently with the common people. Participants reported that the number of female police officers get increased and thus their presence led to reduce the inappropriate language usage. Changes in the required educational qualification for the selection of upcoming officers could be other reason for this change. Some participants also reported at certain situations and while dealing with criminals they may use harsh words and the usage of these harsh words are misinterpreted as abusive language. It was reported that:

"After the upcoming of educated people in police force...using of abusive words came to an end. To some extent it is necessary.... To certain individuals, we cannot converse in good manner. Police will not behave in a rude manner to those who behave in good manner.... In certain cases even if we behave in good manner, police will be blamed. Some individuals may not respect police.... If you behave in good manner you will get return the same." (P 28, 2018)

Opinion on bribe

The participants reported that at past there were police officers who ask for bribe, but at present it is not pervasive as in past. By considering the current scenario, police officers are financially stable and are paid well by the government. The recognition of this profession also gets inclined and thus they reported that there is no need for accepting bribe. Some participants reported that they will not disclose their identity to public and with their professional status they will not ask for any free services to accept free services. Sometimes by thinking the consequence of accepting things freely, refrains from engaging in those illegal actions. It has been reported that:

"There is no need... the government pay to line well. Some people gets such benefit in the police... I do not ask for anything free. In olden days police have to buy bribes. Now there is enough salary.... There is a police officer with an average of 20 years to get a salary of between 40000- 50000 rupees.... That's enough for a family now...." (P 72, 2018)

IV. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the conformity of police officers in Kerala. Police officers are group of people who hold privileges to perform activities that are specific to their profession and the study aimed to explore how conformity plays an important role in their specific behaviors. A survey was done to find out the extent of conformity among police officers holding different ranks. Conformity was assessed through a survey questionnaire that encompasses five major concepts of conformity, they are normative influence, informational influence, ingratiation, identification and internalization. Sample's score on each section was analyzed and the inter correlation of each section was assessed. The results suggest that conformity could better explain the certain behaviors or actions of police officers in the department.

The results found that in order to gain acceptance they may conform to the existing police system and it can be manifested through their difficulties that they faced to open up their opinion in front of others and because of the fear of getting hatred and isolated they will agree upon their colleagues opinion, gets embarrassed when others teases him and hides colleagues mischiefs. And they even break laws for getting acceptance. Studies shown that normative influence is the predictor of protective self-presentation i.e., the individual take efforts in order to avoid undesirable self-presentation.²⁴

When the police officers are confused or unclear about their actions or the situations they may totally rely upon their colleagues. The findings suggests that the officers thinks that their colleagues decisions cannot be wrong and they are capable of taking better decisions and they are not reluctant to follow their colleagues instructions or suggestions. The research found that if the situation where the decision needed to be taken is uncertain, the probability of occurrence of social influence would be higher.²² That is the reason why individuals conform to the group norms.

The results suggests that based on the outcome and rewards that they receive, they show conformity. In order to gain a good impression from colleagues they does activities that seems to be favorable to their superiors and colleagues. They even cover up their real emotions and perform against their will to avoid negative consequences and to get accepted within the group. They are abide by the department rules since it seems to be beneficial to them. The past study found that cultural norms demands ingratiation behavior and it's capable of determining one's gain or loss of self-esteem.¹³

To get identified within the group, the police officers try to conform to the department. The result shows that they avoid unnecessary arguments with their colleagues to maintain a smooth relationship. They conceals and withhold others mischiefs in order to protect their colleagues from getting punishments. But they won't support to indulge in wrong deeds. They sometimes experience helplessness and suppress they negative emotions while conforming to colleagues. And they reported that it is not always good to obey their superiors and thus to maintain a good bond within the group they conceal others mistake in front superiors. Studies found that individuals have a perception of shared membership with in a group and they practice certain behavior regulations in order to form a collective identity.¹⁵

From the study, it's found that there are certain change in beliefs that occurs due to social influence and internalize within them. They consider the department rules as the part of their life and they are privileged to obey them. And they are pretty sure that breaking the rules are against their morality. They even hold to their opinions and views internally, even though majority stands against them. Research study shows that individuals who internalize the group norms are less likely to violate it under permissive conditions.⁵ Hence they are against violating the rules of their department.

The qualitative part of research explored the tendency to show misconduct behavior and the conformity of police officers towards their department. Altogether across the study two global themes were `derived conformity and misconduct behavior. Under the global theme of conformity three major themes were recognized and under the global theme of misconduct behavior five major themes were recognized. Across the global theme of conformity discipline in force, satisfaction in colleagues performance and actions done against their will were the important subthemes. According to the participants, discipline is very important and they consider it as the existence of the police department. They will abide to their superior's instruction and follows those instructions if it is legal. They consider disobeying their superiors as ethical violation and against their rules in the department. And some participants reported that if the instructions are legal they tend to obey. The participants were not so satisfied with their colleague's performance, as there are many irresponsible police officers who misusing their role as police. And the participants reported that even if their colleagues does a mistake they try to rectify them by making aware of it, giving suggestions etc. There were actions that done against their will and at times they feel helplessness about the situations as they do not have the freedom to get control over some situations. Research stated that police department can be considered as institutionalized organization and they are street-level bureaucrats, who need to cope with common work conditions, conflicting or ambiguous department goals and who cannot control the outcomes of their work.²⁵

Across the global theme of misconduct behavior Awareness about difficulties caused to common people, Opinion on 3rd degree punishments, Role of police officers punishment in crime reduction, Abusive language in police department and Opinion on bribe were the important subthemes. The findings suggest that misconduct behavior is not predominant as in olden times. Educational qualification for the selection of police officers had change over the years and thus education has played a role in change in the practice. Gradual increase in the female police officers in the department could be the other reason for this change. The participants reported that the status of policing as a profession has increased and as it is paid well job the need for accepting bribe gets reduced. The study found that organizational and environmental factors does affect misconduct behavior and suggests that changes in rules, training and organization can control police misconduct behavior, brutality and discretionary decision took by the officers.⁹ The result indicates that currently

misconduct behavior is not in its extreme phase and it may be because of the reasons reported by the participants and also it may be because of social desirability aspect, which was not ruled out from this study.

V. CONCLUSION

The results indicate that police officers have the tendency to conform to the department. The conformity behavior among police officers could be explained by normative influence, informational influence, ingratiation, identification and internalization. The qualitative phase identified two global themes – conformity and misconduct behavior. In the former one three major themes were identified and in the latter one five major themes were identified. Most of them reported that misconduct behavior is not as pervasive as before, since the education level is much high as compared to police officers in past. As the part of discipline they conform to superiors and colleagues and follows their legal instructions. They sometimes experience helplessness while engaging in certain actions as it happens against their will and because those situations are out of their control. Sometimes as the part of official duty and as they get stressed out, they had caused some difficulties to common people. The upcoming of female police officers and educated officers had led to a decline in the usage to abusive language, and sometimes, harsh manner of converse is misinterpreted as improper language.

This study is relevant in the current scenario especially in India where the rate of occupational deviance in police department is higher than all other countries. And the public holds certain stereotype towards police officers. The results obtained from the study can be used to create awareness to the police organization on the misconduct behavior shown by police officers and the reason for such behavior. With the study findings, police integrity could be promoted and stereotype could be reduced by conducting some training programs. If conformity is strongly associated with misconduct then it poses a question to current policies on misconduct management. No policy will be effective if the state of conformity is not changed.

The limitations of the present research includes, the population for the study can further be extended in order to get more clarifications especially in the quantitative phase of this research. The social desirability factor was not ruled out from the study and hence the results could be biased. The results could not be generalized, since the study was done in a small geographical area. Since conformity does not have a standardized scale, a survey questionnaire was constructed which was validated by experts and was used in the quantitative phase and thus the actual comparison was not possible. Rank level comparison among police officers could also be done as it would be beneficial to the study. Though there are limitations, considering fewer researches that have been done in this area, the research has great implications in this current scenario.

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