

Name of the Candidate: Pushpa

Name of the Supervisor: Prof. Neelam Sukhramani

Department: Department of Social Work (UGC Centre for Advanced Studies)

Topic of Research: Gender and Women Police Officers: Exploring the Connect between the Experienced and the Expressed Gendered Definitions.

Key Words: Women Police Officers, Domestic Violence, Special Police Units, Gender Experiences and expressions, Case handling.

The Special Police Unit is one among various institutional state measures in response to increasing dowry deaths and reporting of domestic violence, primarily staffed with women police officers. The engagement of women in police and such similar set ups is based on the essentialist premise that the similar identity of being women police would help the survivors with empathetic and effective response, which would eventually facilitate gender justice in long run.

In this backdrop the present study attempted to explore the responses of women police officers to the survivors reporting matrimonial/domestic violence to these specialised police units. The attempts are made to understand the backdrop in which these women police officers respond so, by way of exploring their lived experiences within their natal, matrimonial family, at work place. It attempted to explore the connect, if any, between the experienced and the expressed gender definitions; training inputs and desired systemic responses.

The researcher opted for qualitative research methods using instrumental case study design. It allowed the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the issues and to draw inference for such similar practices and settings. The 48 women police officers were chosen through criterion sampling, using the criterion of minimum two years of case handling experience at special police units, after obtaining prior approval of the authorities and their individual informed consent.

A semi structured interview schedule was used to explore their lived experiences through interviews, to draw the gendered definitions that these officers were exposed to. And one session of case handling by each officer was observed using observation guide, to understand their key responses conveyed to survivors of domestic violence. The data was collected by

the researcher during the period from September 2012 to July 2015. After transcription and coding, data collected through interview and case observation were clubbed for each participant later for an intra case analysis to explore 'the connect'. Data was thematically analysed using the principles of grounded theory with the help of qualitative data analysis software- Atlas.ti.

The findings suggest that the connect is evident with very few exceptions as most often the officers depend on their own lived experiences to handle the reported cases, in the absence of qualitative trainings and other contributing factors. The normalisation of violence within their lives has made it difficult for them to accept the women challenging it on the other side of the table. It may be conclude that law is interpreted by way it is enforced by the officers at different levels and such subjective interpretations have serious implications on the procedures and outcomes both. The systems thus creates and recreates helplessness of the survivors, standing a chance of being perceived to be pacifying the voices of women survivors and recreating patriarchy with such flawed essentialism.