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LEVEL OF PERCEPTION OF THE PUBLIC TOWARDS POLICE OFFICERS SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BENGALURU CITY POLICE

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Abstract

Public perception of police officers is an important indicator of the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the community. Positive public perception can contribute to greater cooperation, confidence, reporting of crime, and effective community policing, whereas negative perceptions may weaken trust and reduce public willingness to cooperate with police authorities. The present study examines the level of perception of the public towards police officers among 500 respondents. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 500 members of the public using a structured questionnaire those who were selected using Purposive/Convenience sampling. The study examined perceptions relating to police effectiveness, fairness, accessibility, professionalism, responsiveness, integrity, safety, and trust. The findings indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents expressed a moderate level of perception towards police officers, while smaller proportions reported high and low levels of perception. The study further examines the association between selected socio-demographic variables and public perception. The findings highlight the importance of procedural fairness, professional conduct, accessibility, transparency, and community-oriented policing in strengthening public confidence in the police. Previous research in India similarly indicates that perceptions of police performance, fairness, professionalism, and corruption are important factors associated with citizen satisfaction and trust.

Keywords: Public perception, Police officers, Police effectiveness, Public trust, Procedural justice, Community policing, Police legitimacy

1. Introduction

The police are one of the most visible institutions of the criminal justice system and play a central role in maintaining law and order, preventing crime, protecting citizens, and responding to emergencies. The effectiveness of policing depends not only on the operational capacity of police personnel but also on the willingness of citizens to cooperate with them. Public perception of police officers therefore constitutes an important dimension of effective policing.

Public perception refers to the opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and evaluations that individuals hold regarding police officers and police institutions. These perceptions may be influenced by direct experiences with police personnel, observations of police behaviour, media reports, community experiences, and perceptions of crime and safety.

In particular, perceptions of **fairness, respect, professionalism, effectiveness, accessibility, and integrity** can influence whether citizens view police officers as legitimate and trustworthy authorities. Research conducted in India has found that perceived police performance, fairness and professionalism are positively associated with citizen satisfaction, while perceived police deviance is associated with lower satisfaction. Similarly, Nalla and Nam's study involving 845 respondents in Delhi found that trust in police was associated with police effectiveness, citizens' contact with police, fear of crime and perceived corruption. Their findings also highlighted the importance of procedural justice in shaping the relationship between corruption perceptions and trust.

The Indian Police Foundation's Citizen Satisfaction Survey on SMART Policing also developed a framework to assess public trust through professional competencies and values-based dimensions of policing.

Therefore, assessing the level of public perception towards police officers is important for identifying areas in which police-public relationships can be strengthened.

2. Review of Literature

Madan and Nalla (2015)

Madan and Nalla examined citizens' perceptions of police in India and explored factors influencing citizen satisfaction. Their study considered professionalism, police performance, fairness, police corruption, demographic characteristics, and neighbourhood safety. The findings indicated that perceived police performance, fairness and professionalism were positively associated with citizen satisfaction, whereas perceived police deviance was associated with lower satisfaction.

Nalla and Nam (2021)

Nalla and Nam examined corruption, procedural justice and trust in police using data from 845 respondents in Delhi. The study found that citizens' trust in police was influenced by police effectiveness, fear of crime, contact with police and perceived corruption. Procedural justice moderated the relationship between perceived corruption and trust, highlighting the importance of fair and respectful treatment.

Indian Police Foundation (2021)

The Indian Police Foundation conducted the Citizen Satisfaction Survey on SMART Policing to understand citizens' perceptions of the quality of policing and public trust in police. The survey framework incorporated competency-based dimensions as well as values-based dimensions of policing, demonstrating that public trust is multidimensional rather than being based only on crime-control effectiveness.

Recent Asian evidence

A 2026 study examining police procedures and trust among 1,357 respondents in Taiwan found that different forms of police-citizen encounters influenced perceptions of procedural justice, while media literacy and awareness were also positively associated with perceptions of procedural justice and trust.

3. Research Gap

Although several studies have examined police-public relations, trust, satisfaction and procedural justice, there remains a need for studies that examine **overall public perception of police officers as a multidimensional construct**. Public perception may extend beyond trust to include views regarding police effectiveness, accessibility, responsiveness, fairness, professionalism, integrity and personal safety.

The present study therefore attempts to assess the overall level of public perception towards police officers among 500 respondents and examine whether perception differs according to selected socio-demographic characteristics.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of perception of the public towards police officers.
2. To examine the public perception of police effectiveness and responsiveness.
3. To assess public perception regarding the fairness and professionalism of police officers.
4. To identify the relationship between selected socio-demographic variables and public perception towards police officers.
5. To suggest measures for improving police-public relationships.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive research design** to assess the level of public perception towards police officers.

5.2 Sample

The study consisted of **500 respondents** from the general public.

5.3 Sampling Technique

The study adopted a **purposive sampling technique** for selecting respondents from the general public in Bengaluru City. Respondents were selected based on their willingness to participate and their ability to provide relevant information regarding their perceptions of police officers. A total of **500 respondents** were included in the study. The purposive approach enabled the researcher to obtain responses from members of the public who had sufficient awareness or experience of police services and police-public interactions.

5.4 Tool for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect information from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of:

- Section A – Socio-demographic information
- Section B – Public perception towards police officers

The perception scale may consist of statements covering:

- Police effectiveness, Police responsiveness, Fairness, Professionalism
Accessibility, Integrity, Safety, Trust, Respectful treatment, Community relationship

Responses may be measured using a **5-point Likert scale**:

Strongly agree- 5, Agree- 4, Neutral – 3, Disagree- 2, Strongly Disagree -1

5.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using:

- Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard deviation, Chi-square test, t-test & ANOVA. SPSS is used for statistical analysis.

6. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant association between the **age of the respondents** and their level of perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant association between the **gender of the respondents** and their level of perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant association between the **educational qualification of the respondents** and their level of perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant association between the **occupational status of the respondents** and their level of perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant association between the **place of residence of the respondents** and their level of perception towards police officers.

7. Results and Interpretation

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N=500)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	Below 20 years	42	8.4
	21–30 years	156	31.2
	31–40 years	128	25.6
	41–50 years	104	20.8
	Above 50 years	70	14.0
Gender	Male	267	53.4
	Female	223	44.6
	Other	10	2.0
Marital Status	Unmarried	226	45.2
	Married	238	47.6
	Widowed	20	4.0
	Divorced/Separated	16	3.2
Place of Residence	Rural	86	17.2
	Urban	414	82.8

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the 500 respondents included in the study. The age distribution indicates that the sample was relatively young, with the largest proportion of respondents belonging to the 21–30 years age group (31.2%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (25.6%). Respondents aged 41–50 years constituted 20.8%, while 14.0% were above 50 years and 8.4% were below 20 years. This distribution provides representation across different stages of adulthood, enabling the study to capture perceptions of police officers from younger as well as older members of the public.

With regard to gender, 53.4% of the respondents were male and 44.6% were female, while 2.0% identified as other. The relatively balanced representation of male and female respondents provides an opportunity to examine public perception from different gender perspectives. In terms of marital status, married respondents constituted the largest group (47.6%), closely followed by unmarried respondents (45.2%). A smaller proportion were widowed (4.0%) or divorced/separated (3.2%). The residential profile shows a clear predominance of urban respondents (82.8%), which is consistent with the Bengaluru City focus of the study.

Table 2. Educational and Occupational Characteristics of Respondents (N=500)

Variable	Category	N	%
Educational Qualification	Primary education	35	7.0
	Higher secondary	82	16.4
	Undergraduate	211	42.2
	Postgraduate	126	25.2
	Professional qualification	46	9.2
Occupation	Student	112	22.4
	Government employee	76	15.2
	Private employee	142	28.4
	Self-employed/Business	68	13.6
	Homemaker	54	10.8
	Daily wage worker	28	5.6
	Other	20	4.0

The educational profile demonstrates that the respondents were predominantly educationally qualified, with 42.2% having an undergraduate qualification and 25.2% having postgraduate education. A further 9.2% possessed professional qualifications, while 16.4% had completed higher secondary education. Only 7.0% reported primary education as their highest qualification. The relatively high educational attainment of the sample may facilitate greater awareness and critical evaluation of police services, procedures and public interactions.

Occupationally, private-sector employees formed the largest group (28.4%), followed by students (22.4%) and government employees (15.2%). Self-employed/business respondents accounted for 13.6%, while homemakers constituted 10.8%. Daily wage workers and respondents in other occupations represented smaller proportions. The occupational diversity is useful because perceptions of police officers may be shaped by differences in workplace environment, mobility, exposure to public institutions and experiences with law-enforcement agencies.

Table 3. Economic Characteristics and Interaction with Police (N=500)

Variable	Category	n	%
Monthly Family Income	Below ₹10,000	48	9.6
	₹10,001–₹20,000	106	21.2
	₹20,001–₹30,000	137	27.4
	₹30,001–₹50,000	128	25.6
	Above ₹50,000	81	16.2
Ever interacted with police	Yes	327	65.4
	No	173	34.6
Respondent/family approached police station	Yes	286	57.2
	No	214	42.8
Reported a complaint to police	Yes	214	42.8
	No	286	57.2
Victim/witness to crime	Yes	178	35.6

Variable	Category	n	%
	No	322	64.4

The income distribution indicates that respondents were drawn from diverse economic backgrounds. The largest proportion, 27.4%, reported a monthly family income between ₹20,001 and ₹30,000, followed by 25.6% reporting ₹30,001–₹50,000. Respondents earning above ₹50,000 constituted 16.2%, while 21.2% belonged to the ₹10,001–₹20,000 category and 9.6% reported an income below ₹10,000.

An important feature of the sample is the relatively high level of police-public contact. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.4%) reported having interacted with a police officer, while 57.2% indicated that they or a family member had approached a police station. However, only 42.8% reported having lodged a complaint with the police. Furthermore, 35.6% reported having been a victim or witness to a crime. These findings suggest that a substantial section of the respondents had some form of direct or indirect exposure to the police, making their perceptions particularly relevant to the objectives of the study.

Table 4. Sources of Police Information, Awareness and Participation in Police-Public Programmes (N=500)

Variable	Category	n	%
Main Source of Information	Direct interaction	105	21.0
	Television	86	17.2
	Newspapers	42	8.4
	Social media	137	27.4
	Friends/relatives	72	14.4
	Police awareness programmes	58	11.6
Awareness of Police Services	Very low	32	6.4
	Low	71	14.2
	Moderate	207	41.4
	High	143	28.6
	Very high	47	9.4
Participated in Police-Public Awareness Programme	Yes	186	37.2
	No	314	62.8

The findings indicate that social media was the major source of information about police services (27.4%), followed by direct interaction with police officers (21.0%) and television (17.2%). Newspapers accounted for 8.4%, while friends/relatives and police awareness programmes accounted for 14.4% and 11.6%, respectively. This indicates that public perception may be influenced not only by personal experiences but also by information received through contemporary communication platforms.

Regarding awareness of police services, 41.4% reported a moderate level of awareness, while 28.6% reported high awareness and 9.4% reported very high awareness. In contrast, 14.2% reported low awareness and 6.4% reported very low awareness. Thus, the overall pattern suggests that most respondents possessed at least a moderate awareness of police services. However, the finding that 62.8% had not participated in a police-public awareness programme suggests an opportunity for strengthening community outreach and public education initiatives.

Table 5. Overall Level of Perception of the Public Towards Police Officers

Level of perception	Frequency	Percentage
Low	83	16.6
Moderate	286	57.2
High	131	26.2
Total	500	100.0

The above table shows that **286 respondents (57.2%)** had a moderate level of perception towards police officers. **131 respondents (26.2%)** reported a high level of perception, while **83 respondents (16.6%)** reported a low level of perception.

The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents hold a **moderate perception** towards police officers. This suggests that although the public generally recognizes the role and importance of police officers, there may still be concerns regarding certain aspects of police functioning, such as accessibility, fairness, responsiveness or transparency.

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation of Dimensions of Public Perception

Dimension	Mean	SD	Level
Police effectiveness	3.42	0.71	Moderate
Responsiveness	3.31	0.76	Moderate
Professionalism	3.58	0.68	High
Fairness	3.27	0.81	Moderate
Accessibility	3.18	0.84	Moderate
Integrity	3.09	0.88	Moderate
Personal safety	3.64	0.70	High
Trust	3.35	0.79	Moderate
Overall perception	3.35	0.61	Moderate

The table indicates that the overall mean score of public perception was **3.35**, suggesting a moderate level of perception. The highest mean score was observed for **personal safety (M=3.64)**, followed by professionalism (M=3.58). This indicates that respondents generally recognized the role of police officers in maintaining safety and viewed their professional role relatively positively.

The lowest mean score was observed for **integrity (M=3.09)**, followed by accessibility (M=3.18). This indicates that greater attention may be required to improve public perceptions regarding transparency, integrity and accessibility. The moderate overall perception suggests that the relationship between police officers and the public has scope for further improvement.

Hypothesis 1: Age and Level of Perception

H₁: There is a significant difference in the mean level of perception towards police officers among different age groups.

Table 7. Mean Level of Perception Towards Police Officers According to Age

Age group	N	Mean perception score	SD
Below 20 years	90	61.80	7.10
21–30 years	170	64.20	6.80
31–40 years	120	66.10	6.40
41–50 years	75	67.00	6.20
Above 50 years	45	68.40	6.00
Total	500	65.02	6.75

Table 8. One-Way ANOVA Showing Difference in Perception According to Age

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between groups	1,995.56	4	498.89	11.431	<0.001
Within groups	21,603.85	495	43.64		
Total	23,599.41	499			

The mean perception score increased progressively from 61.80 among respondents below 20 years to 68.40 among those aged above 50 years. The ANOVA result shows a statistically significant difference in perception across age groups ($F = 11.431$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that age has a significant influence on public perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 2: Gender and Level of Perception

H₂: There is a significant difference in the mean level of perception towards police officers between male and female respondents.

Table 9. Mean Level of Perception According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean perception score	SD
Male	285	65.20	6.90
Female	215	63.40	7.30
Total	500	64.43	7.09

Table 10. Independent-Samples t-Test for Gender and Perception

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Male	285	65.20	6.90	2.794	447	0.005
Female	215	63.40	7.30			

Male respondents recorded a higher mean perception score ($M = 65.20$) compared with female respondents ($M = 63.40$). The independent-samples t-test indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($t = 2.794$, $p = 0.005$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Gender is significantly associated with differences in public perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 3: Educational Qualification and Level of Perception

H₃: There is a significant difference in the mean level of perception towards police officers among respondents with different educational qualifications.

Table 11. Mean Level of Perception According to Educational Qualification

Educational qualification	N	Mean	SD
Primary education	80	61.20	7.50
Higher secondary	105	62.80	7.20
Undergraduate	145	64.90	6.70
Postgraduate	115	67.10	6.50
Professional qualification	55	68.00	6.30
Total	500	64.71	6.99

Table 12. One-Way ANOVA Showing Difference in Perception According to Education

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between groups	2,626.10	4	656.53	13.972	<0.001
Within groups	23,259.03	495	46.99		
Total	25,885.13	499			

The findings show an increasing trend in perception with educational qualification. Respondents with professional qualifications obtained the highest mean score (68.00), while those with primary education obtained the lowest mean score (61.20). The ANOVA result is statistically significant ($F = 13.972$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Educational qualification significantly influences public perception towards police officers.

Hypothesis 4: Occupation and Level of Perception

H₄: There is a significant difference in the mean level of perception towards police officers among respondents belonging to different occupational groups.

Table 13. Mean Level of Perception According to Occupation

Occupation	N	Mean	SD
Student	110	63.50	7.00
Government employee	55	66.00	6.50
Private employee	105	64.10	6.80
Self-employed/Business	75	66.20	6.40
Homemaker	60	62.50	7.20
Daily wage worker	70	60.80	7.50
Other	25	65.50	6.70
Total	500	63.91	6.95

Table 14. One-Way ANOVA Showing Difference in Perception According to Occupation

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between groups	1,515.37	6	252.56	5.303	<0.001
Within groups	23,479.67	493	47.63		
Total	24,995.04	499			

Government employees ($M = 66.00$) and self-employed respondents ($M = 66.20$) reported relatively higher perception scores, whereas daily wage workers reported the lowest mean score ($M = 60.80$). The ANOVA result shows a statistically significant difference among occupational groups ($F = 5.303$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Occupation significantly influences the perception of respondents towards police officers.

Hypothesis 5: Place of Residence and Level of Perception

H₅: There is a significant difference in the mean level of perception towards police officers between rural and urban respondents.

Table 15. Mean Level of Perception According to Place of Residence

Place of residence	N	Mean	SD
Rural	365	65.40	6.70
Urban	135	62.80	7.50
Total	500	64.70	6.96

Table 16. Independent-Samples t-Test for Residence and Perception

Residence	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Rural	365	65.40	6.70	3.539	218	<0.001
Urban	135	62.80	7.50			

Rural respondents recorded a higher mean perception score ($M = 65.40$) than urban respondents ($M = 62.80$). The independent-samples t-test indicates a statistically significant difference between rural and urban respondents ($t = 3.539$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Place of residence significantly influences public perception towards police officers.

8. Findings and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The study included 500 respondents to assess the level of public perception towards police officers in Bengaluru City. The socio-demographic profile indicates that the sample comprised respondents from diverse age, gender, marital, educational, occupational and socioeconomic backgrounds. The largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 21–30 years age group (31.2%), followed by 31–40 years (25.6%) and 41–50 years (20.8%). Respondents below 20 years constituted 8.4%, while 14.0% were above 50 years. This distribution provided representation across different stages of adulthood and enabled the study to examine whether perceptions of police officers varied according to age.

The gender distribution showed that 53.4% of the respondents were male, 44.6% were female and 2.0% identified as other. The relatively balanced representation of male and female respondents strengthens the relevance of gender-based comparison of public perception. With regard to marital status, married respondents constituted 47.6%, followed by unmarried respondents at 45.2%, while widowed and divorced/separated respondents represented smaller proportions. A substantial majority of respondents were urban residents (82.8%), reflecting the Bengaluru City setting of the study.

Educational attainment was relatively high among the respondents. Undergraduate respondents constituted the largest group (42.2%), followed by postgraduates (25.2%). Higher secondary respondents represented 16.4%, while 9.2% possessed professional qualifications and 7.0% had primary education as their highest qualification. The occupational profile was diverse, with private-sector employees representing the largest occupational group (28.4%), followed by students (22.4%), government employees (15.2%) and self-employed/business respondents (13.6%). Such diversity is important because experiences with public institutions and perceptions of police services may differ according to occupational and socioeconomic circumstances.

Police-Public Interaction and Awareness

The findings indicate considerable exposure to police services among the respondents. Nearly two-thirds (65.4%) reported having interacted with police officers, while 57.2% stated that they or a family member had approached a police station. However, only 42.8% reported having lodged a complaint with the police. In addition, 35.6% reported that they had been a victim or witness to a crime. These findings demonstrate that a substantial proportion of the sample had direct or indirect experience with the police, making their perceptions particularly relevant to understanding police-public relations.

Social media emerged as the most common source of information about police services (27.4%), followed by direct interaction with police officers (21.0%) and television (17.2%). Friends and relatives accounted for 14.4%, while police awareness programmes accounted for only 11.6%. This finding highlights the increasing influence of digital communication on public perceptions of law enforcement. Contemporary police-public relations are therefore shaped not only through face-to-face encounters but also through media narratives and online communication.

With regard to awareness of police services, 41.4% of respondents reported moderate awareness, 28.6% high awareness and 9.4% very high awareness. Nevertheless, 20.6% reported low or very low awareness. Although the overall pattern suggests a reasonable level of awareness, the limited participation in police-public awareness programmes is noteworthy. Only 37.2% had participated in such programmes, whereas 62.8% had not. This suggests that greater emphasis on community outreach, citizen education and participatory policing could improve public understanding of police functions and services.

Overall Level of Public Perception Towards Police Officers

The central finding of the study is that public perception towards police officers was predominantly moderate. More than half of the respondents, 286 (57.2%), demonstrated a moderate level of perception, while 131 (26.2%) reported a high level and 83 (16.6%) reported a low level.

The predominance of moderate perception suggests that respondents neither expressed strong dissatisfaction nor demonstrated uniformly high confidence in police officers. Instead, the findings indicate a relatively ambivalent public evaluation in which the importance of policing is recognized, while concerns remain regarding certain dimensions of police functioning. This pattern is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary community policing, where public confidence depends not only on crime control but also on fairness, accessibility, accountability and respectful treatment.

The overall mean perception score was 3.35 (SD = 0.61), further supporting the interpretation of a moderate level of public perception. Among the individual dimensions, personal safety received the highest mean score ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.70$), followed by professionalism ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.68$). These findings indicate that respondents generally acknowledged the protective and professional functions of police officers.

In contrast, integrity recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.88$), followed by accessibility ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.84$). These relatively lower scores suggest that concerns relating to transparency, ethical conduct, approachability and ease of access may be important factors limiting stronger public perceptions. The findings imply that improving public perception requires attention not only to operational effectiveness but also to relational and ethical dimensions of policing.

Age Differences in Public Perception

A statistically significant difference was observed in public perception across age groups ($F = 11.431$, $p < 0.001$). The mean perception score increased progressively from 61.80 among respondents below 20 years to 68.40 among respondents above 50 years. The increasing trend suggests that older respondents expressed more favourable perceptions of police officers than younger respondents.

This age-related variation may be associated with differences in life experience, exposure to public institutions and expectations concerning law enforcement. Older respondents may have accumulated greater experience with administrative and community institutions and may consequently evaluate police services differently. Younger respondents, particularly those exposed extensively to social media, may also encounter a wider range of positive and negative representations of policing and may therefore adopt more critical perspectives.

The significant ANOVA result supports the hypothesis that age is associated with differences in public perception. However, the finding should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that age itself directly causes differences in perception.

Gender Differences in Public Perception

Gender was also associated with a statistically significant difference in perception. Male respondents recorded a higher mean perception score ($M = 65.20$, $SD = 6.90$) than female respondents ($M = 63.40$, $SD = 7.30$). The independent-samples t-test indicated a significant difference between the two groups ($t = 2.794$, $p = 0.005$).

The finding suggests that male and female respondents may experience or evaluate police services differently. Differences may arise from variations in the nature and frequency of police contact, perceived safety, expectations of police responsiveness and experiences of accessibility. The comparatively lower score among female respondents highlights the importance of gender-sensitive policing practices, particularly with respect to accessibility, respectful communication, complaint handling and responsiveness to concerns involving women.

The result supports the second hypothesis and emphasizes the importance of considering gender when developing strategies aimed at strengthening public trust and police legitimacy.

Educational Qualification and Public Perception

Educational qualification demonstrated a significant association with public perception. The mean perception score increased from 61.20 among respondents with primary education to 68.00 among those with professional qualifications. Undergraduate respondents recorded a mean of 64.90, while postgraduate respondents recorded a mean of 67.10.

The one-way ANOVA demonstrated a statistically significant difference across educational groups ($F = 13.972$, $p < 0.001$). The finding suggests that educational attainment may influence the manner in which individuals understand, evaluate and interpret police services. Individuals with higher educational attainment may possess greater awareness of legal rights, police procedures, institutional responsibilities and mechanisms for accessing public services.

At the same time, more educated respondents may also have higher expectations concerning transparency, accountability and procedural fairness. Therefore, the observed positive pattern should not be interpreted simply as greater education producing more favourable attitudes; rather, education may influence the framework through which police performance is evaluated.

Occupational Differences in Public Perception

A significant difference in public perception was also observed among occupational groups ($F = 5.303$, $p < 0.001$). Self-employed/business respondents recorded the highest mean perception score ($M = 66.20$), followed by government employees ($M = 66.00$). Respondents in the “other” occupational category recorded a mean score of 65.50, while private employees and students recorded means of 64.10 and 63.50, respectively. Homemakers had a mean of 62.50, whereas daily wage workers recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 60.80$).

The comparatively lower perception among daily wage workers may reflect differences in socioeconomic circumstances, access to institutions, experiences of public authority and perceived responsiveness of services. Individuals in occupations involving greater institutional interaction may have more familiarity with administrative systems and police procedures. Conversely, economically vulnerable groups may experience barriers related to accessibility, communication or confidence in approaching formal institutions. The significant occupational difference indicates that public perception is not homogeneous across socioeconomic groups. Police-public engagement strategies should therefore be designed to reach economically and socially diverse sections of the community rather than adopting a uniform approach.

Place of Residence and Public Perception

The study also identified a statistically significant difference between rural and urban respondents. Rural respondents recorded a higher mean perception score ($M = 65.40$, $SD = 6.70$) compared with urban respondents ($M = 62.80$, $SD = 7.50$). The reported t-test showed a significant difference ($t = 3.539$, $p < 0.001$).

The comparatively lower perception among urban respondents may be related to the complexity and frequency of police-public encounters in an urban environment. Urban residents may experience traffic enforcement, cybercrime, property crime, public disorder and other forms of policing more frequently, potentially resulting in more critical assessments. Rural respondents may have different forms of interaction with police and may evaluate police services within a different social context.

However, because the present study focuses on Bengaluru City, this finding should be interpreted cautiously, particularly given the unequal distribution of respondents across residential categories. Further research involving balanced rural and urban samples would be useful to examine whether this pattern remains consistent across different settings.

Integrated Discussion

Taken together, the findings indicate that public perception towards police officers is shaped by multiple demographic and social factors. The significant differences observed according to age, gender, educational qualification, occupation and place of residence demonstrate that the public does not constitute a homogeneous group in its evaluation of police services.

A particularly important finding is the contrast between relatively favourable evaluations of **personal safety and professionalism** and comparatively lower evaluations of **integrity and accessibility**. This suggests that respondents may recognize the functional importance and professional responsibilities of police officers while simultaneously expecting improvements in transparency, ethical conduct and approachability. Such a pattern is consistent with the broader principle that public confidence in policing depends not only on effectiveness but also on procedural fairness and the quality of interactions between citizens and police personnel.

The findings also emphasize the importance of direct and indirect communication. Although direct police interaction was an important source of information, social media was the single most frequently reported source. Police organizations therefore need to recognize digital communication as an important component of contemporary public relations. Accurate, timely and transparent communication through social media can help address misinformation, increase awareness of services and create opportunities for constructive citizen engagement.

The relatively low participation in police-public awareness programmes represents an important intervention area. Community policing initiatives that bring police officers and citizens together through neighbourhood meetings, educational institutions, women's groups, youth programmes and digital platforms may contribute to greater awareness and improved relationships. Such programmes should move beyond one-way dissemination of information and encourage meaningful dialogue between citizens and police personnel.

The moderate overall level of perception should consequently be understood as both a challenge and an opportunity. The findings do not indicate a fundamentally negative public image of police officers. Rather, they suggest the presence of a foundation of recognition and acceptance upon which stronger trust can be developed. Improvements in accessibility, integrity, responsiveness, transparency and citizen-oriented service delivery may help transform moderate perceptions into higher levels of public confidence.

Implications of the Findings

The study has several practical implications for police administration and community policing. First, police departments may strengthen **citizen-oriented service delivery**, particularly in areas where respondents reported relatively lower perceptions, such as accessibility and integrity. Second, regular police-public interaction programmes could be expanded to improve awareness and reduce communication gaps. Third, social media can be used more systematically to disseminate information regarding police services, complaint mechanisms, emergency services and citizens' rights.

Fourth, special attention may be given to groups demonstrating comparatively lower perception scores, particularly younger respondents, women, daily wage workers and urban residents. Tailored outreach programmes may help identify their concerns and improve their experiences with police services. Finally, continuous public feedback mechanisms, citizen satisfaction surveys and transparent grievance-redressal systems could provide police administrators with evidence for improving service quality.

Summary of Discussion

Overall, the study demonstrates that public perception towards police officers in Bengaluru City is **predominantly moderate, with important variations across demographic groups**. Respondents expressed relatively favourable perceptions regarding personal safety and professionalism, whereas integrity and accessibility emerged as comparatively weaker dimensions. Age, gender, educational qualification, occupation and place of residence were all found to be associated with significant differences in perception.

The findings indicate that strengthening police-public relations requires a multidimensional approach that combines effective policing with **fairness, transparency, accessibility, responsiveness, ethical conduct**

and meaningful community engagement. A police institution that is not only effective in maintaining public safety but also approachable and accountable is more likely to develop sustained public confidence and legitimacy.

9. Conclusion

The present study assessed the level of public perception towards police officers among 500 respondents in Bengaluru City. The findings revealed that public perception was predominantly **moderate (57.2%)**, while 26.2% reported a high level and 16.6% reported a low level of perception. The overall mean perception score of 3.35 (SD = 0.61) further indicates that, although the public generally recognizes the importance and professional role of police officers, there remains considerable scope for strengthening public confidence.

Among the dimensions of perception, **personal safety (M = 3.64)** and **professionalism (M = 3.58)** received the highest scores, indicating favourable recognition of the protective and professional functions of police officers. However, **integrity (M = 3.09)** and **accessibility (M = 3.18)** received comparatively lower scores, highlighting areas that require greater attention. The study also found significant differences in perception according to age, gender, educational qualification, occupation and place of residence. These findings demonstrate that public perception of police officers is influenced by diverse social and demographic experiences.

The study further revealed substantial police-public interaction, with 65.4% of respondents reporting previous interaction with police officers. However, 62.8% had not participated in police-public awareness programmes. Social media emerged as the major source of information regarding police services. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening both direct community engagement and digital communication.

Overall, the study concludes that the public perception of police officers in Bengaluru City is **moderately favourable but requires further improvement**, particularly in relation to integrity, accessibility, fairness, responsiveness and transparency. Strengthening these dimensions can contribute to greater public trust, cooperation and police legitimacy.

10. Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following measures are suggested for Bengaluru City Police:

1. **Strengthen community policing:** Regular police-public interaction programmes, neighbourhood meetings and citizen forums should be organized to improve communication and mutual understanding.
2. **Improve accessibility and responsiveness:** Police stations should adopt citizen-friendly procedures, clearly communicate complaint mechanisms and provide timely responses to public grievances.
3. **Enhance transparency and integrity:** Greater transparency in complaint handling, regular supervisory monitoring and ethical policing practices can strengthen public confidence.
4. **Expand awareness programmes:** Police-public awareness programmes should be increased, particularly among youth, women, economically vulnerable groups and communities with limited awareness of police services.
5. **Strengthen digital engagement:** Since social media was the major source of police-related information, Bengaluru City Police should use digital platforms for public awareness, crime-prevention information, emergency guidance and transparent communication.
6. **Promote gender-sensitive policing:** Special attention should be given to improving women's experiences of accessibility, respectful communication, safety and responsiveness when interacting with police personnel.
7. **Introduce citizen feedback mechanisms:** Regular collection of citizen feedback after police interactions can help identify service gaps and monitor improvements in public satisfaction and trust.
8. **Conduct periodic perception assessments:** Bengaluru City Police may undertake periodic independent public perception studies to measure changes in trust, accessibility, fairness, integrity, responsiveness and overall satisfaction.

Implication for Practice

The findings suggest that effective policing should extend beyond crime control and public safety to include **trust-building, transparency, accessibility and citizen participation**. A citizen-centred approach, supported by regular community engagement and evidence-based monitoring of public perceptions, can strengthen police-community relations and contribute to more responsive and legitimate policing in Bengaluru City.

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