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Research Article

# Police Reforms in India with a Focus on Punjab

## Shubham Sehgal

ABSTRACT

The Indian police system has long been governed by the colonial-era Police Act of 1861, which was designed for maintaining control rather than serving citizens in a democratic setup. Despite numerous recommendations, including the Punjab Police Act of 2007, like many other states, has struggled to implement comprehensive police reforms. The Ribeiro Committee (1998), Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000), and Supreme Court directives in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006) have all highlighted the urgent need for changes in police autonomy, accountability, and professionalism. Punjab faces unique challenges such as political interference, drug trafficking, organized crime, human rights concerns, and inadequate modernization. To understand these issues at a ground level, a field survey of 100 police officials from Constable to SSP ranks in SAS Nagar, Punjab, was conducted using the random sampling method. The findings indicate systemic issues related to workload, corruption, lack of training and outdated policing methods. This paper critically examines these challenges and proposes structural, operational and technological reforms to build an efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly police force in Punjab.

## Introduction

Policing in India, including Punjab, remains largely shaped by its colonial legacy. The Police Act, 1861, introduced by the British after the Revolt of 1857, established a centralized and politically controlled police force designed more for maintaining authority than for serving citizens in a democratic setup (Government of India, 1861). Even after independence, this structure remained largely intact, leading to persistent issues such as political interference, lack of autonomy, outdated investigation methods, and inadequate accountability mechanisms. Recognizing these challenges, the Punjab Police Act of 2007 was proposed to modernize and professionalize policing in India. However, Punjab has yet to fully implement these reforms, leaving many structural and operational inefficiencies unresolved. Punjab's unique socio-political landscape has further complicated policing. The insurgency of the 1980s and early 1990s left a lasting impact on law enforcement, with an emphasis on counterterrorism operations (Gill, 1997). While this approach was effective in restoring stability, it also led to allegations of human rights violations and a strained relationship between the public and police. In the post-insurgency era, Punjab has faced new policing challenges, including rising drug abuse, organized crime, cybercrime and political interference. The drug trafficking crisis, in particular, has placed immense pressure on law enforcement, exposing gaps in intelligence gathering, investigative capabilities and internal accountability (NCB, 2023).

Despite various judicial interventions, including the Supreme Court's landmark directives in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (Supreme Court of India, 2006). Punjab has struggled to implement significant reforms. Political interference continues to influence police appointments and operations, while outdated training programs and inadequate resources hinder effective law enforcement. The need for technological modernization, independent oversight, and community-oriented policing has become increasingly evident in the face of evolving crime patterns and public expectations. Furthermore, policing in Punjab is often reactive rather than preventive, with officers overburdened by administrative tasks and law-and-order duties. The lack of specialized units for cybercrime, forensic investigations, and community

**Author Address:** Ph.D. Research Scholar, department of Public Administration, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India.

policing has reduced the efficiency of the force in tackling modern-day challenges (NCRB, 2022). Additionally, concerns regarding police welfare, excessive working hours, stress, and lack of career progression contribute to declining morale within the force. Addressing these structural inefficiencies through policy-driven reforms, better resource allocation, and modern training techniques is crucial for building a professional, accountable, and citizen-friendly Punjab Police. This paper critically examines the historical evolution, structural challenges, and reform efforts within the Punjab Police and presents a roadmap for much-needed transformation.

## Review of Literature

### 1. David H. Bayley (1983) – Colonial Legacy and Indian Policing

Bayley's seminal work, Police and Political Development in India, examines how the Police Act, 1861 shaped India's policing system. He argues that the colonial police structure prioritized state control over public service, a legacy that continues to affect modern police functioning. Bayley highlights that the Indian police remain hierarchical, militarized and oriented toward maintaining order rather than serving citizens. His research also emphasizes the need for fundamental structural changes to transform policing into a democratic and community-focused institution. Additionally, Bayley compares policing models worldwide and suggests that India can benefit from adopting decentralized and citizen-friendly policing practices. (Bayley, 1983).

### 2. Arvind Verma (2005) – Structural Issues in Indian Policing

In The Indian Police: A Critical Evaluation, Verma critiques the centralized and bureaucratic nature of Indian police forces. He highlights issues such as lack of autonomy, accountability deficits and the politicization of policing. Verma argues that excessive control by the executive weakens operational efficiency and prevents the police from acting independently in law enforcement. He also examines the gaps in police training, recruitment and the investigative process, emphasizing the need for evidence-based policing and modern crime-solving techniques. His research underscores that meaningful reform requires both legislative changes and cultural transformation within the police force. Additionally, Verma advocates for adopting best practices from international policing models, such as decentralized decision-making and community engagement, to enhance public trust and police legitimacy in India. (Verma, 2005).

### 3. K.S. Subramanian (2007) – Political Influence and Police Governance

Subramanian, in Political Violence and the Police in India, examines how political interference weakens police autonomy and undermines law enforcement efficiency. He argues that the police in India have historically been used as an instrument of state power rather than an independent agency for maintaining law and order. His research highlights how political patronage influences police recruitment, promotions and transfers, leading to a lack of professionalism and accountability. Subramanian also critiques the failure of successive governments to implement police reforms, despite recommendations from various committees. He emphasizes that without institutional safeguards, police officers often find themselves caught between political pressures and their duty to uphold the law. Furthermore, he underscores the need for an independent oversight mechanism to ensure that law enforcement operates without undue political influence and in alignment with democratic principles. His work is particularly relevant to states like Punjab, where political interference has significantly impacted policing effectiveness. (Subramanian, 2007).

### 4. Prakash Singh (2008) – Supreme Court-Directed Police Reforms

Prakash Singh, a former Director General of Police (DGP) and the petitioner in the landmark Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006) case, has extensively written about the urgent need for police reforms in India. In his book India's Police: Reform and Reorganization, he highlights how the Indian police force remains structurally and functionally outdated, heavily influenced by colonial-era practices that prioritize control over public service. He argues that political interference in police operations, frequent arbitrary transfers and lack of a fixed tenure for senior officers have led to inefficiency, corruption and poor morale within the force. Singh's work details the Supreme Court's seven directives aimed at ensuring police autonomy, professionalism and accountability.

He particularly emphasizes the need for a State Security Commission to reduce political interference, the separation of law enforcement and investigative functions and the establishment of independent Police Complaints Authorities at the state and district levels. His research underscores that while judicial interventions have provided a roadmap for reform, the lack of political will and resistance from vested interests continue to stall meaningful changes. Singh's advocacy for a modern, independent and citizen-friendly police force makes his work an essential reference for discussions on police governance in India, including in Punjab, where many of these challenges persist. (Singh, 2008).

## 5. Vikram Chand (2010) – Governance and Police Modernization

Vikram Chand, in Reinventing Public Service Delivery in India, examines the challenges of governance and the urgent need for modernization in the Indian police system. He argues that police reforms should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a broader framework of administrative and governance reforms. Chand highlights those inefficiencies in policing stem from outdated procedures, bureaucratic delays and the lack of technological integration. His research emphasizes the importance of capacity building, professional training and community engagement in creating an effective and accountable police force. Chand also discusses the role of e-governance and digital tools in transforming law enforcement, advocating for the adoption of modern investigation techniques, data-driven policing and the use of forensic science in criminal investigations. His work is particularly relevant for states like Punjab, where technological advancements in policing, such as the Punjab Artificial Intelligence System (PAIS), can improve efficiency and transparency. Chand's research aligns with global best practices, showing how developed nations have successfully integrated technology and governance reforms to enhance law enforcement capabilities. He concludes that without systemic changes in governance, any attempt at police reform will remain superficial and ineffective. (Chand, 2010).

## 6. N. Prabha Unnithan (2013) – Comparative Perspectives on Indian Police Reforms

N. Prabha Unnithan, in Crime and Justice in India, provides a comprehensive analysis of police reforms by comparing India's law enforcement system with global policing models. He argues that while India has undertaken several reform initiatives, including recommendations from committees like the National Police Commission (1977–81) and the Supreme Court's directives in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006), the actual implementation remains weak due to systemic resistance and lack of political will. Unnithan emphasizes that police accountability, professionalism and community-oriented policing are essential for modern law enforcement. He highlights those countries like the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States have successfully implemented independent police oversight mechanisms, which have led to greater public trust and reduced instances of misconduct.

He suggests that India can benefit from adopting similar models, particularly through independent police complaints commissions, better training programs and technological advancements in crime detection and prevention. In the context of Punjab, Unnithan's research is particularly relevant as the state faces drug-related crimes, organized crime and human rights concerns, all of which require a modernized and transparent police system. He concludes that without a shift in governance structures and stronger accountability mechanisms, police reforms in India will remain largely superficial and ineffective. (Unnithan, 2013).

## 7. Ajay K. Mehra (2014) – Challenges in Implementing Police Reforms

Ajay K. Mehra, in Police Reforms in India: An Analytical Study, provides an in-depth examination of the historical and contemporary challenges in reforming India's police system. He argues that despite multiple recommendations from various commissions, including the National Police Commission (1977–81), the Ribeiro Committee (1998), the Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000) and the Malimath Committee (2003), the pace of police reforms remains slow due to bureaucratic resistance, political interference and institutional inertia. Mehra critiques the colonial legacy of the 1861 Police Act, which continues to influence modern policing in India. He emphasizes that the structure of the police force is hierarchical and rigid, prioritizing obedience to political authorities over democratic policing. His research identifies key obstacles to reform, such as arbitrary transfers of officers, lack of financial autonomy and outdated training methods.

He argues that unless these structural flaws are addressed, police forces across India—including Punjab—will continue to struggle with corruption, inefficiency and a lack of public trust. Mehra also stresses the importance of community policing initiatives, independent oversight mechanisms and modern technological tools, such as forensic advancements and cybercrime units, to improve policing effectiveness. His work highlights that while the Punjab Police Act, 2007, was a step in the right direction, its implementation has been inadequate, mirroring the nationwide trend of resistance to meaningful reform. Mehra concludes that police reform must be a continuous process, backed by strong legal and institutional support, to create a citizen-centric law enforcement system. (Mehra, 2014).

## 8. Julio Ribeiro (2016) – Policing and Public Trust

Julio Ribeiro, a former Director General of Police (DGP) and a key advocate for police reforms in India, has written extensively on police professionalism, accountability and public trust. In his writings, including his reports and opinion pieces, Ribeiro critiques the deep-rooted political interference in police functioning, which hampers the force's ability to act independently and efficiently. He argues that policing in India continues to be driven by political pressures rather than public service, making reforms difficult to implement.

Ribeiro emphasizes the need for structural and operational autonomy to free the police from political manipulation, particularly in recruitment, transfers and promotions. He advocates for the implementation of Supreme Court directives from Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006), which include the establishment of State Security Commissions, independent Police Complaints Authorities and fixed tenures for senior officers. His insights also highlight how outdated policing methods, lack of proper training and inadequate technological resources negatively impact police effectiveness, particularly in states like Punjab, which faces challenges such as drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism-related threats. A strong proponent of community policing, Ribeiro stresses that restoring public trust requires a citizen-centric approach, where the police engage with local communities to build confidence and cooperation. He believes that reforms should not just focus on modernization and technology but also on ethical policing, transparency and accountability. His work remains influential in advocating for a professional, independent and people-friendly police force in India. (Ribeiro, 2016).

## 9. N. Ramachandran (2018) – Modernization and Accountability in Indian Policing

N. Ramachandran, a former senior police officer and a leading advocate for police reforms, explores the need for modernization, accountability, and professionalization of the Indian police force in his work Policing in India: Challenges and the Way Forward. He highlights how policing in India remains outdated, burdened by colonial-era laws, political interference and lack of technological integration. Ramachandran argues that despite multiple police reform recommendations, including those from the Supreme Court in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006), implementation has been slow due to institutional resistance and lack of political will. He identifies arbitrary transfers, lack of training, inadequate resources and outdated investigative methods as major obstacles preventing police from effectively addressing modern law enforcement challenges, such as cybercrime, terrorism and organized crime.

His research also underscores the importance of scientific policing methods, including the use of forensics, data analytics and cybercrime units, to improve policing efficiency. In the context of Punjab, where drug trafficking and organized crime are significant threats, Ramachandran advocates for specialized training, better intelligence-gathering techniques and independent oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability. Additionally, he stresses the role of community policing

initiatives to build public trust and bridge the gap between citizens and law enforcement. He concludes that without structural and operational independence, combined with modern policing tools, India's law enforcement agencies will continue to struggle with credibility and effectiveness. (Ramachandran, 2018).

## 10. S. N. Vashisht (2020) – Structural and Operational Reforms in Indian Policing

S. N. Vashisht, a former senior police officer, in his work Reforming the Police: Need for a New Approach, critically examines the structural inefficiencies, operational shortcomings and lack of autonomy in India's police force. He highlights how political interference, outdated legal frameworks and inadequate training prevent police from functioning as a truly independent law enforcement agency. Vashisht argues that most reform initiatives, including the Supreme Court's directives in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006), remain largely unimplemented due to resistance from political and bureaucratic establishments. He emphasizes that the police continue to operate under colonial-era laws, such as the Police Act of 1861, which prioritize control and compliance over public service and community engagement.

In his research, Vashisht underscores the importance of modern investigative techniques, forensic advancements and digital policing tools to combat emerging challenges like cybercrime, financial fraud, and transnational organized crime. He specifically highlights Punjab's struggle with drug trafficking and organized crime, stressing the need for specialized training, intelligence-led policing, and robust inter-agency cooperation. A strong proponent of community-oriented policing, Vashisht advocates for greater police-public collaboration, transparency in law enforcement actions, and independent accountability mechanisms. He concludes that meaningful police reform requires a fundamental shift in both governance and policing culture, focusing on professionalism, public trust and operational independence (Vashisht, 2020).

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF POLICE REFORMS IN INDIA

The roots of India's policing system can be traced back to the Police Act of 1861, enacted by the British after the Revolt of 1857. This Act created a highly centralized, authoritarian, and politically controlled police force, designed to suppress dissent rather than serve the public. It placed the police under the direct control of the executive, particularly the district magistrate, ensuring that policing remained an instrument of state power.

Even after independence in 1947, this colonial-era framework largely remained unchanged, leading to persistent challenges such as political interference, lack of autonomy, and outdated policing methods.

Commissions and Committees on Police Reforms in India

Over the years, several commissions and committees have been established to reform India's policing system. These include:
National Police Commission (1977–1981)
Ribeiro Committee (1998)
Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000)
Malimath Committee (2003)
Soli Sorabjee Committee on the Model Police Act (2005)
Supreme Court Directives (2006)
Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007)
Let's now examine each commission and committee in detail, highlighting their key recommendations and impact on police reforms in India.

## THE NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION (1977–1981)

The National Police Commission (NPC) was the first major initiative post-independence aimed at comprehensive police reforms in India. Established in 1977 by the Government of India, the NPC was tasked with examining the shortcomings of the police system and recommending measures to make it more efficient, citizen-friendly and accountable. Over four years, the commission submitted eight reports, covering various aspects of policing, administration, and legal reforms (Dhillon, 2005).

### Key Recommendations of NPC

1. New Police Act – Proposed replacing the Police Act of 1861 with a modern, democratic law ensuring autonomy and public accountability.

2. Reducing Political Interference – Suggested that police officers should have a fixed tenure and be insulated from undue political influence in transfers, promotions, and postings.

3. Separation of Law and Order from Investigations – Recommended dividing police functions to improve efficiency and focus on professional crime investigations.

4. Police Complaints Authority – Proposed independent mechanisms to handle complaints against police misconduct and excesses.

5. Community Policing & Accountability – Advocated for greater citizen involvement in policing through advisory boards and social audits.

6. Modernization & Infrastructure – Stressed the need for better training, forensic support, and technology integration in policing.

### Implementation & Impact

Despite the NPC's extensive recommendations, most of its proposals were never fully implemented. Political resistance, bureaucratic inertia, and a lack of legislative action meant that policing continued under the outdated 1861 Act. While some states made minor reforms, the core issues of autonomy, transparency, and modernization remained largely unaddressed. The failure to implement NPC's recommendations led to the formation of subsequent committees and commissions, reinforcing the urgency of police reforms in India (Singh, 2008).

## RIBEIRO COMMITTEE ON POLICE REFORMS (1998)

The Ribeiro Committee was established in 1998 by the Government of India to examine police reforms, particularly in light of the growing political interference, declining public trust, and inefficiency in law enforcement. Chaired by J.F. Ribeiro, a former Director General of Police (DGP), the committee aimed to revisit the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977–1981) and suggest actionable measures for their implementation (GOI, 1998).

### Key Recommendations

1. State Security Commission (SSC): Proposed setting up an independent State Security Commission to insulate the police from political pressure and ensure professionalism in law enforcement.

2. Fixed Tenure for Police Officers: Recommended that key officers such as DGPs, SPs, and SHOs should have a minimum fixed tenure to prevent arbitrary transfers.

3. Police Establishment Board (PEB): Suggested creating a Police Establishment Board to decide postings, promotions, and transfers independently, reducing political interference.

4. Police Complaints Authority (PCA): Recommended the establishment of independent Police Complaints Authorities at both state and district levels to address cases of police misconduct and human rights violations.

5. Separation of Investigation & Law and Order: Advocated for separating investigative functions from routine law and order duties to enhance efficiency in criminal investigations.

### Implementation & Impact

Despite its strong recommendations, the Ribeiro Committee's proposals were not fully implemented. Political resistance and bureaucratic reluctance prevented key reforms, especially those related to police autonomy and accountability. However, its recommendations were later reinforced by the Prakash Singh case (2006), where the Supreme Court incorporated many of its proposals into binding directives. Some states have since established State Security Commissions and Police Complaints Authorities, but full implementation remains a challenge (Singh, 2009).

## PADMANABHAIAH COMMITTEE ON POLICE REFORMS (2000)

The Padmanabhaiah Committee was constituted by the Government of India in 2000, under the chairmanship of K. Padmanabhaiah, a former Union Home Secretary. The committee was tasked with recommending structural and functional reforms to modernize the Indian police system and enhance its efficiency in tackling contemporary challenges such as organized crime, terrorism, and cybercrime (Verma, A., Das, D. K., & Abraham, M. (Eds.)., 2013).

### Key Recommendations

1. Modernization of Police Force: Emphasized the need for technology-driven policing, improved forensic capabilities, and better use of intelligence networks.

2. Community Policing: Advocated for people-friendly policing, recommending citizen advisory boards to strengthen police-public relations.

3. Improved Training & Specialization: Suggested enhanced training programs for police personnel in areas like counterterrorism, cybercrime, and forensic investigation.

4. Better Infrastructure & Working Conditions: Highlighted the poor working conditions of police personnel and recommended improving housing, salaries, and equipment.

5. Separation of Investigation from Law and Order: Stressed the need for a dedicated investigative wing to ensure impartial and efficient crime investigation.

6. Accountability & Performance Evaluation: Proposed strict performance monitoring, along with independent oversight mechanisms to curb corruption and misconduct.

### Implementation & Impact

While the Padmanabhaiah Committee's recommendations were well-received, their implementation remained limited due to financial constraints and political resistance. Some modernization initiatives were adopted, such as increased use of technology and intelligence-based policing, but the broader structural reforms—such as separating investigation from law-and-order duties and improving working conditions—were not fully realized.

Many of the committee's proposals were later reinforced in subsequent reports, including the Prakash Singh case (2006) and the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007), yet full-scale reform remains a challenge (Singh, 2012).

## MMALIMATH COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS (2003)

The Malimath Committee, officially known as the Committee on Reforms of the Criminal Justice System, was set up in 2000 by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the chairmanship of Justice V.S. Malimath, former Chief Justice of the Karnataka and Kerala High Courts. Unlike previous committees that focused primarily on police reforms, the Malimath Committee took a holistic approach to criminal justice reform, covering policing, prosecution, judiciary, and corrections. The committee submitted its report in 2003 with recommendations aimed at making the justice system more efficient, victim-centric, and prosecution-driven (MHA, 2003).

### Key Recommendations

1. Shift from an Adversarial to a Mixed Justice System: Suggested moving towards a combination of adversarial and inquisitorial legal systems, similar to the European model, where judges play a more active role in investigations.

2. Victim-Centric Approach: Recommended giving victims greater rights, including legal representation and participation in trials.

3. Strengthening Investigations: Suggested setting up a separate criminal investigation wing within the police to focus solely on investigations.

4. Higher Standard of Proof for Arrests: Proposed easing the burden of proof in certain cases, making it easier to prosecute criminals, especially in organized crime and terrorism cases.

5. Fast-Tracking Criminal Trials: Recommended specialized courts for handling serious crimes, ensuring speedy justice.

6. Reforming the Indian Penal Code (IPC) & Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC): Proposed revising key provisions to reflect modern crime trends and simplify legal procedures.

7. More Power to Police in Certain Cases: Suggested allowing police to take a more proactive role in certain investigations, which was criticized for potential misuse.

Implementation & Impact

The Malimath Committee's recommendations were never fully implemented, mainly due to concerns over civil liberties, human rights, and potential police overreach. Critics argued that lowering the burden of proof and giving more power to the police could lead to misuse and wrongful convictions. However, some recommendations—such as witness protection programs and victim rights—have been partially adopted in subsequent legal reforms.

The Justice Verma Committee (2013) and the Supreme Court's directives on police reforms (Prakash Singh Case, 2006) later reinforced some of Malimath's proposals. However, its most controversial suggestions, such as shifting to an inquisitorial system and easing the burden of proof, remain unimplemented (Second ARC, 2007).

SOLI SORABJEE COMMITTEE ON THE MODEL POLICE ACT (2005)

The Soli Sorabjee Committee was constituted in 2005 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, to draft a Model Police Act that could replace the colonial-era Police Act of 1861. Chaired by Soli Sorabjee, a former Attorney General of India, the committee aimed to create a modern, democratic, and accountable police system suited to contemporary challenges (MHA, 2006).

Key Recommendations

1. Replacing the Police Act of 1861: Proposed enacting a new Model Police Act to establish a professional, service-oriented, and accountable police force.

2. State Security Commission (SSC): Recommended setting up independent SSCs in every state to insulate the police from political interference.

3. Fixed Tenure for Police Chiefs: Advocated a minimum two-year tenure for DGPs, SPs, and SHOs to ensure continuity and prevent arbitrary transfers.

4. Police Complaints Authority (PCA): Suggested creating independent PCAs at state and district levels to investigate complaints of police misconduct and human rights violations.

5. Separation of Law & Order from Investigations: Recommended separating investigative functions from routine law and order duties to improve crime investigations.

6. Community Policing: Proposed greater police-public cooperation, including the formation of citizen advisory boards.

7. Welfare & Working Conditions of Police Personnel: Highlighted the need to improve salaries, working hours, and housing facilities for police personnel.

Implementation & Impact

The Soli Sorabjee Committee's Model Police Act (2006) was submitted to the government in 2006, but it was not adopted at the national level. However, some states like Kerala, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan used its recommendations to draft their own State Police Acts. The Supreme Court's 2006 judgment in the Prakash Singh case also incorporated several key recommendations, particularly regarding State Security Commissions, fixed tenures, and Police Complaints Authorities.

Despite these developments, most states have not fully implemented the Model Police Act, and policing in India continues to function under the outdated Police Act of 1861 with only minor modifications (Verma, 2010).

SUPREME COURT'S DIRECTIVES ON POLICE REFORMS (Prakash Singh v. Union of India, 2006)

The landmark judgment in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006) 8 SCC 1 was delivered by the Supreme Court of India on September 22, 2006. It issued seven binding directives to reform the police structure in India and reduce political interference (CHRI, 2019).

Background

Prakash Singh, a retired DGP, filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in 1996, arguing that police in India were still functioning under the colonial-era Police Act of 1861 and were highly politicized. The Supreme Court recognized the need for institutional police reforms and issued seven key directives to the central and state governments.

Seven Directives of the Supreme Court (Prakash Singh Case, 2006)

State Security Commission (SSC): Every state must establish an SSC to ensure that police function independently of political pressure. The SSC should include government officials, independent members, and the Leader of the Opposition.

Merit-Based Appointment of the DGP: The DGP of a state must be selected from the three senior-most officers empaneled by the UPSC. The appointment should be

based on merit, experience, and integrity, and the DGP must have a minimum tenure of two years.

Fixed Tenure for Senior Police Officers: The Director General of Police (DGP), Superintendent of Police (SP), and Station House Officers (SHOs) must have a minimum tenure of two years to prevent arbitrary transfers.

Separation of Law & Order from Investigation: The police force should have separate wings for law enforcement and crime investigation to ensure better specialization and efficiency.

Police Establishment Board (PEB): A PEB should be created to decide on transfers, postings, and promotions of police officers to ensure transparency and professionalism.

Police Complaints Authority (PCA): A PCA at the state and district levels should investigate complaints of police misconduct, including custodial violence, abuse of power, and corruption.

National Security Commission (NSC): The NSC should be responsible for recommending candidates for chiefs of central police organizations (CRPF, BSF, CISF, etc.), ensuring merit-based appointments.

## SECOND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS COMMISSION (ARC) – 5th REPORT ON PUBLIC ORDER (2007)

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was constituted in 2005 under the chairmanship of Veerappa Moily to recommend governance reforms across various sectors. Its 5th report, titled "Public Order: Justice for All, Peace for All" (2007), focused on police and criminal justice system reforms and reinforced recommendations from previous committees (Second ARC, 2007).

### Key Recommendations

1. Adoption of the Model Police Act (2006): Urged states to implement the Soli Sorabjee Committee's Model Police Act to modernize policing.

2. State Security Commission (SSC): Recommended independent SSCs to insulate police from political interference, ensuring professionalism.

3. Police Performance Evaluation: Suggested new performance indicators based on crime prevention, public trust, and service quality instead of just crime detection rates.

4. Separation of Investigation & Law and Order: Reiterated that investigation units should be separate from regular law and order policing to improve crime investigations.

5. Improved Training & Modernization: Stressed better training in cybercrime, counterterrorism, and forensic sciences to tackle modern threats.

6. Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms: Recommended Police Complaints Authorities (PCAs) at the state and district levels to handle complaints against police misconduct.

7. Community Policing: Advocated for greater police-public partnerships to improve trust and cooperation.

8. Better Working Conditions: Highlighted the need for improved police housing, salaries, and working hours to boost efficiency and morale.

### Implementation & Impact

While the report strongly supported structural police reforms, most states did not implement these recommendations fully due to political and bureaucratic resistance. Some states partially adopted reforms such as Police Complaints Authorities and community policing initiatives. The Supreme Court's Prakash Singh (2006) judgment already mandated several reforms recommended by the ARC, but compliance remained weak. The report remains one of the most comprehensive studies on police and law enforcement reforms in India, influencing later discussions on policing (CHRI, 2010).

## Research Objectives
The primary objective of this study is to critically examine the state of police reforms in India, with a particular focus on Punjab.

1. To assess the Implementation of Police Reforms: Analyze the extent to which the Punjab Police Act, 2007, and Supreme Court directives in Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006) have been implemented.
2. To evaluate the Role of Committees and Commissions: Review recommendations from key police reform committees, including the National Police Commission (1977–1981), Ribeiro Committee (1998) and Padmanabhaiah Committee (2000).
3. To assess the Impact of Political Interference on Police Functioning - Examine the extent to which political influence affects operational autonomy, decision-making and law enforcement efficiency in Punjab.
4. To examine the challenge of Drug Trafficking and Police Preparedness - Investigate the scale and impact of drug trafficking in Punjab and its implications for law enforcement.

# Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining historical analysis, policy review and empirical data collection to examine police reforms in Punjab.

### Research Design

The study follows a descriptive research design, aiming to analyze the historical evolution of police laws, the structural and operational challenges faced by Punjab Police, and the extent of reform implementation.

### Data Collection

Primary Data: A field survey was conducted among 100 police officials, ranging from Constable to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) in SAS Nagar, Punjab, using the random sampling method. The survey focused on key issues such as political interference, training deficiencies, drug trafficking and perceptions on police reforms.

Secondary Data: The study relies on government reports, legal documents, policy papers, books, and journal articles. Key sources include the Police Act of 1861, the Punjab Police Act of 2007, NCRB crime data, Punjab Police reports, and Supreme Court directives (Prakash Singh Case, 2006).

### Sampling Method

A random sampling technique was used to select 100 police officials across different ranks in SAS Nagar, Punjab, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives.

### Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods.

Quantitative Analysis: Responses from the survey were statistically examined to identify common trends and patterns regarding police challenges and reform needs.

Qualitative Analysis: Content analysis of policy documents, historical records and expert opinions was conducted to assess the effectiveness of existing police reforms in Punjab.

This methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of Punjab Police's reform challenges, balancing historical insights with real-time empirical data for a policy-driven approach to police modernization.

# Data Analysis

To gain firsthand insights into the challenges faced by Punjab Police, a field survey was conducted among 100 police officials of varying ranks, from Constable to SSP, in SAS Nagar, Punjab. The survey focused on four critical aspects: political interference, adequacy of training and resources, the challenge of drug trafficking and public perception of police efficiency and fairness. The responses collected provide a comprehensive understanding of the ground realities of policing in Punjab, highlighting both strengths and areas requiring urgent reform.

Table 1: To what extent do you think political interference affects police functioning in Punjab? (Police Officials)

| Responses | SSP | SP | DSP | I | SI | ASI | Constable | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very High | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 5 | 4 | 13 | 13% |
| High | - | 1 | 2 | 5 | 13 | 16 | 8 | 45 | 45% |
| Moderate | - | - | 2 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 11 | 31 | 31% |
| Low | - | - | - | - | 2 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 11% |
| Not at all | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 20 | 30 | 30 | 100 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data

The survey results, as shown in table no. 1, indicate that political interference significantly affects police functioning in Punjab. Out of 100 police officials surveyed, a majority (45%) perceive the level of political interference as high, while 13% believe it is very high. This suggests that more than half (58%) of the police force experiences notable political influence in their operations.

A moderate level of interference was reported by 31% of respondents, indicating that while interference exists, its impact may vary based on rank or situation. Interestingly, only 11% of officials rated interference as low, and none of the respondents reported "Not at all," confirming that political involvement in policing is a widespread issue.

These findings highlight the urgent need for structural reforms to insulate the police from political pressures, ensure impartial law enforcement and better governance.

Table 2: Do you believe the current training and resources (including cybercrime units, forensic support and modern investigation tools) are sufficient to handle contemporary law enforcement challenges in Punjab?

(Police Officials)

| Responses | SSP | SP | DSP | I | SI | ASI | Constable | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | - | - | - | 2 | 2 | - | 1 | 5 | 5% |
| Agree | - | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 22% |
| Neutral | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 13 | 41 | 41% |
| Disagree | - | - | 1 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 7 | 23 | 23% |
| Strongly Disagree | - | - | - | 1 | - | 6 | 2 | 9 | 9% |
| Total | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 20 | 30 | 30 | 100 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data

| Responses | SSP | SP | DSP | I | SI | ASI | Constable | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extremely Significant – Inadequate Resources | - | - | 1 | - | | 3 | 6 | 10 | 10% |
| Significant – Moderate Resources | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 33 | 33% |
| Somewhat Significant – Sufficient Resources | - | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 45 | 45% |
| Not Significant – Well-equipped | - | - | - | - | 2 | 7 | 3 | 12 | 12% |
| Total | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 20 | 30 | 30 | 100 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data

The survey results in table no. 2 highlight mixed opinions among police officials regarding the sufficiency of training, cybercrime units, forensic support and modern investigation tools in Punjab. A majority (41%) of respondents remained neutral, indicating that while some resources are available, they may not be consistently effective or accessible across all levels of the force. Meanwhile, only 5% of officials strongly agreed that current training and resources are sufficient and 22% agreed, bringing the total positive response to 27%. This suggests that while a section of the force finds the resources adequate, the majority remains unconvinced.

On the other hand, 32% of respondents (23% disagree, 9% strongly disagree) believe that Punjab Police lacks sufficient training and modern investigative tools, pointing to potential gaps in forensic support, cybercrime investigation, and advanced policing methods.

These findings emphasize the urgent need for capacity-building initiatives, better technological integration, and specialized training programs to equip Punjab Police with the skills and tools required to handle modern law enforcement challenges, especially cybercrime and forensic investigations.

Table 3: How significant is the challenge of drug trafficking in Punjab and how well-equipped is the police force to tackle it?
 (Police Officials)

The survey findings in table no. 3 highlight that drug trafficking remains a major challenge for law enforcement in Punjab, though opinions differ on the adequacy of police resources to combat it. A majority (45%) of police officials considered drug trafficking "somewhat significant" but believed they had sufficient resources to tackle it. This suggests that while the problem is widespread, the police force has access to some operational tools and strategies to counter drug-related crimes.

However, 33% of respondents rated the issue as "significant" with only moderate resources, indicating that while efforts are being made, existing mechanisms may not be fully effective in curbing drug networks. Additionally, 10% of respondents viewed the problem as "extremely significant" with inadequate resources, signalling those certain ranks, particularly among ASIs and Constables, feel under-equipped for frontline drug enforcement. On the other hand, 12% of officials believed that drug trafficking was "not significant" and that the police were well-equipped to handle it. This view was more prevalent among lower-ranking officers (ASI and Constables), possibly reflecting regional differences in drug-related crime levels or varying degrees of enforcement success.

Overall, the study underscores the urgent need for police reforms in Punjab, focusing on reducing political influence, improving training infrastructure and enhancing resource allocation for tackling emerging threats like cybercrime and drug trafficking.

Table 4: In your experience, how do the people of Punjab perceive the police in terms of fairness, efficiency and responsiveness?
(Police Officials)

| Responses | SSP | SP | DSP | I | SI | ASI | Constable | Total | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Highly Trustworthy and Efficient | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 4 | 4% |
| Moderately Trustworthy with Some Concerns | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 12 | 17 | 13 | 50 | 50% |
| Neutral – Mixed Public Opinion | - | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 39 | 39% |
| Low Trust Due to Inefficiency or Misconduct | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | 1% |
| Very Low Trust – Significant Public Distrust | - | - | - | - | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 6% |
| Total | 1 | 2 | 5 | 12 | 20 | 30 | 30 | 100 | 100% |

Source: Primary Data

The survey findings in table no. 4 indicate that public trust in the Punjab Police is mixed, with a majority (50%) of police officials stating that the public perceives them as "moderately trustworthy with some concerns." This suggests that while citizens acknowledge the police's efforts, there are lingering issues related to fairness, efficiency, and responsiveness.

Another 39% of respondents reported a "neutral" or mixed public opinion, reflecting varying experiences among communities, possibly influenced by regional differences in law enforcement effectiveness, past incidents, or media portrayal of police actions. Only 4% of officials believed that the Punjab Police is highly trustworthy and efficient, indicating that there is still a long way to go in improving public perception and community-police relations. On the other hand, 7% of respondents reported low or very low trust levels, citing inefficiency or misconduct as contributing factors. This lack of trust could stem from issues like delayed responses, corruption, or excessive force in certain cases.

These findings highlight the need for confidence-building measures, including community policing initiatives, increased transparency, improved response times, and stricter accountability mechanisms to strengthen public trust in law enforcement.

## EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

The survey results highlight several key challenges faced by Punjab Police. Political interference remains a major issue, with 58% of police officials reporting high to very high levels of influence, particularly affecting lower-ranking officers. Regarding training and resources, opinions were mixed—while 27% of respondents felt that existing infrastructure was adequate, 32% disagreed, indicating a need for better forensic, cybercrime, and investigative tools. Drug trafficking emerged as a significant law enforcement challenge, with 43% of officials acknowledging moderate to inadequate resources for tackling the problem, while 45% believed current resources were sufficient. Public trust in Punjab Police was largely neutral to moderate, with 50% of officials stating that citizens have some concerns about police fairness and efficiency, and 7% reporting low or very low trust due to perceived inefficiency or misconduct. These findings underline the urgent need for police reforms, focusing on reducing political influence, improving resource allocation, strengthening drug enforcement strategies, and enhancing community trust.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is crucial in understanding the structural, operational, and policy-related challenges faced by Punjab Police and the broader need for comprehensive police reforms. By analyzing the historical evolution of policing laws, including the Police Act of 1861 and the Model Police Act of 2007, the study highlights the gaps in reform implementation and the persistent issue of political interference in law enforcement. Punjab, with its unique socio-political history, has faced insurgency, drug trafficking, organized crime and emerging cyber threats, all of which demand specialized policing strategies and modernized infrastructure. The study also sheds light on existing inefficiencies such as outdated training methods, lack of technological integration, and the absence of independent oversight. By addressing these critical concerns, this research aims to provide policy recommendations that can help shape a more accountable, professional and citizen-oriented Punjab Police in the future.

## Conclusion

This study underscores the pressing need for structural and operational reforms in Punjab Police to address political interference, resource gaps, drug-related challenges, and public trust issues. The findings suggest that while certain policing mechanisms are in place, their effectiveness is inconsistent across different ranks and regions. Implementing the Supreme Court's directives on police reforms, upgrading training infrastructure, modernizing investigative tools, and adopting community-oriented policing strategies can significantly improve law enforcement efficiency in Punjab. Additionally, specialized anti-drug units and better coordination between law enforcement agencies are crucial for tackling the state's ongoing drug crisis.

Strengthening internal accountability mechanisms and fostering transparency will also play a key role in enhancing public trust and ensuring a more professional and efficient police force in Punjab.

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