Female Police Officers In Thailand: Gender Inequality And Organisational Transformation From A Cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the extent to which Thai cultural factors appear to play a crucial role in influencing and/or determining the experiences of female officers in the Royal Thai Police (RTP); the extent and prevalence of gender inequality, and how it can affect recruitment, retention, performance, promotion, and the wider work environment for those officers. Ultimately, the research seeks to determine and address factors leading to gender inequality within a largely male dominated organisation, as well as suggesting pathways that could be initiated for organisational transformation. The research concludes that gender inequality is present and marked within the organisation. This finding is broadly consistent with research carried out in Australia, India, Nigeria and the USA, and clearly shows that the Royal Thai Police treats female officers quite differently i.e. as a second-class gender. Interestingly, results arising from this study directly contradict research by the Royal Thai Police conducted in 2014, which found that both female and male officers have equal career opportunities. Perhaps alarmingly, this study also demonstrated that verbally abusive, sex-based harassment is common, and widely accepted as the norm in the Royal Thai Police when communicated in a seemingly or apparently jocular manner. Worse, verbally abusive, sex-based harassment was also viewed as a relationship building technique! Within a broader context, Royal Thai Police executives apparently fail to see the importance of equity and gender balance within the organisation, nor do they comprehend the extent to which female officers face persistent discrimination.

Introduction

Gender inequality is one of several inequities that persist in Thai society, particularly in the public sector, which includes the Royal Thai Police, the subject of this particular study. This is illustrated by the fact that even quite recently, Thailand was ranked 76th on Gender Inequality Index (Casella, 2016). It is widely understood and appreciated that gender inequality can create hostile work environments, which means in turn that gender reform programmes are needed to help alleviate and remove workplace gender inequality. Denham (2008) revealed that gender reform in the public sector can promote a non-discriminatory culture and a more productive work environment (Denham, 2008, p.4 ed. United Kingdom Home Office).

Thailand's first formal commitment to gender equality only began about 30 years ago, when the country participated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; but it was only in 2014, that the Thai cabinet passed a resolution for all public organisations to be equipped with sex-based harassment prevention and resolution guidelines in the workplace. In Thai policing, one of the keys to reform besides 'public involvement' and 'de-centralisation' appears to be the elimination of gender bias in 'police transfers' and 'promotions' (Bohwongprasert, 2019). It can be argued that promoting gender equality in policing will not only benefit female officers who wish to enjoy a successful career path, but it will also help create gender diversity, and the workforce will achieve more of the balance contemporary policing needs according to studies cited later. For example, research by the University of San Diego shows that having female police officers at work can help ease tension in sexual assault investigations which examine crimes committed against women (2019). Moreover, more

extensive studies show that female police officers are less authoritarian and more compassionate, that they are good at stress management, and because of their 'natural' empathy they are better equipped to handle diverse personalities and deliver effective two-way communication (Crowson, 2019). Other research suggests female police officers are less likely to use physical force, hence, they are generally "better at defusing and de-escalating potentially violent confrontations with citizens, and are less likely to become involved in problems with use of excessive force" (Resetnikova, 2006).

Literature review

Viewing 'gender' from cultural perspective

According to Risman (2004, p.437), 'gender', must be viewed as a social structure. By contemplating gender as social structure, we are better able to determine its criteria as: a characteristic of groups; persistence over time and space; legitimating ideology; changes incessantly; organised and permeated with power (Lober, 1994 ed. Risman, 2004, p. 431). In other words, 'gender' is an 'identity' that may change continuously over time and place, and like other social aspects, it is subject to the mediation of power. 'Gender' is clearly shaped by cultural values which help determine what appears desirable in a society (Williams 1970 ed. Siddiqi and Shafiq 2017, p. 32).

Hofstede (2011, p.7) states that cultural values are the by-product of individual and social values of different communities and identifies six main aspects of cultural value dimensions. Like many other Asian countries, Thailand is seen as high in power distance (PDI) and uncertainty avoidance (UAI) (Hofstede Insights n.d.). With the score of 64, Thailand seems willing to accept the notion of 'inequalities' as a central part of its culture. Thailand more widely has a stricter chain of command structure, a clearly discernible hierarchy, and many privileges associated with rank, status and the like. Because the idea of the 'unknown' future is not generally acceptable,

Thailand is often seen as highly regulated (although regulations are far less likely to be implemented), and workplaces usually governed paternally, where more lowly ranked employees are often given forms of protection in exchange for their loyalty. There is also a widespread expectation that more lowly ranked employees should be submissive to those who appear above them in the chain of command. This means such employees are also highly collective (IDV), where decision making often depends on acceptance from extended family and social members. It is also apparent that in general terms, Thai workers do not believe in confronting issues or behaviours head on, therefore, workplace culture tends to revolve around subservient roles, and the presence of hidden conflicts, which may make gossip and scandal more prevalent. With a score of 34 Thailand scores the lowest masculinity (MAS) level of all Asian countries which may go some way to explaining how Thais are generally less assertive and not overly competitive. Hofstede's theory also indicates this is a reason why traditional male and female roles in Thailand are more highly preserved than in many other countries. Typically, Thais have a very low score on 'long term orientation' (LTO), and tend to value the past and the present more than the future, which goes some way to explaining how the country places high importance on traditions, while at the same time, formulating ad-hoc policies. On the last dimension, Thailand has an intermediate score on 'indulgence' which is neither 'indulged' (IND) nor 'restrained', hence, the result on this area is remains ambiguous.

Erin Meyer (2014) has worked extensively on cultural differences in the workplace and describes these on an eight-scale spectrum. In this domain, Thailand is labelled a culture with high-context communication which means verbal and non-verbal communication are complex as messages are often delivered between the lines, sometimes remaining unspoken and implied (GWOPA, n.d.). Because Thai culture is

essentially non-confrontational, 'evaluation' may be given and used as indirect negative feedback: often quite softly, subtly, privately, and implicitly. On the concept of 'leading', Thai culture is classed as very hierarchical, and so the distance between supervisors and subordinates is high (Hofstede labelled this as high power distance), "status is important", "organisational structures are multi-layered and fixed", and "communication follows set hierarchical lines" (GWOPA, n.d.). Thailand might be seen as a polar opposite of countries which are more egalitarian, where there is far less emphasis on differences in apparent power and status. 'Trust' in Thai culture is often outside-work relationship-based, which means bonds are built casually and personally. Trust arises because individuals bond with each other by sharing personal time and personal information, which is often not work-related. Finally, 'disagreeing' is done discretely, as Thai culture is often at pains to avoid confrontation. In Thailand, professional disagreement can have critical impact on personal relationships; where "open confrontation is seen as inappropriate with the clear potential to break group harmony" (GWOPA, n.d.).

The situation in Thailand stands in some contrast with wider change in the social order, where Christina Bicchieri, an American-Italian philosopher states 'cultural values' can be transformed over time because social change transpires when there is a shared reason, and collective co-ordination for change. In other words, social change can occur when a 'new norm' emerges and there are 'rumours' or clear impetus for change. For instance, a male-dominated society can only be eradicated if a society collectively believes there is a good enough reason or incentives for such a change. Social constructs or norms in Thailand sit neatly alongside how Bicchieri describes a: norm or a descriptive norm, which are by definition, a "pattern of behaviour such that individuals prefer to conform to it on condition that they believe

that most people in their reference network conform to it" (Bicchieri, 2016, pp. 25-30). Applying Bicchieri's rationale, if leaders and policy makers wish to implement a counter-active stance opposing and/or reducing gender inequality within organisations, their first priority must be to create, attribute and implement innovative norms which engender a new set of behaviours amongst the community, which in turn has the potential to create significant social change.In some instances, research has found that there is a 'major disconnect' between what is actually happening in a society (prevalence) and evident individual beliefs (support). This sometimes occurs due to what Bicchieri calls 'pluralistic ignorance', which means that research may discover a majority of informants consider female police officers for example as a great asset to the community and that they should be encouraged and promoted, but respondents' second-order beliefs derived from wider reference networks, lead them to conclude policing is a male-dominated profession, and they subsequently act enabling the prevailing hegemony to continue largely un-changed.

Female police officers in Thailand

The history of Thai police may be divided into four distinct periods: before the 1890s; 1890 - 1932; 1932 - 1959; 1959 - present (Hannstad, 2013, p.448). In Thailand, the police service originated as a security system for the King (Haanstad, 2013: p.449). In 1887, the number of crimes in Thailand increased tremendously after King Rama V announced slave emancipation. The surge in crimes attributed to freed slaves caused the royal police to set up "twenty crime suppression units in four different areas of the city" (Hannstad, 2013, p.456). Rather more recently, documentary research un-covered the term Tum Ruat Yhing (policewomen) which was apparently first enacted on November 22, 1961 under the Thai police rank Act. Thus it seems that the advent of female police officers in Thailand emerged around that time.

Since 1961, female police officers in Thailand are entitled and indeed must attach the term "female" to their rank, for example, police captain (female) forename, surname etc. Despite this, it was not until about 10 years ago (2009), that the Royal Police Cadet Academy began admitting females for "the first time in its 107 year history" (Bell, 2009). This stemmed from the rationale that "female victims of crime will feel more comfortable with a female officer" (Bell, 2009). This was referred to at the time as a "radical break." The first generation of cadets included 70 females, and the force hoped to employ at least one female police officer in each of its 1,444 police stations across country. In contrast, while Indonesia founded its first female cadet school (*when*), the Royal Police Cadet Academy in Thailand decided to cease female cadet admission (*when*) apparently because it this is now policy, but sources say they are not allowed to give more information about the reason behind this seemingly strange decision.

Some research said that female cadets come with drawbacks as they complain of hard training and tend to "wimp out". It is also apparent that the career path for female cadets' is limited when compared with that for males (Ngamkham and Laohong, 2018). Evidence shows "females represented seven per cent of officers in the Royal Thai Police, compared with 20 per cent in the Philippines, 18 per cent in Malaysia, and 30 per cent, the world's highest, in Sweden" (Ngamkham and Laohong, 2018). It is also very rare for a female police officer in Thailand to advance to senior level. Recently, Siriwato (2017) conducted a qualitative study examining "The Impact of Thai Culture on Perceptions and Experiences of Sexual Harassment in Policing." The study used semi-structured interviews with 37 participants and found no apparent evidence of physical sexual harassment, apparently for two major reasons: first, Thai women do not generally discuss sexual harassment with other people; and second, there is no clear definition of the term sexual harassment. Siriwato (2017,

p.36) states however, that sexual harassment is common in male-dominated professions; and "sexual harassment is used to maintain masculinity and status differences between men and women. In other words, the primary objective of sexual harassment is the satisfaction of power needs." In policing, she highlighted two underlying themes behind 'sexual harassment': 'quid pro quo harassment' and 'hostile environment harassment.'

Khundiloknattawasa (2019) studied Attitudes towards Merit System and Patronage System Affecting Career Progression of Police Commissioned Officers in Thailand. Responses to close-ended questions revealed that the patronage systems is perceived as a key factor contributing to career advancement. One key informant stressed that the patronage system is inevitable, as it deeply rooted in Thai culture (Khundiloknattawasa, 2019, p.76). Another study by Kukudrua conducted with Royal Police Cadet Academy alumni, demonstrated an apparent gender-bias in female officer task assignments. Female police officers were assigned as inquiry officers, performing tasks regarded as female-related working on crimes against children. Female police officers were perceived as friendly, approachable, dependable, and with good communication skills (Kukudrua, 2019, p.25). Major obstacles to advancing the careers of female police officers appear to be gender related, viz: female police officers are restricted to inquiry roles; the community and suspects show less respect towards female police officers; female police officers are prevented from wearing trousers at work; and a lack of co-ordination with, and acceptance from, other female police officers.

Overall, findings demonstrate that gender bias and gender discrimination exist in the Thai police force. This stands in marked contrast to research conducted by Royal Thai Police in 2014, which employed a mixed-method study covering 850 subjects. The study found male and female

police are perceived as equals, and both genders share equal opportunities for career advancement (Royal Thai Police, 2016). Within the Royal Thai Police there are multiple regulations deriving from various policies. The first of these is the Police Disciplines Act, B.E. 2477 (1934). Initially this Act provides general 'ground rules' for all officers, with Section 5 emphasising politeness and respect towards older or more senior officers (The Royal Thai Police 2012: p.21). While Section 27 states that if a complaint remains un-resolved for 15 days, an officer can lodge a new complaint with a higher superior, but it's by no means clear what happens next, if anything at all.

Critically, words including 'fairness', 'equality', 'discrimination' or 'gender' are not mentioned in regulations governing behaviour in the Royal Thai Police. In stark contrast, the Australian Federal Police Regulations (1979) clearly state the importance of fairness and freedom from discrimination. In an attempt to address gender issues, in 2015, the Royal Thai Police Cadet Academy, set out guide-lines to prevent sexual harassment at work. The framework which is used, describes sexual harassment as any inappropriate behaviour, verbally or non-verbally, through words, messages, voice, picture, document, or by electronic means that cause discomfort to a person of another gender. Verbally, no-one should not make 'un-wanted' sexual jokes, but without any advice as to who determines what is 'un-wanted'. The Academy then seems to have diluted the framework by advising that its female cadets 'dress appropriately' and 'avoid private gatherings with male co-workers', or be in a concealed place with them.

Organisational transformation

One way of seeing organisational transformation is when it is described as 'second generation' organisation development that is both evolutionary and revolutionary in nature (Dagres

and O'Shannassy, n.d.). This involves a change of culture, system, structure, and people within the organisation, and it requires the support of media, government, and the public.

Several propositions have been made about successful organisational transformation:

(i) organisational transformation is a continuous and simultaneous major change which must be implemented over time;

(ii) major changes must be directly deployed by senior executives and acknowledged by all staff; and

(iii) technological change generally increases the success rate of organisational transformation.

Nohria and Beer (2000) reviewed two 'change' theories. Theory E assumes changes based on economic values such as organisational down-sizing, re-structuring, and economic incentives, while Theory O focuses on corporate culture and employee attitudes. Often, these two theories are intertwined, embracing six prospects for change: goals; leadership; focus; process; rewards system; and use of consultants.

'Leadership' is seen as facilitated participation (participative change) which seeks engagement between the two approaches to formulate success. Incentives are used only as reinforcement, but organisational capability is strengthened. Participative change is the type of change generally expected in public organisations, but for such change succeed, resistance must be minimised. Analytical planning is also required to identify organisational and personnel needs and capabilities where changes must occur in order to encourage effective transformation. Skinner et al. (2005) claim organisational transformation takes place through a three-step process comprising 'un-freezing', 'changing', and 'supporting' stages. An example of

organisational gender reform is an initiative by the Australian Government and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Together they have established a Gender Equality Roadmap providing identification tools for organisations requiring gender equity transformation (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018, p.11). The roadmap "enables organisations to plot where they are on the (gender equality) journey", identify their progress, and the absence of it over a five stage spectrum (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018: p.14).

Other studies

Denham (2008, p.3) claims "common challenges in policing" can be eradicated through police reform which makes police "more operationally effective, accountable, equitable and rights respecting." According to Denham, successful police organisational reform requires acceptance of organisational diversity, fair policy, an effective internal and external communication strategy, measurable gender equity goals and evaluation procedures, eliminating recruitment barriers, establishing gender appropriate facilities, up to date training and accountable leadership skills; all of which are elements which complement Theory O mentioned earlier. Chain of command, recruitment and promotion, training, evaluation must complement one another to achieve greater gender equality.

Research conducted in Nigeria (NPF, UN Women, and UNFPA 2010, p.15) categorised discrimination against women in the police force into various topics: 'recruitment; representation of women; marriage, pregnancy and child birth; training and posting; sexual violence and abuse; dressing and nomenclature; accommodation and welfare; and other gender issues.' In contrast with their male counterparts, in Nigeria, female police officers were not allowed to use firearms. As in Thailand, female police officers in Nigeria, also had to add W to their rank to identify them as women.

In respect of policing in India, Bhowmick (2012, p.4) found the majority of male officers interviewed expressed the following opinions:

(i). there is no apparent need to integrate women into mainstream policing;

(ii). female police personnel should be given specific tasks related to women and children;

(iii). women are not enthusiastic about their jobs;

(iv). women may work as cooks in the police mess;

(v). women should escort only female prisoners and not male prisoners;

(vi). women should not be engaged in operations against militants, extremists and insurgents; and

(vii). women police officers are very gentle and are not capable of handling hardened criminals."

Bhomick's research in India revealed similar results to the Chan, Doran and Marel research findings from Australia (2013). Similarly, Bastick (2014: p.16) concluded gender issues must be examined from three perspectives; structure, policy and practice. The notion corresponds to the United Nations' "Global Effort" initiative calling for UN member states to establish policy that sets an equal percentage of male and female officers, as well as reviewing recruitment and incentive procedure (United Nations Police, n.d.).

Brinser's research (2016) in the USA examined gender related challenges female police officers face today, as opposed to those they may have experienced earlier. The author outlines these challenges as 'organisational' and 'personal' where organisational factors include:

(i). acceptance by male police officers;

(ii). discrimination and sexual harassment;

(iii). the glass ceiling; and

(iv). intra-gender challenges.

Brinser found female police officers are less accepted and seen as physically and emotionally incapable of performing police tasks; they are sexually harassed and intimidated by offensive behaviours; they face a glass ceiling; and they are undermined by other female police officers who are more assertive. On the other hand, 'personal challenges' are non-organisational such as family responsibility, socially prescribed role as a nurturer, and self-confidence.

Again in the USA, Freiburger and Marcum (2016, p.227) wrote that barriers facing women in policing and law enforcement include not only resistance from male administrators, but also via regulations such as physical fitness testing and weight requirements. Female police officers are also shown to have higher turn-over rates than male police officers, something particularly notable among female police officers of colour. Most women in the study found policies were not family friendly, and they had not gained sufficient support in their career. Female police officers also had bad field training experiences. Freiburger and Marcum showed that factors related to low 'recruitment', 'selection', and 'retention' should be explored more deeply in subsequent research.

In 2016, the South Australian Government published research investigating gender bias, sexual discrimination, and sexual harassment for over 2,000 police officers. This revealed that almost 45 per cent of women were victims of some form of gender-bias or gender-related jokes (Government of South Australia, 2016, p.xii).Perhaps unsurprisingly, the research documented how culture in the South Australian Police (SAPOL) is essentially a 'boys club' that is "deeply rooted in masculine normative assumptions"; male police officers showed "paternalistic attitudes toward women, rigid in-groups with exclusionary sanctions towards out-groups, and strong expectations of loyalty and affinity in the in-groups" (2016, pp.13 - 14).

The research proposed that in the South Australian Police undertake cultural change via a project where strategies involved 'spearheading face-to-face discussions across SAPOL about gender equity, establishing a blog on gender equality, increasing understanding of unconscious bias, championing bystanders who speak out, and promoting the benefits of flexible work'. Having undertaken this project, South Australian Police now requires solid leadership to enact adaptive cultural change (Heifets, Grashow and Linsky ed. Government of South Australia, 2016, p.37). This involves: re-regulating the organisation's existing DNA; preserving current good practice and behaviours; active experiment with an experimental mindset; use diversity to create stronger decision-making; and being persistent. The South Australian Police initiated a process of sustainable gender equality, introducing things such as a 50:50 recruitment policy aided by hosting women in policing sessions via social media and marketing materials; incorporating internal and external female representatives on selection panels to ensure more diverse recruitment and promotion; and giving sufficient weight to people management skills when promoting officers to higher levels (2016, p.54). Importantly, this research contributed evidence which clearly showed that even in a developed nation such as Australia, the need for cultural change promoting gender equality and ensuring greater diversity remains very significant.

Extracted themes

The table below summarises previously examined factors contributing to gender inequality in a police force.

	Inequality issues							
Literature	Lower recruitment opportunities (No jobs opening, selective role)	Social expectation &gender stereotyping (ie.nurturing role, husband, family, physically weak)	Professional Efficacy, individual skills	Sexual harass-ment	Unequal pay	Less career advance-ment (glass ceiling, patronage system)	Inadequate Support ,training & Welfare	Systematic Exclusion: acceptance issue from male & female Colleagues/ male attitudes
Burke (2005)	√		√	√	√			
UN (2019)	√	√		√	√		√	
Muntarbhorn (2018)						√		
Bhowmick (2012)		√						
Ngamkham & Laohong 2018	√	√				√		
Morrison (2004)	√	√	√			√		√
Bhowmick (2012)		√				√		
Chan's et al. (2013)		√				√		
Wilson (2016)		√			√	√	√	√
Brinser (2016)		√	√	√		√		√
Bastick (2014)	√		√			√	√	
Khundilok-nattawasa 2019	√	√				√		√

Table 1: Extracted themes
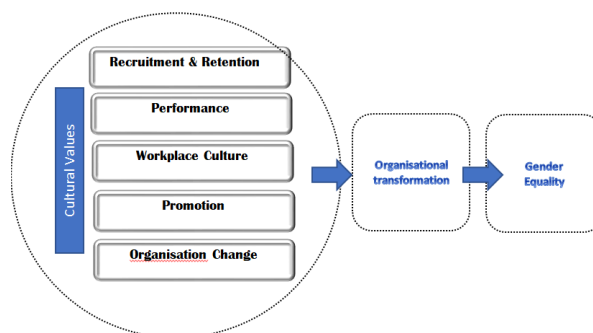
Conceptual framework

Figure1: Conceptual framework

Research methodology

The research is a case study of the Royal Thai Police the main question is: the extent to which and how cultural factors play a crucial role in gender equality; how these shape and re-shape the place and experiences of female police officers in the Royal Thai Police force? The study seeks to examine and identify cultural factors which have driven gender inequalities in the Royal Thai Police force, and how these can be eliminated. This is a descriptive research study, seeking to explain the 'who', 'what', 'when' and 'where' attached to research questions examining what is happening in policing in Thailand, as well as issues such as 'how' and 'why' the phenomenon is occurring. The study uses a combination of document review, in-depth interviews with participants, and a focus group to provide greater analysis and depth to the questions posed. Interviews were conducted with commissioned officers from the Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit (Metropolitan Police Division 1 - 9), five informants from the Crime Prevention and Suppression Supporting Unit (Immigration Bureau), 10 informants from the Education Unit (Police Education Bureau), and one retired high rank officer (police major-general and above).

The Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit was selected largely due to the evident characteristic of being a male-dominated environment and with more masculine or 'manly' assignments. The Education Unit was selected as it was something of an opposite character, comprising mainly female police officers. The Crime Prevention and Suppression Supporting Unit (Immigration Bureau) was selected partly because it is a gender amalgam, falling between the distinct character apparent in the other two units. Interview questions were developed from the gender equality themes prominent in the literature review in order to examine these within the context of policing in Thailand. Finally, content analysis and thematic analyses were performed. Inductive coding was used through a six-step process: data familiarisation; 'coding' which involved de-construction of data; 'generating initial themes' or sub-themes to identify sub-groups beneath the same umbrella; 're-check' and review themes against the data; cause and effect analysis; as well as constant comparison; and 'writing up' the results. Data triangulation involved re-examination and cross-examination of data from several sources for the primary purpose of ensuring greater and more accurate data validity. In this research, data triangulation is done with people, time, and space; theory triangulation was performed to examine commonality and contradictory data schemes; methodological triangulation was used for data collection entailing document review and in-depth interviews.

Results and discussion

Question 1: Which cultural factors may contribute to the lack of women in law enforcement in Thailand ? (recruitment and retention)

Answers to this question revealed that the majority of the police officers employed in all units are influenced by their friends and family to join the police force. This suggests that existing female and male police officers are not entirely self-reliant, and that the decision-making is largely a factor of acceptance from extended family and other members of the same social groups. This result confirms Hofstede's theory that Thais are very 'collective' and cherish the values of their reference network.

Participants in this study observed that the existing pattern of recruitment in the Thai police is extremely gender biased, i.e. overwhelmingly male dominated. A counter-argument emerged however, with some participants suggesting that female police officers should not complain about a selective recruitment as they "should have recognised that the police force is a male culture." 'Male culture' is described by Susan Ryan (Government of South Australia, 2016, pp.13 - 14) as aggressive physical activity, competitiveness, exaggerated hetero-sexual orientation, misogynistic and paternalistic attitudes towards women, rigid in-groups with exclusionary sanctions towards out-groups and strong expectations of loyalty and affinity in the in-groups. As a result of this study, it seems clear that the Royal Thai Police service is a very highly masculinised organisation, within which, certain largely feminised groups operate e.g. the Education Bureau. Interestingly, this study found that about half of respondents, with the majority from the Education Bureau, did not consider a career change as necessary or desirable.

Participants from the Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit are the least hesitant about expressing concerns with their potential career path. Female respondents expressed apprehension about their future career paths as they have little career advancement when compared with their male counterparts. Some also mentioned the need to have a 'side job' such as opening a bakery, or expressing a wish to transfer to a different unit after they have completed their three-year contract as an inquiry officer. A reluctance to challenge or express concern about actions by more senior staff emerged when participants were asked for their opinion on the Royal Police Cadet Academy decision to cease recruiting females. They simply claimed it is the judgement of senior executives, and it is not their place to voice an opinion. Participants do not know the reasons behind this decision, but hope the force has decided to recruit more female officers through other channels.

The same question was posed to a former police commissioner and he stated that the cost of producing female graduates is as high as producing male graduates, and female cadets are simply not worth the investment because their career choices do not correspond to the initial goals of the Royal Thai Police force – whatever these are. Because the Force cannot hold them indefinitely as inquiry officers, it saw no point recruiting females as cadets. Clearly it seems desirable that, ending the recruitment of potential female officers by the Royal Police Cadet Academy should be something of the short-term measure at most, as evidence from very different police services, clearly shows that recruiting and retaining female police officers is both desirable and necessary.

Currently, women are still being recruited for 'front office' policing which may also be contributing to the Academy's decision to cease recruiting female cadets, as those in 'front office' or secretarial roles, do not normally require extensive training. Though the former commissioner commented that female inquiry officers are ambitious and seek an easy way out by transferring to different units which provide higher career advancement opportunities. It is not overly surprising that the evidence emerging in this study confirms the findings of the Freiburger and Marcum (2016) research in the USA, and

which noted that turn-over rates for female police officers are high in comparison with their male peers, and that issues related to female recruitment and retention should be explored more fully in future research.

The findings here are also consistent with the Nhamkham and Laohong (2018) study which found that that female cadets experience limited career paths when compared with males. It does seem likely though, that a solution for low female recruitment and retention might be found in examples such as the South Australian police service. This could involve a female retention programme, which provided a 'voice' enabling policy changes in the Royal Thai Police. As in South Australia, an approach which encourages gender equity and equality, develops a 50:50 recruitment model, and incorporates women into selection and promotion panels will obviously improve existing policy frameworks. Moreover, an approach that provides guidance and mentoring for female inquiry officers, advises them on career pathways and career opportunities, and addresses the struggles they encounter due to gender discrimination, will also assist with recruiting and retaining female police officers.

Such an approach should also help female police officers establish their own networks and create opportunities for those who have not graduated from the Royal Thai Police Cadet programme by establishing their suitability for promotion and career advancement. Evidence emerging during this study, strongly suggests that female enquiry officers will need extra assistance given that they are working within a male dominated, highly masculinised organisation if they are to achieve gender equity and equality. Noting that, gender equality does not mean women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not depend on whether they were born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for men and women according to their respective needs. According to SHRM's Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: The Doors of Opportunity are Open research, low employee retention is not always a result of a low job satisfaction (SHRM, 2020). In contrast though, higher retention rates derive from respectful treatment, equal compensation, trust between colleagues and senior manager, job security and opportunities. Establishing a female recruitment and retention programme in the Royal Thai Police will obviously help the organisation move towards gender equity and equality.
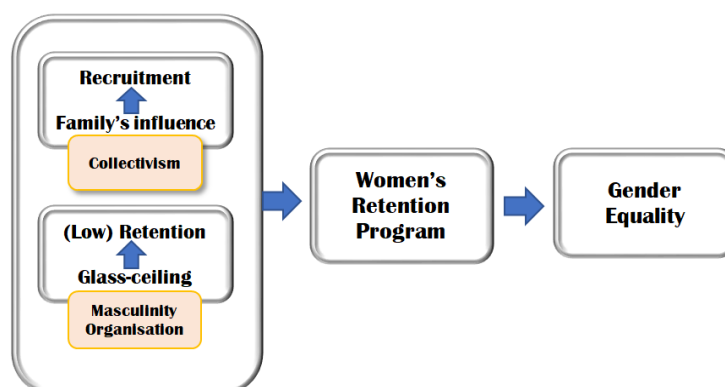

Figure 2: Achieving gender equality through women's retention programme

Question 2: What challenges do women face in policing? (performance)

Participants in this study see the need to more fully integrate women into the police force as a necessary step to achieving gender balance. Overall, participants agreed that female police officers currently only have mainly passive roles in the organisation, largely because they are seen as more detailed, sensitive, patient and meticulous when it comes to administrative work. More widely, participants felt that female officers should receive training for field-work policing.

Participants from the Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit as well as the Crime Prevention and Suppression Support Unit given the same opportunities in those positions as much as their male counterparts. In general terms, female enquiry officers did not mind handling cases involving women and children, but they also wanted to work in roles which advanced their knowledge and widened both their perspectives and career opportunities. Female participants did not want to be limited to only day shifts, nor to being left behind in locked cars during the pursuit of suspects because they are seen as less capable than their male peers. Interestingly, the majority of female participants in this study believed they were actually better at handling weapons, as many of their female colleagues out-performed their male counterparts during competitions. They did however express the view that sometimes they were more physically limited, which might prevent them performing equally effectively in 'the real world', with a few participants mentioning they were out-run by suspects. Participants from the largely female staffed Education Unit reported similarly, however, the majority of them felt their age did not permit changes in their current range of duties.

It was also noted by participants that with enough training, some additional assistance, and perhaps being allocated to a 'buddy system' they could complement their male peers and perform better in the field. Despite their wider confidence, a few participants apparently believe that women are more suited to work in administrative roles, nursing, education, or tourism. This provides a very clear indication of how female police officers have become "accustomed to the stereotype and conformed to the hegemony a society has prescribed for them" (Dekeseredy & Dragiwics, 2012, p.316). One male police officer claimed that female police officers should always remain only in administrative areas because of their womanly nature - whatever that means.

Female participants felt there is a need to prove their ability to fellow officers and society more generally, as they did not enjoy the same level of 'automatic' respect their male peers received. Perhaps interestingly, female participants did not feel inferior as their status was simply a factor of the way in which the organisation worked and how they viewed themselves in Thai society more generally. In contrast, female police officers noted that they tended to be supportive of each other because they are very much the minority gender. For example, one police station had over 100 male officers, but only three female officers. This study also found that female participants did not experience explicit intra-gender challenges. Although a participant from the Police Education Bureau assumed intra-gender challenges exist, but that these are not explicitly marked in Thai society. This belief is consistent with Meyer's analysis that Thai society is high context (communicating) culture which means messages are not delivered explicitly, but concealed between the lines. "Communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered" and that messages are implied but not plainly expressed (Meyer, 2015, p.39).

Other than Thailand, high context communication cultures are apparent in countries such as Japan, Korea, and China. In these

cultures, evaluation is indirect and diplomatic (p.69) especially when it comes to a subordinate speaking to a superior. Though it is more apparent that younger police officers, i.e. those aged under 40, tend to be more confrontational than their older peers. Older officers reported having been more confrontational when they were younger, but over the course of a few years they learnt to master when and where they should be submissive as "open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony which has negative effects on relationships" (p.201). Such theories also go some way to explaining why gossiping is common in Thai culture and in various public organisations. It is also in the nature of the force that younger officers respect older officers, and lower rank officers respect more senior ones. This is referred to as the Poo-noi Poo-yai principle. During interviews, the majority of participants (17) reported hierarchy, discipline and order as their organisational culture; something corresponding closely to Hofstede's analysis. This strongly suggests that the Royal Thai Police is a very hierarchical organisation with high 'power distance' and high 'uncertainty avoidance', which also means the organisation is multi-layered and fixed, and communication follows the chain of command. Despite some uneasiness, this factor did not limit police officers from performing effectively as they had become accustomed to prevailing traditions. A finding such as this corresponds with the approach apparent in Police Discipline Act B.E. 2477 (1934) which stresses 'politeness and respect towards the elders as well as senior officers.'

Overall, it seems that female police officers felt they could perform as efficiently as male police officers, but they were never really given opportunities, the support to demonstrate this, or have it reflected in their career trajectory. Such perspectives stand in marked contrast to those expressed by a former police commissioner who baldly asserted that female police officers are more suited to work in administrative roles. Apparently due to their smaller build and physical limitations, female police officers are not equipped for field work. Moreover, he asserted that Thai culture raised women to be gentle and submissive something quite unlike women from western settings, meaning that Thai women needed to be taken care of. From Australia's Workplace Gender Equality Agency perspective, if the individual described above were to represent the Royal Thai Police more generally, the organisation is undoubtedly at stage 0 of the Gender Equality Roadmap as it is incapable of recognising gender-bias in the organisation. Overall it seems very clear that the Royal Thai Police harbours and fosters gender discrimination meaning that female police officers do not enjoy equal opportunity to work at their optimum. The views described above, are also consistent with Bhowmick (2012) involving policing in India. This study reported that male officers claimed they do not see any need for integrating women into mainstream policing simply because women are not enthusiastic about their jobs, and that females can work as cooks in the police mess (Bhowmick, 2012, p.4).

As a means of addressing its structural failings and gender inequality, it seems the Royal Thai Police may need to adopt bottom up rather than top down decision-making which further encourages power de-centralisation for an exceedingly hierarchical organisation. Evidence for an alternative approach is apparent in in Japan, where a *ringisho* system is used and which means decision making begins with everyone at lower levels, this is then passed upwards to the next level once group agreement is reached. A *ringisho* system creates "root binding" before a consensus is imposed from above. With this approach, women at the base of a hierarchy know they have more chance of expressing their position. If a vastly different approach was taken by the Royal Thai Police, the organisation would need to offer female police officers far more scope and encourage them to

work in operational roles with extended responsibilities, rather than limiting them to their administrative positions. Female police officers should also be encouraged and enabled to gain additional training boosting their self-confidence and respect for their performance. To do this, the Royal Thai Police must enact clear policies establishing gender equality organisational values as well as developing a friendly communication strategy to promote those policies.

Cultural changes can take place and gender stereotyping in the Royal Thai Police can be reduced over time, but only if 'new cultural and behavioural norms' (Biccheri, 2016) are given to the organisation. In the other words, for the policy to take effect and for female police officers to rise in such a traditional organisation, staff must first collectively be informed about and come to believe there are sound reasons for such changes.
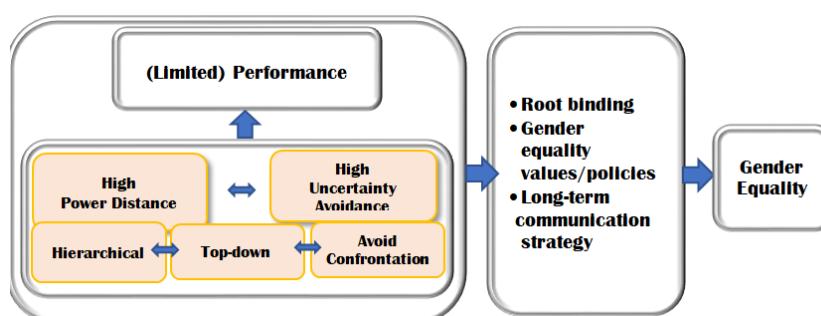

Figure 3: Achieving gender equality through long-term communication strategy

Question 3: Does gender discrimination/sexual harassment exist for women pursuing careers in law enforcement? If so, what cultural aspects contribute to it? (workplace culture)

Initially, all female police officer participants in this study reported that they are treated as equals and have not suffered a lack of respect from male police officers. On the other hand, they were treated more like 'sisters' and were always taken care of and endured paternalistic attitudes (Government of South Australia, 2016, p.xii). For instance, female inquiry officers were always excused from attending night shifts. When interviewed further however, this study found that female police officers are sometimes challenged by their male colleagues about their job performance. On other occasions, they were bombarded with sexual or 'inside jokes.' Generally, female inquiry officers and female police officers working in the Crime Prevention and Suppression Support Unit (Immigration Bureau) were treated more harshly than female officers working in the Education Unit. This

seems likely to be because the number of females working in the Education Unit is higher than those of others. One participant reported being asked if she 'likes it at the top or the bottom' after she had described a victim's sexual encounter to other officers. Another reported that comments were made about her breasts and her gender identity. Often, participants reported they would joke back, but they felt uncomfortable doing so. A few participants claimed even though they felt uncomfortable, succumbing to unpleasant banter simply came as part of a job in a male dominated organisation because 'it is how they talk.' They reported never having confronted male police officers who carried on in inappropriate ways, and some mistakenly viewed this as part of relationship-building within the force.

The US National Institute of Justice Special Report found sexual harassment in police forces are often made through sexual comments or jokes, and that these actions had been so 'normalised that they don't think it's at the level

of harassment' (Muhlhausen 2019, p.iii). Moreover, the US National Institute of Justice Special Report (2019, p.8) also found policewomen of today face more 'subtle sexism as opposed to overt harassment', which corresponds to statements made by all participants from the Police Education Bureau that sexual harassment in the unit could only be read 'between the lines'; something which Meyer's (2015) high-context interpretation of Thai culture reinforces. According to Stockdale (2005 ed. Siriwato, 2017, p.36) sexual harassment is common in male-dominated professions, as it is used for maintaining masculinity and status differences between men and women. The findings in this study support those of Siriwato (2017) who found that Thai female police officers believed sexual harassment is normal if it is done with good intentions. Siriwato also concludes that Thai female officers have high endurance and toleration towards sexual harassment; they are unknowingly working in what Huang and Cao (2005) describe as a hostile work environment which can entail characteristics such as habitually offensive jokes, un-wanted sexual personal discussion, offensive remarks on appearance, and joking in uncomfortable manner.

Further, according to Meyer (2015) 'trust' is built differently in different cultures and in Thailand it is based on, and built, via outside-work relationships. In the other words, trust is built when individuals share their personal time and personal information which is often non-work-related. Participants in this study were asked if they had ever been taken an advantage of during outside-work incidents to which they collectively answered 'no'. They added that they always went out as a group, which again suggested collectivism, or else they did it 'privately', not against one's will and they do not explicitly talk about it. Often women try to avoid confrontation, as they like to 'save face', and they are scared to disagree. (Meyer, 2015, p.199 - 201). Siriwato (2017) found that Thai women do

not openly discuss sexual or sex-based harassment with other people. This is something also observed in this study and it was very difficult to obtain accurate or detailed answers from interviews conducted with participants. This study also found that participants from the Police Education Bureau and the Royal Police Cadet Academy were extremely careful about their answers, demonstrating a high degree of loyalty toward the organisation. Participants in the study were more hesitant to answer when it came to sensitive issues, and were vigilant and avoided making negative comments about the Royal Thai Police. One male Royal Police Cadet Academy participant even went as far as saying there had been no sex harassment incident ever throughout the entire history of the Royal Thai Police.

Of the four units with participants in this study, only the Royal Police Cadet Academy agreed to provide a copy of its internal policy dealing with gender issues. The framework (2015) describes sexual harassment as inappropriate behaviour, and that female officers as well as cadets should 'dress appropriately, avoid private gathering with a male co-workers or be in a concealed place with them, and should avoid making unwanted sexual jokes.' In the 21st century, few if any organisations would publish a policy asking women to dress appropriately to avoid sex-related encounters or crimes however, the Royal Thai Police is one organisation that does. Participants were also asked if they were given equal treatment from the organisation in aspects such as accommodation, allowances, and uniforms. These were reported being equal except for uniforms. Female police officers must wear skirts which are considered 'neat' and 'respectful' of their tradition. This conforms to data seen in the findings made by Kukudrua's (2019, p.25), that workplace inequality includes inability to wear trousers at work. In some units though, female police officers are allowed to wear trousers but only if permitted by a supervisor. The majority of participants in this

study seemed very surprised to learn that Thailand and Nigeria were two of the very few countries that required female police officers to append 'W' to their rank as a form of gender-based label (NPF, UN Women, and UNFPA, 2010, p.15).

In terms of job responsibilities, participants were asked if job allocation is treated fairly and if they are given more workload in comparison to male police officers. Responses indicated that participants are are not given more work, but they felt they had to work harder to be accepted as part of the police force; and that there is a constant need to prove themselves as helpful, in particularly in the beginning of their careers. It is worth noting that one participant assertively said 'no' to all questions which might infer any negativity towards the Royal Thai Police. This is the same participant, a graduate of the Royal Police Cadet Academy, who previously expressed the view that women are incapable of performing male duties. The former police commissioner interviewed as part of this study, re-affirmed that inequality is part of the organisation and it has been there from the inception of the Royal Thai Police which is essentially a male culture, and one in which the nature of work is not female-related.

On this basis, he believed it is unreasonable to compare Thai culture with those of western countries. He argued that mentally, Thai females are not taught to be as independent as their western peers. Physically, they have different body builds, notably that Thai females are seen as small and fragile, and they are trained to be soft, polite, and non-aggressive. In a sweeping generalisation, the claim was made that even in western countries, female police officers are always paired with a male partner and are never allowed to be in the field alone. This led the former police commissioner to conclude that he

did not see the need to risk the life of female police officers in the field. He further added that physical limitations are always going to be one thing which prohibits women from ever having gender equality in a male-dominated workplace such as this one. According to him, gender equality is an impractical set of ideas which are not applicable in real life. In addition, he claimed that sexual harassment barely exists in the Royal Thai Police due to strict rules and regulations as well as harsh disciplinary penalties. During this study, four male police officers were interviewed, of whom, three reported a very similar perception to the former commissioner. Interestingly, one participant cited Israel as an example apparently because in Israel, female and male police officers sleep on the same floor and are not separated into different buildings, but sexual harassment never occurs because of the heavy penalties which may be involved.

Overall, this study shows how gender inequality is so deeply rooted in the Royal Thai Police, that it has become normalised as part of the historical and prevailing organisational culture. As other studies have shown, achieving gender equality in a high power, distance society is a very difficult process, but it can eventually happen when newer norms are created and fruitfully carried by those less concerned with tradition and more concerned with fairness and equity. In moving towards a new organisational approach, the Royal Thai Police must explicitly define sexual harassment, initiate open discussion about such matters, establish new policies and guidelines as well as contemporary complaint and dispute resolution processes which should be simple, direct, and not time-consuming. Cases involving gender inequity, sexual harassment and like matters should be treated fairly and under regular supervision and review by panels and bodies comprising members of both genders.
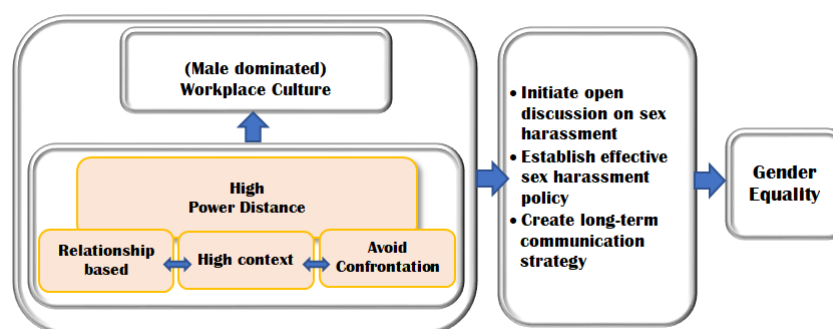
Figure 4: Achieving gender equality through open discussion on sex-based harassment

Question 4: Which cultural factors appear to contribute to lack of advancement opportunities for women in law enforcement? (promotion)

In this study, the majority of participants claimed the current system does not support women from the very beginning of their careers, starting from a recruitment system which quite deliberately makes room for a very small number of women to be admitted. As noted earlier, it is possible for women to be promoted and gain better career advancement in administrative, educational or medical areas, as opposed to crime prevention and suppression. A few female participants from the Education Unit stated that they receive the same opportunities for career advancement as men, but that in reality, Thai society readily accepts men as leaders but not women. Women still encounter many disadvantages in the police force because it is the nature of the Thai social values to show more respects towards men as opposed to women.

This study found that because the main priority for female inquiry officers are cases involving women and children, these circumstance create disadvantages when it comes to career advancement, as they have very limited experience and exposure to other kinds of policing work. Further, in the Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit, female police officers usually reach a glass ceiling at about 35 - 36 years of age when they begin families. After which, they felt a need to be transferred elsewhere for routine duty and further career advancement. This is a finding consistent with

the Brinser (2016) description of the 'glass-ceiling' as "an invisible barrier which inhibits the progression to higher levels of an organisation's hierarchy for women and other disadvantaged minority groups" (Shabbir, Shakeel, and Zubair, 2017, p.236) which also stated that 'personal challenges' are non-organisational challenges such as family responsibilities and self-confidence which limited policewomen to certain roles in the force.

One female participant in this study reported that as a female she is expected to nurture her family, so getting married would also make the job even more impossible. Since the advent of the new monarch, participants in this study felt a great deal of discrimination against female police officers was more apparent, with many additional rules and regulations imposed on their uniforms for example. One participant voiced the view that the Royal Thai Police was a better organisation when the prime minister was also a former police officer. In broader terms, the Royal Thai Police is seen as about politics where organisational changes arise depending on who the new 'big boss' is. Promotion in the Royal Thai Police also very much depends on 'how good connections you have' because other than 'seniority', 33 per cent of the pool is selected for their 'outstanding competency' as determined by those in more senior posts. Participants in this study stressed that 'knowing where to place yourself' is a technique all police officers must acquire in order to prosper, because the Royal Thai Police is a 'relationship based' organisation

where 'business is personal' (Meyer, 2015, p.170).

In a high-power distance and a collectivist culture such as the Royal Thai Police, loyalty is often traded for trust, protection and guidance. Additionally, when participants were asked if they preferred close monitoring and if they expected direct guidance from their superiors, the majority of the participants except one academic from the Royal Police Cadet Academy answered 'yes'. These answers re-affirmed Hofstede's position that Thailand is a high-power distance country, reflected via apparent attitudes for paternalistic approaches to management. Thailand stands in quite marked contrast to countries like Australia, Denmark and the USA, but shares similarities with China and other eastern cultures in the ways that business relationships are personal relationships, where trust is invested in the individual, not the company (Meyer, 2015, p.173).

Relationship here result from 'affective trust' rather than 'cognitive trust' which means these business relationships arise from "the feelings of emotional closeness, empathy, or friendship … seeing each other at a personal level" (Meyer, 2015, p.168). Therefore, getting to know each other at a personal level will help create stronger personal relationships and professional connections within the Royal Thai Police, which explains how social gatherings with colleagues are extremely crucial and part of the job. Overall, police officers regardless of gender, reported working in a very low-trust organisation where one could never be sure who to trust; 'because it is so competitive, people are ready to stab you in the back whenever you have taken a wrong step.'

Answers from the former police commissioner are consistent with those arising from the majority of participants in this study, notably that female police officers are given fewer opportunities for career advancement unless they

prove themselves as exceptional experts in a field such as in budgeting or nursing. Again according to the former commissioner, this is because female police officers are not meant to work in operational roles due to their seeming physical limitations. Female police officers encountered career advancement challenges, but when executives give them an opportunity to work in an operational unit such as being an inquiry officer in the Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit, the former commissioner claims they are seen to 'shoot themselves in the foot' by wanting to transfer elsewhere. On this basis he sees no point on prescribing further changes. Overall, interviews carried out during this study, show that the Royal Thai Police is an overtly patriarchal organisation where male dominance and gender segregation is endorsed. In the Royal Thai Police, gender stereotyping is common and other than having a high-power distance in the chain of command, there is also a high-power distance in between genders. Career advancement depends a very great deal on connections, loyalty, and relationship-based associations. Essentially, the Royal Thai Police has a broadly collective outlook and seemingly short-term orientation as it places traditions at the top and views societal changes with suspicion.

To break away from this traditional hierarchy, the Royal Thai Police executive must look beyond gender stereotyping norms, embrace equality, incorporate women as part of the organisational culture by encouraging equal recruitment, and equipping them with the skills, knowledge and understandings that can provide female police officers with the values and approaches that foster long-term career advancement. What the Royal Thai Police also needs is a contemporary approach to education and a more sharply future-focussed outlook. It should also establish clear, unambiguous ethical guidelines and encourage their effective implementation so that 'outstanding achievement/competency' is not all about 'connections'
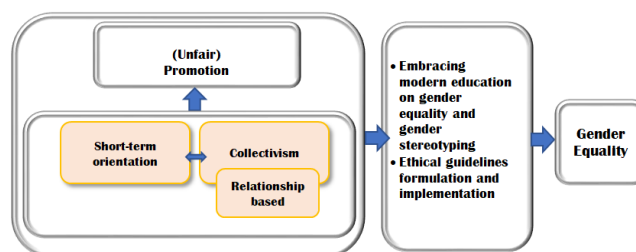
Figure 5: Achieving gender equality through modern education and ethical guidelines formulation

Question 5: What do female police officers hope to see in organisational reform? (organisation change)

All participants including the former police commissioner, confirmed that patronage and a quid pro quo system definitely exist in the organisation, this being part of wider Thai culture. Being a high 'uncertainty avoidance' and an 'indulgent' culture, the Royal Thai Police believes everything should be controlled and it is a culture that avoids unforeseen situations. While there are apparently strict regulations, there does not seem the capacity to to control individual desires and impulses, hence patronage is commonly accepted and welcomed by many. One officer in this study stated that those who work closely with supervisor deserve to get promoted and gain benefits the most, because having a good relationship with supervisor actually meant the person does more work than others. It was also claimed that the system is far from appalling, as long as the 'right' officers are chosen to receive benefits. A few participants stated that such approaches are common and acceptable as they have become the usual practice within the force and in other organisations. Bicchieri (2016) noted that people act accordingly to their reference network, therefore, if a patronage system is accepted by their friends, family, or peers, it is likely that the practice become a social norm.

One example of a quid pro quo may arise when a female officer is bribed with special treatment to engage in sexual behaviour (MacKinnon ed.

Huang and Cao, 2005). Participants in this study reported they had heard of 'relationships' exchanged for 'advancement', though these behaviours were not conducted explicitly because Thai culture requires discretion. When asked if they sought an end to such approaches, participants responded positively as this would provide fairness and equity for everyone. It was also seen that becoming increasingly westernised in organisational terms, it was younger police officers who would initiate these changes, while the more traditional structures reduced with retirement.

Moving towards gender equality, gender reform and organisational change can be achieved by: (i) un-freezing, (ii) changing, and (iii) confirming/supporting such changes (Skinner et al., 2005). One of the hoped-for features of this study is 'un-freezing' the ground allowing progress on the other two steps. Moving forward means the Royal Thai Police acknowledging that current practices entailing:

• low diversity recruitment which does not incorporate sufficient places for female employees and low retention rates within several units;

• assumptions about performance due to apparent physical limitations in combination with insufficient training and gender stereotyping;

• unfair and inequitable opportunities for promotion due to limited roles and duties as well as prejudicial job allocations; and

• lack of knowledge and awareness about sexual harassment in male dominated workplace cultures; all of which require

• embracing an outlook for organisational change which includes eliminating patronage and quid pro quo approaches regardless of gender.

It seems that in order to effect gender reform, the Royal Thai Police should employ programmes of the kind developed elsewhere, those that address women's retention and which mentor and promote their position; incorporate modern education about gender stereotyping, as well as open discussion of sex-based harassment at executive and non-executive level; and establish bottom-up policy formulation, as well as implementing ethical practices/guidelines within the organisation to eliminate hostile work environment. Once way of achieving this will be if the Royal Thai Police adopts the Gender Equality Roadmap (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018, p.11) to identify a new organisational gender equality process and progress towards fulfilling its ambitions. Noting that change must be constantly monitored and evaluated using among other things a long-term communication strategy.

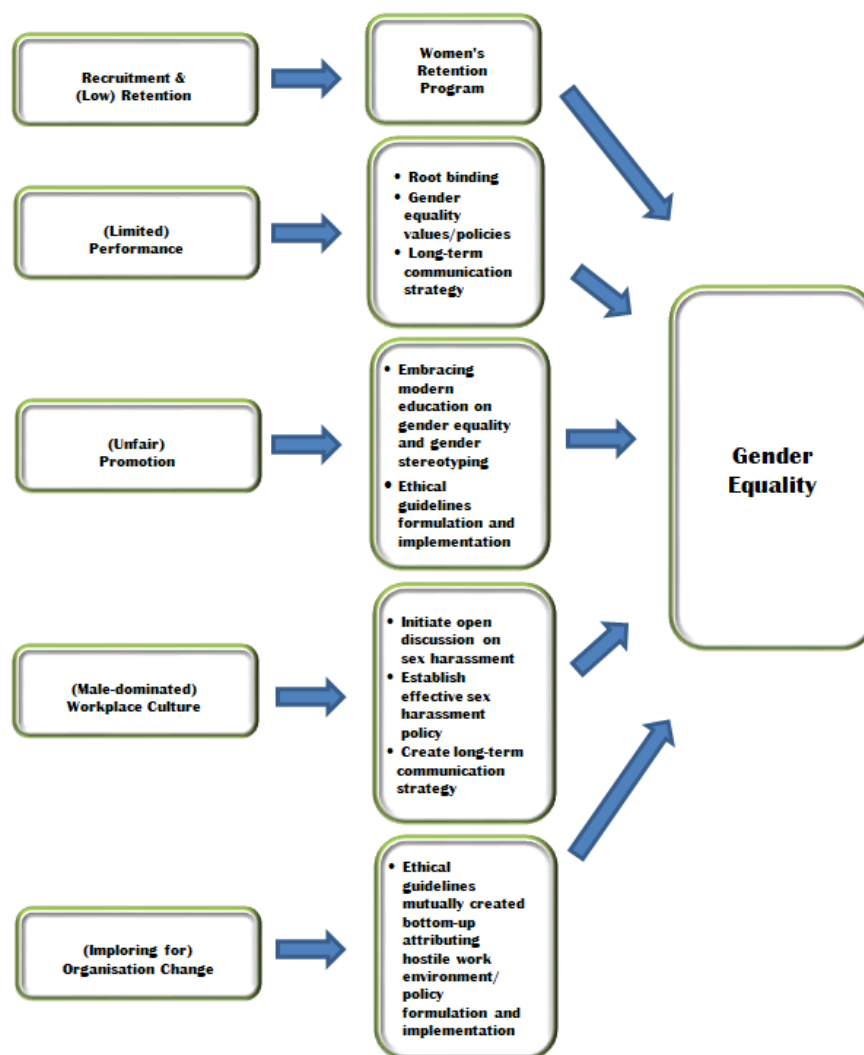The key transformation can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 6: Pathways towards organisational transformation

Conclusions

The results of this study clearly contradict prior findings by the Royal Thai Police that there is gender equality in the police force, and they support the conclusions seen in Siriwato (2017) as well as Ngamkham and Laohong (2018) on the matter. Findings from this study are consistent with those of research carried out in other countries such as Australia, India, Nigeria and the USA. This strongly suggests that it is in the responsibility, and it is the duty, of the executives within the Royal Thai Police to drive change and not waiting for it to occur. 'naturally'. In summary, this study concludes that, gender inequality in the Royal Thai Police is a result of cultural factors such as high-power distance, hierarchical social structure, collectivism, high-context and non-confrontational culture, relationship-based trust, and short-term orientation. It also concludes that the majority of female police officers, whether occupying administrative or operational roles, felt they had physical limitations which might exclude them from certain kinds of work. Overall though the views obtained from participants corresponded with those of the former police commissioner. Interestingly, the former Commissioner also saw that 'culture' plays a crucial role in determining what takes place in the Royal Thai Police; namely that Thai women are raised to be soft, gentle, and subtle; they are valued for their 'feminine' quality and small body build; and they are taught to be submissive rather than active or dominant.

The study identified gender inequality within the Royal Thai Police, where fewer female officers are recruited, retained or promoted, where they are routinely provided with fewer opportunities to advance, and are confined to prescribed domains where they are not as likely to advance as their male peers. Female police officers within the RTP not only suffer from fewer career opportunities, they reach the glass ceiling far sooner than their male counterparts due to the impersonal and personal roles prescribed for them organisationally and socially. Female police officers within the RTP are forced to work in a hostile environment which would not be tolerated in other western countries, where male police officers frequently comment on their looks and habitually use so-called 'jokes' to sexually harass them. Female enquiry officers and investigation officers encountered these experiences more than others as they typically work in male-dominated departments such as the Crime Prevention and Suppression Unit.

Within the Royal Thai Police, connections, patronage and quid quo pro approaches are deeply embedded and widely practised. Some see these things are beneficial as it allows more senior staff to move 'good' staff to higher ranks sooner. Many in this study though, viewed these things as damaging as they provide loopholes for corruption as well as encouraging inefficient and unfair promotion. Moreover, this study found that, even in the 21st century, some male police officers still feel and treat women as an inferior second-gender. They perceive woman as having lower physical and intellectual ability, thus, outcasts from their 'boys-clubs'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some female officers, especially those who were older maintained that 'looks and appearances' are among the most important qualities in being a police officer. More worryingly, female police officers have conformed to the gender stereotyping culture subsequently found it excluded them from their entitlements. A review of documents within this study found for example, that material from the Royal Police Cadet Academy reportedly addressing sexual harassment, notably required female police officers to dress appropriately and be discreet when around their male peers.

This study provides evidence supporting the Hofstede (2011) and Meyer (2015) findings that Thais are collectivists; they live in a higher-context culture as they communicate implicitly and between the lines; and trust is relationship-based and business are always personal. Thais

typically do not talk openly about matters such as sexual harassment, and being in a very hierarchical culture means female police officers have accepted inequalities whether in terms of recruitment/retention, performance, workplace culture, or promotion, as part of their traditional norms and have succumbed to paternalist treatment. Participants in this study placed an emphasis on a younger generation and hope that hostile environments can be eliminated through time, westernisation and globalisation. As a result, this research suggests it the Royal Thai Police should initiate a women's retention programme to mentor and promote their position in the force, gaining higher retention within the units and higher recruitment ratio. More importantly, the Royal Thai Police must provide modern education on gender stereotyping as well as organise open discussion about sex-based harassment at executive and non-executive level. RTP should establish an up-to-date, bottom-up policy approach as well as implementation particularly on non-gender biased ethical practices and guidelines within the organisation which will reduce and eliminate the current hostile work environment for female police officers. Moreover, a long-term communication strategy must be established as the change progress should be continuously monitored, evaluated, and re-evaluated for its lasting effect, so that in future gender status 'tumruaj ying' is removed from the Royal Thai Police organisation.

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