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THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE SOCIETY ON THE JOB SATISFACTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

In the theoretical part of the paper authoress summarises the key theoretical obser-vations on communication and communication with the society. She introduces the meaning of communication of police organizations with the society and the meth-odologies used by the Slovenian police to communicate with the society. Authoress summarises the developments in the fields of evaluating the job satisfaction of employees, measurement of the job satisfaction and other factors that influence job satisfaction.
Empirical part of the study is based on a nation-wide survey of 388 police officers in police directorates Celje, Maribor, Murska Sobota and Slovenj Gradec.
Authoress answered the key questions:
* *How do the police officers value communication with the representatives from organizations?*
* *How do the police officers value communication with the suspects and offen-ders?*
* *How do the police officers value communication with the victims?*
* *How do the police officers value communication with the citizens?*
* *What is their job satisfaction?*

INTRODUCTION

Communication has been defined by many authors (Laswell, 1960; Foltz, 1981; Vreg, 1990; Burleson, 1995; Ule and Kline, 1996; Mumel, 1998; Trček, 1998; Možina, Tavčar and Kneževič, 1998; Rosengren, 2000 and others). Some (Mumel, 1998) state that communication is the cornerstone of the existence of intelligence, while others (Ule and Kline, 1996) emphasise communication as a continuous stream of messages and perceptions between individuals. Some (Grabnar, 1991) are of the opinion that communication is interaction between the sender, the message and the receiver. Other authors (Možina and Damjan, 1994; Možina, Tavčar and Kneževič, 1998) consider communication as a process between the sender and the receiver that contains the message, the channel of communications, mechanisms to codify and de-codify the message, and the possibility to introduce noise and replies from the receiver. The dif-ferences between various definitions of communications are small, allowing approxi-mation, that communication is a process of interaction between individuals using verbal and nonverbal signs on routes knows as communication channels.

Literature discusses organizational communication, composed of three elements: (1) horizontal communication, which is communication between co-workers, (2) vertical communication, which is communication between workers and their superiors and (3) communication with the society, which includes communication of representatives from the organization with the society.

It is becoming apparent that success and survival of organizations strongly depends on the communication both, inside the organizations and with the society. Mumel (1998) claims that no individual or organization can exist if there is a lack of communication

between the individuals or the organization and the society. He also emphasises the significance of the quality of the communication not merely its quantity.

"Communication is between people and not organizations – that's why an efficient communication depends on the understanding and knowledge of behavioural patterns of people. Communication can not be denied – we communicate even when we do not, as reservation and solitude are not unnoticed in a society" state Možina, Tavčar and Kneževič (1995:36). We conclude that organizations are devoting more emphasis and understanding to the role and necessity of communication.

COMMUNICATION OF ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE SOCIETY

All living is in endless interaction with the society, using communication as a mean and method to adjust to the society as well as to adjust society to their preferences (Mumel, 1998). Van de Ven (1976) suggests that communication provides the most suitable foundation for developing the theory of relations between the organization and the public. Communication with the society can aid the organization to recognise the most important elements of the society and, using strategically guided communication, influence their relations with the society (Ašanin Gole, 1999).

"Organizations operate in dynamic, changeable and structured environments, on which the organization depends in one way or another. Society has to be surveyed, analysed and considered at the stage of planning and during the implementation of the organisation's activities. And that is the task of the strategic communication management: continuous search for harmony, symbiosis and acceptability of the organization in the society and on this basis devising the suitable communication strategies. Its role must also include a prompt and concurrent survey of the effect of implemented corrections on the long-term communicational strategies of the organization" (Ašanin Gole, 1998:611).

COMMUNICATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE SOCIETY

The role of police organizations is specific to each community. It is generally viewed as a repressive arm of the state with an extensive authorization to interfere with human rights. It can successfully function during a broad public support, which in turn necessitates adequate communication with the general public. The support of the public is key in ensuring the successful fulfilment of its duties, notably in communities which have seen a change in the philosophy in policing in the past decade. "The notion of publicity implies the existence of mechanisms for acquiring the agreement of the general public with the legitimity of the public service, including police, with understanding of its success and methods of implementing its mission" states Harmon (1981:13) .

Communication of police organizations with the society is also discussed in broad terms by Leclerc (1988), who finds notable changes and differences between the police as an organization and the society. Society has attained a certain amount of influence on the activities of police, while at the same time police has to keep its level of authority over the society, to ensure its ability to successfully function. Similarly Bloch and Weidman (1975) also find an essential link between the quality of police services, the society and the importance of communication.

Ainsworth (1995) discusses the significance of adequate and prompt communication with the benefiters of police services, such as witnesses, victims, suspects and the

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media. He emphasises the importance of psychological training of police officers and their immediate superiors to be adequate prepared for any circumstances and claims that each beneficiary of police services has to be treated on the individual basis.

A milestone in this area has been achieved in some police organizations, such as British, American and some western European police forces who have been evaluating their success rate in achieving their duties through the response from the minorities and their feeling of security. In particular British police has a well developed communication channels with local communities in the framework of so-called "community policing". This field is presented in some more detail below since it addresses the essential features and difficulties in establishing a successful communication between the police and the society.

The essence of the policing in a community – community policing – comprises of preventing security related issues and assistance to the people in the community. In such circumstances and with such philosophy of policing, the value of adequate communication becomes even more apparent and significant.

Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, (1994; in: Pagon and Lobnikar, 2001) state that the community policing is a philosophy and organizational strategy that emphasises cooperation between the citizens and the police. In this context police and society jointly define and solve security matters.

Community policing is inherently organizationally decentralized, with its legitimity ensured by the support to the community and from other sources, such as laws, political hierarchy and professionalism. In this manner police officers are ranked and rewarded for their "communicational skills (sensitivity for cultural diversity, problem solving, participation in conflicts)" (Hahn, 1998; in: Pagon and Lobnikar, 2001).

This type of policing, strongly dependant on the communication with the society, is also discussed in Ferreira (1998:70) who claims that: "In order for police activities in the community to be successful they have to evolve in a democratic environment. That can be achieved only when police and the community develop the same desire for equality. They have to learn to trust one another and believe that any unilateral action by one side will be of benefit to the other side. Wounds inflicted by questionable police ethics in hands of repressive state regimes will heal when police activities in the community become based on trust and cooperation. Only then will police truly protect and work for the benefit of citizens who abide to the laws imposed by their own democracy.

Communication within the police organizations and with the society has been frequently surveyed, in Slovenia and worldwide. Typical results are summarised below.

Using a sample of police officers from Toronto, Corsianos (2000) studied the role of the environment and the society on police officers in meeting their duties, their success rate and the success rate of the police organization on a whole. He highlighted the most prominent factor as the communication relations among police officers, and between police organization and the society in which the police officers operate.

Palmer and Pagon (2002) have examined the attitude of police officers to the social services. On a sample of 94 police officers they observed that:
• Police officers are readily cooperative with the social service;
• Police officers have a good opinion of social workers, although they regard social service to be too feminised;

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- Police officers regard their intervention at domestic disputes to be appropriate, although they desire to be more efficient in such interventions;
- Have to rely on their own creativity when dealing with mentally retarded citizens.

Kovčo and Vukasov (2000) have examined the relation of youth to the police and to their rights, by questioning 391 teenagers aged 15 to 18 years. Authors report several influential factors, such as:
- Police officers don't approach the youth with respect and tolerance they deserve
- police tends to be cautious and cruel to them
- police should better understand and cooperate with the youth
- youth are punished for minor offences
- police officers do not admit to their faults
- And conclude that youth have negative opinion about the police officers.

In conclusion we observe that police in a classical meaning of the word is in a way a repressive arm of the state which is responsible for ensuring law and order in the state. Viewing the police from this angle alone would led to conclusions that police organizations need not pay attention to communication at all. However this is not the case. Police organizations must exercise and be seen to exercise their right and attention to communication within the organization itself, and with the general public.

Recent developments in the activities of police organisations and community policing gave emphasis to the communication of police organizations with the society. As the work of police organizations is predominantly restricted to preventing unwelcomed security related issues in the society, the need for adequate communication with the society becomes even more apparent and necessary.

JOB SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEES IN THE SLOVENIAN POLICE

There is a lack of systematic study of the job satisfaction of employees who are in position of leadership and of those responsible for ensuring the policing duties are enforced. Individuals at the Faculty of criminal justice are researching this area through their own research and with the aid of the undergraduate final year projects. Some of their observations are presented below.

Two similar surveys were conducted on a sample of police officers across the Republic of Slovenia in the years 1994 and again in 2002. Authors of the first survey are Selič and Umek (1994), while the authors of the second are Areh and Umek (2002). Although the surveys are not entirely comparable, the first survey found a greater percentage of employees who are satisfied with their jobs, compared to the second survey. According to the first survey, the most significant factors leading to job dissatisfaction among police officers are their personal income, stress at work, working conditions and limited social life. On the other hand in the same survey Selič and Umek (1994) list the most influential factors for the job satisfaction to be the security and benefits of the employment as well as the interesting and versatile work.

The survey of Areh and Umek (2002) conducted in 2002 found less police officers satisfied with their jobs. More specifically, 50.6% of interviewed police officers were dissatisfied with their working conditions, 45.8% with the system of benefits and promotions, 45.1% with their personal incomes and 38.5% with the organization of the work in general.

The topic of job satisfaction in the Slovenian police is also discussed by Anželj (1995) who lists among desirable factors the security and benefits of employment and the

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versatile and dynamic work. Among unfavourable factors Anželj (1995) lists stressful work, working conditions, and limited social life.

Krope (2002) surveyed factors influencing the job satisfaction of police officers in the police directorate Slovenj Gradec. Krope finds police officers regard as favourable factors the opportunities to assist the community, respect and honest appraisal from their superiors and the quality of life. According to Krope the police officers are least satisfied with their personal income.

Lepoša (2002) used a sample of 68 interviewed police officers in the police directorate Kranj and observed that the most frequently quoted factors for job satisfaction among police officers are the versatility of their work, close-knit relation with the individuals and community, job security and good interpersonal relations with co-workers.

Lobnikar and Pagon (2002) examined the deviatic behaviour of Slovenian police officers on a sample of 564 police officers. Using factorial analysis they classified the behaviour in three categories: (1) in relation to their co-workers, (2) to the organizational rules and codes of conduct and (3) to their views on personal benefit of performing their work.

THE METHOD

In the subsequent sections we present results of a survey conducted in police directorates Celje, Maribor, Murska Sobota and Slovenj Gradec. The topic of our survey was communication with the society with the principal aim to determine a connection between the communication with the society and the job satisfaction of police officers.

The study was based on a non-experimental survey. The research method was a field study and the questionnaire was used as a research technique. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, t-tests and the analyses of variance in a regression analysis. The base population from which a representative sample was taken were all police officers in the surveyed police directorates, excluding their higher ranking officers and their assistants. The survey was conducted between 22nd of November 2003 and 19th of December 2003. 600 questionnaires were sent out and 388 responses were received until the deadline, representing a 64.6% response rate.

All questions, excluding those related to the demographic data, had a five level answer scale, with Grade 1 representing no agreement with the question, Grade 2 a partial agreement, Grade 3 a 50-50 agreement, Grade 4 a broad agreement and finally a total agreement represented by Grade 5.

RESULTS

FORMATION OF DERIVED VARIABLES

Using factorial analysis we first identified *Communication with the society* as an independent variable which has been measured against compound variables: *Communication of police officers with representatives from organizations, Communication of police officers with witnesses and victims and Communication of police officers with offenders*. We also identified Job *satisfaction of police officers* as a dependant variable, measured against compound variables: *Satisfaction with the stimulation, Satisfaction*

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with interpersonal relations and work, Satisfaction with the means of work, Work with people and Overall job satisfaction.

ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Out of the sample of 388 respondents, 378 stated their gender, from which 349 were male, representing a 92.3% of the sample and 29 were women, representing a 7.7% of the sample. 373 respondents stated their age, which ranged between 19 and 50 years with an average age of 31.4 years. The academic degree was given by 375 respondents of which 362 or 93.3% had completed a secondary education, 10 or 2.6% had a higher degree and three or 0.8% a university degree. The respondents have been serving in the police on average for 10.8 years, and on their current position on average of 6.2 years. On average they had 12 years of work experience. 376 respondents answered the question how they were recruited into the police. A majority (168 or 44.7%) were those completing three or four year Secondary Police School, followed by those (126 or 33.5%) who prequalified within the old programme before 1999 – prequalified following a two-year, three-year or a four-year secondary education. The new method for prequalification, where prospective candidates are recruited after a four-year secondary education, was successfully completed by 77 respondents or 20.5%. Two have completed a criminal investigation course and three or 0.8% have completed a police powers course. We were also interested in their current engagement in ongoing education for a higher degree. This question was answered by 376 or 96.9% of the sample among which 76 or 20.2% are attending such programmes.

ANALYSIS OF INTER-CONNECTIVITY OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES WITH COMPOUND VARIABLES

ANALYSIS OF INTER-CONNECTIVITY OF SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA WITH COMPOUND VARIABLES

First of all we examined whether the age of questioned, their period of service on the present position and their period of service in police relate with the compound variables. The findings are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Relation between the period of service on the current position, periods of service in police and the compound variables.

Compound variable	Period of service on the present position	Periodof service in the police
"Satisfaction with the stimulations"	-,115*	-,070
"Satisfaction with the interpersonal relations and work"	-,121*	-,108*
"Overall job satisfaction"	-,152*	-,119*

* p = < 0,05

We observe that the age of respondents does not correlate with the compound variables. Police officers with a longer period of service on the present position have a dissatisfactory regard to the compound variables *Satisfactions with the stimulations*, *Satisfactions with interpersonal relations and work* and *Overall job satisfaction*, compared to colleagues with shorter periods of service on the present position.

Table 1 also shows that respondents with longer period of service in the police less fre-quently value favourable the *Satisfaction with interpersonal relations and work* and *Overall job satisfaction*, compared to those with shorter periods of service in the police.

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In the proceeding paragraph we present a correlation analysis between the compound variables. We observed that individual compound variables frequently tend to be inter-connected with statistically favourable and characteristic correlations. These results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Connectivity between compound variables

	Communication of policemen with the representatives from organizations	Communication of policemen with witnesses and victims	Communication of policemen with offenders
Communication of policemen with the representatives from organizations	1		
Communication of policemen with witnesses and victims	,528*	1	
Communication of policemen with offenders	,366*	,564*	1
Satisfaction with the stimulations	,222*	,187*	,159*
Satisfaction with the interpersonal relations and work	,299*	,219*	,189*
Satisfaction with the means of work	,123*	,105*	,136*
Work with people	,246*	,287*	,269*
Overall job satisfaction	,116*	,129*	,035

* $p = < 0,05$

Table 2 shows that respondents who frequently value the variable *Communication of police officers with the representatives from organisations favourably*, also tend to favourably value *Communication of police officers with witnesses and victims, Communication of police officers with offenders, Satisfaction with the stimulation, Satisfaction with the interpersonal relations and work, Satisfaction with the means of work, Work with people* and *Overall job satisfaction* compared to respondents who less frequently express favourable opinion on *Communication of police officers with the representatives from organization*.

Further we observe that respondents who favourably value *Communication of police officers with witnesses and victims also frequently* favourably value *Communication of police officers with offenders, Satisfaction with the stimulation, Satisfaction with the interpersonal relations and work, Satisfaction with the means of work, Work with people* and *Overall job satisfaction*, compared to respondents who less frequently value *Communication of police officers with witnesses and victims* favourably.

Individuals with a favourable opinion of *Communication of police officers with offenders* also frequently regard favourably *Satisfaction with the stimulation, Satisfaction with the interpersonal relations and work, Satisfaction with the means of work, Work with people* compared to colleagues with an unfavourable attitude to the variable *Communication of police officers with offenders.*

DETERMINATION OF STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

We examined possible statistically significant differences between the individual compound variables in relation to the gender, participation in programmes of further education and to the method of recruitment.

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T-test have revealed only a marginal statistically important difference between the respondents of male and female gender and only at the variable *Satisfaction with the stimulation* (t = –2,030; p = 0,051), with a less favourable evaluation given by male (median value of 2.26) compared to women (median value 2.57).

The analysis of variance was used to determine any statistically significant differences between the compound variables and the method of recruitment. We observed that the candidates who completed the Secondary police school value the compound variable *Satisfaction with interpersonal relations and work* below average (median value of 3.25), while candidates who were recruited through the old method of prequalification value the variable even lower (median value of 3.23). Respondents who completed the new programme of prequalification value the compound variable *Satisfaction with interpersonal relations and work* above average (median value of 3.54).

ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE SOCIETY ON THE JOB SATISFACTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

In subsequent section we conduct a regression analysis for the common dependable variable *Job satisfaction of police officers* and the common independent variable *Communication with the society*. Results show that a 15.7% of variance (R^2 = 0,157; F = 64,032; p = 0,000) on the variable *Job satisfaction of employee*s can be described with the variable *Communication with the society.*

DISCUSSION

An important observation from this study is that police officers with a longer period of service on the same position become less satisfied with the stimulation, interpersonal relations and work and consequently with the overall job satisfaction. In the analysis of demographic data we observed that police officers on average serve on the same position for 6.2 years and a substantial percentage (17%) are actually occupying the same position for over 10 years. The reason for this may be sought in the strictly hierarchic organization of the police. Within each group of the same educational degree or qualification level there are several possibilities of promotion and these become more widespread for individuals with a higher degree. Therefore individuals who attend courses and actively seek qualification for a higher degree stand a greater chance of promotion. Contrary, police officers who are serving on the same position for an extensive period of time, we find that they must have not participated in programmes of further education, which in turn weakened their possibilities for a promotion. Under these circumstances such police officers will naturally be dissatisfied, which is not entirely unexpectable observation.

Similarly we observe that police officers who already serve in the police for longer periods of time less frequently regard favourably the interpersonal relations and their job satisfaction. Analysis of the demographic data shows that the average period of service in the police is 10.8 years and that only 37% of police officers are serving in the police for less than the average period. We suggest the same factors as discussed above can be used to explain this observations, that is the lack of engagement of police officers to concurrent education hinders their chance of promotion which in turn promotes the dissatisfaction factors.

In the framework of communication with the society we observe that police officers who frequently positively value their communications with the representatives from the organizations, witnesses, victims and offenders, also frequently value favourably

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all segments which were used to measure the levels of job satisfaction. We conclude that communication of the society has an effect on the levels of job satisfaction of police officers (15.7% of explained influence).

We encourage the police management to consider the findings from this study and develop frameworks and workshops where police officers can enhance their communicational skills. It is not merely the question of communication skill of the sub-commanders and commanders of police stations and directorates, but more importantly the communication skills of the ordinary police officers whose job revolves around communication with a variety of people of different backgrounds, beliefs and education on a daily basis. We recommend to the police management to consider within the programme of police recruitment (new prequalification) the possibilities to emphasise the communicational skills and requirements. We also encourage police management to develop communicational classes for the current members of the police. Secondly, the communicational skills are also important to the assistant commanders and commanders of the police stations. The existing educational curriculum on higher and the university accredited courses, where the respective candidates attain the necessary qualification, virtually does not contain such classes. It is felt necessary that the police management provides such classes in the framework of continued education of assistant commanders and commanders before they occupy the respective positions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Irena Gorenak has a master of science degree and is now employed as a councillor at the Ministry of the internal affairs of the Republic of Slovenia in the Department for complaints. Her work revolves around communication within the police organization itself and with the members of the general public (press and media).

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