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ELEMENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN THE FUNCTIONING OF DISTRICT (CITY) POLICE HEADQUARTERS - THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

Organisational culture is a permanent feature in the functioning of any organisation, including organisations belonging to the disposition groups, also referred to as uniformed services, an example of which is the Police. In this article, issues related to the distinctive features of organisational culture and how they manifest themselves are presented in the example of the functioning of field police units, i.e., municipal and district police headquarters. The types of these units were indicated not accidentally because the very nature of the tasks performed by their officers indicates that they have direct relations with the public daily, which affects the image of the indicated units and the whole organisation, such as the Police.

Elements of organisational culture and its practical significance

Although the literature defines organisational culture as a specific organisational resource that is difficult to define unambiguously and to which it is difficult to attribute determinants and specific effects with exact certainty, it nevertheless constitutes a permanent distinctive feature of the organisation. On the one hand, organizational culture defines the rules of behaviour in the organisation and communication between its members; on the other hand, it defines the organization's external image. Culture differs in every organisation, as its shape is influenced by the people who create it and where it operates (Ścibiorek 2012, p. 33).

Organisational culture is a system of three levels made up of sets of elements:

- artefacts (behavioural, physical, linguistic),
- procedures, standards, and values,
- behaviour and interpersonal relations (Młodzik 2014, p. 46).

Artefacts are those that are most noticeable to an organisation's environment and that distinguish it from others. They are the layer of external manifestations of a particular organisation. Procedures, norms, and values determine how members of an organisation should behave in certain situations and indicate the essence of the organisation. Behaviours refer to human nature (e.g., lazy versus creative workers). Human relations define the determinants of organizational relationships (e.g., cooperation or competition).

Knowing what organisational culture is and what elements it consists of, it is worth asking at this point: what is the importance of culture for an organisation?

Firstly, the existence of a cultural community affects the behaviour of the participants in an organisation, who interpret and evaluate the surrounding reality and the changes taking place in it identically or similarly. Secondly, culture standardises human behaviour, making it more predictable and reducing its ad hoc control. Thirdly, culture enables fast, efficient, and unambiguous communication between participants in an organisation. It is because it contains a specific language code, i.e., situationally conditioned abbreviations, metaphors, symbols, or slogans (Kozłowski, Jemielniak, Latusek 2009, p. 4).

Although culture does not necessarily unite all members of an organisation in the same way, it should not divide and differentiate them and thus should not be a misused tool in the life of an organisation (Geraga 2020, p. 15).

Touching upon issues related to the culture of an organisation, it is impossible not to mention its climate, i.e., the set of norms and views characteristic of its participants, mentioned earlier, which determine the way of thinking and are expressed in attitudes and patterns of behaviour focused on the tasks to be performed and the goals to be achieved. It results from objectively functioning organisational rules and subjective perceptions, which interpenetrate each other, thus determining organizational participants' behavior framework (Potocki 1992, p. 32).

The most favourable case for the organisational climate is to base it on ties of interdependence, which manifests itself in the multi-actor implementation of tasks, for example, by forming a team to solve a specific problem. Interdependence also means that the participants in the organisation can choose their methods of action and create opportunities for them to use their competencies. With co-dependency, however, certain organisational conditions limit the freedom of action of individuals. An example of this is the performance of tasks for which one must be qualified.

The leadership (management) style adopted within the organisation is also vital for the climate of the organisation. It consists of the content of the social relations that shape the dynamics of interaction between the participants in the organisation. It is consequently linked to the decision-making procedure and the rules of reward and punishment. The climate of an organisation can foster the

attitudes of its participants, who will identify with it not only because of their functions within it but, above all, because of the congruence of their individual or group goals with those of the organisation as a whole. If a suitable climate is not in place, expecting participants to be involved in the organisation's tasks and identify with the organisation's processes is unrealistic. In this sense, a climate is a management tool to converge individual goals and expectations with the organization's.

Organisational climate should be regarded as a partly resultant phenomenon of organisational culture, which is shaped by elements of the latter. The culture of an organisation is discernible in many dimensions of its functioning. Thanks to it, it is possible to distinguish essential factors determining the specifics of the organisation's functioning, viz:

- the operating model of the organisation (including the shape of the organisational structure, the degree of formalisation of activities, the standardisation of processes, and the exercise of control),
- the communication style of the organisation (this results in an area of freedom between openness and formalisation of the communication process),
- leadership (leadership style of superiors, degree of participation of subordinates in decision-making),
- methods of motivation (degree of emphasis on performance) (Scibiorek 2012, p. 33).

A strong culture implies a high degree of alignment between the participants in an organisation and what it represents. It simultaneously fosters loyalty, compactness, and commitment among participants, thus leading to a high degree of homogeneity of behaviour. In this way, it can significantly influence the reduction of formalisation in the organisation. From this perspective, culture reinforces employees via a hierarchical, authorized, and endorsed framework of values and principles.

Place of district (city) units in the police structure and their tasks

At the territorial level, the Police comprise an integrated organisational structure operating at the central and field level, with the principle of hierarchical subordination. The Police is headed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Police, who is the central organ of government administration competent for protecting human security and maintaining public safety and order. He is also the superior of all police officers.

The government administration bodies in the provincial area for the matters mentioned above are:

- the provincial governor with the assistance of the regional police chief acting on his/her behalf or the regional police chief acting on his/her behalf,
- district (city) police chief,
- chief of a police station.

As a rule, the territorial scope of action of district (city) police chiefs corresponds to the primary administrative division of the state. At the same time, it should be noted that the creation of municipal police headquarters is optional, which means that it is possible to create such units in cities which are the seat of the authorities of a city with the rights of a district and a district having its seat in that city. At the same time, the minister in charge of internal affairs, by way of regulation, creates and abolishes municipal police headquarters considering the city and county's administrative, geographic, and demographic conditions (Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 30, item 179).

In model terms, the Police Force is an integrated organisational structure that includes, among others, 65 municipal police headquarters and 271 district police headquarters. These bring together the most significant number of officers, 73,938 out of 99,060 employed in the Police as of 1 July 2022 (<https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/540/resource/40356/table>). There are also police stations and police stations within the structures of district (city) police headquarters.

The organisational structure of police units is also defined as the arrangement and interdependence between individual cells and positions, indicating the hierarchy and specialisation of official tasks in police units. An organisational cell is a separate part of the organisational structure, which in district (city) police headquarters may have the form of a department, desk, cell, post, district unit, office, team, or single-person positions.

The tasks carried out by the district (city) police headquarters include:

- To develop and implement prevention programmes in cooperation with local government bodies and non-governmental organisations,
- Performing operational and investigative activities in order to uncover crimes and detect perpetrators efficiently,
- Organise, execute, supervise, and control the police activities in the performance of police officers in the prevention service,
- Performing activities ensuring safety and order in traffic on public roads (Official Gazette of KGP 2013, item 50).

The tasks mentioned above are performed in everyday service by officers of all district (city) police headquarters in Poland. The performance of these tasks and the place of the Police in the institutional system of the state determine its characteristic function, which is to serve society and the state by protecting the safety of people and maintaining public safety and order. All activities of the organisation above within the framework of such a defined function are carried out exclusively in the public interest. The Police, in order to function efficiently, must adapt its organisational structure and internal management system to the dynamically changing conditions in its environment. The public requires it to continuously improve to efficiently and effectively fulfil the tasks imposed on it.

Importance of organisational culture elements in the functioning of district (city) police headquarters

The organisational culture of the Police, as in other organisations, has a significant impact on establishing its identity by indicating the elements that are part of its adaptation strategy, i.e., what is central, enduring, and what distinguishes the organisation from its environment (Kostera 2010, p.154).

Adaptability, mission, cohesion, and participant commitment are the main areas of culture linked to organisational performance (Denison, Mishra 1995, pp. 204-223).

Culture informs an organisation's value system by enabling an understanding of its mission, which, in the case of the Police, it is its servant role to society by protecting people's safety and maintaining public safety and order.

The Police, like other uniformed services, is an organisation with a hierarchical structure, where the disposition of lower-level bodies towards superior bodies is apparent and can be exercised in various areas. The organisational structure is based on formal authority, in which a vertical and horizontal relationship exists between the scopes of tasks, competences, duties, and powers of officers occupying specific official positions. The roles of superior and subordinate contribute to maintaining service discipline and determining the tasks assigned and performed. As a result, a mechanism of multi-level linkage of police organisational units is created. Figure 1. shows an example of an organisational chart of a municipal police station.

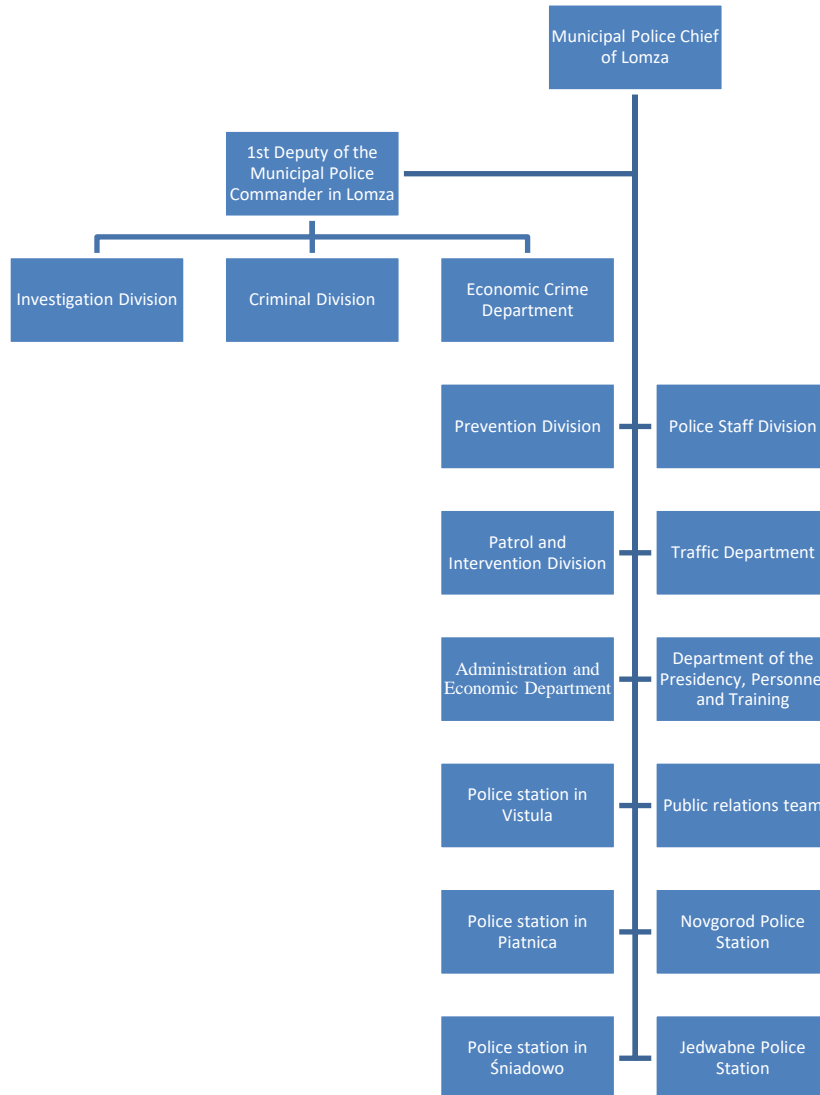


Figure 1: Organisational Chart of the Lomza City Police Station

Source: own compilation based on the Rules of Procedure of the Lomza City Police Station dated 11 March 2010, as amended.

There are often discrepancies resulting from the different views of how superiors and line police officers perform their official tasks. Superiors primarily strive for the absolute and strict implementation of the set strategic objectives seen through the prism of established metrics, while line police officers directly

perform tasks arising from the nature of their service under various types of constraints (Banutai, Mesko, Sifer 2011, pp. 379-399).

The institution of the service relationship of officers plays an essential role in shaping the organisational culture of the Police. This relationship has four elements that distinguish it from other legal relationships, i.e., an obligation of sacrifice, availability and obligation of subordination, special rights related to the performance of service, administrative-legal regulation of the officer's legal relationship (Hauser, Niewiadomski, Wróbel 2011, p. 5).

The results of the research conducted by A. Hollingshead and G. Kirkham identified the following elements of police organisational culture:

- esoteric knowledge, involving the assimilation of norms of behaviour appropriate to the service,
- internal sanctions to control the interaction between police officers and external stakeholders and their relationship with each other,
- professional solidarity,
- social isolation, which is expressed in the fact that officers face resentment from parts of society,
- jargon, i.e., the vocabulary and expressions characteristic of this professional group, occurs in the daily communication process (Holyst 2013).

What significantly creates organisational culture and, at the same time, builds the atmosphere in the workplace is communication. Internal communication in an organisation binds together the elements of the organisation while providing the information necessary to perform work, enables the coordination and control of tasks, and at the same time, is a motivating tool, shaping the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour of employees (Trzcińska, Wiciak 2011, p. 60).

In the police force, corporate communication is becoming essential to ensure internal and external communication's consistency, relevance, and reliability. This type of communication is intended to enable information balance while preserving the principle of hierarchy prevailing in the formation. To this end, it is necessary to successively improve the communication competence of the management so that proper interpersonal communication functions at all levels of management and functioning of the Police (Oblińska 2014, pp. 59-60).

Referring to the classification of organisational culture created by R. Harrison, there are four basic types: power culture, role culture, support culture, and success culture (Panasiewicz 2013, pp. 44-45). In the opinion of the author of this article, the most corresponding type in relation to field police units is the role culture type. This type is based on respect for rules and established norms, and authority depends on the place occupied by the person in the organization's structure. Vertical communication plays an important role here, while at the same time, employees are not expected to be committed and active identified with the manifestation of innovation.

The results of a study conducted among Polish police officers indicated that internal communication significantly influences the creation of organisational culture. Also, to the same extent, communication between officers made visible in the external environment creates the image of the Police and presents elements of organisational culture. On the other hand, the external communication of police officers with citizens has the most significant impact on the image of the organisational culture of the indicated institution presented to the environment (Bartłomiejczak 2009, p. 155). The nature of the tasks performed by the officers of district (city) police headquarters, who interact with representatives of local communities daily, emphasises the importance of ensuring effective communication. How prevention officers communicate with citizens during an intervention in the street, police officers of the criminal investigation service during activities related to receiving a report of a crime, traffic officers during a road check, or, finally, neighbourhood police officers during their rounds of the service area is essential not only for the image of the local police unit and its officers but also significantly determines the formation of the organisational culture in a given district (city) police station.

Summary

Although the organisational culture in municipal and district police units does not have a direct impact on their effectiveness, understood as the fulfilment of statutory objectives in a manner consistent with the legal regulations in force, it is undoubtedly the case that an adequately shaped organisational culture in them provides police officers with a sense of belonging and mission, making their work more meaningful and broader. Doing so also increases their loyalty and identification with the organisation. A solid organisational culture integrates police officers around the organisation's goals and the means to achieve them. At the same time, it significantly impacts the sense of unity and cooperation by influencing a positive workplace climate.

The organisational culture of the Polish Police takes into account, in addition to the typical levels in the form of artefacts, values, norms, and procedures, also other distinguishing components of the organisational culture of individual field police commands, which function daily in different administrative units of the state and different local communities. It is precisely this local specificity taking into account above all behaviours and interpersonal relations that will influence the possibility of differences in the formation of culture in individual Police units, which may affect the image not only of this particular district (city) commands but also of the Police as a whole.

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Abstract

Organisational culture, or how its elements are shaped and dimensioned, can be crucial to how an organisation is perceived by its internal and external stakeholders. It is also the case for disposition groups distinguished by the object of their activities, including issues related to providing security and order. One of these is the Police, whose structure includes district (city) police commands.

Keywords: Police, organisational culture, district (city) police headquarters

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