



МЕЃУНАРОДНА НАУЧНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЈА
БЕЗБЕДНОСНИ КОНЦЕПТИ И ПОЛИТИКИ - НОВА
ГЕНЕРАЦИЈА НА РИЗИЦИ И ЗАКАНИ



INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE
SECURITY CONCEPTS AND POLICIES - NEW
GENERATION OF RISKS AND THREATS

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04 - 05 Јуни 2017, Охрид

Том II

Скопје 2017

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

**SECURITY CONCEPTS AND POLICIES - NEW
GENERATION OF RISKS AND THREATS**

04 -05 June 2017, Ohrid

Volume II

Skopje 2017

Издавачи:

Универзитет „Св. Климент Охридски“
Битола
Факултет за безбедност – Скопје

За издавачите:

проф. д-р Сашо Коруновски, ректор на
Универзитетот „Св. Климент
Охридски“ – Битола
проф. д-р Оливер Бачановиќ, декан на
Факултетот за безбедност – Скопје

Уредник на изданието:

Доц. д-р Марјан Ѓуровски

Лектор на англиски јазик:

Рози Гроздановска Велеска

Компјутерска обработка:

Оливера Трајанова Ѓорѓијовски
Кемал Рушид

Печати:

АД „Ван Гог“ - Скопје

Адреса на издавачите:

Факултет за безбедност 1000 Скопје
П. Фах 103
тел: 022546211

Универзитет „Св. Климент Охридски“
1ви Мај б.б. 7000 Битола,
тел: 047223788

Publishers:

University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
Bitola
Faculty of Security- Skopje

For the Publishers:

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the University “St. Kliment
Ohridski”- Bitola
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Lecturer in English:

Rozi Grozdanovska Veleska

Computer Processing:

Olivera Trajanova Gjorgjijovski
Kemal Rushid

Print:

“Van Gog” - LTD Skopje

Address of the Publishers:

Faculty of Security 1000 Skopje
P.O. Box 103
tel: ++389(0)22546211

University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
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tel: +++389(0) 47223788

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POLICE SUBCULTURE AND POTENTIAL STRESS RISKS***Dane Subošić, Dr.Sc****The Academy of Criminalistic and Police Studies, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia****Slaviša Krstić, Dr.Sc****Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia****Ivana Luknar****PhD student Faculty of Political Sciences***ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of occupational subculture and the stressors involved in a pronounced occupational subculture. Policing is also known for its physical and mental stressors that are, arguably, more numerous than in other professions. The importance of the protective function of subculture needs to be taken into account when attempting to deal with police stress. This study describes the prevention and treatment programs that have unfortunately not been sufficiently utilized because of the police culture. The paper reviews the potential risks caused by the exclusion of police culture. It hypothesizes that those police officers who perceive themselves as “out-group” (i.e. that they are not part of the subculture), would experience more occupational stress in comparison to those who perceive themselves as a part of the group (i.e. “in-group”).

Key words: police, occupational subculture, stress, stress dealing mechanisms

1 INTRODUCTION

Police profession faces many challenges regarding not only its relation to social circumstances, but also with respect to finding out the best solutions for the internal weakness and ongoing problems. Stress is one of the crucial modern problems caused by the nature of the job and the relationship between the people in this profession.

Police subculture and belonging to it is of great importance whether we observe a person as an individual (social unit) or as a professional (social role). Traditionally, the police were more interested in practical action and results than in innovations and exploration of new techniques and methods. However, along with the social and technological progress, the possibilities of the police profession are expanding and it is necessary to adapt the police to new conditions and needs of modern society. This is the challenge facing the police profession, which can be a significant source of stress. Babić defines stress as "strong, intense, negative experience, any significant change (positive or negative) in life that disrupts the balance and sets new requirements for adaptation" [1] (p. 329). This inability of effective and quick adaptation of the police to the modern requirements may result in: stress, disregard of the procedure due to the lack of its understanding, unclear role of the police in society, confusing police tactics, etc. On the other hand, the police can contribute to the alleviation of the symptoms of stress of their employees in different ways: using a strong and developed police subculture, motivating and rewarding its employees adequately, as well as conducting a variety of appropriate measures to mitigate the already known sources of stress in the police. It will primarily contribute, in accordance with the capabilities, to create a "tailor-made" work environment

for the people who work there, leading to a better functioning, performance and development of the police profession in general.

The purpose of this paper is to point out the seriousness of stress and its effects on everyday life and work of the police officers. The paper emphasizes the importance of the professional police subculture, which in many ways can contain and mitigate the sources of stress at the workplace. Hence, it is recommended to strengthen and develop the professional police subculture, underlining the need to undertake certain activities in order to prevent and solve the stress in the police profession.

2 STRESS IN THE POLICE PROFESSION

Lately, the issue of stress is becoming increasingly relevant in everyday life, but also in professional life. Stress affects negatively the physical and mental health of the police officers, their social life and the very organization which employs them suffers great damage. Different people point out to different sources of stress. Stress disrupts the normal flow of the working time.

Police profession is considered to be one of the most stressful [2] (pp. 375-400), as policemen are exposed to unusual stress and trauma. Numerous authors have written about police stress. For example, Patterson [3] (pp. 338-352) defines stress as an imbalance between what is required of a policeman and what a policeman can offer.

Given that police officers are exposed to the most violent, antisocial and generally bad elements of society [4] (pp. 43-62), the police profession contains many sources of stress:

1. Physical conditions of work (field work in all weather conditions or inadequate facilities, unventilated rooms, bad lighting, constant noise, etc. may be some of the sources of stress in the workplace);
2. Job description (constant exposure to crime and criminal activity, a profession that is a "lifestyle", shift work, frequent interruptions of the work or work monotony);
3. Interpersonal relations (petty disputes in the collective, intolerance, isolation of individuals, unprofessional conduct, petty gossip during breaks, etc.);
4. Gaps in the work organization (unclear roles, incomplete instructions, inadequate distribution of responsibilities among the staff, poor communication and poor coordination among the organizational work units, etc.)
5. Inadequate reward (low wages, lack of praise or recognition, lack of feedback) and many others. Many researchers have tried to present a complete and final list of categories of stress sources in the police profession.

For example, Stratton [5] (pp. 443-470) lists four categories:

1. Stressors within the organization;
2. Stressors outside the organization (dealing with the modern professional requirements and challenges, stressors related to the legal system and society's expectations of police conduct [6] (pp. 338-352), disrespect of the public and the media toward the police [7] (pp. 63-79) etc.);
3. Stressors arising from the nature of the work (includes events that are routinely repeated in the police work and have the potential of causing psychological and physical harm. First, referring to the use of force, making critical decisions, continuous exposure to crime and criminal activities, frequent encounters with people in distress, death, etc. [8] (pp. 123-135). Other authors [9] (pp. 338-352) report five main stressors related to the nature of police work: physical assault on a police officer, killing a person while on duty,

deaths of partners, working with abused children, pursuit, deprivation of another's life [10] (pp. 535-547), a violent murder and horrific scenes of war crimes [11] (pp. 43-62);

4. Individual stressors (specific sources of stress for an individual, family circumstances etc.).

Basically, all stressors occur within a specific organization, in this case the police profession. Stressful events do not occur in isolation, but most commonly they are associated and repeated several times, which leads to negative consequences. "The common symptoms of stress can be divided into four groups:

1. Physical - fatigue, tiredness, headache, sleep disturbance, muscle pain and stiffness (especially neck, shoulders and lumbar area, tachycardia, chest pain, abdominal cramps and pain, nausea, tremors, cold hands/feet, warm or cold "waves");

2. Mental - lowering of concentration and memory, indecisiveness in making decisions, confusion, loss of sense of humor;

3. Emotional - anxiety, nervousness, depression, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, irritability, impatience, low frustration tolerance;

4. Behavioral - walking nervously, fidgeting, nervous habits (nail biting, tapping feet), increased food intake, intensification of smoking and drinking, crying, shouting and yelling, blaming others, aggression, throwing things "[1] (p. 335).

Spielberger [12] made a survey of police stress and cited three key categories:

1. Administrative-business;

2. Lack of support;

3. Physical and psychological stress.

In view of the numerous methodological problems, various researchers conducted several analyses of Spielberg's questionnaire. Thus, Martelli & Martelli [13] (pp. 443-470) confirmed that the questionnaire constitutes a valid and reliable measure of the overall stress of the police, particularly in the administrative and business, physical and psychological stress categories. Some authors [14] (pp. 231-239) suggest that when considering the sources of stress, the wider context, such as quality of life and social disorder and crime rates in certain areas and settlements, must be taken into account. From the above, we can see that the authors mainly state similar categories when talking about police stress, which differ only in the number of categories of stress or in the names of the very categories of stress.

During their daily activities, police officers enter into a special social relationship, which involves upgrading of the personality with characteristics of the police profession and its culture, while respecting the individual differences. At the same time, the existence of a strong ethic code contributes to improved performance within the profession. Therefore, the second part is dedicated to defining the professional police subculture.

3 PROFESSIONAL POLICE SUBCULTURE

Bearing in mind that there is very little literature on the topic of professional culture of the police, it is necessary to point out the need for its consideration. Generally, professional culture is a form of subculture. That is, it is the culture of a specific group of people that is different or "stands out" from the culture of the wider community to which the group belongs. With the help of professional subculture, the group experience is concretized and transmitted. Therefore, subculture is: "One particular, relatively closed segment of general culture, whose members share common beliefs, traditions and values, and often the manner of dress, diet, behavior and moral norms" [15]. Considering the fact

that professional associations belong to interest groups, hence professional subculture belongs to a special kind of subculture.

Professional subculture strengthens and develops along with the development of the profession. It helps to clearly define what is desirable and characteristic for the members of the police profession. In this way, the culture completes and makes recognizable one profession in comparison to other professions. As Kešetović noted, professional subculture primarily refers to: "A certain system of values, attitudes and beliefs in relation to the profession itself, clients, relations within the profession, as well as to other community groups and social phenomena that have an impact on the profession" [16] (p. 115), therefore, it is necessary for an individual to adopt that subculture to be able to exercise his/her profession.

Bearing in mind that the basic elements of culture are: 1) values, 2) standards, 3) beliefs and attitudes, 4) customs and rituals, 5) terminology and 6) symbols, we will look at each of these elements in order to present the professional police subculture.

The values that are an integral part of the professional police subculture represent an important source of motivation and guide employees to act towards achieving the professional goals and achieving the desired state. Therefore, the ultimate values that relate to the desired goal which the profession wants to achieve are equally important for the professional cultures as instrumental values, which relate to the desired behavior nourished and supported by the profession (such as diligence, teamwork, respect for rules and authority, etc.). Robins and Kutler [17] (p. 112) state that the behavior of every person who joins the organization with an already relatively established system of values is strongly influenced by that system. Values are formed by joining a certain number of individual social attitudes into a more general attitude toward a greater number of social phenomena. That general attitude includes relations which are the content of the integrated attitude and is upgraded by many new relations and attitudes. Therefore, the growth of man depends on his/her environment. In other words, individual values are upgraded with collective values; in this case, professional values.

Professional subculture implies certain norms of behavior. Norms serve to align the individual behavior, in order to avoid a discrepancy in the performance of the professional practice and to ensure harmony between the police and the community, which police serves and protects. Norms are defined by Subošić as: "The standards of work behavior, or behavior in the work process. They can be written (codified moral norms, legal and technical rules) and unwritten (undocumented moral norms). They convert the values into forms of behavior "[18] (p. 191). For successful implementation of the professional goals and development of the profession, it is important that standards are firmly accepted. "If the group standards are firmly adopted by the members of the group, it will be harder to change their attitudes. The firmness of group standards usually goes hand in hand with the assessment of their justification. Those group standards and attitudes whose justification is more confident will be insistently maintained and harder to change" [19] (p. 378). Solid professional culture involves successfully accepted professional standards.

Attitudes and beliefs are an important element of professional subculture because the profession as a social group has an important role in forming and changing attitudes, not only because it represents them, but also because it sanctions those who do not manifest such views. There are three ways in which social groups can exercise its influence in forming and changing attitudes: "1) The fact that it affects selection, filtering of communications and information that will reach out to the members of the group; 2) The

second way in which groups can exercise influence is emphasizing the group values and the authenticity of communications and communicators which the group is prone to and whom it trusts; 3) The third way of influence lies in the social support that the group provides to maintain attitudes in accordance with the collective perception "[19] (p. 361). Hence, the police will, like any other social form, work better if its members are better adapted to their status and roles. Manning [20] (pp. 472-475) notes that a significant source of stress within the police profession may be the individual autonomy at the disposal of the police officers. Due to the nature of work, the police personnel who are engaged in the "field" have the freedom, in particular, to take the initiative in the performance of their official duties and tasks, which can be one of the factors of abuse and stress. Hence, more intensive training is conducted within the police in order to reduce the stress of the police officers. Although the internal objectives and functions of the police are mainly independent of their environment, as Zhao & Thurman notice [21] (pp. 345-357), the police organization has undergone changes in order to adapt to the expectations of contemporary society. That is how a new model of police is developed - the police as a service to the citizens. Lilley & Hinduja [22] (pp. 489-490) compared the modern and the traditional police model and concluded that the modern model is considerably more oriented to the community (as a police department, service), while the traditional model is mainly oriented to law enforcement (the police as power). That had a huge effect and shaped the modern professional police culture.

In accordance with the modern requirements of society, a more current police training is the training related to the implementation of the principle of equality, anti-discrimination policy on racial, ethnic and cultural grounds and beliefs that are consistent with it. The rejection of the above principles and beliefs, as confirmed by numerous studies [23] (p. 111), can be a significant source of stress at work. The constant and consistent repetition of traditions and rituals (application of procedure), keeps the continuity of the organization for a long time, even in adverse conditions. Traditions and rituals are also part of the professional subculture. Traditions include preserving the tradition of the police organization or its organizational units, as holidays, promotions, celebrations, mourning and oath. Close-order drill, parade of units and similar activities of the police units represent the typical rituals (element) of the police subculture, which contribute to the identification of the police profession. Daily practice develops specific terms and jargon which strengthens the affiliation to the police profession, shapes a culture in return and facilitates communication in order to achieve better efficiency in achieving the professional goals. Due to the specificity of the police profession, the collected and systematized slang of the criminal structures is part of the police terminology. The police profession is recognized throughout the world for its use of symbols, such as uniforms and police badges. These are the basic elements that form the professional police subculture.

4 PROFESSIONAL POLICE SUBCULTURE– SOURCE OF STRESS OR POSSIBILITY FOR OVERCOMING THE STRESS

What to do when a police officer is expelled from a professional subculture? It is generally acknowledged that culture influences the development of personality, according to Golubović [24] (pp. 205-206) so as it: "1) channels the individual in a certain direction; 2) performs symbolization, i.e. develops appropriate responses to standard signals; 3) structures the perception; 4) leads the individual to perform the tasks specified by the society - the roles, in terms of gender, age, occupation etc .; 5) the individual refers to the society in terms of integration or conflict. "When an individual is being purged from the

collective, then he/she is in a conflicted relationship with the professional community and culture that he needs to belong to, because man is a social creature that behaves as an autonomous individual, but also as a member of a particular society, or a social group. Thus, the personality develops from "continuous process of assimilation and organization of experience that an individual derives from interaction with the environment" [25] (p. 202).

The police profession can also be viewed as a common platform built by an individual who performs the role of a police officer. Due to the specificity of police work, solidarity develops, however Bitner [26] (pp. 63-65) indicates that solidarity is incomplete, because it simultaneously develops social isolation, which is mentioned by Kešetović. [16] (P. 117). This has the effect that divides the world into "us" (those who are within the service) and "them" (those who are outside the police).

The attention on the police officers during the establishment of their work relationships is focused on the evaluation of their behavior. This is achieved by an internal, professional (self) control, which is also part of the subculture adopted through education, training and performance of the police practices and it is more part of the pedagogical (positive indoctrination) than educational work. Depending on whether the individual behavior is mainly acceptable or unacceptable, it is stimulated or discouraged (sanctioned). Control would be difficult to maintain providing that it is imposed only by force. Therefore Beker [27] (p. 84) states that: "There are more subtle mechanisms that can fulfill the same function. One of them works by influencing the way in which individuals perceive certain procedures and the possibility of their undertaking. These attitudes are transmitted by persons worthy of respect and are confirmed by experience. "

E. Rus-Ajani [28] (p. 13) notes that two models of behavior are developed through the police culture: the preferred model of "good" and undesirable model of "bad" police officer. Moreover, this way not only forms and distinguishes the desirable from the undesirable behavior, but also through criticism and sanctions "you do not behave like us," it excludes the individuals from the police community. This alienation of certain police officers strengthens the internal tensions which could further lead to their deviant behavior. Hence, Horvat states: "Whatever has a negative impact on the process of work, must have a negative impact on its result - self-realization. The man is unable to realize his human potential. He is alienated"[29] (p. 103).

The constant exposure to stress can lead to a breakdown of the immune response, which makes people who work in the police vulnerable and susceptible to the development of secondary traumatization. Zhao and Ren [30] (pp. 535-547) conducted a study in which they showed that the destructive coping mechanisms were the strongest predictors of stress in police officers. Jackson & Maslah [31] (pp. 244-259) state that police officers often use smoking, drinking, avoiding people (loss of social support) or engaging in activities that draw away their attention from the problem, as a strategy for dealing with stress. Evans et al [32] (pp. 246-258) state that police officers are dealing with their emotions by retreating into themselves or becoming cynical, authoritarian and suspicious.

If a police officer is strongly identified with his/her professional role, accepted by the collective and well adapted, then he/she develops positive coping mechanisms. Some authors [33] (pp. 338-352) state: talking with colleagues, counseling and exercise [34] (pp. 215-226) are positive coping mechanisms.

5 CONCLUSION

It is generally known that police profession is considered to be one of the most stressful. Stressors themselves are not solely the cause of the ill effects of stress, but also the non-adaptive coping mechanisms. An individual may be faced with stress in different ways, including delinquency. Hence, there are both positive and negative coping mechanisms. An important factor in coping with stress is the intensity and frequency of exposure to stress. That is, it is important for a police officer to adapt to the professional conditions and constant exposure to stress. If the reactions to the stressors involve exclusively negative emotions, especially anger and frustration, then we talk about delinquent adaptation. If the professional police subculture is strong and its elements are firmly accepted, then the adaptation of the police officers to their professional role is complete. This greatly helps the individual (police officer) to face the everyday sources of stress in a productive way.

Using the professional subculture defines the acceptable and desirable behavior of the members of the police profession. Therefore, it is necessary that during the training or education of the young personnel in designated police institutions, special attention is paid to fostering the professional police subculture. The clear message to the candidates - future police officers that the police profession is also a special lifestyle also contributes to a better selection of personnel and future functioning of the profession. Through the professional police subculture, the desirable personality traits relevant to the profession are developed and nurtured. It is therefore important to understand the importance of the professional police subculture, especially in the area of dealing with everyday stress arising from the police profession and the need for its development.

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