

Wk 2 forum law enforcement

Law



Stress and the Police Officer STRESS AND THE POLICE OFFICER A number of studies on police personnel claim that stress portends negative effects on the service. Stress causes police personnel to have higher than usual rates of neurosis, severe nervous conditions, dermatological problems, gastrointestinal functions, coronary heart disease, as well as several mental and physical disorders in police professionals (Ellison, 2011). Increased incidents of stress have also led to various forms of police malpractice and marital discord. Additionally, as high as forty to sixty percent of the average police visits to doctor involve professionals suffering from one sort of psychosomatic illness or the other, a phenomenon that has been blamed on increased stress levels. Police officers have an increased rate of suicide, alcoholism, and divorce than most other occupations. The extended costs to be paid from police stress are also astounding, with premature retirement, high absenteeism, lower rates of discipline, and disability. Stress also possesses hidden costs such as crisis management actions that the police require to redo their shift schedules and poor community relationships (Ellison, 2011).

Most police personnel also tend to suppress stress, which has negative impacts on the police officers, their families, and ultimately their career. Suppression of stress eventually evolves into defensive mechanisms, for example, detachment of officers from their emotional lives (Ellison, 2011). This suppression benefits the police officer in the occurrence of crises, proving a systemic and validated way to release suppressed emotions especially after critical occurrences. However, the officers also suppress anger and frustration towards their supervisors, which causes questioning of their leadership skills. Police stress also leads to a high rate of divorce

among police officers since they use work as a way to deal with their stress, thus staying away from home and accepting punishing shifts (Ellison, 2011).

Suicide rates from stress related issues also have hard-hitting effects on families, as the officer may have been the sole breadwinner in the family.

Spill over from demands at work, work family conflict, and emotional exhaustion leads to high marital discord rates, as well as divorce.

Administrators in Police Departments have attempted to develop programs aimed at addressing the issue of stress among its personnel. This change has, however, been very slow because of the bureaucracy inherent in most police departments Kearn (Kearney, 2009). First line supervisors carry a vital role in leadership in the PD, a managerial function of competence that should be paid a lot of attention. Since leaders are empowered by their subordinates, the use of authoritarian rule by the supervisors is likely to create friction, especially during interaction with his or her subordinates, which causes stress among them, and the supervisor, as well. Furthermore, the use of this leadership style in Police Departments continues, and this could be one cause of stress (Kearney, 2009).

Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model, which is compatible stress levels that are acceptable, as well as increased productivity, involves choosing a leadership style by the supervisor that is based on the presenting situation and follower readiness levels (Kearney, 2009). Without organizational reform, however, the situational leadership promise will never bear fruit.

Leaders should implement management innovations such as objective management, participative making of decisions, job rotation, and job enrichment, which improve the organizational climate of the force. However, authoritarianism will still minimize the effects to be reaped from the initiative

unless there is simultaneous leadership development and organizational reform, which help to achieve stress reducing and motivational effects (Kearney, 2009). Therefore, first line supervisors should be trained in progressive leadership and to rely on experience as their resource for personal leadership development.

References

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- Kearney, Daniel. (2009). Police stress : an organization problem. Michigan: University of Michigan .