

Understanding organizational behavior in a criminal justice agency

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Let us first define what organizational behavior is, before we discuss the importance of its functions in the context of a criminal justice agency. Organizational behavior is a field which analyzes, interprets, predicts and controls human behavior in work organizations (Organizational Behavior).

Analysis of the behavioral patterns of individuals or groups is important in predicting possible behavior responses to organizational actions or strategies. The prediction of possible behavior responses may also be the key to gain control.

In the analysis stage, it is vital that the needs of the employee as an individual and as a part of the organization be considered and that the social group behaviors which cause changes or create major impacts in employee motivation and performance, be determined. Its primary goal is to establish more harmonious and productive relationships among the employees and between the employees and management by addressing the individual and organizational concerns.

The elements of organizational behavior include the organization's goals, values, mission and vision, the organizational culture, leadership, employee motivation, group dynamics and communication (Clark, 1998). A combination of all these elements results to the organization's operations strategies. From these elements arise the four organizational behavior models. The Autocratic model focuses on power of the managerial position. Employees are expected to depend on their superior or manager for decisions and courses of actions, and they are required to obey.

This is the classic leader-follower model. The Custodial model concentrates on the supervision of money and security for the employees. The economic rewards and benefits of employees are considered. The Supportive model gives importance to employee motivation and recognition by creating a supportive working environment, while the Collegial model values teamwork between the manager and employees as a means to achieve the organization's goals (An Outline of Organizational Behavior).

A combination of aspects from the different models would be the ideal organizational set-up due to differences in the employee perceptions and fields of experiences. It may be true that using one model may not be sufficient in addressing the needs of the organization in terms of its manpower, but more companies are now using the Collegial approach due its numerous advantages. This model emphasizes partnership between the employees and the management.

This relationship gives assurance to employees that they are valued and needed by the company and that their importance to the organization is highlighted. It is also not absolute that Collegial model is the only approach used as overlapping of model principles may occur. We will now use the organizational behavior elements in analyzing and suggesting ways to improve effectiveness of a criminal justice agency. Out of the numerous criminal justice agencies, let us focus on the State Police.

The fundamental functions of the State Police include providing of general police services like citizen protection and emergency assistance, enforcement of traffic, highway and criminal laws, crime investigation and

intelligence services, assistance in the efforts for state and local law enforcement, and records maintenance and report generation. As it is, the job of a state police is not that easy and is in fact dangerous and life-threatening. The job entails enforcement of laws which means arrests or detention of offenders and use of physical force if the situations demand for it.

Risk of life is something that is hard to compensate with money. Bearing this premise in mind, the management of a State Police Department should formulate strategies that would motivate the State Police Officer to continue doing his job despite the threat to life aspect of his job. Thus, employee motivation as an element of organizational behavior is very significant in the maintenance of the workforce because this is where the morale for individual growth and benefit to self and family, is given much consideration.

Police Officers usually leave the service because of dissatisfaction and discouragement sentiments. Most of the time, their expectations when they initially joined were not met and their feelings of working for something that is not worth risking the life for become very strong. Motivation in this sense does not only involve monetary compensation but job recognitions and awards play very important roles in uplifting the spirits of the Police Officers.

The feeling of self-worth comes from being recognized as someone who has done a good job and as someone who is an indispensable part of the organization. Different forms of incentives for the able performance of duties are also great motivators. It is also important to note that provision of ample trainings to officers to increase their competence is a major motivator.

Trainings give them the confidence in their abilities and help them accomplish their tasks more efficiently.

Leadership is a very essential element as it is the binding instrument and the bridge from the values, visions and goals of the organization to the employees. The main role of the leader or the head of the Police department in this case, is to cascade the plans and strategies of management down to the bottom ranks. They use the mission and visions of the organization as their guide in the way they delegate responsibilities to their subordinates, how they support the efforts of their subordinates and how they supervise task execution and completion.

The head of the Police Department should be more of a team player because the nature of the job of a Police Officer is not individualistic but more of a group effort. The head should be in tune with the group and should be collaborative in his efforts. He should include all the Police Officers in decision-making processes as they are the ones who are exposed to that actual job arena. They can contribute a lot with regard to present and future strategies because they have already experienced what works and what does not.

The organizational culture as an element helps in the development of a partnership between the Department Management and the Police Officers. If the goals of the organization or the agency are aligned with personal goals of the Police Officers then there would be greater harmony and a strong culture will evolve. This would lessen conflicts within the department. Maintaining open communication lines is also vital to the effectiveness of the entire

agency. All employees regardless of their position or rank should be made aware of developments or changes in the organization.

The elements of organizational behavior are all important in the success of a criminal justice agency or any organization for that matter. More than the financial aspect of the organizations, the most vital facet is the human resources. Without a strong workforce, organizations will crumble. People may be willing to patronize or support the organization and its products and services, but if the needed human resources are not available, then there will be nothing to patronize or support. There will be no end product and there will be no services to offer.