

THE ROLES OF SUPERVISORS IN MODERN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS

Modern Polis Teşkilatlarında Polis Amirlerinin Rollerini

Mustafa ÖZGÜLER *

Abstract

Policing is one of the most complex professions. The role of police organizations in today's society is being changed more rapidly than ever. As new developments have unfolded, new challenges have confronted police managers. New concepts in policing like community policing, problem oriented policing and neighborhood oriented policing require new supervisory and managerial skills.

The police supervisors play indispensable role in police organizations because of the great need for teamwork, as they deal with police officers on the one hand, and middle or upper management on the other. Wise leadership starts from police supervisors. To be successful leaders, police supervisors must be experts in getting things done through officers. Supervisors have to learn to "read" subordinates and diagnose situations before choosing how to respond. Supervisors have to become students of human behavior and of such behavioral science disciplines as psychology and sociology. Effective police supervisors serve as a trainer, educator, planner, disciplinarian, counselor, listener, friend, communicator and performance evaluator.

Key Words: Police Supervisor, Policing, Supervisory Role, Manager, Managerial Role, Responsibility, Leadership, Effective Supervision.

Özet

Polislik en karmaşık mesleklerden biridir. Günümüzde polis teşkilatlarının rolleri hiç olmadığı kadar hızlı bir şekilde değişmektedir. Yeni gelişmeler ortaya çıktıkça polis yöneticileri yeni zorluklarla karşı karşıya kalmaktadırlar. Toplum destekli polislik, problem çözücü polislik, mahalle polisliği gibi yeni ve modern polislik yöntemleri, yeni amirlik ve yöneticilik becerilerine sahip olmayı gerektirmektedir.

Polis amirleri, hem polislik mesleğinin takım çalışmasını gerektirmesi hem de bir yanda polis memurları diğer yanda orta veya üst düzey yöneticiler arasında görev yapmaları nedeniyle polis teşkilatlarının hayati unsurlarıdır. Akıllı yönetim, polis amirlerinden başlar. Polis amirlerinin başarılı birer lider olmaları için, işleri memurları aracılığıyla yapmanın uzmanı olmayı öğrenmeleri gerekmektedir. Amirler, harekete geçmeden önce astlarını "okumayı" ve olayları teşhis etmeyi öğrenmelidirler. Bu nedenle polis amirleri insan davranışları ile psikoloji ve sosyoloji gibi davranış bilimlerini çok iyi öğrenmelidirler. Etkili polis amirleri birer eğitici, öğretici, planlamacı disiplini sağlayıcı, danışman, dinleyici, arkadaş, iletişimci ve performans değerlendirici olarak görev yaparlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Polis Amirleri, Polis, Yöneticinin Rolü, Sorumluluk, Liderlik

* Emniyet Amiri, APK Daire Başkanlığı

Introduction

There is no doubt that the world has never changed as much as in the last two decades. The rise of “new public management” within the public sector has entailed a cultural shift in all public sectors including police organizations. The role of police organizations in today’s society is being changed more rapidly than ever. Everyday, police organizations face more sophisticated, more challenging, and more complex problems. In many instances, police managers are rising to the challenge, questioning many of the traditional concepts about police service delivery and redefining the police mission itself (Brown, 1985:70).

Although these challenges and complexities are faced at the street level by the police officers, the greater parts of the required tasks and responsibilities lie on the supervisory and managerial side. Along with enforcing the law, police managers -both supervisors and executives- have found themselves in the middle of a set of roles similar to problem solvers and multipurpose service providers. The roles of police managers become more diverse as they climb the career ladder. The more senior the rank they achieve, the broader their perspective needs to be. Everything becomes bigger at each higher rank. For example, they could have a district or force-wide role and be in charge of hundreds of officers and a budget of millions of dollars, as well as having policy-making input similar to that of a company director. Moreover, they retain operational responsibilities for major public events or public order incidents.

As new developments have unfolded, new challenges have confronted police managers. New concepts in policing like community policing, problem oriented policing and neighborhood oriented policing require new supervisory and managerial skills (Kessler, 1999:41). Instead of day-to-day management, their new challenges have become focusing on clear responsibility and accountability for results, client oriented service style, and professional and business like management.

On the other hand, police organizations are still bureaucratic or, to some extent, paramilitary in structure in a majority of the countries in the world. As expected, in those organizations the police managers are considered as ranked officers, rather than as managers. Ranks are given either by automatic promotions or by some type of competitions, instead of focusing on managerial skills.

For this reason, this study focuses on the issue of roles of police supervisors, which is a crucial issue for all police organizations in the world. The attempt of this study is to identify the fundamentals of police supervision for an effective police management and for relevant and effective training structure and content. Finding the most appropriate mechanism of management and equipping them for their tasks within a tight performance and accountability framework for fostering better policing, it is essential to consider the descriptions of police supervisors’ roles.

Supervisory Role and Responsibilities

Supervision is 'the overseeing of the actions or performances of others' or "the act of directing and controlling the talents and actions of others in the carrying out of certain goals and objectives" (Garner 1995:5). Supervision as a part of the management process also refers to the act of overseeing people, whereas "supervisors are the members of the management team who are directly and regularly in touch with those employees who actually do the work of the organization and interact with its customers and clients" (Peak and Glensor and Gaines, 1999:37).

All supervisors, including police supervisors, share certain universal functions and responsibilities. In the case of the police employee, the work of the organization is police service and the clients are the citizens. Obviously, if the supervisor fails to make sure that employees perform correctly, the product-police service- will not satisfy the clients -citizens.

The police supervisors' roles are extremely difficult, as they deal with police officers on the one hand, and middle or upper management on the other. The concerns, expectations, and interests of officers and management are inevitably different, and, to some extent, in conflict especially in bureaucratic and paramilitary type of police organizations. In those organizations, officers and managers are, respectively, at the bottom and the top of the organization; while it is the managers' job to squeeze as much productivity out of officers as possible, officers' motivation often seems to be to avoid work as much as possible. "Supervisors find themselves right in the middle of this contest. Their subordinates expect from them some level of understanding and protection from management's unreasonable expectations and arbitrary decisions, and to represent their interests. Management, though, expects supervisors to keep employees in line and to represent management's and overall organization's interests" (Peak et al., 1999:38).

Although police officers are expected to fulfill many of the expectations of citizens, they rely on the administration of the police agency to provide the resources necessary to offer the services expected (Dantzker, 1999:2). Their performance and morale are more strongly influenced by the immediate superior than by any other factor in their environment. This is true not only because of their close relationship, but also because supervisors exercise such a strong influence upon officers' physical and social environment. From ethical to legal and disciplinary issues, first level supervisors play a key role in police organizations the same as in any organization.

Like employees of other organizations, police officers want feedback and a permanent record of their accomplishments and performance (Peak et al., 1999:75). There is no doubt that only supervisors can give immediate feedback. However, this task requires a certain set of qualities. First of all, these responsibilities can be performed successfully only by fair, knowledgeable and therefore respected supervisors. These qualities are very important for effective

supervision. Whatever his business or profession, the supervisor should be a counselor, confidant and friend. As a counselor, the supervisor should be a good listener. This trait is necessary for healthful and empathetic relationship. He¹ should also talk. He should give careful advice when it is needed. On the other hand, he should know when not to talk. This is important to gain subordinates' confidence. He should be a good communicator. A good supervisor excels in the concise use of words as tools. As a friend, he should support his charges when they need a boost. He should also have courage enough to tell them when they are wrong (Garner 1995:7).

Supervisors in any field are disciplinarians. Monitoring and regulating the subordinates' behavior and taking disciplinary action when it is necessary is the nature of supervisory role in any organization. However, the complex nature of police work makes police supervisors' job unique and in most cases complicated. Policing has some major differences compared to many other occupations. First of all, police officers exercise their authority in direct personal contact with citizens generally during the most difficult times of life. Moreover, "they are among the few governmental officials who are armed, possess the power of life and death, and for many individuals they represent the embodiment of the coercive aspects of government." (Ross, 2000:169) Although these tasks are actually performed by police officers, it is the police supervisors' task to make sure that the job is performed according to legal framework. Such a task gives unique responsibilities to police supervisors. They can even be "responsible for the officers' behavior if they authorize, or participate, or direct, or ratify or are present when an act for which liability results occurs" (Del Carmen & Smith 1997:233). It is known that police officers can be only loosely supervised on the street. Even in the most bureaucratized organizations, direct administrative control remains weak (Hunt and Magenau, 1993:120). "Most police work takes place out of sight of supervisors and witnesses who cannot be regarded as reliable evaluators of its quality. An arrest sometimes is a measure of good and sometimes is a measure of bad police work" (Klockars, 1985:313). Because of these difficulties, maintaining police services within the legal framework and maintaining high quality of relations between police officers and citizens, is extremely complex and delicate. Additionally, the public expects a very high standard of moral and ethical conduct from those who would enforce the laws on others. Police supervisors should be good complaint processors for divergent persons, groups, and interests. They should listen to complaints from citizens about how they were mistreated by the officers. On the other hand, they should hear gripes from the officers. Undoubtedly, police supervisors are the ones who define the tone of these kinds of delicate issues. For this reason, their role is crucial to the society.

According to Carmen & Smith, current case law in the United States indicates

¹ For simplicity and readability in grammatical construction and syntax throughout the study, the pronouns 'he', 'him', 'himself' are used generically to denote 'person' that is, the individual, whether male or female.

that supervisors can be found liable because of negligence in seven general areas. These areas are; failure to train, negligent hiring, negligent assignment, failure to supervise, failure to direct, negligent entrustment, and failure to investigate or discipline (1997:234-241). Even though the hiring of police officers can be considered as management’s responsibility, the rest, are still among supervisors’ responsibilities.

The supervisor is a planner. Planning duties may range from relatively uncomplicated daily decision making to special projects and assignments for the job. He is also responsible for the continuing training and education of his subordinates. For this reason, he should keep himself abreast of the latest approaches for the transmittal of knowledge to them. On the other hand, the supervisor is a performance evaluator as well. He rates the actions and products of his subordinates (Garner, 1995:8-9).

Ultimately, today’s police supervisor must be adept in many subjects. Although the specific job descriptions vary from one position to another or from one country to another, a police supervisor guides, monitors and evaluates the performance of subordinates or civilian personnel on a scheduled patrol shift, in a detective or intelligence unit, or in specialized unit or support services function (Garner 1995:15).

After describing the above facts about police supervision, it would be useful to list responsibilities of a police supervisor in a more specific manner. Findings of a job analysis of the sergeant’s position in the 400 sworn-officer Lexington, Kentucky, Police Department, denotes 10 major tasks (Glensor, Peak and Gaines, 1999:24). According to incumbent sergeants, the following tasks are listed in decreasing order of importance:

Table.1: Police Sergeants’ Tasks

| |
|---|
| Supervises subordinate officers in the performance of their duties. |
| Disseminates information to subordinates. |
| Ensures that general and special orders are followed. |
| Observes subordinates in handling calls and other duties. |
| Reviews and approves various departmental reports. |
| Listens to problems voiced by officers. |
| Answers backup calls. |
| Keeps superiors apprised of ongoing situations. |
| Provides direct supervision on potential high-risk calls or situations. |
| Interprets policies and informs subordinates. |

Observably, the tasks that are listed in Table 1 require a wide range of skills and knowledge.

Police Supervisory Leadership

Leadership can be defined as an entity which influences and motivates others to enthusiastically fulfill their roles. In essence, "leadership is that which acts as a motivator to complete specific and required actions defined by management." (Dantzker, 1999:79)

The history of police supervisory leadership in literature starts with almost a hundred years ago. Leonhard F. Fuld mentions leadership in 1909 in his *Police Administration* book. Later, the issue was elaborated in 1950's by different authors (More, 1975:12-40). However, police leadership didn't take enough attention until early 1980s.

Supervisors play indispensable role in police organizations because of the great need for teamwork. Police supervisors are very much affected by the strength of the police culture, which determines the uniqueness of their roles. To be successful leaders, they must be experts in getting things done through officers (Iannone, and Iannone, 2001). Unquestionably, they cannot be leaders without followers. People like to be led by those whom they respect and in whom they have confidence. Gaining confidence and respect from subordinates is the first and may be the most important element of being an effective leader. Nevertheless, this leadership requires being a part of the team, while at the same time being apart from the team. Because police supervisors represent the rank and file to the senior management and simultaneously, represent senior management to the rank and file.

In contemporary police organizations where Community Oriented Policing (COP) principles are applied, empowerment of line officers and first line supervisors is the core of the whole philosophy. This allows line officers to solve problems but also gives them the trust and involvement of the entire community (Reiter, 1999:9). Increasing police involvement in the community, adopting patrol practices that increase officers' knowledge of their beats, having officers become involved in community projects, and having citizens become involved with officers by identifying problems, proposing solutions and contributing additional resources (Kessler, 1999) imposes quite different role both to officers and to supervisors than traditional policing. In this philosophy, supervisory systems are developed to provide officers with the latitude and discretion to do their jobs, but at the same time, supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the job is done (Peak et al., 1999:40). This is the heart and soul of police supervision, no matter what type of management structure is employed.

Police supervision, without question, is a difficult task in every police organization. As Culligan points out, "No matter how capable the leaders are at or near the top level of management, they will operate in a near vacuum if wise leadership is not provided at the operational level where the day-to-day work is done" (Culligan, 1983:81). Eventually, this wise leadership starts from police supervisors. Supervisors represent the top-level leadership in the operational level.

Human Relations

Police supervisors are generally in their first managerial positions after serving as officers for some years, while in some countries police supervisors get to supervisory positions without any occupational experience. Regardless of procedures, after stepping up to the supervisory position, they are no longer responsible solely for their own personal behavior. The step from officer or cadet to supervisor is a big step that calls for a new set of skills and knowledge, largely separate from what was learned at street level policing or at school.

This step involves a host of knowledge and skills, including communicating, motivating, leading, team building, training, developing, appraising, counseling, and disciplining. They are supposed to get their officers to 'do their very best'. This means that figuring out the strengths and weaknesses of each, defining good and bad performance, providing feedback, and making sure that subordinates' efforts coincide with the organization's mission, values, goals and objectives (Peak et al., 1999:39).

Advancement into a position of authority also involves a considerable change in life-style (from being a follower to being a leader) and requires a radical change in philosophy and thought process, especially in the area of human relations. This issue requires accepting the fact that people are all different:

Supervising a group of subordinates is tough in part because of what might be termed the "human element." People are complex and sometimes unpredictable. Rules and principles for communicating, leading, and similar supervisory tasks are rarely hard and fast because different people react differently. What works for a supervisor in one situation may not work for that supervisor in another situation, much less for some other supervisors. Thus, supervisors have to learn to "read" subordinates and diagnose situations before choosing how to respond. Supervisors have to become students of human behavior and of such behavioral science disciplines as psychology and sociology. Unfortunately, these are inexact sciences (Peak et al., 1999:39).

Even though it is one of the most difficult challenges in the world, as Holden states; "the effective law enforcement manager must be able to work with people, because that is what law enforcement agencies do" (1994:12-13). However, effective supervision is also tough because the job is dynamic, not static. "Turnover is common, so that new subordinates come under the supervisor's wing; the supervisor must learn the best way to handle these new subordinates and also be attuned to a new person's effect on other subordinates and on the work group as a whole" (Peak et al., 1999:39). Even without any turnover of personnel, one's subordinates change over time as they age, grow, mature, and experience satisfaction and dissatisfaction in their personal and work lives.

The organization and its environment change over time, as well as subordinates. History is replete with organizations – even police agencies with

corrupt employees from the chief executive down to the officers on the street – that because of poor leadership became pathological or catastrophic. Effective supervision over the long haul requires continuous monitoring and adaptation. The organization’s rules and expectations may change. Clients and customers may make new demands. Societal values evolve and change. Certainly, new technologies come and go these days in the blink of an eye. Supervisors must be aware of these changing conditions if they are to be successful over time in getting their subordinates to do their very best. The organization expects the supervisors to keep up with such changes in order to keep subordinates on track; subordinates expect the supervisors to help them interpret and adapt successfully to such changes (Peak et al., 1999:40). The supervisor who recognizes that “each employee is a distinctive individual with his or her own needs, personal likes or dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, and hopes and dreams has already taken the first large step toward earning the loyalty of those employees” (Henning, 1994:42).

Good communication between management and supervisor and between supervisor and the supervised is vital to more than just general organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Reliable communication helps overall organization effectiveness, which is good for employee morale. “The individual who cannot communicate clearly and openly with his subordinates and superiors will not succeed as a police supervisor” (Garner 1995:165). Thus, he will not have good relations with his subordinates. Effective supervisors understand others and are understood easily by them, both orally and in writing. They avoid distractions, prejudices, emotions, inappropriate language and difficult attitudes. Instead, they communicate effectively with two-way sharing of information and ideas.

Conclusion

Policing is one of the most complex professions. As a result of it’s nature, police work is not only counting on instruction from supervisors or executives, but also exercising individual judgment about the best responses to give when confronted with different situations.

Although many constraining influences on the police supervisors’ attitudes and actions, they mainly are responsible for the fulfillment of their organizations’ missions, ensuring their subordinates’ productivity and producing impacts in their jobs. Since law enforcement is the only occupation empowered to take human life, they also must define policies on determining guidelines for life and death decisions.

Effective police supervisors serve as a trainer, educator, planner, disciplinarian, counselor, listener, friend, communicator and performance evaluator. They realize that their work is more challenging than most first line leaders outside of law enforcement.

Based on the above facts, the definition of police leadership is not limited to

a process of influencing the members of the organization to employ appropriately and willingly their energies in activities that are helpful to the achievement of the police department's goals. It includes creating an atmosphere, an environment, and the highest possible quality of service standards inside and outside the agency through constant improvisations. It also includes providing opportunities for achievement, advancement, personal growth, and recognition for all members of the organization.

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