

The Organisational Culture of the Police Force

Johanna Farkas

ORCID: 0000-0001-6376-4209

János Sallai

ORCID: 0000-0001-6674-1942

Ernő Krauzer

ORCID: 0000-0001-8744-5894

National University of Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement, Hungary

Abstract. *The concept of 'organisational culture' can be described based on numerous approaches nowadays. This underlines the fact that it is a significant issue within work and organisational psychology. However, the growing scope of organisational culture and subculture types shows not only its significance, but also the appearance of its explanations in a wide spectrum. The extensive research of organisational culture is related to the trend that there is a growing interest of organisational development and human resource professionals in a deeper understanding of human behaviour in organisational settings, and the factors influencing it. Organisational culture includes communication with clients (in the case of police, citizens) and the relating approach system. The organisational culture cannot be considered basically 'good' or 'bad'. There are external and internal metrics and requirements that reflect the state of a given organisation: they indicate the quality and quantity of value creation, the organisation's acceptance in its environment as well as its necessity in the society. The organisational culture is optimal if it serves the organisation's tasks, objectives, the fulfillment of its duties, on the maintenance of its expedience, as well as if it is supportive, creative and facilitating. In an optimal organisational culture, the interests are enforced between the groups and people in the organisation in a peaceful way, their work is effective and successful, all conditions are ensured, the staff is satisfied, and the organisation's output is accepted, recognised and required in its external environment. These organisations are acknowledged by the citizens and operate in accordance with their environments.*

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0014.3189

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0014.3189>

Keywords: law enforcement, culture, human resources

Introduction

Organisational culture consists of norms, values, rules, procedures, symbols, and beliefs, all organised in a system, deeply embedded in the collective conscience of the members of the organisation, thereby influencing their cognitive and affective behaviours, and even their performance in an indirect way. The effects of organisational culture can be perceived in all external (e.g. external organisational communication, relationship management, and social presence) and internal (e.g. selection and integration of employees, leadership culture, performance and motivation management, organisational learning and innovation capability, cultivating the next generation of leaders, ethical operation, development of processes and systems, and politics and control), operational (functional and structural) and

strategic fields of an organisation. Therefore, following the results of international organisational culture research can be both important for academic and practicing professionals as well as for leaders¹.

In organisational sociology terms, organisations (including the police) are systems setting goals², and these goals can be achieved only by involving the people working in the organisation, i.e. the members of the organisation³. The organisational culture of an organisation is created by its members during the social learning process which affects the long-term efficiency of the organisation since the organisational culture has an effect on the members' identities even unconsciously⁴, and forms their thinking, feelings and actions. In our view, organisational culture from a psychological approach is the essence of an organisation that forms both the whole of an organisation and its members.⁵ The process has an effect through a kind of feedback mechanism since the values, views, and other factors of the members affect the organisation itself permanently in the framework of a social context.

International research trends

Molnár⁶ presents the international trends of organisational culture research in the recent decade in detail. She demonstrated that the number of empirical publications has been growing from year to year and new fields of research are evolving, opening new perspectives for the future. Researchers are mainly studying the effect of organisational culture on organisational performance, leadership style, knowledge management, and the successful integration of various systems and approaches into organisations. Most of all, studies take the *Competing Values Framework* of Quinn-Rohrbaugh (1981)⁷ as a base. In some of the studies reviewed, there are deficiencies in the methodology (mainly in the description of the sample and the sample collection procedure), and, in certain cases, the samples were not representative.

The findings regarding the above fields clearly facilitate the work of leaders and professionals. Furthermore, Molnár⁸ has come to the conclusion that a large

¹ Boda J, Sallai J, A belügyminisztérium feladatrendszerének változásai 1848–1959 között. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*, 2016, Vol 4, Issue 1, pp. 4–17.

² Whelan C, Security networks and occupational culture: understanding culture within and between organisations. *Policing and Society*, 2017, Vol 27, Issue 2, pp. 113–135.

³ Farkas J, Csoport, csoportdinamika, [in: Csernyikné Póth Á (Ed.), *Emberi kapcsolatok pszichológiája*. Budapest, Rejtjel, 2006, pp. 32–64.

⁴ Cameron K, Quinn R, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*. Based on the *Competing Values Framework*. San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 2006.

⁵ Farkas J, The Drawbacks of Group Decision Making from a Psychological Aspect. *Magyar Rendészet*, 2016, Vol. 16, Issue 2, pp. 67–79.

⁶ Molnár R, A szervezeti kultúra kutatások nemzetközi aspektusai, [in: Farkas J & Horváth J (Eds), *Szervezeti kultúrák és kutatásuk*. Budapest, 2018.

⁷ Quinn R E, Rohrbaugh J, A competing values approach to organizational effectiveness. *Public Productivity Review*, 1981, Vol. 5. Issue 2, pp. 122–140.

⁸ Molnár R, 2018.

number of researchers have contributed to the enlargement of empirical resources of organisational culture studies, but the studies have multiple research foci, and, at the same time, the majority of the topics have not been revealed in depth. Neither the key factors for individuals (motivation), nor the mapping of the phenomena appearing in organisations as a result of globalisation and affecting organisational culture have been in the focus of academic attention, and organisations out of the private sector (state-owned and nonprofit companies) have not been represented appropriately in the researches of the recent decade.

The organisational culture of the police

Complex systems like organisational culture are often described with the iceberg metaphor because some of the elements are clearly visible but most of the background factors require deeper analysis to understand. The organisational culture of the police also consists of multiple layers.⁹ Understanding these layers is of key importance because they affect the lives of police employees (both their everyday lives and professional work) which is demonstrated in their behaviours.¹⁰

Policemen work in a specific work environment¹¹ where the organisational and occupational environments are different. ¹²The fact that their work is one of the most stressful professions worldwide makes it even more difficult: on the one hand, it requires tolerating numerous conflicts, while on the other hand, it strengthens groups.

In general, the organisation often requires loyalty and autonomy at the same time, which also poses a challenge for employees.¹³ Although in the Hungarian police, we can observe that there are certain areas that have been 'going civilian', including primarily, of course, organisational subunits serving as the 'back office', such as business administration or human resources management. Typically the police staff includes not only police officers, but there is a large number of employees serving in public servant, civil servant, and government servant positions. Moreover, a growing number of public employees have recently become members of the organisation. Nevertheless, the importance of the hierarchical structure is still acknowledged.

⁹ Sallai J, A rendészeti folyóiratok hatása a rendészettudományra. *Magyar Rendészet*, 2017, Vol. 2, pp. 183–204.

¹⁰ Sallai J, The History of Law Enforcement in Hungary, [in:] Farkas J, Horváth J (Eds), *Szervezeti kultúrák és kutatásuk*. Budapest, 2018.

¹¹ Farkas J, Horváth J, *Szervezeti kultúrák és kutatásuk*. Budapest: National University of Public Service, 2018.

¹² Kovács G, A rendészeti szervek szervezeti kultúrájának összetevői és sajátosságai, a téma feldolgozása a Rendőrtiszti Főiskola vezetéselméleti oktatásában. *Pécsi Határőr Tudományos Közlemények*, 2009, Vol. 10, pp. 223–234.

¹³ Paoline E.A, Taking stock: Toward a richer understanding of police culture. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 2003, Vol. 31, pp. 199–214.

The factors influencing the organisational culture

As an organisation, the police has to face a number of problems that, given their nature, cause changes in the organisation.¹⁴

Generational changes and co-living of multiple generations outside the organisation

Different generations have different expectations. Therefore, their image of the police, and their expectations against the police can be different, too.

Unequal situation

Basically, the police is a hierarchical organisation, i.e. various units operate in line with superior and subordinate relationships. At the same time, citizens cannot be considered peers in police actions either. This may trigger emotions in them in some cases, and this situation shall be handled properly by the acting police officer.

Generational changes, co-living and co-working of multiple generations within the organisation

Currently, besides a small number of 'baby boomers', generations X, Y, and Z are represented in the organisation (these generations require different styles of communication, and motivation, and have different expectations), and they also actively encounter the current 'alphas' and form an image about the organisation in them.

Lifelong Learning phenomenon becomes general

Common officers of the staff shall collect a certain number of educational credits within the organisation as well.

Social judgement

Various aspects of police officers' work are judged in different ways within the society. At the same time, being a 'police officer' does not necessarily have a positive meaning as a profession nowadays. Police officers working in the streets shall handle any negative emotions or anger towards them properly, and, at the same time, they shall not let themselves get carried away by their own emotions demonstrated in their reactions to a given situation: they have to be able to remain sober.

Finding work/life balance

This problem includes not only the quantity of the working time, but also the quality of the situations, emotions, events and circumstances police officers face

¹⁴ Cf. Tózsér E, Fridrich A.C, Borbély Zs, 2018.

during their work, as well as how they are able to handle them, what stress relief techniques they use, and what social support they have around them.¹⁵

An ever fast-paced development of technology devices

Generation gaps may entail tension lying in the fact that, in some cases, younger people tend to learn to use new devices in a professional manner more easily, although the organisation is not always able to keep pace with the latest technology devices available. At the same time, it may be surprising or even frustrating for any member of the organisation. After all, even they can be followed in person through social media, and, in many cases, recordings of police actions are published on the Internet without the original context.

Changes in the legal and political environment

Whether directly or indirectly, these changes almost always affect the whole organisation, which is a significant factor in the police. The police force is the representative of legitimacy and political independence. At the same time, its members have their own views that do not necessarily match the views they have to represent from their organisational roles.

Encounters of various cultures and subcultures

The encounter points of various cultures and subcultures can also induce changes.¹⁶ In case of the migration pressure which evolved in the year 2015, the significance of its effect on the life of the staff members in the organisation is underpinned by a study.¹⁷ Nevertheless, to be represented in a positive way in the community, it is crucial for police officers to be able to adapt to heterogeneous environments (multicultural or even multinational).

It is presumably one of the consequences of the above that the Hungarian police has made efforts to change the culture of police actions. As a part of this, the emphasis has been shifted. The stress on the service-providing nature of the police has become important (providing assistance, empathy, and discretion). This is of key importance for the entire police staff since it is true for any organisation that the features of any representative may become valid for the entire organisation for outsiders, and this can be especially true for uniformed organisations such as the police. After all, when a police officer stops a citizen, the citizen may not see a person who might be tired, cheerful, stressed, or merry, just like any other person, and may not pay attention to their name, or care about their families, hobbies, or private opinions regarding the given case. Of course, the police officer shall not

¹⁵ Farkas J, *Stressz- és konfliktuskezelés*, [in:] Christián L (Ed.), *Személy- és vagyónvédelem*. Budapest: National University of Public Service, 2014, pp. 209–26.

¹⁶ Farkas J, The Current psychological perspectives of migration. *Magyar Rendészet*, 2013, Vol. 13, Issue 2, pp. 141–151.

¹⁷ Borbély Zs, Farkas J, Tózsér E, A tömeges méretű illegális migráció pszichés következményei a rendészeti feladatellátás során. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 2017, Vol. 10, Issue 3, pp. 288–304.

share any information regarding the above since they have to do their work at a professional level, which excludes 'private issues'.¹⁸ Nonetheless, it is crucial how the police officer handles such situations, including what their appearance, presence, and attitude demonstrates to local citizens, tourists, and even foreign tourists. This is why the role of the customer service approach has become significant.

Conclusions

In our current research, we intend to reveal deep layers of the organisational culture of the police, trusting that, complemented by other research and strategies, will serve the long-term interests of the organisation and those working in it, thereby making this knowledge useful for society as well. In our view, discovering the deeper levels of the organisational culture, highlighting the differences between various fields, and describing the optimal work conditions will facilitate a more active discussion about the potential of the customer service approach within the organisation. We believe that this will be effective for all stakeholders in the long run.

References

1. Boda J, Sallai J, A belügyminisztérium feladatrendszerének változásai 1848–1959 között. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*, 2016, Vol 4, Issue 1, pp. 4–17.
2. Borbély Zs, Farkas J, Tózsér E, A tömeges méretű illegális migráció pszichés következményei a rendészeti feladatellátás során. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 2017, Vol 10, Issue 3, pp. 288–304.
3. Cameron K, Quinn R, Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture. Based on the Competing Values Framework. San Francisco, 2006.
4. Farkas J, Csoport, csoportdinamika, [in:] Csernyikné Póth Á (Ed.), *Emberi kapcsolatok pszichológiája*. Budapest, Rejtjel, 2006, pp. 32–64.
5. Farkas J, Horváth J, *Szervezeti kultúrák és kutatásuk*. Budapest: National University of Public Service, 2018.
6. Farkas J, Stressz- és konfliktuskezelés, [in:] Christián L (Ed.), *Személy- és vagyónvédelem*. Budapest: National University of Public Service, 2014, pp. 209–26.
7. Farkas J, The Current psychological perspectives of migration. *Magyar Rendészet*, 2013, Vol. 13, Issue 2, pp. 141–151.
8. Farkas J, The Drawbacks of Group Decision Making from a Psychological Aspect. *Magyar Rendészet*, 2016, Vol. 16, Issue 2, pp. 67–79.
9. Kovács G, A rendészeti szervek szervezeti kultúrájának összetevői és sajátosságai, a téma feldolgozása a Rendőrtiszti Főiskola vezetéselméleti oktatásában. *Pécsi Határőr Tudományos Közlemények*, 2009, Vol. 10, pp. 223–234.
10. Kovács G, A szervezeti és vezetői kommunikáció sajátosságai a rendészeti szerveknél. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 2016, Vol. 1, pp. 381–394.

¹⁸ Kovács G, A szervezeti és vezetői kommunikáció sajátosságai a rendészeti szerveknél. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 2016, Vol. 1, pp. 381–394.

11. Molnár R, A szervezeti kultúra kutatások nemzetközi aspektusai, [in:] Farkas J. & Horváth J (Eds), *Szervezeti kultúrák és kutatásuk*. Budapest, 2018.
12. Paoline E.A, Taking stock: Toward a richer understanding of police culture. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 2003, Vol. 31, pp. 199–214.
13. Quinn R. E, Rohrbaugh J, A competing values approach to organizational effectiveness. *Public Productivity Review*, 1981, Vol. 5. Issue 2, pp. 122–140.
14. Sallai J, A rendészeti folyóiratok hatása a rendészettudományra. *Magyar Rendészet*, 2017, Vol 2, pp. 183–204.
15. Sallai J, The History of Law Enforcement in Hungary, [in:] Farkas J, Horváth J (Eds), *Szervezeti kultúrák és kutatásuk*. Budapest, 2018.
16. Whelan C, Security networks and occupational culture: understanding culture within and between organisations. *Policing and Society*, 2017, Vol. 27, Issue 2, pp. 113–135.

About the Authors

Johanna Farkas, PhD, National University of Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement. Field of scientific interest: criminal psychology, law enforcement. E-mail: farkas.johanna@uni-nke.hu

János Sallai, professor, PhD, National University of Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement. Field of scientific interest: security, law enforcement, history. E-mail: sallai.janos@uni-nke.hu

Ernő Krauzer, National University of Public Service, Faculty of Law Enforcement. Field of scientific interest: law enforcement. E-mail: erno.krauzer@bm.gov.hu

Streszczenie. Pojęcie „kultury organizacyjnej” można dziś opisać opierając się na licznych jej ujęciach. Jest to istotne zagadnienie z zakresu psychologii pracy i organizacji. Rosnący zakres kultury organizacyjnej i jej rodzajów wskazuje jednak nie tylko na jej znaczenie, ale i pojawienie się prób objasnienia tego zagadnienia w szerszym ujęciu. Prowadzone na dużą skalę badania kultury organizacyjnej wiążą się z tendencją rosnącego zainteresowania rozwojem organizacji, specjaliści zaś w dziedzinie zasobów ludzkich są zainteresowani głębszym zrozumieniem ludzkich zachowań w środowisku organizacyjnym oraz wpływających na nie czynników. Kultura organizacyjna zakłada komunikację z klientami (w wypadku policji — z obywatelami) i związany z nią system podejścia. Nie można jej rozważać jako „dobrą” lub „złą”. Istnieją zewnętrzne i wewnętrzne mierniki oraz wymagania, które odzwierciedlają stan danej organizacji: wskazują na jakość i ilość tworzenia wartości, akceptację organizacji w środowisku, jak również stopień jej zapotrzebowania w społeczeństwie. Kultura organizacyjna jest efektywna, jeżeli służy zadaniom i celom organizacji, sprzyja wypełnianiu obowiązków, podtrzymaniu interesu firmy, a także jest wspierająca i kreatywna. W zoptymalizowanej kulturze organizacyjnej interesy grup i ludzi są realizowane w sposób pokojowy, ich praca jest efektywna i skuteczna, zostały zapewnione wszystkie warunki, pracownicy są zadowoleni, a rezultaty pracy organizacji akceptowane, uznawane i pożądanego w jej otoczeniu zewnętrznym. Takie organizacje są uznawane przez obywateli i działają w zgodzie z ich środowiskiem.

Zusammenfassung. Der Begriff Organisationskultur kann heute anhand seiner zahlreichen Ansätze beschrieben werden. Dies ist ein wichtiges Thema im Bereich der Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie. Der wachsende Umfang der Organisationskultur und ihrer Typen zeigt nicht nur ihre Bedeutung, sondern auch die Entstehung von Versuchen, dieses Problem im weiteren Sinne zu erklären. Eine groß angelegte Organisationskulturforchung ist mit einem Trend des wachsenden Interesses an der Organisationsentwicklung verbunden, und Fachleute auf dem Gebiet der Humanressourcen sind an einem tieferen Verständnis des menschlichen Verhaltens im organisatorischen Umfeld und der ihn beeinflussenden Faktoren interessiert. Die Organisationskultur beinhaltet die Kommunikation mit Kunden (im Fall der Polizei — mit Bürgern) und das damit verbundene Ansatzsystem. Es kann nicht als „gut“ oder „schlecht“ angesehen werden. Es gibt externe und interne Maßnahmen und Anforderungen, die den Zustand

einer Organisation widerspiegeln: Sie geben die Qualität und Quantität der Wertschöpfung, die Akzeptanz der Organisation in der Umwelt sowie den Grad ihrer gesellschaftlichen Nachfrage an. Organisationskultur ist effektiv, wenn sie den Aufgaben und Zielen des Unternehmens dient, die Erfüllung seiner Aufgaben fördert, das Interesse des Unternehmens wahrt und wenn sie unterstützend und kreativ ist. In einer optimierten Organisationskultur werden die Interessen von Gruppen und Menschen auf friedliche Weise umgesetzt, ihre Arbeit ist effizient und effektiv, alle Bedingungen sind gewährleistet, die Mitarbeiter sind zufrieden und die Ergebnisse der Arbeit der Organisation werden in ihrem externen Umfeld akzeptiert, anerkannt und wünschenswert. Solche Organisationen werden von den Bürgern anerkannt und handeln im Einklang mit ihrer Umwelt.

Резюме. Понятие «организационная культура» сегодня можно рассматривать, опираясь на многие существующие концепции. Это важный вопрос в области психологии труда и организации. Однако, расширение спектра организационной культуры и ее видов свидетельствует не только о ее значимости, но и о попытке более широкого объяснения данного вопроса. Крупномасштабные исследования организационной культуры связаны с тенденцией роста интереса к развитию организации, в то время как специалисты в области человеческих ресурсов заинтересованы в более глубоком понимании человеческого поведения в организационной среде и факторов, влияющих на эту среду. Организационная культура предполагает контакт с клиентами (в случае полиции — с гражданами) и соответствующую систему подходов. Ее нельзя считать «хорошей» или «плохой». Существуют внешние и внутренние меры и требования, которые отражают состояние данной организации: они указывают на качество и количество создания ценностей, признание организации в окружающей среде, а также степень ее востребованности в обществе. Организационная культура эффективна, если она служит целям и задачам организации, способствует выполнению обязанностей, поддерживает интересы компании, а также оказывает поддержку и проявляет творческий подход. В оптимизированной организационной культуре интересы групп и людей реализуются мирно, их работа является эффективной и результативной, обеспечены все условия, сотрудники довольны и результаты работы организации одобряются, узнаются и желательны во внешней среде. Такие организации признаются гражданами и действуют в гармонии с их средой.