



A Sociological Approach to Police Officers' Conflict Management Tools

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Abstract

Conflicts are inseparable part of human society all over the world. Although much contemporary conflicts seem to be about political, ethnic, or religious differences, in fact these conflicts generally have an economic, and a political basis. One of the most important nowadays issue is how people manage conflict situations, driven by interests, seemingly incompatible values and hostilities. Albanian State Police strategies vision is supporting new arrangements and innovation about police communication services. In addition, it appears necessary for police officers to be prepared for effective intervention and conflict resolution. *The objective* of this research is to examine conflict situations and relationships in police institution. The aim is to find out which appropriate methods of analysis or management strategies are better for solutions between parties of conflicts. *The method* used for the conduction of this work is a qualitative one, combined with analyses of data of a short survey process. Through the literature research and analyses of the data collected from the survey there are provided ways or manners of dealing and managing conflicts situations between police officers, people and police officers or police officers in front of people who conflict to each other. Analysis of the collected data have revealed in the conclusion that in order to perfectly resolve and manage conflict situations, it's necessary to primary deeply analyze situations. This works in police officers case, too. As *a main conclusion* of this paper, each police officer who deals with a conflict situation has to structure their work plan and has to mention the main points like: description of the situation, identification of six phases of a conflict situation, deepening analysis based on the "mapping" method, following police procedures and finding a path for an adequate management and solution. Mapping method is used in terms of in-depth analysis of conflict situations to bring out better understanding of conflicts causes and parties.

Keywords: conflict analysis, police officer, mapping method, management strategy, procedures, solution.

1. Introduction

According to communications and conflicts scholars/authors, there are not any exact applied formulas that perfectly resolve conflicts in all professional or personal fields, even in the police officers. Conflicts have engaging personal, professional, ethnic, religious and any other character.

There are many definitions of conflicts, but the most appropriate one according to the police context and the objective of this research is: "*Conflict is related with any situation in which two or more parties feel they have mutually incompatible intensions*" (Albanian Police Standard Procedure, 2017).

Police organization conflicts are usually presented between: police officers, people and police officers, or police officers in front of people who conflict to each other.

Professional conflict situations of police organization may occur as a result of misunderstanding of roles or functions, as well as divisions of duties, modes of promotion, ways of promotion in duty or rewards, lack of transparency among colleagues, disagreements, etc. In the personal view, conflicts may occur due to social disagreements, dishonesty, lack of respect, family problems, acting behind the shoulders, disrespect of unwritten social rules est.

2. The method

The method used for the conduction of this work is a qualitative one, combined with analysis of data of a short survey process. Literature researchers are focused on conflicts situations between police officers, people and police officers, or police officers in front of people who conflict to each other. Also it is collected data from the strategies, police procedures, or other similar sources to introduce the best foreign and Albanian practices for police conflicts management. The literature suggests “mapping method” as an appropriate one to in depth analyze conflict situation. The elements of this method help police officers to get detailed information about causes of conflict and the parties. This method will be presented in detail in a specific topic through this paper below.

A short survey process has also been conducted with twenty police officers, respectively student in Academy of Security in Tirana, with a low rank of police grades, and under the commissar grade expected, in order to get information about their experience in resolving conflict situations. They used to be patrol officers or investigation crime specialists. They were faced with different kind of conflicts in their previous jobs, from the usual up to the most dangerous or difficult ones.

All the twenty of them said that it is very difficult and idealistic that you have to take your time and communicate in peace with parties in a conflict situation.

3. Communications and conflicts according to “Community Policing Strategy”

Price, Straus and Breese (2009: 40) say that “community policing is problem-solving policing”. Community Policing Strategy defend the idea of moving from a reactive response to crime, in proactive responses to community problems which hold the potential to further reduce crime and improve public safety (SACP, 2014).

Community policing makes policing services different from traditional law enforcement. Building structures of trust and sharing information across community agencies, in order to resolve resident problems, is the core of community and problem-solving policing. All is about knowing how to behave and communicate with other parties in order to find better solutions, as well as dealing with daily conflict situations or intervening in high-risk situations.

In the framework of community policing and sociology programs, police officers should be familiar with people in the neighborhood and not be affected by prejudices or rumor. This can help them peacefully resolving and intervening in conflicts situations. According to those programs (Price, Straus & Breese, 2009), a police officer must:

- a. Identify and then face the problem;
- b. Ask as many question as possible to get many information about the problem;
- c. Reflect on the information received;
- d. Analyze all responses and witnesses and take care about future actions.

In order to reach a reaction to some kind of problem, one must first understand the problem.

This requires a profound analysis of the situation of conflict. Any conflict situation goes through some stages of development. Being able to identify the stages in which conflict develops can be useful in gaining insight into the interventions, which may be necessary to properly handle and deal with the situation.

4. Stages of a conflict development

When a police officer faces with a conflict situation, the first step he must do is to comprehend deeper that situation. The officer may interfere and calm the situation. Then he/she needs to act and reflect. A police officer tends to behave differently in several types of circumstances of a conflict situation. It all depends in the kind of level a police intervene. In the discomfort level (CRANA Plus, 2011), it is easiest to deal with and head off the issues by speaking directly with the other party to establish if there is a problem. Good will is established by being prepared to address the issue. But there are other levels where it becomes more difficult facing with parties or trying to calm and resolve something. The best theory and practices about the best ways on behaving in different levels of conflict situation are listed as follows (*Ibid.*, 2011).

It is differently called “incidents level” (CRANA Plus, 2011) and it appears when the incidents happen and a police officer may face with an issue causing irritation or frustration. It is suggested to intervene successfully by raising the issue with the other party and realize an open and non-confrontational manner with an opening statement that a solution is being sought. It can be helpful to say something like “I would like to discuss what is happening as it appears there is a problem”. It is important that a non-judgmental stance is taken.

It is not easy for police officers to intervene and deal with parties in a conflict situation.

During the short survey process with twenty students of Academy of Security (patrol officers and investigation crime officers, 2018), they revealed that in some cases they have risked their life because of the incomplete information about the situation or as a consequence of intervening in a dangerous hassle. They also claimed that it’s difficult to deal with people when they are under the pressure of the moment of conflict: “*After facing with parties and calm them down it comes the most difficult part – in-depth analyze of the case*” – they said (A short survey, 2018).

There are higher level or conflict escalation “misunderstandings”, “tension” or crisis that need to be explored (CRANA Plus, 2011). In the first one, it is recommended that police officers should involve the parties to clarify what might be happening. It can be useful to ask questions such as: “When you said that, what you meant?” or any question which can shed light on the nature of the problem. The focus here is on clearing any confusion around the issue.

At the “tension level” (CRANA Plus, 2011), it is hard for people to be objective enough to discuss the matter in an open and constructive manner. That’s why Albanian police officers emphasize this moment as being risky to intervene. During the short survey process they talked about many dangerous cases where their colleges have been hurt or dead. In those cases, police officers must get a lot of information before intervening and facing with the conflicts parties (Albanian Police Standard Procedure, 2017).

The lack of information had cause serious consequences. Also, the literature suggests that it may help to call upon a trusted and impartial manager or someone from nearby to the work unit to assist. Such a person will informally mediate and may speak separately to each party in the dispute. This can often resolve misunderstandings or set some boundaries to the situation.

The “crisis level” (CRANA Plus, 2011) is difficult to handle. It is recommended to call on the services of an external mediator, who will work with the parties and assist them to find a workable solution.

It is very difficult for people who are at this level of escalation in a conflict to be sufficiently objective and sufficiently clear headed to work on and arrive at a resolution. That's why police officers need collaboration of other professionals like mediators, psychologists, etc. Albanian police officers emphasized the need for this cooperation during the short survey process. In most of the cases the theory recommends a mediator to objectively work with the parties and their both perspectives and interests to resolve the case. A mediator will ask each individual to reflect upon the contribution they made to the dispute and how they see themselves contributing to the solution. Mediation is rarely suitable when bullying or violent behaviors have been experienced.

A police officer need to be aware of those stages of conflict because of knowing how to react in each kind of situation. They first need to notice the signals of a conflict situation and then the causes of misunderstandings, the risk level of the situation, the distance between parties or the tendency to neither compromise or not with each other. They should be alert to the type and the risk of conflict, so they should know what to do next.

When you intervene during a conflict, it is difficult to think rationally about how you got, where you are, and how you might make things better. So it becomes a necessity to explore elements of a conflict situation in order to get an in-depth analysis.

Program on Negotiation by Harvard Law School revealed three of the most notable elements of conflicts, and those are interests, alternatives and identity (Shonk, 2018).

It is suggested that professionals should focus in long-term interest to get effective resolution of conflicts. If they focus on long-term interests of parties or encourage them to do so, there is more probability to grow the relationship strongly and give better solutions.

Fisher, Ury and Patton (2004: 34-35) have revealed four fundamental principles of negotiation:

- Separate people from the problem;
- Focus on interests, rather than positions;
- Create common benefit options;
- Insist on using objective criteria.

By respecting and following those principles, negotiators, mediators or other professionals as police officers, will get better results in their job. They will be able not only to perfectly resolve a conflict situation, but they will help other parties to save their relationship and keep it in the long run, too. In order to follow those principles in conflict situations, it is necessary that a police officer should know how to keep calm, to listen more carefully, to construct a logical and objective perception of the case, to communicate with parties, to identify different solution options of both parties and then get a direction, advice or order to solution. It is necessary to keep calm and stay reasonable.

Professional police officer who will negotiate in hostage cases, in violence cases, in young's disagreement or other ones, should look and listen carefully, target the main problem and make it easier in front of parties eyes (see Staff, 2018). They should be able to understand parties' needs and interest. They should compare the importance of the problem with parties' interest in resolving it and then, they should know how to present the entire situation in concordance to their perception. A good conflict management police officer is someone between a psychologist,

mediator and police officer. You should be three in one, in order to get a solution which should be adapted to each side.

When a police officer makes a negotiation process, it is suggested them to apply brain storming process. So it will help in conducting different opinions, interests and possibilities for solution and direct to the right one.

5. What should contain a conflict report according to sociological analysis?

In order to design a conflict situation report, it is necessary to gather in-depth analysis, enable elements of the situation and then find effective solution strategies. You may not get successful solution, without accurate data or information about what happened. These should be analyzed and interpreted so that the solution fits with the conflict case or parties. Professionals like mediators, negotiators, police officers or others must get in touch with a conflict report elements or a conflict profile (Barrena, 2003, Resource Pack).

The elements that should contain a conflict report (see Medam & Aboya, 2013) are as follows:

- Information on the basic features of the conflict object;
- How's the possibility for opponents to get in touch with the conflict object;
- The opponent's profile (their psychic properties, status, power; their goals, needs, interests, experiences, thoughts analysis, etc.);
- Evidencing conflicts sources and causes which encourage their development or persecution;
- Social environment detailed analysis where the conflict issue has happened;
- Who and how to support the opposite parties;
- Impact of public opinion on conflict development.

Once the data are collected and a specific case analysis is carried out, then it is possible to choose the best strategy for resolving the conflict situation. And now the question is: what method should police officers or other professionals use, in order to get all this information and to complete that conflict report?

6. "Mapping method" elements

Exploring conflicts needs to base on conflict models or schemes to distinguish their composite parts and issues. Reflecting on different conflict degrees of complexity and dynamics, it is more likely to face with different processes and results. The conflict situation profile arises from the opposing relationships' context and dynamics investigation. In addition, a "conflict tree" can be also used to shed light on the parties' manifestations or tensions.

In this paper, as a result of the literature research, it is suggested "mapping method" (Ho-Won, 2008) to illustrate the purpose of a conflict through evaluating the purpose of parties and also their relationships' type and kind of issues. Identifying conflicting parties is an essential step in understanding their attitudes, interests, capacities and their support's external level.

Evolution of the relationship between parties and their social context can be considered in short-term and long-term dynamics, which makes mapping analyses method as one of the most necessary and important one. Based on this method, we analyze a conflict situation by

separating in various part related with the context and other details. Those various parts are used to explain the whole event meaning within a certain timeframe.

This method is recommended to police officer's conflict analysis and investigation, when they have to deal, to resolve or to intervene in cases like that, because of opportunity to analyze parties in details. The mapping method analysis is realized in terms of some milestones keys that serve to divide and orient the information. And that's useful for police officers work.

Mapping method, as Ho-Won specified (2008: 20-43), aim at identifying key conflict actors from the viewpoint of:

- a. Interests, values and needs related to the motive;
- b. Purposes, representing by aims and perspectives;
- c. Issues arising from concerns about well-being.

Those milestone keys are important for conflicts situations' in-depth analysis and conflict management strategies. Each of those perspectives has its own sub-issues, so that any part of a situation can be pulled-apart and analyzed. Relationship dynamics are determined by parties' identity, self-esteem, sense of reality and development conflict level.

Conflict management and solution processes can be analyzed by exploring security, politics and economics, social or other fields. Micro-level versus macro-level analysis covers obstacles that work against a peaceful solution, as well as internal and external factors which influence the prolongation of the conflict.

Mapping method (see Department de Justicia, 2014) includes essential information on planning a constructive response, including violence control. One of the most important goals of this method is that it considers the conflict as helpful as to differentiate opposites parties existing attitude from their true interests and needs by explaining a variety of conflict resolution options.

The key point of view that this method suggests is that a professional worker should go beyond what appears. When a police officer deals with a conflict issue, should analyze any detail, in order to a better understanding and a useful solution. Mapping gives the opportunity to get in-depth analysis of conflict cases and that is helpful for police officers, too.

7. Conflicts management by police officers

It's difficult for police officers to interfere in conflicts between individuals who know each other because they may be hurt. For example, police officers who are called to a domestic violence accident scene face the threat and possibility to violence. There is always risk when low enforcement officers interfere in conflicts between foreigners, too. The stressful nature of police and angers' management difficulties increase life and work risk for low enforcement officers.

Police conflict management training programs have been developed to enhance their ability to manage conflict.

Initially, some police department was resistant and didn't support these training programs, because of the deep-rooted military culture. However, these conflict management training programs have gained acceptance over time. The conclusion is that nowadays many large urban police department uses these programs.

In fact, law enforcement agencies have operational conflict management units. For example, Delaware State Police (2015) uses a Conflict Management Team to help negotiate hostages, media abductions and other crises. In addition, low enforcement agencies have early

warning systems for identifying and responding to officers who have difficulties in conflict management or other (American Department of Justice, 2001).

Nowadays discussions follows on the elements of conflict various approaches to conflict management, interpersonal skills needed for conflict management and researches on effectiveness of police conflict management training.

8. Five strategies to manage conflicts situations from a sociological point of view

There are many strategies that suggest different ways of behaviors, in order to a better resolving of conflict situations. Sociological studies have pointed out five conflict managing strategies. Those ones are also used in the field of economy, psychology, security and beyond. They are used to show the position that each party faces in a conflict situation (see Hiemer, n.d.).

As mentioned above, knowing as more as possible about details, sources and causes or parties position in a conflict situation, it's important for every professional or police officer, in order to get the necessary information to resolve the situation.

The first conflict strategy management is "Cooperation". It is called "win-win" strategy and is considered the best way to deal with conflicts. The purpose is to reach agreement on goals. Through this strategy you can lead to commitment to goals and reduce bad feelings. The disadvantage of this strategy is that it can consume time and require energy.

The second one is "Compromise". It is called "win some-lose some" strategy and is used to achieve temporary solutions, avoid conflicts or resolve the problems in a short period of time. A disadvantage is that people can ignore important values and long-term goals in order to resolve the case in the pressure of time. In addition, this strategy may lead individuals to ignore the importance of an issue and may lead to cynical attitudes.

The third one is "Competition". It is called "win-lose" strategy and it involves attempts to defeat your opponent, in order to gain scarce resources. Conversation is a form of competition. This strategy can lead to an escalation of conflict, where the party who lose can try to retaliate against the winner's one.

The fourth one is "Accommodation". It is called "lose-win" strategy and is used in those cases when the problem is more important for other parties than for you. This strategy promotes goodwill. It's also effective when you make a mistake. The disadvantage is that your point of view is secondary to others. In addition, you may lose credibility and the ability to influence in the future.

The fifth conflict strategy management is "Avoidance". It is called "lose-lose" strategy and is used in those case when the issues is not so important for both parties or other issues are more important for them. This strategy is also used in those cases when the conflict can be very dangerous or otherwise it is needed more information to solve the problem. The disadvantage is that issues can be settled by default.

One of the first efforts to help police officers become more effective in managing interpersonal conflict was a program developed by Morton Bard at the City University of New York. In addition to helping participants become more competent in conflict management, this program included training in the competencies of influence, communication, empathy, and self-awareness (Zacker & Bard, 1973). There are also some types of techniques related with police officers behavior and attitude during a conflict situation (Albanian Police Standard Procedure, 2017), divided in two parts:

A. The techniques used by police officers to calm down a conflict or discussion situation;

B. The action procedures of police officers after they are notified about a conflict or discussion situation.

In the first one there are described behavior's techniques of police officer, in order to calm down the conflict situation. There are relaxing techniques, control techniques, management techniques of anger and management techniques after calming the conflict situation. All those techniques guide police officers how to intervene and to communicate with other parties that are involved in a conflict situation. They should get some information about a kind of situation so that they should be prepared about the intervene plan. Through those techniques police officers should control their anger, listen carefully and show empathy, avoid hasty reactions, encourage parties to exhaust their anger, etc., when deal with a conflict case. They can't go further to police procedures if they can't emotionally and psychologically control the situation or they can't find ways of communication with parties.

For conflicts in which the police intervene, acting either as a primary or a third party, effective conflict outcomes do include restoring order. This usually implies reducing or preventing escalation of the situation, and solving the issue in an efficient way. Particularly escalation, with the threat, for example, of having to make arrests, implies a great deal of work for the police and the judicial system. Therefore, preventing escalation is a key element of effective conflict management by the police.

In this framework, police officers should take part in various trainings with the focus on sociological and psychological factors of communication and behaviors, in order to manage or resolve a conflict situation.

In a study made in the Netherlands by Euwema, Kop & Bakker (2004: 23-38), it was concluded that dominance plays an important part in police-civilian interactions. The benefits of reduced dominance in these situations should be taken into account in the training of professionals. In this study, there were related conflict behavior to burnout and performance. Researchers have conducted the study among police officers, who have both a stress- and conflict-prone occupation. In another observation study among police officers (Euwema & Kop, 2001), it is found that officers using verbal or physical force in interactions with civilians, all scored high on burnout, particularly on depersonalization.

It is very important to know how to understand and how to communicate with parties. If you keep a certain attitude when you are facing a discussion or conflict scene between parties you will be able to expect a similar attitude. So it is recommended that professional ones like nurses, mediators, and police officers should know how to look calm, audibly, communicative, and under stable as much as possible. Only in this way then can better show their professionalism.

According to Kiesler's interaction theory (1983), leading behavior of one party is complemented by submissive behavior of the other party.

In the case of professional interactions, the client or patient follows, while the professional, being a teacher, nurse or police officer, leads and directs the interaction (Euwema, Kop & Bakker, 2004).

During the short survey process (2018), one of the police officers said: "You just don't have time for this kind of things because you may be in a hurry to resolve some other problem. You are not quiet to involve in one case and to analyze it. So we choose the shorter way. We go there, to the conflict scene, give some order, complete the necessary documents and we go away".

Here there comes two problems of Albanian police officers: first one is related with organizations of work, and the other one, with the police culture to give little importance to communication, in order to end up things and cases in a quickly and military way.

In the Table 1 there are demonstrated three communication problems in police conflicts resolving case in Albanian Police (A short survey process, 2018).

Table 1. Communication problems

Communication problems in police conflicts resolving case in Albanian Police	
Lack of time	1
A lot of other responsibilities	2
Police culture	3

Community policing is the philosophy and organizational strategy which aims to establish a partnership between the community and the police, to enable a common analysis of problems and to identify possible solutions based on the concept of sharing responsibilities, in order to maintain security in the community. As a result by OSCE study (2008: 19) this philosophy is built on two basic principles that are improving the quality of service and building trust.

The criteria of community policing are the following (OSCE, 2018):

- Show respect for parties;
- Respect for human rights;
- Effective and mutual conversation;
- Frequency of bilateral contacts;
- Non-use of abusive, discriminatory or prejudicial practices by the parties;
- Display of professionalism and preservation of ethics;
- Integrity thought and care for the common good as the goal of post modernity.

9. Conclusions

As a conclusion of the literature research and analysis of data of the short survey process with Albanian police officers, it is concluded that each police officer who deals with a conflict situation has to structure their work plan and has to mention the main points like: description of the situation, identification of six phases of a conflict situation, deepening analysis based on the “mapping” method, following police procedures, as well as finding a management and solution path. First of all, police officers are suggested to deeply analyze conflict situations by using the structure and proper elements offered by “mapping method”, which came out from the researches in the literature. Then they are expected to intervene following police procedures orders.

Even though, every professional one like mediators, negotiators, police officers who deals with conflict cases, must know how to keep calm, to communicate, to behave and to listen carefully to each party and respect police procedures orders, principle of negotiation, methods of conflict analysis and management strategies by constructing an individual work plan to intervene, manage and give the right solution.

It is important that police officers should be further trained about analyzing, managing and resolving conflict situation. It will work in their better work performance, as well as in in-depth resolving real problems of society and keeping long term community relation. All the above mentioned strategies will be help in the State Police Department and the society in the whole.

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