

Examine the ethical dimension of ‘real time’ operational decisions. (1000 words)

This last year is testament to the potential far-reaching implications for ‘real time’ operational decisions. George Floyd is a household name whose death ignited momentum in the Black Lives Matter movement, resulting in worldwide protests and a re-assessments of police accountability. Derek Chauvin, the police officer called to the convenience store to deal with a counterfeit twenty dollar note Floyd used as tender, was convicted for his murder as a result of his poor decision-making.

The repercussions of operational decisions have the potential to be extensive, career changing and life changing for all those involved. Thus, the importance of upholding the Code of Ethics in all decision-making and actions is key to maintaining public confidence (College of Policing, 2021). Operational decisions are faced daily by police officers, particularly during major or critical incidents. A major incident is declared where ‘any emergency that enquires special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, and generally includes the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of large numbers of people’ (Beardsmore and Butterworth, 2014). A recent example of a major incident was the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. A critical incident is declared when the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victims, their family and/or the community (NPIA, 2011).

Generally, police investigations take place over a longer period of time, allowing evidence to be gathered prior to decision-making. However, major and critical incidents involve less time for law enforcement to consider the evidence before taking action (Shortland, Thomson and Alison, 2020). In such cases, decisions should be made using professional judgement whilst acting with integrity to best serve the public (College of Policing, 2013).

Officers often play an integral part in the decision-making process which can have a substantial impact on the outcome. No matter how much training an officer undertakes, the pressure of reacting to a real time situation cannot be replicated and, as such, it is difficult to prepare for the level of stress involved with decision-making in these situations. A study conducted on the complexity of operational stress when making decisions concludes that a greater understanding of the psychology of stress is necessary to improve methods of training for officer’s prevention of post-traumatic stress disorders after ‘real time’ policing (Brisinda *et al.*, 2015).

When responding to incidents, officers reflect on the National Decision Model (NDM) to assist in decision-making enabling them to have confidence that their actions are influenced by a best practice framework. However, circumstances are continuously changing and fast moving, therefore it is not always possible to work through every aspect of the NDM. Despite this, the NDM should be used as a foundation to enable officers to be confident in their professional judgement allowing effective decision-making (Association of Chief Police Officers, n.d.). Moreover, prior to, and upon arrival of an incident, officers should conduct dynamic risk assessments to assist in effective decision-making by weighing up the likelihood of harm and risks versus benefits of a decision (College of Policing, 2020).

During operational decision-making, it might not always be necessary to use policing powers. Utilising discretion following an objective consideration of the details of a situation can assist in maintaining community relations and a reduction in crime (Myhill and Quinton, 2011). However, one must weigh up the risks versus the benefits of the outcome coupled with the public's perception of the decision.

The evolution of policing to a transparent service where officers are held accountable coupled with the pressure associated with making operational decisions in a stressful situation, has the potential to result in increased risk aversion among the service, as opposed to being risk aware, a culture which noted as still pervading in the police force due to 'unnecessary bureaucracy' (Flanagan, 2008, p. 7). A recent incident which was viewed by the public as the police losing control of a situation was the 'Mayhill riots' in Swansea (2021) where an operational decision was made for officers to stand down due to their presence potentially escalating the violence. However, the decision was highlighted in the media as a lack of control from the police. Additionally, officers may adapt risk aversion to reduce negative outcomes, or to avoid making decisions which might involve an increased amount of admin following the incident due to the ever-increasing demand and limited resources in policing.

Moreover, the increase in bureaucracy and input from complaints agencies such as the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), has been noted as a reason for a potential lack of flexibility in decision-making. The IOPC have noted concerns that a fear of being blamed if an incorrect decision is made can affect the effectiveness of policing. As a result, the IOPC aim to be transparent in explaining their processes and the complaints system (Independent Office for Police Conduct, 2018).

Thus, the increasing public intolerance to error, accusations of risk aversions and avoidance, and complaints and public enquiries, can make it difficult for officer to make ethical operational decisions. However, reflecting upon, and evaluating decision-making post incident at an organisation level can aid learning and potentially reduce risk aversion and increase officers' confidence (College of Policing, 2020).

In conclusion, the ability to make effective real time operational decisions is a key responsibility of the police service. However, there are a number of factors which can negatively influence an officer's confidence in making these operational decisions potentially leading to risk aversion. The notion that officers are conscious that their decisions and highly scrutinised at an organisation level has been echoed by in research (Myhill, 2018). Moreover, scrutiny at a social level through public complaints can also affect decision-making. In order to remain confident in the face of multilevel scrutiny, it is important that officers utilise their professional judgement when making decisions, are confident in utilising discretion following gathering appropriate information and intelligence, and ensure policies and decision-making frameworks are followed enabling officers to be held accountable and be able to justify their decisions (Pais and Felgueiras, 2017). In order to overcome the concerns around scrutiny when making operational decisions, reflecting upon the actions prior to, during and after the decision-making can facilitate learning and professional development (College of Policing, 2020).

Word count: 1030

Assess the impact of organisational justice on police agency. (1000 words)

As Ojo (2021) suggests, Law Enforcement in the UK has suffered from the negative effects of austerity; in policing terms, the impact is most visible, as Hastings and Gannon (2021) propose, in the reduction in strength of Police Forces across the UK's 45 Forces, and organisational reorganisation that has followed. Within such change, the demand for police support or requests from the general public for services continue to rise. Allen and Zayed (2021) suggest that there is an expectation on the part of government and general public that operational police officers and support staff will continue to operate professionally; however, as Jarman, (2021) notes, fewer resources are being allocated to public services with which to carry out their duties. The consequence of cutting back on police spending, according to Davies *et al.* (2016), centres on the willingness of police officers to display discretionary efforts, while Houdmont and Davies (2017) maintain that the organisational restructuring significantly impacts on the officers' physical and mental health. Loveday (2021) even goes as far as to suggest that such change leads to a reduction in the number of individuals available to respond to a given task.

The manner in which an organisation interrelates with its people is important. Employee perceptions of their organisation, its behaviours, decision-making strategies, policies, procedures and actions, each have the effect of shaping employee attitudes and behaviours towards their employers during work and off duty. According to McCarthy (2021), our sense of justice hinges on moral correctness of an action or decision made by significant others, in this instance the organisation. In the context of policing, notions of integrity are formulated in the Police Code of Ethics, or operationally in Police Conduct Regulations (Parliament of Victoria, 2009). Also from the perspective of employee-employer relations, principles of fairness are supported in law, through the Equality Act (2010), Employment Relations Act (1999) or Equal Pay Act (1970). Whilst reinforced in principle through organisation policies on 'raising concerns' or when making formal complaints, human beings are prone to react poorly to organisational decisions and incidents they judge unfair, biased or seemingly unwarranted. Unfair decisions to often draw resistance, a reduction of workforce cooperation and willingness to perform tasks (Davies *et al.*, 2016; Hassan *et al.*, 2014).

Fairness in terms of organisational productivity is, according to Greenburg (2011), of importance, since notions of unfairness carry consequences, notably that they can impact on professional attitudes; justice in this sense centres on an organisations capacity to deliver fair

pay, provide equal opportunities and allocate a reasonable workload (Bobocel 2021). Organisational Justice might be viewed as a measure of how employees become either more or less motivated, as a consequence of their employer's capacity to produce notions of significance, uniqueness or the value they place on their workers and their role; this consequently impacts on the individual's 'agency', in this instance their Police Agency.

Agency is defined as an individual's capacity to act independently, and to make their own free choices in order to achieve their goals. According to Giddens (1979) and others (Wiseman *et al.*, 2012; Bourdieu, 1977), an individual's agency is self-determining; it provides the means and capacity to perform as independent and self-determining entities. Muller-Wolf (1974) suggests its composition is one of primary and secondary socialisation, and the joining of social norms and the values. Kinzig (2013) proposes we assign to membership to a particular group or a social network. To fully appreciate the role played by 'agency', one needs to appreciate the sociological principle of 'structure', wherein according to Sorokin (1974) and others (Kazakova 2021; Li, 2021; McClelland, 2020), the qualities of an individual's agency must be tested during periods of social interaction.

Agency from a policing perspective according to Johnson (1967) settles on similar notions of "the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices" (Johnson, 1967, p. 417). Johnson supports clear links to the often low levels of skill and occupational knowledge held by frontline officers, and the commitment and cooperation they display in undertaking often dangerous duties, noting importantly that in policing:

"The high expectations that the general public appoint to the Police Force, serve in the long run to complicate police work, on the basis that one of the qualities of this occupation is determined largely by the skill and discretion employed by the personnel occupying the lowest level of positions in the organizational structure; therein the effectiveness of police officers can be viewed as a consequence of police agency" (Johnson, 1967, p. 405).

Police agency operates in the same way as social agency, yet due to the nature of policing, and the additional social and ethical responsibilities and expectations, one carries as a police officer, one needs to have faith in the principle that 'there is a plan', and that their role is of value, their status and membership viewed as meaningful and necessary in society. Organisational Justice

when well applied, creates a sense of additional security, it covers notions of collective responsibility and principle that each officer has a voice, and that their comments, hopes, fears, aspirations or proposals will each be taken seriously. Discretionary effort is given freely, driven by an agency surrounded in a willingness to engage, that comes with an expectation of going the extra mile. Yet to achieve that headset and commitment one also needs to feel, as much as be, an essential part of a meaningful and empowering organisation.

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