Police Integrity : The Unwillingness to Report a Peer's Misconduct
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Introduction

This project explores the unwillingness to report a peer's misconduct. Throughout this study three factors playing a role in the ineffectiveness of peer reporting have been outlined. Although police organizations aim to increase peer reporting of unethical behaviours, studies have shown that police officers who report their peers damage the overall team structure.(McCartney & Parent, 2015)

Background

The public puts a lot of trust in the police and if the officers engage in unethical behaviours it will damage the police organization's image and reduce public confidence in them (Payam, 2016). Therefore police integrity plays an important role in building public trust.One aspect of police integrity is peer reporting of unethical police behaviours. Peer reporting is best described as a police officer reporting to the superior officer in the chain of command about the misconduct committed by one of his co-workers. According to Rowe (2018) the unwillingness of peer reporting usually starts as soon as recruits are trained by more experience police officers. The recruits are often told by other police officers to forget what they learned in the academy and to start learning real police work (Rowe, 2018).

Methods

The method used to complete this project was a critical appraisal. A thorough literature review of the current research was conducted, and the most relevant information was chosen for review.The majority of the articles for this research were found on the Justice Institute of British Columbia library databases and the following keywords were used to find relevant information: Police Integrity, Peer Reporting of Police Misconduct, Corruption, Police Culture, Police Ethics, Blue Code of Silence, Police deviance. This search returned almost five thousand results. To limit the results, the search criteria was narrowed to only include full text, peer reviewed articles from the year 2000 onwards. The search terms generated hits in specific databases such as Criminal Justice Abstracts, PsycINFO. In total nine articles were analyzed for their relevance and validity in terms of this research topic.

Results/Findings

Three main themes emerged from this research. The themes identified are three different factors that play a role in the unwillingness to report a peer's misconduct. The themes were:

• The perceived seriousness of acts;

• Individual Reporting Intentions;

• Police culture.

These themes were explored and compared to the existing literature, and further discussion was undertaken.

Discussion

From this research, it was concluded that the acts that were perceived as more serious were those with acquisitive attributions. The theft of money or items of any value is an act that most police officers would report.

As for individual peer reporting intentions the academic literature stated that when police officers have higher levels of cynicism it will decrease their peer reporting intentions.The existing studies that were reviewed stated that low level of cynicism increases the likelihood of peer reporting within police departments.
The last factor identified was that of police cultures. The police culture is one who encourages values such as loyalty among police officers but also creates a "us versus them" attitude (McCartney and Parent, 2015). Therefore, reporting a peer is seen as "snitching" and is discouraged by police culture.

http://justiceisjustus.blogspot.ca/2013/07/the-blue-code-of-silence.html

Conclusions or Recommendations

Several conclusions and recommendations were made as a result of this research. These recommendations include, but are not limited to:

• Further ethical training for both new recruits and current police officers.

• Reducing the amount of unethical behaviours and maintaining an ethical environment will reduce the need for peer reporting.

• Rewarding ethical behaviours in order to support ethical decision making.

The research shows that some factors will decrease peer reporting intentions. Yet it is important to encourage peer reporting because it is a preventive strategy to unethical behaviours in a police organization.

References

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