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Law Enforcement Executive Selection Process in North Texas

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Herbert Robert Ashford, Jr.

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Law Enforcement Executive Selection Process in North Texas

by

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MS, Amberton University, 2014

BAAS, Dallas Baptist University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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November 2024

Abstract

Poor community-police relationships impact both communities and police because the community may feel unfairly targeted for enforcement. This qualitative study investigated what attributes are essential to executive law enforcement success. The theoretical framework was the person-organization fit theory as it applies to public service motivation. Data were collected from chief law enforcement executives and their direct reports from eight municipal law enforcement agencies in the Dallas County area of the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Metropolitan Area through an open-ended qualitative questionnaire; the sample population consisted of 19 police executives. The results were analyzed using NVivo software and hand coding. The results were related to the areas of operational, administrative, and investigative experiences. Participants' experiences fostered more positive relationships within and outside of their organizations and provided them with the skills to handle their duties and to meet organizational objectives. Findings may be used for positive social change by law enforcement agencies to evaluate various aspects of a candidate's experience when considering officers for executive leadership positions.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to the leaders in law enforcement whom I worked with or worked for throughout my law enforcement career. These leaders took a personal interest in my development. Their example, insight, and counsel are invaluable and are the reason for my success, allowing me to pass on their legacy to the current and future leaders in law enforcement.

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I want to thank God for getting me here. He has again restored my life, comforted me, lifted me from the deepest depths, and increased my honor (New International Version Bible, 2011, Ps. 71:20-21).

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To my brothers of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc., who have reminded me of the importance of honorable achievement in every field of human endeavor and that we serve God, our families, our community, and ourselves through honorable achievement. Phi Nu Phi.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the last decade, law enforcement has faced many challenges in ensuring safe communities and being responsive to the communities they serve. Despite 4 decades of efforts by law enforcement in the United States promoting the modern model of community policing, relations between law enforcement and primarily racial minority economically disadvantaged communities are still considered strained (Panditharatne et al., 2021). The current community policing model is the outgrowth of racial tension between the African American community and law enforcement during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s (Fisher-Stewart, 2007). Poor community–police relations impact both communities and police because the community may feel unfairly targeted for enforcement. Poor police–community relations may also impact policing efforts; if there is little to no cooperation from the community, a reduction in crime or improved community quality of life may not be realized. A possible cause of this ongoing issue is law enforcement leadership. With weak law enforcement leadership, developing good relationships and the ability to solve problems cooperatively is challenging (Panditharatne et al., 2021). Executive decisions in an organization pose increasing levels of role and task complexity, especially when the top management team works to address the needs of diverse stakeholders and applying the appropriate organizational practices to address stakeholders’ needs (Törnblom, 2018; Vinkenburg et al., 2014; Weitzer et al., 2008).

Leaders who practice a transformational leadership style based on procedural justice, including fostering good dyadic relationships, will result in better interaction and

cooperation between law enforcement and the community to develop strategies to achieve safer communities. Further, community trust in an organization promotes communication and can lead to an organization successfully meeting its goals (Northouse, 2013; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2013; Quttainah, 2015). However, it is not clear whether the establishment of requirements for formal education, job-specific training or certification, and tenure (experience) improve the success of law enforcement executives and make them more effective (Ting et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2016).

This chapter addresses the importance of this study by covering the background and purpose of why leadership selection is critical to law enforcement and providing effective service to the community. Further, this chapter covers the nature of the study and the research questions that guided the study. The theoretical foundation is also discussed. The chapter concludes with the definitions, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, and significance of the study.

Background

According to Törnblom (2018), role and task complexity increase at each level a person rises within an organization. Executive leadership has a critical impact on internal and external stakeholders. Top leadership sets the direction of an organization through the influence of an organization's culture that can better connect with the community it serves by being responsive to the community's desires. Further, through leadership, an organization can become more responsive to the community, fostering improved dialogue, trust, and legitimacy (Moggré et al., 2017; Quttainah, 2015; Törnblom, 2018).

According to The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015), the first pillar in improving the relationship between the police and the community is building trust and legitimacy. Within the African American and Hispanic communities, the lack of trust and perception of disparate treatment may correlate to the increase in deaths of people of color during encounters with law enforcement. Deaths resulting from the outcome of lawful interaction between police and individuals increased by 45% between 1999 and 2013. At the end of the examined period, the ratio of overall deaths was 0.16/100,000 contacts, with an African American rate of 0.24/100,000, a Native American rate of 0.24/100,000, and a rate of 0.17/100,000 for Hispanics. In contrast, non-Hispanic Whites represented 0.09/100,000 deaths (DeGue et al., 2016).

One of the findings in The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015) was the importance of cultural change in law enforcement. Further, being responsive to the community's desire for organizational change and finding common value with the community are critical skills for the top management team to achieve trust between the organization and the community. An organizational leader who is adept at achieving organizational change in alignment with the community's desires is more likely to build trust with the community. Characteristics of leaders who are more successful at attaining organizational change are higher educated, older, male, experience with making critical decisions, tenure, diverse experience, strategic, and socially connected within the organization (Quttainah, 2015; Ting et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2016).

There is a gap in the literature related to the attributes, skills, and activities that are important for executive success. Further, it is not clear how organizations develop their leaders for the role of executive leadership, The complexity of executive leadership and how executives deal with internal and external challenges, especially ambiguous ones, is a skill set that impedes some leaders from transitioning from middle to executive management; some middle managers' careers derail in their attempt to move to the executive level. Therefore, their lack of preparation may result in low individual and organizational effectiveness (Kaiser et al., 2011).

Problem Statement

Organizational leadership impacts organizational effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction with the organization. Executive selection and succession planning in law enforcement vary across organizations, and the recent research examined quantitative outcomes of executive selection as it relates to the financial or strategic impact on the organization. However, there was a gap in the literature regarding the important attributes are important in executive leadership and what works in policy development and leadership as it relates to executive selection (Elms et al., 2015; Kaiser et al., 2011; Schepker et al., 2018; Vanebo et al., 2015; Vinkenbug et al., 2014).

Purpose Statement

This study aimed to bridge the knowledge gap in selecting the top management teams in law enforcement. Findings from this study could be applied to the selection of law enforcement executives. Applying best practices from the private sector may result in police departments that are more responsive to their communities, resulting in improved

police–community relations and improved quality of life through crime reduction. The study consisted of a qualitative exploration of the aspects of executive selection in the private sector and how those aspects can be applied to the public sector to determine the best practices for law enforcement executive selection. The different aspects in executive selections include a candidate’s tenure, functional background, and education level. In this study, I sought to understand how law enforcement executives are selected and matured within law enforcement agencies and the impact of executive selection within those agencies related to the perceived success of the law enforcement executives. Further, for agencies that select their executives using criteria including the candidate’s formal education, job-specific training or certification, and tenure, I explored whether any of those attributes are essential in the perceived success of the law enforcement executives (see Bond, 1996; Elms et al., 2015; Jordon & Schraeder, 2003; Schepker et al., 2018; Vinkenburg et al., 2014).

Research Questions

RQ1: What characteristics are essential to the success of municipal law enforcement executives?

RQ2: How does formal education prepare law enforcement executives in their leadership roles?

RQ3: How does the amount of command experience impact the perceived success of law enforcement executives?

RQ4: What impact does having varied leadership experience in operations, administrative, and investigative assignments have on the perceived success of law enforcement executives?

Theoretical Foundation

The assumption for this research was that law enforcement executives will have more successful careers when they participate in the allowable actions of earning at least a master's degree; have a tenure of at least 1 year each in operations, investigative, and administrative capacities; and have completed executive-level law enforcement training. Various theories and concepts, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, served as the theoretical foundation of this study to explore the perceived success of law enforcement executives. The theories and concepts included person-organization fit (P-O fit) theory as it applies to public service motivation, functional/top management team diversity, upper echelon theory, complexity theory, the experience trap, job competencies, knowledge management behavior, the impact on political influence on executive selection, developing management competencies, and promotion-based job crafting.

Nature of the Study

I conducted an anonymous questionnaire with open-ended questions to better understand the experiences of law enforcement executives. This qualitative study addressed the phenomena that are common to law enforcement executives and their perception of their success. The law enforcement executives' perceptions were investigated using an anonymous questionnaire. The sample consisted of police executives

who were in the top two tiers of executive rank for their respective departments. I sought to determine whether tenure, formal education, diverse assignments, politics, and job-specific training had any impact on participants' perceived success as law enforcement executives. This study included 19 law enforcement executives. The questionnaire responses were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software to identify themes.

Definitions

Contest or tournament mobility: A situation in which candidates continuously compete against each other for top positions regardless of their previous performance (Vinkenburg et al., 2014).

Functional Diversity: Diversity of tasks or functions (Hollenbeck et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2018).

Intersectoral mobility: Leadership training and experience across government levels and policy areas (T. Bach & Veit, 2018; Finkel et al., 2021)

Leadership pipeline: The process within an organization that focuses on critical career passages through the hierarchy as it relates to the development of skill requirements, time applications, and work values (Charan et al., 2011).

Person-organization fit (P-O fit)/role fit/candidate fit: How an individual's skills, experience, and abilities fit with an organization's goals and values (Elms et al., 2015; Hu et al., 2016; Rutherford, 2017).

Sponsored mobility: A situation in which candidates are selected early in their careers for advancement to the exclusion of others (Vinkenburg et al., 2014).

Upper echelon theory: A framework that addresses the characteristics, experience, education, and traits that are important to perform at the top management or executive leadership level (Quttainah, 2015; Ting et al., 2015).

Assumption

Through a qualitative analysis of the questionnaire responses of law enforcement executives, I sought to determine what they perceived to be the reasons that led to their upward mobility. My assumption was that regardless of whether the law enforcement executive moved up their organization's hierarchy through a contest mobility process or sponsored mobility, tenure in prior grades, varied assignments, a graduate degree, and completing job-related management training were instrumental in their perceived success.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to determine which leadership aspects led to the advancement of the law enforcement executives. The sample included incumbents from eight municipalities in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The delimitations of this study did not include the communities that are served by the represented law enforcement agencies for the community's perspective of whether the leaders of their respective law enforcement agency are influential and effective. Also, this study did not consider the impact of the executives' leadership on crime.

Limitation

The limitation of this study was the small sample size of 19 law enforcement executives. I used a nonprobability purposeful sampling method to recruit law enforcement executives in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA, which may have

resulted in sampling bias. A larger sample size of the population of law enforcement executives stratified by agency size and type (i.e., local, state, and federal agencies) may result in different findings (O'Sullivan et al., 2017).

Significance of the Study

Findings from the study may be used to improve police–community relations, which are under increasing stress due to the lack of community trust in law enforcement. In this study, the expectation was to show those police executives who are better prepared for leadership are better prepared to provide organizational leadership that is more responsive to the community that the organization serves. This study has the potential to add to the knowledge of the importance of law enforcement executives. Findings may lead to better processes in preparing and selecting leaders who are more adept at managing the complexity of organizational leadership. An aspect of complexity is being responsive to stakeholders; in this study, the primary stakeholder was the community (see Törnblom, 2018; Vinkenburg et al., 2014).

Effective executive leaders in the top management team have been shown to change organizational culture by creating a strategic vision and getting the organization to embrace that vision. Effective leaders have a track record of diverse, creative, and responsive leadership. Selecting leaders with these characteristics who are able to inculcate the community's desires for just law enforcement will result in increased trust from the community, and the community, in turn, will see the police as legitimate partners in building and maintaining safe communities. Increased trust and cooperation between the community and law enforcement may result in more positive outcomes.

With improved relations, community members may be more likely to obey the laws, resulting in less crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015; Yoon et al., 2016).

Summary

As more incidents of negative police interactions with the community occur, the cry for police reform grows louder. Since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in May 2020, the public has become more vocal about how policing is done and more critical of its leaders. Several police leaders have moved on from their roles as police chiefs.

The preparation and selection of a police executive should not be left to chance or a flawed selection process. In June 2020, the City of Portland, Oregon, appointed a police lieutenant who was serving as the acting captain in the department's Community Services Division to the position of chief of police. However, the selection process of the mayor, who also serves as the police commissioner to appoint the police chief, is an example of a selection that is not much of a formal process. After 80 consecutive days of riots and other challenges such as community relations, officer morale, and the administration of a law enforcement agency, it is not clear whether Chief Lovell will be successful in leading his department to a better state after a significant leap in responsibilities from mid-level command to the top executive. Over time, the appointment of Chief Chuck Lovell will prove to be either an excellent or poor decision (Harbarger & Rambo, 2020; The City of Portland Oregon, 2020).

This chapter discussed the importance of selecting effective law enforcement leaders, which impacts organizational effectiveness. It was important to determine the

attributes that are important in choosing the top management teams in law enforcement. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive literature review to determine the salient attributes that are key to successful managers and executives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Safe and crime-free communities are essential to society, and providing effective police services is instrumental to that end. The low sense of the legitimacy of law enforcement in some communities has negatively impacted the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Providing proper police services requires capable and competent leadership (Mearns, 2017; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

This chapter includes the search strategy of the literature review and a synthesis of the literature, including themes and characteristics that relate to executive success. The literature review covers aspects that are important to organizational success for leaders. The literature review also covers the impact of politics on executive selection; the importance of P-O fit; the diversity in work experience, intellect, and creativity; and how aspiring leaders, along with their organizations, can craft these characteristics to improve their success.

Literature Search Strategy

There was a gap in the literature on executive selection in law enforcement. Therefore, my search strategy revolved around the leadership structure and organizational dynamics of non-law-enforcement public and private organizations. The research sources I used to find comparative literature were the Walden University Library and Google Scholar, which allowed me to search databases such as Elsevier, ProQuest, Sage Publications, and various journals. Key terms searched were *top management teams*, *upper echelon theory*, *contest mobility*, *stratified systems theory*, *competency-based development*, *critical success factors*, and *leadership pipeline model*.

Theoretical Foundation

Several theories and concepts formed the basis of the research and development of the research questions. The theories and models included P-O fit, top management team diversity theory, upper echelon theory, complexity theory, the experience trap, job competencies, knowledge management behavior, job crafting, and developing managerial job competencies. Each theory covers various aspects of the literature regarding determining the phenomena that lead to leadership success in organizations.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Person-Organization Fit

Kristof-Brown et al. (2023) discuss how P-O fit is the value congruence or complementary fit between the attributes of an individual and an organization. Those attributes can be objective in that they match the workers' personal needs, such as financial compensation, position, favorable work schedule, and benefits with the needs of the organization. The organization's needs are complementary to those of workers in that they have the same needs. The lack of complementary fit could result in a negative results in that workers will not meet the objectives of the organization. However, increased P-O fit results in increased commitment by the worker and alignment with the organization's goals (Bright, 2021; Dahleez et al., 2021; Kristof-Brown et al., 2023; Liu & Xie, 2023).

Functional/Top Management Team Diversity

According to Nielsen (2000), top management team (TMT) theory focuses on how various characteristics of the individual top team members, such as age, tenure, education, and varied experience, impact the organization's performance and outcomes.

A TMT and individuals who possess diverse experience can help an organization make positive or effective change through varied functional diversity and creativity. Functional TMT diversity is multifaceted, consisting of external management diversity, educational level, background, and internal management diversity. Leaders with functional TMT diversity positively impact organizations through their broader view, promoting increased communication and influencing the decision-making process. Leaders with functional diversity possess better problem-solving skills and are more adept at addressing organizational challenges (S. B. Bach & Lee, 2018; Chen et al., 2019; Díaz-Fernandez et al., 2020; A. Kumar, 2023; Ma et al., 2020; Pham & Lo, 2023; Stanišić & Čerović, 2018; Yoon et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2023)

Upper Echelon Theory

Upper echelon theory was developed by Hambrick and Mason. A benefit of upper echelon theory is that it helps select upper level executives by evaluating the various characteristics of the top management teams. As with functional TMT diversity, possessing various characteristics leads to higher organizational performance. The characteristics include the executives' age, functional diversity, formal education, industry tenure, personality, and how the characteristics relate to strategic organizational management. A significant aspect of upper echelon theory is that older executives are more risk averse than their younger counterparts (Pham & Lo, 2023).

Further, the executives' decision making or their behavioral strategy and neurostrategy is based on their experience. However, age in organizations outside North America has had less impact on executive performance. There are inhibitors or

moderators that positively affect the characteristics of upper echelon theory. Those inhibitors include what organizational constraints are on the executive, their freedom to make decisions, the demands of the job, and the distribution of power or relative power that the executive possesses. Higher pay incentivizes executives to obtain the required skills and increases performance (Abatecola & Cristofaro, 2020; S. B. Bach & Lee, 2018).

To be influential in their organizations, executives must possess various characteristics, and metrics are used to determine which factors are essential to executive and organizational success. Upper echelon theory has been criticized for its reliance on proxy demographics to extrapolate a connection between an executive's age, functional diversity, formal education, and industry tenure with their success. An empirical assessment in the form of a psychometric assessment tool has been used to gauge an executive's attributes that are critical to executive success (Neely et al., 2020).

Complexity Theory

Complexity theory or complexity leadership theory addresses how leaders manage or react to complex situations and complex organizations. According to Abbaszade (2022), complexity leadership involves three dynamics of administrative leadership, adaptive leadership, and action-centered leadership. Leaders must possess varied skill sets and the ability to adapt in dynamic organizations to manage complexity, which is identified as management development. Leaders must navigate four stages to be successful in changing organizations: dealing with disequilibrium (uncertainty), amplification, emergence, and stabilization (Kjellstrom et al., 2020; Uhl-Bien, 2021).

Leaders who can manage complex situations must possess intellect, creativity, and flexibility; those who are successful in doing so can better align themselves with the organization's goals (Tourish, 2019). Leadership development within complex organizations involves interaction between leaders and followers and allows for contest mobility. To be effective in complex organizations or processes, leaders must also understand and be adept at traditional management principles, strategic leadership, policymaking, and alignment with the organization's goal (Bäcklander, 2019; Rosenhead et al., 2019; Tourish, 2019).

The Experience Trap

The literature indicated that more experience does not mean better executive or organizational performance. The experience trap is contrary to the human capital theory, which says that there is a positive link between experience and performance. However, the experience trap states that performance peaks and diminishes with increasing experience regardless of prior success. An executive's prior experience may hinder their success because executives may not be as flexible and may adhere to old practices that limit future success (Bragaw & Misangyi, 2017; Hahn & Kim, 2021).

Job Competencies

Job competencies include the knowledge, skills, and abilities aligned for a specific role. The literature showed that for executives to be appropriately prepared for their roles, they need a density of job experience, including time in various and challenging roles in preparation for a higher role (Srikanth P. B., 2019). Depending on the literature, the density of experience falls into two categories. The first category is

roles. Those roles are individual contributor, team lead, and manager. The second category is assignments. The assignments that are considered vital for development are assignments before becoming a manager, the person's first supervisory position, success in dealing with a problem operation, managing the creation of a new process or function, working in an administrative position, having increasing responsibilities, and working as part of a key team (McCauley et al., 2019; Srikanth, 2019).

Supporting the density of job experiences are the challenges of those experiences. Carvalho et al. (2021) discussed that five challenging experiences increase management competencies. Challenging experiences are unfamiliar responsibilities through which the manager is challenged to think creatively. The second challenge is creating change, such as fixing an issue within a work unit or creating a novel process. The third challenge is managing high levels of responsibility. This challenge includes managing multiple high-level or high-liability aspects of an organization. The fourth challenge deals with working across boundaries, including working laterally and vertically in the organization and with external stakeholders. The fifth challenge is managing diversity across ethnic, cultural, and generational boundaries. The literature recommended that these five challenges be put in place within the organization processes to make available the opportunities, support, and ways to measure the performance of individuals in the five challenging experiences (Carvalho et al., 2021).

Srikanth (2019) discusses how it is incumbent upon organizations via their human resource departments to develop critical competencies for their respective executive requirements. The literature suggested that the competencies should be based on a high

density of work experience. The density is a matrix of varied work roles, how much time is spent in each role, and the complexity of the role. The literature suggested that this is a better predictor of executive success than an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Components of the density of work experience consist of cognitive ability, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience (Perrone & Tucker, 2019; Srikanth, 2019, 2020).

Knowledge Management Behavior

According to Namdarian (2018) knowledge management is preserving, organizing, exchanging, and utilizing information specific to an organization. Although the literature considered knowledge management an organizational attribute, individuals have that knowledge. Individuals within an organization who are learning oriented embrace gathering information and sharing knowledge as a way to advance their careers. An attribute of individuals who embrace knowledge management behavior is increasing their creativity and possibly their recognition within the organization. Knowledge management behavior is a crucial attribute of authentic leaders. Leaders who promote knowledge management behavior positively impact their organization (Alzghoul et al., 2018; Namdarian et al., 2020; Young & Jin, 2017).

Political Influence in Executive Selection

According to Jordon and Schraeder (2003) political influence in executive selection in government may not result in the most competent person being placed in the role. To minimize the influence of political patronage, the Navy's senior executive service developed a process to mitigate this type of influence. Like the Navy's senior

executive service, the German federal government dealt with the issue of political loyalty versus merit in the selection for an executive ministry positions. In Germany, the literature suggested that partisan affiliation for executive civil service positions is vital in helping the elected officials of the same party achieve their political agenda for which they were elected (Bach, T., & Veit, S., 2018). Therefore, party affiliation was critical for selection for executive civil service positions.

Conversely, He et al. (2021) suggested that political adeptness is an essential competency for executive-level service. The German federal service suggested that diverse experience or intersectoral mobility develops the requisite competencies. The experience includes working in a leadership support unit, the chancellery, and the parliamentary group. In addition, those with political connections have additional resources available to help them succeed within their organization. A downside identified is the nature of the political arena, in that those who aspire to gain an executive appointment must have the opportunity to gain the prerequisite experience (T. Bach & Veit, 2018; He et al., 2021).

Developing Managerial Competencies

The literature suggested that certain experiences, more specifically certain qualitative and quantitative work designs, are essential in developing managerial competencies. The qualitative aspects of managerial competencies revolve around tasks, knowledge, and social and contextual characteristics. Task complexity is considered a qualitative aspect in that it is based on how the task is mentally demanding. The quantitative aspect of managerial competencies deals with task variety. Task variety helps

individuals develop the skills needed to manage similar tasks but at a higher level (Srikanth & Jomon, 2020). There is a gap in knowledge regarding task variety due to limited research. The literature suggested that in addition to task complexity and task variety, the following experiences are important in developing a competent manager:

- boundary spanning, or dealing with external stakeholders
- virtuality, or being able to work in a remote setting
- feedback provided through evaluation

Srikanth and Jomon (2020) discussed the importance of developmental challenges as a way to build competencies. Developmental challenges are roles that involve making decisions under high stress or high stakes. This aspect of decision making is not tied to a specific task but is a combination of tasks and environment. Developmental challenges involve leading a high-risk organizational function versus serving as a team member. Boundary spanning is important in developing managerial competencies through increasing broader and more challenging responsibilities. Through boundary spanning, the literature suggested that this process results in a higher level of learning. Virtuality helps develop competency over a broader geography and challenges managers' interpersonal skills. Feedback lets managers know how they are doing and learn in their roles, thereby improving their capabilities (Srikanth & Jomon, 2020).

Several other attributes are critical to developing the skills necessary for executive leadership. One physiological attribute is neuroplasticity, or the ability to learn and retain new skills for leadership through new training and experiences. In conjunction with neuroplasticity is the concept of pragmatic intelligence. Pragmatic intelligence is a

combination of several cognitive abilities and experiences. Neuroplasticity is bolstered by consciousness intelligence, or the ability to conceptualize abstract concepts and think in creative and hypothetical ways (Gheerawo et al., 2020; Heimann, 2020).

Promotion-Based Job Crafting

According to Lee and Lee (2018) job crafting involves the activities a motivated employee takes to align themselves with their organization's goals. Job crafting is a relatively recent theory in human resource development. Further, job crafting involves five critical areas in role preparation and improved performance. The five characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Job crafting has two primary processes: either bottom-up, employee-driven, or cooperative job crafting done in conjunction with the employee and their organization. The former addresses employee autonomy, which leads to self-determination, and the latter ensures alignment with the organization's goals (Furstenberg et al., 2021; Kim & Beehr, 2022; Lee & Lee, 2018).

Hetland et al. (2018) discusses bottom-up or employee-based job crafting, and how it falls into two broad categories: role-based and resource-based job crafting. Role-based job crafting focuses on the meaning and motivation of the employee tied to their role. Although resource-based job crafting shares the aspect of motivation with role-based job crafting, it focuses on the mechanics of job design. As it relates to resource-based job crafting, it is promotion-based job crafting. Promotion-based job crafting is positively associated with transformational and servant leadership through three constructs of increasing structural resources, social resources (internal and external to the

organization), and challenging job demand, whereas attributes of gender, age, job tenure, and leadership position had minimal impact on promotion-based job crafting (Hetland et al., 2018; Lee & Lee, 2018; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2018; Wang et al., 2020).

Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2018) identified three positive attributes of promotion-based job crafting. Those attributes are task performance, adaptive performance, and proactive performance. Task performance is how often and how well employees do their core job function. Adaptive performance is what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) an individual learns to improve their organizational performance. In addition to KSAs, other key aspects of adaptive performance involve the individual's age, in that older workers are invested in improving their performance and learning additional KSAs.

Further, the individual's motivation and learning goal orientation is key to adaptive performance (Park & Park, 2019). Proactive performance is when the individual is motivated to perform and is bolstered by a positive relationship with their supervisor. Additionally, a positive correlation exists between increased task complexity related to the leader-member exchange and increased job interdependence and team-member exchange (Boudrias et al., 2021; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2018).

Personal growth initiative and psychological empowerment are other aspects that positively impact job crafting. Personal growth initiative involves the individual's motivation centered around their readiness for change, planfulness, the planning process for making change, utilizing resources to grow, and being intentional towards self-improvement. Psychological empowerment deals with the value the individual places on

the goal, their competence, and how they can impact their job. Personal growth initiative and psychological empowerment positively interact by increasing structural job resources, social job resources, increased workload, and challenging job demands. These three dimensions promote job crafting (Joo et al., 2021; Kuijpers et al., 2020; Matsuo, 2019).

Leadership Preparation

Goktepe, et al. (2018) discusses that preparation for managerial roles is lacking. Things that are essential to prepare for leadership include coaching, mentoring, formal training, and education. To help develop managerial competencies, the literature recommends the use of a management assessment tool to determine the competency level of management candidates. After the assessment, an organization should develop an intervention plan to bolster managerial competencies. The intervention process should include developing an educational program focusing on effective management, quality management, leadership skills, problem-solving, and budgeting. The findings of the study training improved managers' knowledge levels and managerial competencies (Goktepe, et al., 2018).

Summary

Chapter 2 discussed several concepts, including the top management dynamics and upper echelon theory. Also, the impacts of management and executive success are based on their experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Further, the individual's propensity to learning or learning orientation and job crafting. Finally, the impact of political influences on advancement. The next chapter will discuss the research process

and design based on the research question and the concepts identified during the literature review.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This study aimed to bridge the knowledge gap in selecting the top management teams in law enforcement. Findings may be applied to the selection of law enforcement executives. Applying best practices from the private sector may result in police departments that are more responsive to their communities, resulting in improved police–community relations and improved quality of life through crime reduction. This study consisted of a qualitative exploration of the aspects of executive selection in the private sector and how those aspects can be applied to the public sector to determine the best practices for law enforcement executive selection. The different aspects in executive selections include a candidate’s tenure, functional background, and education level. This chapter includes the research design and rationale, my role in the study, the subject population, how participants were selected, the methodology, the data collection instrument, and the data collection.

Research Design and Rationale

The questions answered through this study were the following: What characteristics are essential to the success of municipal law enforcement executives? How does formal education prepare law enforcement executives in their leadership roles? How does the amount of command experience impact the perceived success of law enforcement executives? Finally, what impact does having varied leadership experience in operations, administrative, and investigative assignments have on the perceived success of law enforcement executives?

The type of research conducted was a qualitative study. I explored the common experiences that managers and executives in law enforcement have as they advance through their careers. Findings may link the population's experiences and support the research theory (see Creswell, 2013; Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). The current study's assumption was that those in law enforcement who seek leadership roles are more successful if they have experience in varied and increasingly complex assignments, have completed executive-level law enforcement training, and have completed graduate-level education.

Role of the Researcher and Research Participants

My role in this phenomenological study was as an impartial observer. Through analysis of the participants' responses, I expected to determine what phenomena led to law enforcement executives' success. Although some of the sampled population may have been known to me, I did not have a power relationship. The role of the participants was to provide information via a semistructured interview addressing their experiences as law enforcement managers or executives (see Patton, 2015).

Methodology

This was a qualitative study of a purposefully selected population of law enforcement personnel at the executive command level. A questionnaire with open-ended questions was used to explore the perceptions of the population regarding their perceived success pertaining to the aspects of work experience, education, training, and work assignment. Further, the questionnaires provided a snapshot of the sampled population's experiences (see Creswell, 2013; R. Kumar, 1999; Patton, 2015). Questionnaires were

sent to command-level personnel of law enforcement agencies within the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area using a web-based instrument. To increase validity of the data collected, I had initially considered conducting member checking through follow-up questions of the population. However, because the questionnaires were anonymous, this could not be accomplished.

Participant Selection Logic

The participation selection logic was based on using a purposeful sampling technique. The targeted population consisted of law enforcement executives who were expected to provide the most salient responses to the research questions based on their positions. The geographic area for the target population was the law enforcement executives in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA, which consisted of 16 counties and over 190 cities. To make the data collection more manageable, I solicited the participation of the top two executive command-level officers from midsize law enforcement agencies in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA. Midsize law enforcement agencies are law enforcement agencies that have a sworn strength of 50–999 officers, as defined by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (2022).

I surveyed the top two command levels of the agencies via an anonymous online questionnaire instrument, with the anticipation of surveying at least 15 law enforcement executives. With approximately 7%–9% of full-time sworn law enforcement officers in Texas who are women and racial diversity of the chief law enforcement officers being approximately 5.5% African American, 3.8% Hispanic, and 3.5% other races, I did not expect diversity of those surveyed (see Gardner & Scott, 2022; Goodison, 2022). My

primary purpose for this research was to determine the attributes key to law enforcement executive success. I evaluated participants' responses for themes to the point of data saturation. While coding the data from the questionnaire responses, I did not see any indication that reflected the respondents' race, ethnicity, or gender. The following cities were included with approximate sworn size: Carrollton (167), Cedar Hill (63), DeSoto (84), Garland (342), Grand Prairie (267), Irving (341), Mesquite (219), and Richardson (170; City of Richardson, 2022; Dallas Regional Chamber, 2022; Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2022; North Central Texas Council of Governments, 2021).

An introductory and explanatory letter was sent to the chief law enforcement executive of the law enforcement agencies via email. The letter included a hyperlink to the questionnaire, which could be distributed to qualifying persons, that allowed those who wished to participate to access the questionnaire online or on a mobile device. The online questionnaire was open to the executive command level members of the police departments of the selected cities. For this study, executive command-level officers were police officers at the appointed level of police command. For this study, the appointed level was those appointed by the chief law enforcement executive and, in the case of the top law enforcement executive, was a person appointed by either an elected official or a chief administrative officer.

Instrumentation

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of an introductory section, which provided background on the research and the researcher. In addition, an explanation of the purpose

of the research was included, specifically that the purpose of the study was to gather data from the population regarding their experience as they advanced to their executive position. The questionnaire questions are in the Appendix.

As discussed in Creswell (2013) regarding establishing validity for a quality study, I expected to take the results of the questionnaires and conduct member checking by providing the participants with the transcripts for their review and feedback to confirm whether the findings were accurate. However, I was unable to perform member checking because the questionnaires were anonymous.

As discussed by Hendra and Hill (2019), my goal was to obtain an 80% response rate of the population to minimize nonresponse bias. However, a response rate between 60% and 80% is deemed adequate. To increase the response rate, I periodically resent the invitation email to remind the targeted population that the questionnaire was still open.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data were collected through an online questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. An introductory and explanatory letter was emailed to the chief law enforcement officer of the police departments of the law enforcement agencies. The letter included a URL that allowed participants to access the questionnaire online. The prospective participants were provided with a closing date to complete the questionnaire, which was 29 days from the date of emailing the letters. Participants using the URL provided informed consent via an informed consent form, which provided information regarding my contact information, the rights of the participants, the school affiliated with the research, the nature of the study, how participants' data and responses would be

handled, any risks, and other requirements by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and in compliance with the federal regulations regarding informed consent.

Data Analysis Plan

After the questionnaires were completed, I collected the responses and performed a content analysis by first going through the questionnaires to become familiar with the responses; I assigned a code to each theme. Also, I used Nvivo software to assist in a more detailed analysis to help identify subthemes in the questionnaire responses. In addition, I used tools in Survey Monkey to evaluate themes in the data. Specifically, I addressed how the themes related to tenure, functional background, and education level of the population. This process helped me report the findings in a logical and systematic manner.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The letter sent to the chief law enforcement officer included several items to ensure that participants' information would be handled in an ethical manner. First, I identified myself as the researcher, including my name and contact information, and that I was the sole researcher for this study. Next, I identified that I was conducting this study as a doctoral student for Walden University and included the appropriate university contact information if participants had questions or concerns about the study. I explained the purpose of this study, how the participants would be selected, and how their participation would increase knowledge in the area of executive selection in law enforcement. The targeted population was provided information on how to participate in the study, including the process of recording their responses and the study's time line.

Related to credibility, adjustments were made to the methodology of my study. To maintain participants' anonymity, I was unable to conduct member checking (i.e., asking participants follow-up questions). Because of this methodological change, the interpretive validity or credibility was not as strong as I would have liked. However, by using the utilization-focused evaluation model and the knowledge use theory, I believe that the responses from the questionnaire will be useful in future exploration of this subject (see Motulsky, 2021; Okul & Nyonje, 2020). I believe that the findings from questionnaire responses will be transferable to the broader body of law enforcement executives, specifically as it relates to which attributes are essential to prepare for law enforcement leadership.

Dependability was addressed by recruiting participants who worked for different law enforcement agencies. Findings indicated that there were overlapping and consistent responses. However, this does not mean that there were no unexpected responses. The methodology of this study relied on anonymity; if the study is replicated, I anticipate that there will be similar responses, thereby confirming the findings of this study.

I provided the participants with a consent form explaining their rights and how their personal information and responses would be handled, specifically in a confidential manner. Also, their participation was voluntary, and they have the right not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. As required in the IRB application (approval number 11-20-23-0505628), none of the participants' personal information will be used for any purposes outside of this research. Also, this research did not include any identifying information in the study reports. Any data shared with another researcher in

the future will contain no identifiers. Data will be kept secure via a password-protected computer file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Summary

This chapter outlined how the participants were selected and surveyed. The participants' responses were coded to determine what themes were identified and how they related to the perceived career success of the participants in law enforcement. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the findings based on the analysis of the questionnaire responses.

Chapter 4: Results

This study aimed to bridge the knowledge gap in the selection of the top management teams in law enforcement. Findings may be applied to the selection of law enforcement executives. The study consisted of a qualitative exploration of the experiences of law enforcement executives to determine what attributes were key to their success. Questionnaires were based on the following research questions:

RQ1: What characteristics are essential to the success of municipal law enforcement executives?

RQ2: How does formal education prepare law enforcement executives in their leadership roles?

RQ3: How does the amount of command experience impact the perceived success of law enforcement executives?

RQ4: What impact does having varied leadership experience in operations, administrative, and investigative assignments have on the perceived success of law enforcement executives?

This chapter covers the data collection process and responses of the participants. Also, I discuss the data's trustworthiness and summarize the questionnaire responses.

Settings

The setting of this study was social in nature in that the population was law enforcement officers who were either the chief law enforcement officer for their agency or an executive-level officer who reported directly to the chief law enforcement officer. Further, the setting for this study was based on the parameters described by Rubin and

Rubin (2012) in that the population was important to this study based on their position as law enforcement executives. Also, the population was accessible to me because they were my peers. As the researcher, I was also a law enforcement executive and a member of the same professional network. The expectation was that the findings would be transferable to the broader population of law enforcement executives.

Demographics

The sample population consisted of law enforcement executives. Law enforcement executives are considered executive command-level officers who are police officers at the appointed level of the police command. The appointed level is those appointed by the chief law enforcement executive and, in the case of the top law enforcement executive, is the person appointed by either an elected official or a chief administrative officer. The questionnaire used was anonymous; therefore, besides the respondents being law enforcement executives, there were no other demographic identifiers collected.

Data Collection

On November 20, 2023, I received approval notification from the Walden University IRB to proceed with the data collection process. Data collection began on November 23, 2023, through an online Survey Monkey questionnaire that was distributed via an email invitation. The anonymous questionnaire remained open through 6:00 p.m., December 22, 2023. There were 19 responses to the questionnaire when the questionnaire closed. There was no variation from the approved process for data collection, and there

were no unusual circumstances encountered in the data collection. Because the online questionnaire was anonymous, I did not have the ability to ask follow-up questions.

Data Analysis

In Chapter 3, I stated that I would use NVivo software to analyze the data from the questionnaires. However, after reviewing the questionnaire responses, I determined that the responses were manageable for me to code by hand. using the process discussed by Rubin and Rubin (2012), specifically looking beyond repeated words and nuances from individual responses that may be concepts of note. In addition, Survey Monkey offered some thematic analysis tools, which I attempted to use but did not find much benefit.

As illustrated in Appendix, the first two questionnaire questions were qualifying questions regarding whether the participant consented and whether the participant was either a chief executive law enforcement officer or a law enforcement executive who reports to the chief law enforcement executive. Questions 3–5 addressed the respondents' perceptions of attributes important to be successful in their positions. Questions 6–11 addressed how different roles prepared and impacted their careers. Questions 12–16 addressed participants' perceptions of miscellaneous items that they believed impacted their careers.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As it relates to credibility, adjustments were made to the methodology of my study. To maintain anonymity, I was unable to conduct member checking (i.e., asking participants follow-up questions). Because of the methodological change, the interpretive

validity or credibility was not as strong as I would have liked. However, by using the utilization-focused evaluation model and the knowledge use theory, I believe that the responses from the questionnaire will be useful in future exploration of this subject (see Motulsky, 2021; Okul & Nyonje, 2020). I also believe that the content of the questionnaire responses will be transferable to the broader body of law enforcement executives, specifically as it relates to which attributes are essential to prepare for law enforcement leadership.

Dependability was addressed by recruiting participants who worked for different law enforcement agencies. Although there were overlapping and consistent responses, this does not mean that there were no unexpected responses. The methodology of this study relied on anonymity. If replicated, the study would likely contain similar responses, thereby confirming the findings of the current study.

As required in the IRB application, none of the participants' personal information will be used for any purposes outside of this research. Also, this research did not include any identifying information in the study reports. Any data shared with another researcher in the future will contain no identifiers. Data will be kept secure via a password-protected computer file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Results

The questionnaire responses are addressed in the order listed in the questionnaire. The first interview question was about the respondent consenting to the questionnaire, and the second interview question was a qualifying question:

Please affirm that you are either the chief law enforcement officer of your agency, i.e., the Chief of Police, or an executive reporting to the Chief of Police for your agency. If you do not meet the above criteria, select “No,” you will be exited from the survey.

The next 14 interview questions were germane to the study. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections. The first section (Interview Questions 3–5) asked the respondents their perspective on the attributes related to executive leadership in law enforcement. The second section (Interview Questions 6–16) addressed their perspectives on their experiences in the administrative, operational, and investigative arenas.

Officers’ Perspectives on Attributes

Interview Questions 3–5 addressed RQ1: What characteristics are essential to the success of municipal law enforcement executives? RQ2: How does formal education prepare law enforcement executives in their leadership roles? Because the questionnaire was open in design, the expectation was that the respondents would discuss how education prepared them for leadership. In hindsight, Interview Question 3 could have been better worded to elicit responses regarding the impact of formal education.

The first theme centered around the relational aspects of leadership. Specifically, the responses addressed being personal, being a good communicator, and possessing emotional and social intelligence skills. The second theme was the importance of experience. The third theme was strategic and organizational management.

Interview Question 4 addressed the attributes identified in the previous question, and asked participants to elaborate on why those attributes are essential. The first theme

identified was related to relationships, specifically communication, active listening, engagement, fairness, taking time to develop personnel, treating people humanely, and social and emotional intelligence. The other theme was tangible attributes such as having broad skills, the ability to make decisions, and managing resources.

Interview Question 5 addressed the ways the attributes described benefited participants in their role as a law enforcement leader. The themes identified were similar to those for Interview Questions 3 and 4, in that the respondents focused on relational aspects of leadership. The theme was again focused on relationships. The attributes relating to relationships were increased trust, improved morale, servant leadership, and fairness. In addition, the attributes of integrity and being principled were important.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 are graphic representations of word clouds for the questionnaire responses. Although the word “leader” is prominent in Figure 2, it was a qualifier for other attributes of communication and relationships. The overall concept represented in the responses was “relationship,” which is represented in the word cloud in Figure 3 as “officer” and “understand.”

Figure 1

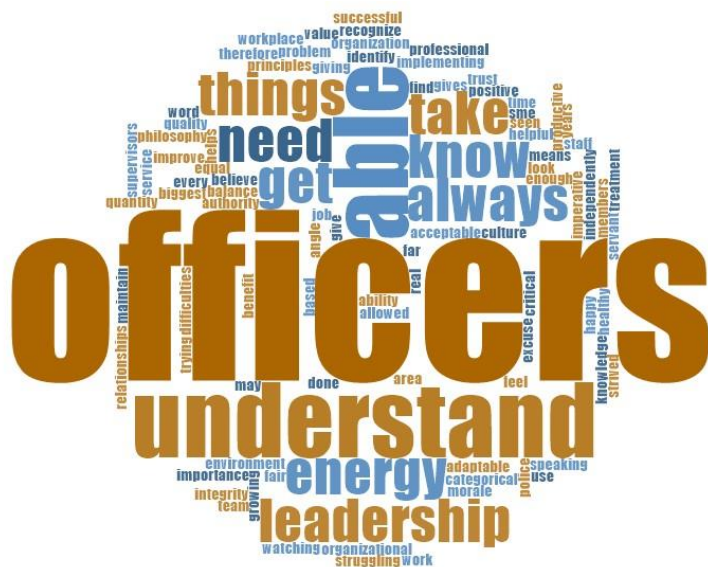
Interview Question 3 Word Cloud



Figure 2

Interview Question 4 Word Cloud



Figure 3*Interview Question 5 Word Cloud***Perspectives on Operational, Administrative, and Investigative Experience**

The following responses relate to RQ4, which addressed what impact having varied leadership experience in operations, administrative, and investigative assignments had on participants' leadership roles. RQ3 is addressed with responses to Interview Questions 12–14. The following themes were identified from the respondents based on their experiences in operational, administrative, and investigative areas as law enforcement executives. Interview Questions 6–11 are related to RQ4: What impact does having varied leadership experience in operations, administrative, and investigative assignments have on the perceived success of law enforcement executives?

Interview Question 6 asked the respondents to describe their experience in an operational role. The purpose of this question was to determine what roles the respondents held, which were later explored in Interview Question 7. The operational

assignments worked by the respondents were patrol, field training officer, detective, SWAT, first- and second-line supervisors, operational commander, and executive positions including assistant chief and chief of police.

Interview Question 7 asked how operational experience prepared participants for their leadership role. The overall theme from the responses was that their experience gave them an appreciation of how their decision and leadership impacts their workgroups, organization, and personnel. Some of the sentiments expressed were “better appreciation” of their experience. Participants also reported respect and trust by those whom they lead due to their experience. Further, their experience operationally helped them to achieve the organizational goals for which they were responsible. Interview Question 8 asked the respondents to describe their experience in an administrative role. The roles in which the respondents worked were executive and command administrative roles, personnel, policy, budgeting, and grants.

Interview Question 9 asked participants how their administrative experience prepared them for their leadership role. Overall, the theme from the responses was that their administrative experience was essential in their executive roles. The sentiments expressed were that their administrative experience allowed them to handle their administrative roles more deftly at the executive level through increased confidence and that administrative experience is critical to achieving operational and organizational goals.

Interview Question 10 asked those who were interviewed to describe their experiences in an investigative role. The investigative roles fell into two general

categories of person crimes, which is investigating crimes against an individual, and other crimes not involving crimes against a person. The investigative roles that respondents held were crimes against children, sex-related crimes, internal affairs, and narcotics. One of the respondents, in their response to question 10, characterized their experience as one that improved their critical thinking, attention to detail, and decision-making skills. Also, they described how investigative experience increased their legal knowledge and conflict resolution skills.

Interview Question 11 asked the interviewed population how their investigative experience prepared them for their leadership role. Based on the responses, the first theme identified was the importance of paying attention to detail which was characterized by one respondent as a foundational skill. Conversely, another respondent characterized their investigative experience improved their ability to have a broader view of issues. A third theme from some of the responses was that their investigative experience bolstered their work-related social skill and emotional intelligence.

Perspectives on Command Experiences

RQ3: How does the amount of command experience impact the perceived success of law enforcement executives? Addressed how the amount of command experience impacts the respondents' perceived success as law enforcement executives is explored with the themes identified in Interview Questions 12–14 below.

Interview Question 12 asked what types of roles did they not have the opportunity to work that they believed would have helped in their leadership role? The responses

included media relations, SWAT, investigative, budgeting, field training, and human resources.

Interview Question 13 asked the respondents how their decision-making on leadership roles has changed over time. The overall theme centered around relationships. Some of the comments were the appreciation of the role of the public's opinion on how they are policed, being more inclusive within their organization regarding decision-making, increased patience, and the influence garnered through relationships. Additionally, their varied experiences made them better leaders and decision-makers.

Interview Question 14 asked based on their response to Interview Question 13, what factors did they believe influenced this change? The responses varied, and there was not an overall theme. The responses were increased accountability and experience in their area of responsibility. One respondent recognized that their decision-making required more consideration and input from others, and in line with that response, another respondent emphasized the importance of input from their employees. Additional items mentioned were maturity, resilience, and desire for improvement. However, one respondent made comments that were not clear based on the question. That respondent mentioned "the failures of distortion of ideals" and "the failure of situations."

Interview Question 15 asked how the respondents felt that organizational politics helped their careers. There was an overall theme from the responses was "relationship." In the responses, relationship was characterized as support from elected officials and understanding their motivations. Respondents believed that their roles gave them access to decision-makers and that relationships helped them achieve their goals. Other

responses included that organizational politics had no impact on their career and that they worked to avoid politics.

The final interview question, Question 16 asked a question in converse to Interview Question 15, which is how the respondents felt organizational politics hindered their careers. There was not an overall theme in the responses, and they fell within three categories. First, some of the responses stated that their careers were not hindered by politics, and others stated that politics hindered their careers by not receiving promotions or access. One response characterized the negative effects of politics as cancerous and that it reduces trust.

Summary

In summary, the interviews of the law enforcement executives were consistent with their responses regarding their experiences. Of the responses as they relate to experiences and impact as it relates to the arenas of operations, administration, and investigation. In general, the overall theme seen in the operational area is that the respondents believed that their operational experiences helped them execute their operational mandates and garner the respect of the community and officers that they lead. As it relates to their administrative experience, the overall themes identified were that their administrative experience was critical in their executive roles, providing them with the skills needed to manage their respective commands. Regarding their experience in the investigative arena, the themes identified from the responses of the law enforcement executives noted that their experience provided them with the skills of being thorough and paying attention to the details in their capacity as leaders.

In addition, apart from the operational, administrative, and investigative aspects, there was consistency in what the respondents believed were essential attributes of their leadership. Other themes identified were honesty, integrity, patience, empathy, communicating effectively, servant leadership, strategic thinking, adaptability, and accountability. Further, the consensus is that the above traits build trust with the officers they lead. Finally, the law executives discussed how politics impacted their law enforcement careers. Overall, the respondents expressed that the political atmosphere benefited them more than it hindered. Next, in Chapter 5, I will discuss the interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, and the implications of the study, and then make my conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to bridge the gap in knowledge regarding the selection of the top management teams in law enforcement. Findings may be applied to the selection of law enforcement executives. I study sought to determine the attributes key to law executive success through anonymous questionnaires from law enforcement executives. This chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings, including the interpretation of the findings, limitations, recommendations, and implications.

Interpretation of the Findings

According to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, there were key concepts that applied to top management teams or executives. As it relates to complexity theory, some of the themes developed from the questionnaires aligned with several concepts. First, as it relates to administrative leadership and the complexity thereof, as discussed in Uhl-Bien (2021) and Tourish (2019), the responses from the questionnaires demonstrated that the respondents had to be flexible and deal with dynamic, complex, and uncertain situations.

According to Kjellstrom et al. (2020), McCauley et al. (2019) and Srikanth (2019), competence in a position is based on diversity and increasing levels of responsibility. In addition, having a density of work experience is critical to leadership success. Top management teams in law enforcement are also dealing with a novel issue and managing it at a high level. The participants' responses in the operational area (Question 7) showed that the respondents held diverse and complex roles in policing. The diversity of work experience by the respondents aligns with the concept of leadership preparation as discussed by Goktepe et al. (2018).

According to the responses of the law enforcement executives regarding their experience in the areas of operational, administrative, and investigative roles, it is evident that employee-driven job crafting prepared them for their roles, which confirms findings by Furstenberg et al. (2021), Lee and Lee (2018), and Kim and Beehr (2022). For example, some responses discussed the importance of “learning and doing” and learning things that would not be learned in a classroom. Further, as discussed by Joo et al. (2021), Kuijpers et al. (2020), and Matsuo (2019), the responses addressed the individual motivation aspect of job crafting.

Political influence can negatively or positively impact the upward mobility of executives, as discussed by T. Bach and Veit (2018), He et al. (2021), and Jordon and Schraeder (2003). Overall, the responses in the current study showed that participants’ experiences regarding political impact were positive and an opportunity for growth. When it comes to developing managerial competencies, as discussed by Gheerawo et al. (2020) and Heimann (2020), task complexity and variety are essential to building work competencies. The responses from the law enforcement executives in the current study showed that their varied experiences were key to their perceived success. These findings align with the theories of P-O fit, which values the congruence or complementary fit between the attributes of an individual and an organization, and complexity theory, where to be effective in complex organizations or processes, leaders must also understand and be adept at traditional management principles, strategic leadership, policymaking, and the organization’s goal.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the small sample size of the population surveyed. The surveyed population was limited to 15 municipal agencies in the Dallas County area. Within those agencies, those surveyed were individuals who held the position of chief law enforcement or the position immediately below the chief law enforcement officer. Another limitation was that this study was anonymous and did not allow for follow-up questions to probe some of the participants' responses. Also, this study was limited to qualitative methodology and thus did not consider quantitative items such as time working in various operational, administrative, and investigative assignments. As discussed by Nielsen (2000), other quantitative items that were not evaluated included agency size, type of law enforcement agency (i.e., municipal, county, state, secondary and postsecondary education, federal), and elected law enforcement officials. Other items that were not evaluated were demographic items such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, total years of service, total years in management, and level of education.

Recommendations

This qualitative study addressed the attributes that are important to executive law enforcement success from the perspective of complexity theory, job competencies, political experience related to executive-level positions, job crafting, and managerial competencies/leadership preparation. However, three recommendations may bolster the findings of this study. The first recommendation is to expand the sample population beyond the geographic area of Dallas County to include other types of law enforcement

agencies beyond municipal. The second recommendation is to conduct a mixed-methods study to include quantitative items such as demographics, tenure, and education. The third recommendation is to make the study confidential rather than anonymous and allow for follow-up questions to probe initial responses.

Implications

The potential implications of this study include providing attributes to consider when evaluating officers for leadership positions. Law enforcement agencies may evaluate aspects of a candidate's background such as their operational, administrative, and investigative experience to put in place competent people in leadership roles. The resulting positive social change may be to have law enforcement leaders who are able to align organizational goals in their area of responsibility with the needs and desires of the community. As discussed in the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015), building trust and legitimacy within the community through transparency helps with the joint goal of the community and the police of making communities safer. Based on the responses of the law enforcement executives in the current study, their experiences align with the P-O fit theory in that these executives seek ways to improve their organizational fit in areas where they do not necessarily align with the organization, such as expressing their desire to have work experience where they are deficient, such as in operational, administrative, or investigative areas. This also aligns with complexity theory in that the respondents' varied experiences bolstered traditional management principles, strategic leadership, and policymaking.

Conclusion

Serving as a law enforcement officer is a sacred trust and is exemplified by the fifth Peelian Principle of Policing:

To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour, and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life (Home Office, 2012, "Definition of policing by consent" section).

Effective leadership is key to ensuring that law enforcement agencies are responsive to the communities they serve. However, the literature had not addressed what is critical in the selection of effective law enforcement leaders. There was anecdotal knowledge of what attributes and experiences are important, but anecdotal knowledge is insufficient to develop policy and process. The literature reviewed in this study showed that proper job crafting is critical to placing the right people in top management teams.

As it relates to job crafting, the themes identified in the current study regarding the experiences of law enforcement executives indicated that having diverse work experience is essential to success, specifically in three of the areas focused on in this study. Regarding operational experience, it was evident from the responses that understanding police operations helps leaders align the actions of their personnel with the

department. Administratively, the findings indicated how administrative experience prepared participants for increased responsibilities and managing priorities. Finally, the themes indicated that investigative experience helped leaders analyze administrative and operational issues from different perspectives. It is my hope that this study fills the gap in knowledge regarding identifying, training, and promoting effective leaders in law enforcement.

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Appendix: Questionnaire Questions

Q1 – What attributes do you believe are essential to prepare for law enforcement leadership?

Q2 – For the attributes you identified in the previous question, please elaborate on why those attributes are essential.

Q3 – In what ways have the attributes described benefited you in your role as a law enforcement leader?

Q4 – Describe your experience in an operational role.

Q5 – How did your operational experience prepare you for your leadership role?

Q6 – Describe your experience in an administrative role.

Q7 – How did your administrative experience prepare you for your leadership role?

Q8 – Describe your experience in an investigative role.

Q9 – How did your investigative experience prepare you for your leadership role?

Q10 – What types of roles did you not have the opportunity to work that you believe would have helped you in your leadership role?

Q11 - How has your decision-making on leadership roles changed over time?

Q12 - Based on the previous response, what factors do you believe influenced this change?

The following questions are about organizational politics and their impact. This study defines organizational politics as the informal or behind-the-scenes processes that impact individuals or an organization.

Q13 – How do you feel organizational politics helped your career?

Q14 – How do you feel organizational politics hindered your career?