

Citizen Satisfaction with Police: A Pillar of Law Enforcement Governance

Murat Ozkan, Ph.D.
Turkish National Police

Abstract: *Increasing use of governance practices in public administration have had broad repercussions in law enforcement and policing. As a result, law enforcement services have witnessed significant changes that shifted police from a bureaucratic, incident driven force to a proactive service oriented organization. Among other governance indicators, citizen satisfaction and confidence in law enforcement services has increasingly been one of the central tenets of the governance structures in the contemporary world. In this new era of policing, enhancing community relations and improving the satisfaction of citizens have become the main objective of police departments. This study first explains the governance approach to law enforcement and policing and then focuses on citizen satisfaction with police. It explores the general determinants of citizen satisfaction, and assesses the impact of police citizen encounters on citizen satisfaction with police. Based on the literature and research studies, this article shows that socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, race, gender, and income independently determine the attitudes toward police. Police contact also has a significant effect on satisfaction level. Favorable contacts with police improve citizens' satisfaction regardless of the type of contact. Residential location of an individual and physical police presence in the neighborhood also affects attitudes toward police.*

Keywords: *Citizen satisfaction, governance, policing, public administration, proactive*

I. Introduction

Salomon (2002) describes governance as the framework which emphasizes “the collaborative nature of modern efforts to meet human needs, the widespread use of tools of action that engage complex networks of public and private actors, and the resulting need for a different style of public management, and a different type of public sector, emphasizing collaboration and enablement rather than hierarchy and control” (Salomon, 2002, p. 8).

Increasing use of governance practices in public administration have had broad repercussions in law enforcement services. Among other governance indicators, citizen satisfaction and confidence in law enforcement services has increasingly been one of the central tenets of the governance structures in the contemporary world. Governance perspective in law enforcement sees community as owners of law enforcement services rather than consumer of law enforcement services, and makes emphasis on the public safety needs, expectations, and values of the community owners (Kaustinen, 2016).

In this “new” era of policing, law enforcement agencies rely heavily on public approval to maintain their legitimacy, and need to persuade public to seek their consent to be governed. In this context of police community relations, citizen satisfaction with police becomes critical. One of the main objectives of the recent change in policing – from traditional to community oriented- is to increase the citizen satisfaction. The shift from the bureaucratically isolated force to a service oriented organization requires strong partnership between police and citizens. This article aims to explain law enforcement governance and its main determinant of citizen satisfaction with police. Specific focus was given to determinants of citizen attitudes toward police and relation with police contact and citizen satisfaction.

II. Governance Approach To Law Enforcement

Keeping (2006) suggests that the notion of authority is the basic and essential difference between government and governance perspectives. According to the author, unlike government perspective, in which only government departments have authority, in governance perspective, non-government organizations have authority too. While the subject of government is public institutions, the subject of governance can be public institutions, private institutions, or cooperation between them.

Governance perspective differs from government in terms of power and authority. Government refers to the execution and implementation of activities, and these activities are backed by policing power and other legal authorities. On the other hand, “governance seeks to share power in decision-making” (Bingham, et. al., 2005). Like government, governance refers to execution and implementation of activities, but most importantly it refers to the creation of activities before both. Unlike government perspective, shared goals of citizens and

organizations back these activities, where having formal authority and policing power does not matter (Bingham, et. al., 2005).

In the traditional public administration approach, the authority is centralized and exercised hierarchically, which is often called command and control model (Meehan, 2003). Conversely, in the governance perspective, the notions of power and authority are dispersed. Analysts of governance argue that governance arise from governments' lack of capacity to effect desired changes when acting alone (Meehan, 2003). Unlike traditional view that effective political powers are national governments, governance perspective suggests that effective power is shared and exchanged among different actors at national, regional and local levels (Meehan, 2003). Law enforcement agencies are the ones where centralized authority, hierarchical structure, and command and control model are the most prominent. Therefore, adoption of a governance perspective in law enforcement agencies requires significant organizational change, which is quite difficult and often met with strong resistance.

Exercise of power in the administration process in governance perspective also differs. Traditional administration models, in which power is exercised from above, uses the political authority of the government and exercises a one-way management model through issuing orders and making and implementing policies. Governance, however, is a process of management characterized by interactions between the higher and lower levels. Rather than relying on a power which is single and from above, its orientation for the exercise of power is pluralistic and mutual (Keeping, 2006).

Governance perspective is characterized by an increasing utilization of non-regulatory policy instruments which are proposed, planned, and implemented by non-state actors working in cooperation with state actors (Jordan, et. al., 2003). Governance perspective involves "cooperation between state institutions and civil society groups" (Kjaer, 2005, p. 1). The author further states that governance is an institutional set-up that involves citizens to participate both in decision-making and implementation both at the central and local level. Likewise, the governance perspective "places emphasis on increasing involvement of private and voluntary sectors in service delivery and strategic decision-making" (Apreada, 2003, p.9). From this perspective, public participation, partnership, and cooperation are the fundamental principles of the concept of law enforcement governance. They promote synergy, creativity, innovation, and a strong ability to solve problems. They also increase interconnection among people, civil organizations, and law enforcement agencies.

Another important and widely accepted distinction between government and governance perspectives is Osborn and Gaebler's emphasis on process versus instrument. Accordingly, "governance is the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society's needs. Government is the instrument we use" (1992, 24). From this respect, law enforcement governance can be seen as a process in which public safety needs, expectations, and values of the community owners are taken into account in decision-making to achieve maximum citizen satisfaction with police.

Unlike traditional public administration models, governance perspective put more emphasis on the network theory. Kersbergen & Waarden (2004) emphasizes that networks of public policy organizations have been considered to be the analytical heart of the notion of governance in the study of public administration. In governance perspective, networks play an important role and they organize relations between independent and relatively autonomous actors (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004). In governance literature, networks are characterized by "an exchange of resources and negotiations, and by game-like interactions rooted in trust and regulated by rules of the game negotiated and agreed by network participants" (Rhodes 2000: 61). The author further suggests that networks are considered to be "self-organizing, and to 'resist government steering, develop their own policies and mould their environments" (Rhodes 2000: 61). In these networks, "hierarchy or monocratic leadership is less important, if not absent" (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004).

Transparency is another important distinction between government and governance. It is widely accepted that governance is more transparent than government. Transparency requires that decisions and their enforcement follow rules and regulations. It also requires that information is freely available and accessible to those that will be by those decisions and their enforcement (McGee and Gaventa, 2010). Achieving transparency is a significant challenge in law enforcement agencies mainly because of their distinct culture characterized by what is called "code of secrecy" or "code of silence" (Philips, 2015).

III. Determinants Of Citizens' Attitudes Toward Police

A relatively large body of policing research has reported findings that indicate the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and satisfaction with police services. These characteristics are often studied as the general determinants of satisfaction when the influence of other variables are controlled. In other words, literature on citizen satisfaction with police suggests several determinants that independently affect satisfaction level regardless of any police intervention. These characteristics are race, age, gender, and socioeconomic status. (Brown and Coulter, 1983).

Several reports documented the relationship between citizens' race and perception of police services (Klyman and Kruckenberg, 1974; Boggs and Galliher, 1975; Durand, 1976; Peek et al, 1981; Parker, Onyekwuluje & Murty, 1995; Kusow et al, 1998; Priest & Carter, 1999). In general, the literature suggests a strong relationship between respondent's race and satisfaction level, whites being more positive than do their nonwhite counterparts.

Age is also studied as a determinant of satisfaction level. The relationship between age and citizen satisfaction with police services, that younger citizens have less favorable attitudes toward the police, has less consistent support (Webb & Marshall, 1995, p.45). While most studies documented a positive relationship between age and attitudes toward police (Smith & Hawkins, 1973; Sullivan et al., 1987), Jacob (1971) reported very weak connection between the individual's age and positive perception of police.

Researchers also documented the relationship between gender and satisfaction with police. In their study on crime victims, Tewksbury and West (2001) reported a strong relationship between victims' gender and satisfaction-women being more positive than men. Similar to many determinants of satisfaction, opposite of these results have also been documented. Kusow et al. (1998) and Murty et al (1990) found no significant relationship between respondent's sex and satisfaction with police services.

Another determinant of citizen satisfaction is socio-economic status. Socio-economic status of an individual, that people having more income to be more satisfied, is related to citizen satisfaction (Jacob, 1971, as cited in Webb & Marshall, 1995). However, it should be noted that some studies challenge the relationship between socio-economic status and individual perception of police (Dunham & Alpert, 1988).

In addition to the individual level or socio-demographic characteristics, the neighborhood in which the interaction with police occurs has significant effects on citizens' positive perception of police (Mastrofski et al., 1998; Skogan, 1978). Based on their study on the relation between socio-demographic and spatial variables on perceived satisfaction, Kusow et al. (1998) reported that "whites who live in the suburbs are more satisfied with police performance than both whites and blacks who live in the city. Similarly, blacks who reside in the suburbs are more satisfied with police performance than both whites and blacks who reside in the city. Unlike the research suggesting a relation between race and citizen satisfaction, these findings indicate "police perception is more a function of residential location than racial attributes" (Kusow, et. al., 1998, p.663).

IV. Police Contact And Citizen Satisfaction

As mentioned in the previous section, citizen satisfaction with police is dependent on several variables. Any of these would affect the satisfaction level of an individual independently. In addition to these general variables, police contact has long been perceived as a determinant of citizen satisfaction (Smith and Hawkins, 1973; Boggs and Galliher, 1975; Parks, 1976; Dean, 1980).

Scaglione and Condon (1980, p. 490) reported personal contact with the police as the "most significant determinant of general satisfaction with police services than all other variables combined". The results of a survey of a Midwestern city showed that 59 percent of respondents based their views on their past experience with police (Janeksela & Demming, 1979). This emphasizes the significance of police contact on developing attitudes towards police. Therefore, regardless of other factors influencing the satisfaction, police contact alone is well documented in the citizen satisfaction and police literature.

Police citizen contacts are classified in different groups. They are mostly categorized as officer initiated or citizen initiated. Bercal (1970) classified them as either "voluntary" (e.g. service calls) or "nonvoluntary" (e.g. traffic stops) (as cited by Cheurprakobkit & Bartsch, 2001). Dean (1980) categorizes police citizen encounters in four groups: "Contacts resulting from victimization, assistances provided by the police, stops initiated by the police, and citizen calls to the police for information" (p.445).

Classifying contacts helped researchers identify the factors that contribute to citizen satisfaction, and brought along an important question. What actually account for satisfaction: type (nature) or quality of contact? "Type of contact" here refers to the classification (i.e. voluntary- non-voluntary), where "quality of contact" means whether the contact is favorable by citizen.

A significant body of literature suggests that it is the nature of the interaction, neither the amount nor the type, which improves police-resident relations (Stoutland, 2001). Reisig and Correia (1997) reported that voluntary contacts have generally been associated with more positive ratings of the police. However, they also documented whether or not the contact is initiated voluntarily, "higher citizen evaluations of police are more likely to result when the police treat the individual fairly and with compassion" (p.312).

When police are perceived as fair and respectful, citizens report greater satisfaction, regardless of the nature of the encounter (Reisig & Correia, 1997; Wilson, 1985, as cited by Travis et al., 2000). For example, Dean (1980) reported a link between victimization and satisfaction; however, she suggested that even for the victims who showed lesser degrees of satisfaction with police, favorable contact led to positive perception of police.

Glaser and Tullar (1985) studied the relation between police telephone contact and the citizen satisfaction, and they reported that dissatisfying conversations were characterized by a lack of socio-emotional linkage. They report another important characteristics of dissatisfaction as a one-way conversation that officers asking questions and citizens providing answers.

Tewksbury and West (2001) reported the strongest contributing factor to citizen satisfaction as an officer's perceived helpfulness, and display of concern as the second. In other words, citizens seemed to be more satisfied when an officer asked about if they had any injuries or worries.

Recent studies; however, have presented evidence, which contradicts past findings that satisfaction is highly related to the interaction between officer and citizen. Hawdon and Ryan (2003) studied the relation between community solidarity and citizen satisfaction, and they found that there is no relationship between interactions with the police and citizen satisfaction. They reported residents appear to be more concerned about "having the police patrol their neighborhoods than they are interacting with them" (2003, p.64).

Similar to Hawdon and Ryan's findings, Hoover et al. (1998) reported that satisfaction with police were partly dependent upon whether a police patrol unit responded physically to the call for service. Residents consider traditional "law enforcement" goals to be more important than the "service-oriented" goals associated with community policing (Webb, Katz, & Graham, 1987).

Given these findings, it is apparent that citizens are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward police services when police are viewed as respectful, helpful, and concerned (Weitzer, 2000). It is also apparent that less traditional police responses to crime problems may not always satisfy individuals.

V. Conclusion

The importance of the governance in law enforcement stems from the fact that globalization has deeply changed the ground rules for public policy and administration. Globalization has created a situation where problems can no longer be solved at the state level and where equally powerful organizations and new institutions have emerged, which undermined the decision-making capacity of state actors (Finger, et. al., 2006). With the increasing emphasis on efficiency and quality, policy makers and public administrators have begun to assess processes and outcomes rather than depending only on rules and procedures. This led to emergence of the concept and practices of governance as an alternative to traditional methods of law enforcement administration.

In today's world, citizen satisfaction with law enforcement services can no longer be seen just as criminal justice or policing issues. Governance perspective to law enforcement requires a comprehensive public policy approach to achieve highest levels of citizen satisfaction. However, developing and implementing a public policy to achieve citizen satisfaction with police is not an easy task. It is mainly because of the fact that "different environments place different requirements on organizations" (Scott, 2002: p.96), which is often ignored or overlooked by law enforcement agencies (Kucukuysal and Beyhan, 2011). It is crucial that policy decisions should take into consideration the environmental conditions and characteristics of the community to achieve maximum benefit.

One of the most significant approaches to achieve citizen satisfaction with police is the service quality approach, as in the private sector, which encourages them to act like businesses and be more customer-driven in the pursuit of service quality. An effective leadership, training of the law enforcement officers, monitoring and supervision of the implementation of departmental policies and police-citizen encounters, and change in organizational culture are the key factors that determine the success of governance policies level of citizen satisfaction in law enforcement.

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