Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

https://www.vera.org/publications/examining-organizational-change-and-procedural-justice

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The origins and ongoing practices of policing continue to have implications for public trust and perceptions of police legitimacy. Researchers and practitioners have attempted to apply theories of procedural and organizational justice to this issue. Organizational justice is the notion that how employees view their employers will affect the way people behave in work-related contexts. In this way, if police employees view their organization as treating them fairly, they may be more likely to exercise fair practices and procedural justice within the communities they serve.

Vera and the University College Londons Institute for Global City Policing partnered with the Arlington Police Department (Texas) and the West Midlands Police (West Midlands, United Kingdom), with support from the Open society Justice Initiative, to conduct a comparative process evaluation of their efforts to improve organizational justice. This report includes an analysis of the successes and challenges of each departments implementation efforts and provides recommendations on how police organizations can effectively implement similar reforms.

The successful implementation and adoption of organizational justice reforms may require different strategies depending on the size and structure of the police department, its organizational culture, and leadership and governance processes. Future research should continue to explore whether organizational justice reforms have impacts on perceptions of procedural justice within the community.

The language and messaging of organizational reforms should be carefully and strategically selected to increase the likelihood of acceptance from rank-and-file officers and avoid resistance and backlash.

Well-respected, experienced members of a department can champion organizational reforms in order to increase buy-in and perceptions of legitimacy.

Organizational reforms should include mechanisms for ongoing feedback and evaluation to ensure that leaders can be held accountable for implementation.

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