

UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA
The Doctoral School of Economics
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Field: Management

PhD Thesis

**CULTURAL ASPECTS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS
CASE STUDY AT THE CĂLĂRAȘI GENDARMERIE**

SUMMARY

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Craiova

2016

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In the thesis, I approached the complex problematic of social responsibility culture within public institutions with a case study at the Călărași Gendarmerie.

The challenge this research paper responds to has been to research social responsibility culture within public institutions and it consists of the following axes:

- the critical analysis of conceptual elements of the of social responsibility culture in organizations;
- the study of the importance of promoting a social responsibility culture in public institutions;
- the analysis of the cultural aspects of social responsibility in public institutions;
- the research of social responsibility culture at the Călărași Gendarmerie.

The first axis of the scientific research has been aimed at the critical analysis of the conceptual elements of the social responsibility culture in organizations. Based on reference works from Romanian and foreign literature, it is illustrated the way in which it is defined and it is outlined *the study of the importance of promoting a culture of social responsibility in public institutions*. Central and local public institutions begin to integrate the principles and values of social responsibility, working in partnership with the private and social sector. For the central and local public institutions, social responsibility implies the need to manage a complex set of relationships.

Public institutions may choose to support or to develop a series of initiatives covering various areas of social responsibility, carrying out actions where they can perform a variety of roles. For example, an institution of public order is mandated to take all coercive measures to meet its objectives provided by law. The same objectives can also be achieved through a role of facilitator (programmes regarding citizens' education and information in order to prevent violations of legal regulations concerning the public order), partnerships (with stakeholders who are involved in various activities that could endanger the public order) or by supporting activities so that problems are prevented. Moreover, some of the activities conducted in public sector organizations, such as procurement, are closely and directly associated with the increasing of social responsibility degree.

After having researched the agenda of social responsibility, we believe that in the public sector, social responsibility can be addressed taking into consideration the following issues:

- the drafting of laws and regulations in this area and ensuring compliance with them,
- the initiation of some responsible public policies,
- ensuring an efficient and effective organizational governance,
- making public investments according to the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy,
- the philanthropy and involvement in community issues,

- stakeholders' engagement in the activities of public organizations and their representation in management or other advisory boards,
- the increase of institutional transparency of the activities carried out in public organizations.

Another axis of scientific research has been to establish the basic themes of social responsibility agenda. The research identified the following key themes of social responsibility that are relevant to establish the roles in the public sector: setting and enforcing minimum standards, initiating responsible public policies, corporate governance, responsible investment, philanthropy and community development, stakeholders' involvement and representation, encouraging the production and consumption respecting the principles of social responsibility, the certification of compliance with the principles of social responsibility, "beyond compliance" standards and management systems, the reporting and transparency of the compliance with the principles of social responsibility, multilateral processes, guidelines and conventions.

To understand why some public institutions choose to engage in promoting an environment conducive to social responsibility, we conducted an evaluation of vectors, as well as the constraints this commitment is subjected to.

The analysis of the cultural aspects of social responsibility in public institutions consists of social responsibility programmes and support actions undertaken within communities in order to demonstrate that Călărași Gendarmerie is a responsible actor of public life in Călărași County. A systematic and structured approach to the culture of social responsibility in public institutions is based on determining the aspects of the research methodology, with the purpose of the application of theoretical elements and their use in practice. We developed a research methodology for analysing social responsibility culture in public institutions, taking into account both the elements found in the technical literature and their own contributions to the development of knowledge.

Călărași Gendarmerie human resources are made up of human resources with a military regime and human resources with contractual arrangements. Among the human resources of the military regime at the Călărași Gendarmerie are included officers, non-commissioned officers and military personnel.

The objectives of the scientific research focused on the following areas of organizational culture and social responsibility:

- *identifying employees' perceptions regarding labour issues within the organization,*
- *identifying employees' perceptions regarding various aspects of human resources management and labour relations,*
- *identifying employees' perceptions regarding the environmental policies of public institutions,*
- *identifying employees' perceptions regarding social responsibility programmes and activities of the public institution.*

The main objective of the thesis (the research and identification of the issues that particularize social responsibility culture within the Călărași Gendarmerie) is detailed in subordinate objectives regarding the organizational culture, assuming responsibility towards their own employees, responsibility for the environment, involvement in the local community, responsibility towards other categories of stakeholders. The scientific research hypotheses are:

- The main Hypothesis no. 1 (MH1) - there is a strong organizational culture at the Călărași Gendarmerie;
- The main hypothesis no. 2 (MH2) - Călărași Gendarmerie is a model employer in terms of human resources policies
- The main hypothesis no. 3 (MH3) - Călărași Gendarmerie runs a model of sustainable activity in terms of environmental protection;
- The main hypothesis no. 4 (MH4) – there is a high level of involvement of the Călărași Gendarmerie in the community;
- The main hypothesis no. 5 (MH5) - Călărași Gendarmerie has a high level of social responsibility.

In order to achieve the objectives set, we started from the theoretical and empirical elements identified. Starting from the conclusions drawn from observations and exploratory research undertaken, we identified the research objectives which involve the analysis of the research hypotheses formulated. After the qualitative and quantitative research undertaken in the Călărași Gendarmerie, these hypotheses were confirmed. Analysing the responses received from the questionnaire, we formulated a series of general considerations regarding some cultural aspects of responsibility, as well as a series of specific recommendations to improve support programmes and actions carried out by the Călărași Gendarmerie in the field of social responsibility. Subsequently, the tool we called the index measuring the degree of social responsibility can be used in any public institution together with the model of designing and implementation of strategies in the field of social responsibility in order to improve work in this area.

The concept of public-private partnership can play a central role in implementing programmes and actions and social and environmental responsibility. Public-private partnerships can provide complementary skills to public sector institutions which result from the cooperation with the private sector and civil society organizations in addressing social and environmental issues. Within partnerships, public sector organizations can have the role of an initiator, partner, actor supporting the action or programme through technical assistance.

The challenge for public sector institutions is finding those priorities which are relevant in the regional and national context, supporting and enhancing the initiatives undertaken by the private sector. The users' or beneficiaries' demand represents an important vector that supports and encourages social responsibility practices by public institutions in developed countries. However, in developing countries, most public sector organizations are not involved in stimulating consumer demand for goods and services that are produced respecting the principles of social and environmental responsibility.

In our opinion, it is mandatory to take action upon the following directions for public sector organizations to encourage and support private initiatives in the field of responsibility and to be themselves promoters of such initiatives:

- raising awareness of social responsibility, participation and involvement in the development of initiatives generated by the private sector,
- promoting some initiatives that enable public sector institutions to become effective players in the field of social responsibility (so far, the issue of social responsibility has been largely addressed by companies, especially multinationals, consumers, investors and governments),
- building a stable and transparent environment for socially responsible investing, including participation in efforts to strengthen the standards of social responsibility, economic and environmental norms, as well as their implementation,
- private sector involvement in the process of public policies development,
- the provision of some mechanisms that allow the evaluation and selection of local or national priorities in the field of social responsibility.

Another area in which public sector organizations can influence the development of responsible behaviour of companies refers to those normative acts that encourage and facilitate citizen actions against companies that have an irresponsible behaviour. Public sector's role is to establish minimum legal requirements regarding environmental and social issues and to facilitate lodging of complaint issues identified by citizens. This is the case, for example, of consumer protection laws enacted in all EU countries and at Community level, which, in addition to the minimum requirements to be met by products and services, include ways to make a complaint regarding their non-compliance.

By initiating some responsible public policies, public sector institutions can establish a clear and transparent framework able to facilitate the alignment of business practices in sustainability and social responsibility objectives. Public institutions may be also a catalyst for the conduct of debates regarding public policy proposals. Ensuring efficient and effective organizational governance can be achieved through the creation of some codes of ethics and codes of professions that can facilitate the professionalization of civil service, carrying out public sector activities with maximum transparency and fairness. Public organizations must embrace international principles and good practices in the field in which they operate and integrate them into codes, statutes, regulations and other documents governing its activities.

Public investments should be made in compliance with the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, economy, and to include specific practices of social responsibility in the methodology for making the investment. These practices aim at using new technologies eco-friendly, using public money transparently and effectively, the involvement of communities in the selection of investment projects, the development and application of clear rules regarding investment, participation in the community investment through the development of public-private partnerships.

The philanthropy and involvement in community issues are usually social

responsibility actions specific to the private sector. Public organizations can participate in social responsibility programmes initiated by private organizations in order to boost their impact. This participation may be direct or may be in the form of granting some incentives to organizations with social responsibility initiatives.

Stakeholders' involvement in the activities of public organizations and their representation in management or advisory boards is essential to correctly identify the needs of the community in which the public organization operates and the direct beneficiaries of its activities. Increasing the degree of public institutional transparency regarding the activities of the organization is important due to the fact that the public is informed about the spending of public money efficiently and using practices that are responsible from the social point of view. Public organizations must take the best practices seen in the field of reporting on policies and their impact.

Călărași County Gendarmerie Inspectorate is an active player in some education partnership projects undertaken together with the Călărași County School Inspectorate or through social responsibility programmes in partnership with various other institutions and non-governmental organizations, programmes run in local communities. The most relevant social responsibility programmes involving Călărași County Gendarmerie Inspectorate are:

- Gendarmerie made easy
- Let's do it, Romania!
- We care about the environment!
- Together for Safety
- Too rebellious to be led!
- Life, the most expensive drug!
- The development of crime prevention component
- Stop violence! Violence does not help your favourite team!

In the second part of the chapter, we proposed a methodology to study the culture of social responsibility in public institutions, and a model of design and implementation of strategies in the field of social responsibility.

In order for the social responsibility programmes and actions of the institution in the field of policing to be effective, they should be placed in the institution's strategic plan. Thus, we proposed the implementation of a strategic set of regulations which to enable the core activities improvement and the full and coherent integration of social responsibility programmes and actions of the institution in its basic strategy.

To improve support programmes and actions carried out by the Călărași Gendarmerie in the field of social responsibility, we consider that it is necessary to develop a model of creation and implementation of strategies in the field of social responsibility, a model intended to provide a strategic approach to the concept of social responsibility. The steps of this model will be the basis for future research and they are:

- the statement of the organization's mission,
- establishing priority areas in the field of social responsibility,
- establishing long-term strategies in the field of social responsibility,
- setting annual targets,
- planning implementation strategies and objectives,
- implementing strategies and objectives,
- monitoring, results evaluation and reporting the degree of fulfilment of objectives.

The proposed research model is a model intended to provide a strategic approach to social responsibility programmes and actions, by linking objectives and social activities with the public institution's basic ones, but also to increase the chances of success of the implementation of responsible behaviour within the organizational culture.

The research of social responsibility culture at the Călărași Gendarmerie represented the fundamental research axis with a predominantly applicative and empirical component. The study presents the results of the research of social responsibility culture at the Călărași Gendarmerie. The first part of the study focuses on researching general elements regarding the organizational culture at the Călărași Gendarmerie. The research shows that 77.5% of employees are satisfied with their job, while 22.5% are very satisfied. The satisfaction degree regarding the workplace is very high. According to the employees, among the most important features of the job are: the location of the institution is in a nice area (25.5%), job security (23.5%) and working with cooperating people (19.5%).

Regarding the degree of cooperation within the organization, a percentage of 76% of employees working for the Călărași Gendarmerie consider managers cooperate well and very well. There are only a few isolated cases (6%) when the employees consider that there is a lack of cooperation among managers. According to the quantitative analysis, we found that the perception of the degree of cooperation between managers and performers (77.5%) is even better than the degree of cooperation among senior managers. The percentage of people who are dissatisfied is lower (4.5%). The best degree of cooperation is perceived by Călărași Gendarmerie employees regarding the relations among performers. A percentage of 89% of Călărași Gendarmerie employees think there is good and very good cooperation among performers. There are no cases in which employees consider that there is a lack of cooperation among performers. The research showed that employees think that there is a good degree of cooperation at the level of the institution among functional compartments. The percentages are maintained, 77% of employees thinking that the level of cooperation among departments is good and very good.

As far as the sources of information within the organization are concerned, Călărași Gendarmerie employees rank first rumours or gossip, the second being the information documents sent by management and management's written notes at par. The following places are occupied by various briefings and direct information received from colleagues. From this analysis it can be concluded that the informal plan dominates the formal plan.

In terms of the features that an employee must meet in order to be appreciated / encouraged by heads, Călărași Gendarmerie employees rank first fairness, the second being new ideas and the third being work. Analysing the answers regarding the typical employee's qualities, Călărași Gendarmerie employees have relatively balanced perceptions, out of which adaptability stands out. Sociable character is less important in the opinion of Călărași Gendarmerie employees taking into consideration the fact that this is an institution in the field of protection and public order, with a militarized nature.

After having undertaken the investigations, we can conclude that the most important aspects for employees at the Călărași Gendarmerie in terms of climate and organizational culture are: the team spirit, the work place and relationship with colleagues. It demonstrates a special attachment to the institution and to the members of the organization. At the opposite pole there are the working conditions, the management team and the atmosphere. These aspects indicate a slight distrust of management and the fact that it is necessary to improve working conditions in the institution.

The second part of the study focused on the policies of the public institution in the field of human resources. Analysing the responses given by Călărași Gendarmerie employees regarding the fairness of the ways of hiring, promotion, sanction or dismissal, employees generally have a good opinion (73%), but there are employees who consider that these procedures could be improved substantially (7.5%). Employees general perception regarding the pay equity is also located at high levels, over 51% of employees said they were satisfied and very satisfied with the reward system. However, most believe that the reward system is based on seniority (22%), position in the hierarchy (18.5%), number of years employed in the organization (16.5%) and less on performance and outcomes (4.5%). Over 51% of employees believe that they have great and excellent opportunities for professional development, and over 67% of employees believe that they are offered great and excellent opportunities for personal development, as a result of the climate of discipline and rigor existent in a public institution in the field of ensuring public safety and order.

From the answers given by employees, we may conclude that there were no cases of harassment in public institutions, and the number of discrimination cases is insignificant. The state of compliance with equal opportunities for women, minorities and people with disabilities in the public entity is also favourable.

Regarding privacy, most employees said they did not know if the activity was monitored electronically in the institution (video and online monitoring included) or that it is not monitored electronically. Over 88% of the employees surveyed said they were monitored electronically. Moreover, it can be seen that the approximately 12% who said they were not supervised electronically have a higher level of education and titles that correspond to this level. It is mainly about the administrative staff.

Having studied the feedback received after the advisory according to identification variables, there are three significant issues. Firstly, only 40% of employees say they take into account the suggestions and proposals resulting from the advisory process with employees. Secondly, 45 of the 48 respondents who are dissatisfied with the extent to which the institution takes into account the suggestions raised during the advisory process with employees are registered in seniority groups of 5-10 years and more than 10 years. This is

something that management must take into account because these workers are employees with work experience. Thirdly, 45 of the 48 respondents who believe their suggestions and proposals resulting from the advisory process with employees are not taken into account are ungraduated people. This could be interpreted as discrimination by employees.

The third part of the study focused on the policies of the public institution in the field of social responsibility. In the field of social responsibility, research has focused on three directions: environmental policy, the relationship with customers and suppliers, and the relationship with the local community. Regarding the environmental policy, research has found that employees are aware of the objectives of the public institution in this area. The weakest result was obtained in the case of awareness of energy conservation measures (61%). In this regard, the management of the public institution will have to step up education programmes, given that the implementation of these measures will lead to reducing energy costs and utilities. The field of the environmental protection, nature, is where employees are best informed. Over 85% of employees are aware of the measures that the institution undertakes in this area, given that the Călărași Gendarmerie participated over the years in many such actions (e.g. "Let's Do It, Romania!" "We care about the environment!").

Research into the relationships with suppliers and customers led to a series of normal results influenced by the degree of domain awareness, especially among employees filling executive positions. A notable result is that over 63% are informed about the transparency of the procurement system. Moreover, employees are adequately informed or involved in relationships with the local community.

Following the interpretation of the research results, we summarized the actions which need to be carried out efficiently by public institutions in order to have effective involvement in solving local community problems:

- better ways to let citizens know about how they can access public services;
- greater involvement of citizens and communities in activities of public organizations;
- the implementation of more effective policies, programmes and services which to take into account community needs;
- reducing barriers to citizen participation, so the reluctant regarding cooperation with public institutions should be encouraged to become more involved in their activities;
- participation in the organization of sports and cultural artistic events at the level of the local community;
- helping those vulnerable segments of the population through donations to schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly or children.

Based on the values attributed to the answers given by respondents in the entire survey, we have illustrated the index measuring the degree of social responsibility (IMDSR) as an element of originality of the work. The minimum points are 0 (corresponding to a culture of non-existent social responsibility), while the maximum is 280 (corresponding to a

culture of social responsibility that takes into account as many of the stakeholders' interests). By adding the feedback received from the population studied, in the case of Călărași Gendarmerie it was registered a mean score which demonstrates that the institution is characterized by a strong social responsibility culture.

Based on the research results, we can conclude that all five hypothesis (the main hypothesis no. 1 - strong organizational culture; the main hypothesis no. 2 - Călărași Gendarmerie is part of the model "model employer," the main hypothesis no. 3 - Călărași Gendarmerie runs a sustainable model of activity in terms of environmental protection, the main hypothesis no. 4 - high level of involvement of the Călărași Gendarmerie in the local community, the main hypothesis no. 5 - Călărași Gendarmerie falls within the range of the number four of the index measuring the degree of social responsibility) are validated. It is advisable, however, that the Călărași Gendarmerie pay more attention to elements that characterize organizational culture and improve their human resources policies. In this way, the Călărași Gendarmerie can fall within the range of the index number five measuring the degree of social responsibility (strong social responsibility culture that takes into account all stakeholders' interests).

As a result of the quantitative and qualitative analysis, we feel that it is necessary to ensure a strategic approach to programmes and actions of social responsibility, by linking social objectives and activities with the basic ones in the public institution, but also to increase the chances of success of the implementation of a responsible behaviour within the organizational culture.

The development of a strategy for social responsibility must reflect the current corporation objectives and the expectations of the community, employees, partners and other stakeholders. This strategy should be integrated into the basic organizational strategies so as to allow efficient management of the social, economic and environmental impact. The existence of such a strategy and its implementation in practice leads to increased public confidence, prevention and reduction of antisocial acts, increased safety and security, improved service quality.

The implementation of the strategy is done through a set of objectives. The objective is a future state of the organization expressed in quantifiable terms. In chronological terms, the mission of an organization refers more to this organization than the past and its future, i.e. its future status.