

Executive Summary: Police Chief Turnover in Texas

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Overview

This research analyzed survey data from the Police Chief Turnover in Texas project to investigate factors associated with police chief turnover in Texas. Surveys were completed by newly appointed police chiefs (appointed in 2013 and after) who came to the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas for the Texas Police Chief Leadership Series and New Chief Development Program. This project sought to identify factors related to voluntary and involuntary turnover, with a focus on institutional environmental factors, leadership effectiveness, and agency performance.

Methodology

The purpose of the current study was to investigate potential factors that may affect a police chief's departure from the chief position.

Research participants included newly appointed police chiefs in Texas police departments. The new chiefs were asked why their predecessor left their job as chief of police. Fourteen potential answer choices were provided, which were later combined into two categories: voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover.

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of police chiefs who left for voluntary and involuntary reasons. Slightly more than half (51.8%) of police chiefs left their positions willingly, for reasons such as retirement or taking a better position.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Police Chief Turnover

Turnover type	Number	Percent of Total
Voluntary	85	51.8
Involuntary	79	48.2

The study measured several factors that were expected to influence police chief turnover. One of these was the relationships chiefs have with community stakeholders (such as hiring authorities, elected politicians, other criminal justice organizations, and the media), also referred to as the institutional environment. Other variables included in the study were individual characteristics of the previous police chief, police department characteristics, whether the department engaged in traditional or community policing, and community characteristics.

Key Findings

Police chiefs' relationships with their institutional environments had consistently significant effects on turnover. Specifically, chiefs who had poor relationships with community stakeholders were more likely to leave their position involuntarily.

The type of policing the department engaged in also had a significant relationship with police chief turnover. Departments that received high scores in community policing, by, for instance, treating citizens well and making the community feel secure, were less likely to have chiefs depart involuntarily.

Police chiefs who were appointed from outside the department (rather than being an internal promotion), those who were appointed by a mayor, and those who had a longer length of service were significantly less likely to leave their department involuntarily.

Discussion and Conclusion

The current research is one of only a few studies that empirically investigates police chief turnover. The findings of this project are important because it transfers important information and policy implications to police practitioners and policy makers. For example, police chiefs can strive for good working relationships with community stakeholders and maintain good departmental policing performance to reduce the likelihood of involuntary turnover.

See also:

Li, Y. (2016). *Correlates of Police Chief Turnover in Texas*. (Doctoral Dissertation, Sam Houston State University).

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