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The Analysis of Spiritual Factors of the Safety Culture

Abstract

The article focuses on the analysis of the spiritual factors of the safety culture, which are extremely important in maintaining the overall organisational culture. We consider organisational culture to be a success tool for the organisation and a tool for achieving set goals. One of the essential values of organisational culture is safety, safety culture and its artefacts, values and factors that characterise it. Several factors, whether spiritual, material or organisational influence the provision of a good safety culture. The article analyses the spiritual factors in more detail at the individual level, the cooperative level and the state level.

Keywords: corporate culture, safety culture, spiritual factors

Introduction

Even an animal in danger reacts completely differently than when it is out of danger. This is also the case with individuals, employees of the organisation, the entire organisation itself or the state. If employees do not feel comfortable, they are worried about their health while performing work, they are not sure about the sustainability of their job or financial remuneration, their work performance will be at a low level. When an individual, a resident of a given country feels threatened in his country and his security is compromised, he often acts recklessly and endangers the security of others. We can perceive safety as the highest value in the life of individuals, society and the state.

In order to ensure a good safety culture, there are several factors, whether spiritual, material or organisational. We will focus more closely on the analysis of spiritual factors.

Safety culture

In order to be able to analyse the individual factors of safety culture, we first define what safety culture means. Safety culture consists of two words – *safety and culture*.

Culture represents the sum of the creations of human activity, both material and spiritual, intellectual, which is accumulated, preserved and enriched throughout human history and passed on from generation to generation (HOFREITER–BREZINA 2023).

Safety is the state of a social, natural, technical, technological system or other system that, under specific internal and external conditions, enables the fulfilment of specified functions and their development in the interest of man and society (HORÁČEK 2006). In general, it can also be characterised as a state without a real threat of danger, or a state opposite to danger (BUZÁSSYOVÁ–JAROŠOVÁ 2006).

Culture and security (individual customs, religions and values) have been influencing each other since the beginning of humanity itself. The main aspect of mutual interaction lay in the pursuit of cultural dominance exercised by one nation over another. Here the religious differences arise, that often result in wars or conflicts. The mutual interaction of culture and security is often realised through power, capable of creating and enforcing cultural values and patterns, but also through the defence (protection) of created and accepted cultural values. There are many definitions of safety culture in the professional literature. Kirschtein in his publication “How is it possible to improve the quality of work safety and ensure the constant growth of the safety culture in the company?” defines safety culture as a system of values, traditions, characteristics, approaches and attitudes of the organisation as well as individuals, which considers the safety issues of the organisation as the highest priority and for which the adequate attention must be taken considering their importance across the entire organisation (KIRCHNER–SPERLING 2024).

Cieślarczyk (2011) defines safety culture as a way of thinking about safety, perceiving safety and determining safety values (CIEŚLARCZYK 2011).

According to Pidgeon, the security culture determines the system of meanings, thanks to which the subjects are able to realise and understand the threat and therefore they can take an attitude towards risk, threat, security and they are also able to assign adequate values to them (PIDGEON 1998).

The first official definition of safety culture was given in the document Safety Series No. 75, INSAG-4, issued by the IAEA in 1991 after the Chernobyl disaster: “Safety culture is a set of organizational and individual characteristics and attitudes that establishes the deserved attention to the questions regarding the safety of nuclear power plants as the highest priority.” This definition can be transferred and generalised to any reference object (individual, religious group, state, nation, etc.).

Safety culture combines the correct setting of the safety management system and its implementation in practice – the safe behaviour of individuals and their involvement in safety, as well as the perception of safety as an important value of the entire company.

Consistency between what is declared in the guidelines and how the regulations are implemented in practice is of key importance. Safety culture is not something that can be bought or acquired. Safety culture is a combination of the effects of organisational culture, professional culture and it is often heavily influenced by national culture. It can be positive, negative or even neutral.

Taking into consideration the wide spectrum of definitions in professional literature, we can define safety culture as “a system of values, traditions, characteristics, approaches and attitudes of reference objects that consider safety issues as the highest priority, and to which, due to their importance, they pay adequate and permanent attention” (HOFREITER 2023).

Factors of safety culture

Safety culture is influenced by several factors. In general, it is the cooperation of a person, with the help of various technical and technological means to work and behave in order to ensure safety. In doing so, customary organisational measures and procedures of the company are observed. Therefore, the safety culture is influenced by *spiritual* (behaviour of people), *material* (means to ensure safety) and *organisational factors* (usual procedures, solutions and measures).

Material factors of safety culture

Material factors may be considered to be a set of financial, technical, technological and other material resources that create suitable conditions to ensure the implementation of the accepted and applied safety culture.

Organisational factors of safety culture

It consists of rules and structures for the implementation of safety culture, as well as structures supporting management and implementation institutions. It is primarily about the creation of intelligence structures, ensuring the collection and providing of information about agents, effects and events in the strategic environment of the state. The creation of a functional internal information system is a necessary condition for the functioning of the structures of the state's security system (HOFREITER 2023).

Spiritual factors of safety culture

Security culture also deals with how people negatively or positively influence the functioning of society (state), thereby contributing or not contributing to overall security. The *human factor* is about understanding the ways people interact with the world, their capabilities and limitations, and about influencing human activity to improve the way people do their jobs. People themselves play a very important role in achieving the required level of safety and safety culture. They are an integral part of safety management, that is essential for the overall understanding, identification and reduction of risks, as well as for the optimisation of human behaviour within a safety culture (HOFREITER 2023).

Analysis of spiritual factors

Spiritual factors are an important part of safety culture, they influence the perception and attitudes of individuals, organisations and the entire culture of society or the state.

We can consider spiritual factors at three levels of analysis:

- *individual level* (focusing on the perception of safety/uncertainty)
- *corporate* (enterprise) *level*
- *state level* (with a focus on ensuring security as a function of the state) (HOFREITER 2015a)

As we mentioned above, the basic spiritual factor is *human potential* at all three levels and its capabilities and competences for identification, analysis, evaluation and prediction of the development of factors affecting security.

Analysis of spiritual factors at the individual level

Spiritual factors at the individual level can be expressed by the synthesis of life values, knowledge, abilities of individuals necessary to ensure safety in scientific or professional activity, in ordinary everyday social and private life. It also includes the behaviour of the individual and his preservation of the safety of other people, respect for the legal order, approach to environmental protection, respect for traditional values in society, etc.

Among the spiritual factors at the individual level we can include:

- human value system
- acquirement of safety standards, norms and principles of safe behaviour
- knowledge, abilities, skills and habits of a person conditioning his safe behaviour
- sense of responsibility, human motivation, understanding of the need and necessity of taking care of one's own safety

A *human value system* includes values, beliefs and ethical standards. These factors influence how people perceive right and wrong values and how they behave in accordance with these values. In the nineties of the 20th century, interest in promoting positive values grew. This was mainly due to the fact that in the Japanese companies the positive influence of human values and correct beliefs in the general results of the company was proven. When examining these organisations, the sincere effort of all employees to treat colleagues and clients decently, honestly and fairly was identified. At the same time, the organisations had an evident and clear intention to provide high quality work, products or services (KŘIVOHLAVÝ 1995). Human values such as empathic thinking or compassion strengthen the ability to relate to the situation of others. These qualities are important for cooperation, solidarity and willingness to help in various crisis situations.

Acquirement of safety standards, norms and principles of safe behaviour can help ensure safety and protection against various hazards. Compliance with these standards can help reduce the risk of injury and illness of individuals related to their work, as well

as to improve the general working environment. Compliance with safety standards can also help improve productivity and quality of work, as employees will feel safer and have more confidence that their work is safe and healthy. Therefore, it is extremely important to observe the principles of safety behaviour of individuals.

Knowledge, abilities, skills of a person conditioning his safe behaviour and acquirement of the right work habits is one of the basic steps in maintaining safety at work. Correct work habits include, for example, correct lifting of heavy objects, correct use of tools and machines, or correct use of personal protective equipment. All this ensures that individuals are protected and that there are no unwanted accidents or threats to the health of employees.

A strong spiritual side of an individual can even strengthen the *sense of responsibility* towards oneself, society and others. As a general rule, people who have a strong sense of responsibility adhere more strictly to safety measures and are able to help others, better manage stress and uncertainty. They know how to motivate people around them for better performance and are an example for them in taking care of their own safety.

Analysis of spiritual factors at the cooperative–business level

Spiritual factors at the cooperative–business level can be characterised as a set of rules and functions of the organisation, the purpose of which is to ensure the safety of the enterprise, to ensure its activities and protection of the interests as well as to ensure the safety and health of the employees.

Among the spiritual factors at the cooperative–business level we may include (IAEA-TECDOC-1329 2010):

- functional safety education system
- recognition of the high priority of safety as a presupposition for the duration and development of a company, organisation
- compliance with regulations and procedures in all sectors and areas of security in the company (organisation)
- the attitude of the top management towards safety
- continuous checking and measurement of the state of complex security in the organisation

An important spiritual factor at the corporate level of safety culture is *a functional safety education system*, which will ensure the integrity of the unity of needs, knowledge, abilities and skills necessary to avert dangerous situations and safety threats. As a result, all employees know the company's (organisation's) security policy, the rules of safe behaviour, they have familiarised with them and follow them.

Safety education of employees is essential for the productive use of human potential in the creation of a safety culture. It makes it possible to acquire capabilities and competences for hazard identification, predicting the development of a situation affecting safety and subsequent elimination of an unfavourable situation. That is why it is important to constantly train and educate the staff, familiarise them with the current situation, with possible risks and threats, but also with modern solutions of problems and of threatening unfavourable situations. Such building of security awareness is an important security measure that contributes to achieving a high level of security culture.

With sufficiently functioning security education, the active participation of individuals in risk identification, risk valuation, applicability and sustainability valuation is subsequently possible in order to prevent the security breaches. Not only employees at the operational level but also those at the strategic or tactical level should be involved in the identification of hazards. Adoption or consideration of proposed measures and provided feedback to employees leads to a feeling of participation in building the overall safety culture of the company.

The recognition of *the high priority of safety and the subsequent implementation of safety* in all spheres of the company's activity is the right presupposition for the good development and maintenance of the company. This creates a precondition for the protection of the human factor, property and other assets of the company. It contributes to a higher quality of life in the company and to a higher efficiency of the company itself (GAŠPIERIK–REITŠPÍS 2006).

In the end, this creates a good image, know-how and goodwill of the company on the market. It is necessary to realise that security is expensive. It is never 100%, it is never finished, and it is primarily the task of the top management. The principle is that only approximately 15% of problems should be left to be solved by employees and the rest, that is approximately 85% of problems, should be handled by the management system (HOFREITER–BREZINA 2023). To ensure the permanent prosperity of the company, it is important that a management mechanism is in place to ensure the optimal functioning of the company (BARTEK–RUSKO 2014). No company or organisation is interested in

the existence of temporary or permanent threats, not even in the emergence of a crisis, that only leads to material, informational, financial or human losses.

It is necessary to keep in mind that *the attitude of top management towards safety* is always reflected in the behaviour of employees. If the top management does not respect the rules, it can be difficult to demand the fulfilment of the rules from other employees. Top management is a necessary condition for the success of the company. Strong and visible leadership and actively involved managers at all levels can set the direction and basic principles of a preventative approach. This will ensure the strategic position of safety and health protection in the company. In practice, this means that the management establishes safety and health protection at work as one of the company's core values and informs all employees about it. The managers have an accurate idea of the risk profile of the company they manage and they set an example for others by following all occupational health and safety rules at all times.

Continuous checking and measurement of the state of complex security in the organisation is the basis of preventing risks and imminent unwanted changes. A review of existing and new restrictions must be carried out periodically and any changes must be identified. It should also be noted that the limitation may change with time, with geographical and social developments as well as with the company's work culture. Preventing risks means anticipating them and with the lowest possible costs for this purpose, it is necessary to create financial resources so that the effective risk prevention can be implemented. It is necessary to control those situations and conditions whose risks are eliminated, minimised or transferred to another place and thereby optimised. It is also about predicting the consequences of these risks and optimising them so that the damage to health and property is as small as possible.

Thanks to the continuous checking and measurement of the state of safety, preventive actions can be implemented in time to prevent the occurrence of improper actions, malfunctions, accidents and other unwanted events (BARTEK–RUSKO 2016).

Analysis of spiritual factors at the state level

There are areas in which ensuring security is beyond the power of the individual. It is not possible to defend individually against armed aggression, prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction or influence the economic and environmental problems of the world. Therefore, the individual voluntarily shifts the protection of his interests to a higher organisational structure – the state. It has internal and external sovereignty

and ensures the safety of its citizens by means of its security forces. Internal sovereignty allows the state to exercise jurisdiction within the state entity, while external sovereignty guarantees the state the equal status in the system of international relations and that no other state has the right to interfere in its internal affairs (KAČMÁR 2016).

The culture of security at the state level expresses its attitude and relationship to security as such state of society in which everyone's security is secured at the required level. It expresses how political representation reacts to possible threats to the security of the state and citizens, how it creates conditions for the development of social units. It also shows how the state cares about educating citizens about safety, about safe behaviour in various situations (RAK-MATOUŠKOVÁ 2004).

The culture of security as a result of fulfilling the function of the state in the area of security is also influenced by spiritual factors.

Among the spiritual factors at the state level we may include:

- the system of social values (religion) and priorities in the field of security
- the approach of political representation to the security needs of the state and citizens
- promoting the culture of safety in the mass media
- organisation of population training in the field of prevention and enforcement of patterns of safe behaviour and response to dangerous situations

The system of social values, where religion also plays an important role, has a great influence on people's behaviour and, consequently, on the entire security system of the state. Uneven economic development, especially in the Near and Middle East, creates conditions for the abuse of faith and traditions, the rise of religious fanaticism, the emergence of authoritarian regimes and, consequently, illegal migration. These differences often lead to feelings of threat and attacks on civil liberties, economic and cultural development or their significant limitation. Since the Slovak Republic is not an isolated state, we do not live in a vacuum and we are part of a Western democracy through which we profess certain values. It is necessary to protect these values in order to preserve the customary standard. Therefore, the threats to which we are exposed are not small. Their scope often threatens not only one state, but the entire region or continent. Therefore, it is important to take preventive steps in the social field, in education and in the formation of public opinion aimed at the tolerant coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups in society.

It is important that spiritual factors are continuously integrated into the overall safety culture, thus achieving a balanced and sustainable safety.

The approach of the political representation to the needs of the security of the state and citizens, the accepted and adopted principles of the culture of security are reflected in the content and trend of the culture of the given state, expressing mainly the approach of the political representation of the state to ensure its external security. Factors that influence the security culture at the state level have ideological, religious and cultural values. Historical experience, narrative history, but also military capabilities and the definition of the hierarchy of the state's protected interests shape and build a security culture.

Promoting the culture of safety in the mass media is an effective tool that, by means of modern technologies, spreads information in a given time and space and informs the largest possible audience. Only an educated and well-informed population can react relevantly to security threats or dangerous situations. One of the tasks of the state is *the organisation of population training in the field of prevention and enforcement of patterns of safe behaviour*.

Strengthening of spiritual factors

Strengthening of spiritual factors can contribute to the increase of the overall safety culture and improve perceptions and attitudes at all three levels of safety culture – at the level of individuals, organisations and society (state).

In order to achieve the strengthening of spiritual factors, it is necessary that *the values and ethical standards of society* are clearly established, they should be shared and supported throughout the organisation, society or state. Employees (individuals) should know what is expected from them and what are the company's (state's) priorities.

Another tool for strengthening spiritual factors is the often mentioned *education*. Employers should not only provide their employees with lifelong learning in their field, but also enlightenment regarding the spiritual aspects of safety, which can be implemented through various workshops, lectures or discussions on values, responsibility and company culture.

It is also important to support community activities and the cooperation of individual groups. Voluntary activities, charity projects and joint efforts of individuals can strengthen the sense of security and fellowship and thereby fulfil the individual steps of the safety culture (RAK-MATOUŠKOVÁ 2004).

Creating a positive work environment where employees feel supported and respected creates a space for overall spiritual well-being and a positive safety culture of the

organisation. The same applies at the state level, for the population – creating a safe environment within the given state creates a space for an overall feeling of security.

It is important that individuals, organisations and the state recognise the spiritual dimension and integrate it into their strategies and programs for the overall improvement of the security culture.

Conclusion

By introducing and maintaining the safety culture, it is possible to influence not only the material pillar of safety (the safety system and its elements), but also the human factor and the spiritual pillar of the safety culture manifested in the safety awareness of individuals.

Timeless thinking in safety issues can be considered one of the presuppositions for a good safety culture, when an active approach to safety can ensure a state, in which the company will always be at least one step ahead. It is important to realise that not only high-ranking officials are responsible for safety, but also every individual in the company.

We can understand the spiritual factors of safety culture as a set of characteristics and attitudes of reference objects based on the priority of safety as a condition for their development and survival. These are individual and group values, attitudes and different behaviour models, aimed at achieving safety.

A safety culture is a reflection of the values that are adopted and applied at all levels of the organisation, and which are based on a belief in the importance of safety and the responsibility of everyone to promote and achieve it. It creates a framework for formulating the interests and needs of reference objects in the field of security, and it is a source for the formation of security awareness at the level of the individual, company or state (HOFREITER 2015b).

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