

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

Student name:	Cheung Hoi Yan	Student ID number:	1818881
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	Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 50%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.

**Module Learning Outcomes
(from module syllabus)**

By the end of this module students should be able to:

1. Critically consider the underpinnings of qualitative research principles and be able to recognise strengths and limitations of qualitative research techniques.
2. Critically assess the contexts appropriate for qualitative research techniques, and be able to apply qualitative data collection and analysis techniques in order to address a research question.
3. To generate a preliminary research proposal around some topic of interest that will culminate in a research presentation and paper.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

DBA Programme

Module name and code

Qualitative Research SBPD7002

Title of Part One Assignment

Evaluation of Current Research: A critical review on a journal paper

Submitted to Dr. Stephanie Lee

Student Name: CHEUNG Hoi Yan

Student ID: 1818881

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Abstract

This paper aims to conduct a critical review on a chosen journal paper titled '*How distributed leadership can make a difference in teachers' organizational commitment? A qualitative study*' with a view to examining the philosophy and theoretical perspective being employed in the study. The study was part of a bigger research on organizational commitment of teachers and the present study was a follow-up research using a qualitative design. The study explored how distributed leadership affected the organizational commitment of teachers through conducting interviews with principals and teachers from four high potential schools and four low potential schools. The findings of the study revealed that organizational commitment would be influenced by differences in the leadership practices of the school leadership team, i.e. the principals, assistant principals and teacher leaders. The study filled the research gap by revealing that distributed leadership had a positive effect on teachers' organizational commitment and the findings have been found to be consistent with the earlier quantitative study. Although there were some limitations to adopting qualitative research design, the findings identified theoretical and practical implications to enhance school leaders' understanding of the correlation between 'distributed leadership' and commitment of teachers.

Keywords: qualitative study, distributed leadership, organizational commitment

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to conduct an evaluation of a current research from a top journal in the field of ‘organizational commitment’ that uses a qualitative research design. This paper will consist of three main sections. Following the full citation and background, the philosophy and theoretical perspective of this journal paper will be discussed. The second section will be the data collection method used and the third section will be a critique of the methods used followed by a conclusion.

1.1 The full citation

Hulpia, H. and Devos, G. (2010) ‘How distributed leadership can make a difference in teachers’ organizational commitment? A qualitative study’, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), pp. 565–575. (Impact Factor: 3.18)

1.2 Background

This journal paper by Hulpia and Devos (2010) intended to explore the relationship between ‘distributed leadership’ and teachers’ commitment to their schools by using a qualitative research design through semi-structured interviews with school leaders and teachers. Four schools with high committed teachers and four schools with low committed teachers were selected based on an earlier quantitative research conducted in 2006 and 2007 in order to find out how teachers’ organizational commitment would be influenced by leadership practices of different school leaders. Previous researches confirmed that teacher effectiveness such as job performance, motivation to professionalize and job effort can be predicted by organizational commitment (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). They also indicated that organizational leadership practices would impact positively on employee commitment towards an organization, which was also true in the educational sector (Meyer

& Allen, 1997). However, previous research only focused on traditional one-person leader or ‘superhero’ leadership model, which was largely different from the ‘post-heroic leadership model’ which was seen as a group-level phenomenon when leadership was referred to a team comprising principal, assistant principals and teacher leaders (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Therefore, the authors of this paper tried to fill this gap by exploring the nature of distributed leadership and how this might relate to teachers’ organizational commitment.

The objectives of this paper are:

- To indicate whether ‘distributed leadership’ will impact on teachers’ organizational commitment;
- To explore the differences of this relationship between high potential and low potential schools; and
- To examine how teachers’ organizational commitment is being influenced by these differences (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

2. The philosophy and theoretical perspective being employed

The ontological argument of this journal paper is to prove that teachers in high potential schools are being supported and supervised properly, which are important elements showing the quality and distribution of how the leadership team exercise their core leadership functions. In this journal paper, ‘distributed leadership’ is defined ‘*as the distribution of leadership functions among the leadership team, which is a group of people with formal leadership roles, (i.e. the principal, the assistant principals, and teacher leaders)*’ (Hulpia & Devos, 2010, p. 566). The authors further examined how the school leadership teams operate from three additional dimensions of leadership team cooperation, social interaction and how willing teachers in participating in decision-making processes at school level (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

Under the theoretical framework in this paper, the authors defined organizational commitment as the sense of loyalty and the alignment of an employee's goals and values with those of the organization (Mowday, et.al., 1979). However, the authors did not go into details on any further studies or previous research conducted on organizational commitment under the educational context. No literature review on this particular concept was available in the paper. The remaining elaboration of the theoretical framework focused mainly on the interpretation and explanation of how 'distributed leadership' operates including leadership functions quality and distribution, how members of the leadership team cooperate, internal interaction and level of teachers' participation in school decision-making.

In order to increase educational effectiveness and improve school development, leadership is one of the key factors in building complex causal models (Rikkerink, et al., 2016). There have been observations in the last ten years revealing a change of leadership concept from being a personal quality of school principal towards an organizational quality. In other words, the implication is that leadership is no longer a one-person business, but consisting several people to form a team effort. At the same time, there is a shift of emphasis to the concept of 'leadership practice', namely the leaders must establish a reciprocal interaction with their staff or followers (Rikkerink, et al., 2016). Therefore, the authors of this paper defined that an effective leadership team must be cohesive with mutual trust and effective communication within the team. The leadership team also had shared aims and objectives worked towards the same school vision and goals (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

In the research conducted by Cai (2011), transformational leadership in education contains four dimensions, which are very similar to distributed leadership examined in this paper:

- (1) 'Setting directions' means having school vision, giving directions on goals and priorities;
- (2) 'Developing people' includes offering intellectual inspiration, providing personal support and reinforcing professional practices and values;

(3) 'Redesigning the organization' refers to building a school culture with collaboration, fostering a school participation structure and establishing effective community relationships; and

(4) 'Managing the instructional programme' includes formalizing daily routines, processes and procedures to allow changes to occur. (Cai, 2011)

Similarly, the findings of this study also revealed the categories of distributed leadership which include directions setting, people development, supervising teachers, leadership team collaboration, social interaction and teachers' participation in decision-making and how they affected teachers' organizational commitment.

3. The data collection methods used

The epistemological aspect of the study was to conduct semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in 2007-2008 on two sets of four schools (high potential and low potential), which were chosen from 46 schools in Belgium participating in the earlier quantitative research. In each school, the principal, minimum one assistant principal, minimum one teacher leader were interviewed individually and around four teachers from each school were invited to join focus group interviews (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). This emic approach allowed the authors to interact with the participants and examine the phenomenon from different perspectives.

The methodology of this study concerns data collection, data sampling and data analysis. Regarding data collection, as mentioned above, semi-structured interviews were conducted in eight schools resulting in 34 interviews with 59 respondents. Based on the research objectives, an interview protocol was set up focusing on the four dimensions of distributed leadership. The previous quantitative study findings provided a purposeful sampling of eight extreme schools from

the 46 participating schools. The 46 schools were ranked and the authors selected the schools with the highest and lowest scores for this qualitative research. Regarding data analysis, transcription was done on each interview and a coding scheme which contained seven categories was developed (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). A summary of the study findings in a table format was presented in the paper. However, it was found that the seven categories under ‘data analysis’, i.e. *setting directions, developing people, supervision of teachers, cooperation of the leadership team, social interaction, participative decision-making, and organization commitment*, were not consistent with the information presented in the table. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the data was analyzed by two coders using ‘within-case’ and ‘cross-case’ analyses with a view to generating synthesized overall findings. This approach is able to avoid the axiological assumption that the research was value-laden with biases as the data analyses were not done by the researcher who gathered information from the field.

4. A critique of the methods used

As mentioned in the previous section, semi-structured interviews were conducted in eight schools (four high and four low potential) with one principal, one assistant principal, teacher leaders and around four teachers in each school. A total of 34 interviews with 59 respondents were conducted in this study. In a grounded theory study like this, the authors selected participants who could contribute to the development of the theory. The reliability of this study could be enhanced as the schools were chosen from the earlier quantitative research. In addition, the principals and teachers in this study were purposefully selected to inform the understanding of the relationship between ‘distributed leadership’ and teachers’ commitment in the education sector. However, there was a possibility that teachers being favoured by the principals were invited to participate in the focus group interviews because the teachers were chosen at random by the principal but not by the authors.

In order to enhance the generalisability of the findings in this study, a random or stratified sampling would be more desirable. Nevertheless, using a purposeful sampling might have other practical considerations. For example, one of the major challenges of this study was whether the teachers being interviewed were willing to comment on the quality and distribution of leadership functions among the leadership team (i.e. rating their principals and teacher leaders). The process of interviews asking the teacher participants to assess their leaders might cause a certain level of uneasiness, especially if the teachers were so-called selected by the principals ‘at random’ (Hulpia & Devos, 2010, p. 567).

Hulpia & Devos (2010) pointed out some of the limitations of the study. The use of focus group interviews in a qualitative research design usually shares the same problem of the possible synergetic effect amongst the participants who may be influenced by the opinions raised by other group members. There will be occasions that they will either dilute or overstate their own perceptions because of the peer pressure (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Secondly, although the authors tried to adopt an emic approach in interviewing school principals, teacher leaders and teachers, no direct observation or shadowing of school members were performed. Other aspects apart from leadership function may be overlooked. Thirdly, due to the anonymity of the participants in the research, it was unable for the authors to validate the transcription versions because the research findings were not given back to the schools for verification (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Finally, leadership success can be defined in many other ways, for instance, culture building, teachers’ satisfaction towards their duties or performance evaluations of school principals (Cai, 2011). Other organizational factors impacting teachers’ commitment namely the differences in school climate, school culture and school principals’ personal charisma were not included in this study.

Previous researches have widely explored and documented the work relation between principals and teachers, their work-related attitudes, and trust building in the school environment. Educational

administration researchers have contended that principals or the leadership team surely have considerable impact on teachers' work attitudes in schools. However, some fundamental characteristics such as gender, age and experience of individual teacher were often being ignored, that have implications on principal-teacher interactions (Berkovich, 2018). It is therefore important for researchers to understand how perspectives of individual teachers can contribute to school improvement. In this journal paper, teacher participants in high potential schools revealed that principals' quality support and facilitation became a key factor predicting teachers' professional commitment, their willingness to take up leadership responsibility in schools and formal/informal participation in school-level decision-making processes (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Many previous studies usually focused on how principals devolved power to experienced teachers so that they could become teacher leaders. There has been little emphasis on leadership development programme for novice teachers, which could be further explored in future research. (Cheng & Szeto, 2016)

Under the 'Discussion and conclusion' section of the journal paper, the authors were able to present the findings in an emergent and evolving manner giving a detailed explanation on the data analysis. Firstly, it was highlighted that at least one 'strong transformational leader' in the high potential schools would accord the highest priority to having interaction with teachers. This strong presence of educational leadership was important to give directions in daily routine and provide teachers with support on a daily basis. On the contrary, the leadership functions of low potential schools could not be performed effectively due to a lack of dynamic interaction between principals and teachers (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Secondly, this paper examined the two dimensions of the leadership team operation, i.e. *rational-technical* and *cultural-process oriented* dimensions. It was revealed that cultural-process characteristics of the leadership team represented key indicators of teachers' organizational commitment. These include team cohesion, regular and frank communication as well as shared values. In addition, stability of the leadership team in high potential schools had positive impact on teachers' commitment whilst instable leadership teams in

low potential schools created anxiety amongst teachers, resulting in lower commitment. Interestingly, the authors of this study pointed out that teachers' perceptions were not affected by the change in the leadership team. On the contrary, it was the ineffective communication and unprepared changes resulting in inconsistent school culture that had negatively affected teachers' organizational commitment (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

Thirdly, the study revealed that social interaction enhanced organizational commitment. This was represented by the visibility and accessibility of school leaders and their priorities in building personal relationship with teachers. Through these relationships, teachers were being encouraged to realize their potential and apply their skills in achieving the goals and purposes of the schools. Finally, teachers' different levels of participation in school decision-making process were explored in this study. The findings indicated that teachers in high potential schools were more motivated and willing in participating in the process of decision-making because their expertise was acknowledged (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). On the contrary, although the teachers in low potential school also had the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, they perceived that their opinions and comments were not valued by the school leaders (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

Regarding the ethical issues in this qualitative research, unfortunately the authors did not mention the process and procedures on how to obtain permission from the schools and participants. For example, there was no mention about whether approval was required from the professional or academic associations; why the schools in Flanders, Belgium, were chosen to be the subjects of this study; and whether the schools had vested interest in the outcome of the study. There was no clue in the paper how the participants were briefed and the data was stored. The fact that this research was a follow up study of an earlier quantitative research was briefly mentioned under 'Data collection' of 'Methodology' but the linkage of the two studies was only demonstrated in a table at Appendix on

teachers' responses to the questionnaire (2006-2007). The authors also failed to explain the purpose of the larger project and how this qualitative research contributed as part of this larger project.

5. Conclusions

Despite the limitations observed in this study mentioned in the previous section, this paper is found to be well-structured with good data analysis. The theoretical framework was presented in a logical way followed by clear research objectives. The results of the research were managed and organized in a table format giving a clear and concise summary of the study. As a result, the paper was able to use a constructivist approach to present a holistic and complex picture on how distributed leadership affect teachers' organizational commitment under the educational context which was a rare subject being studied (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

The findings of this study have several important theoretical and practical implications in answering the research question of '*how distributed leadership can make a difference in teachers' organizational commitment*'. While teacher leadership has received considerable attention in the U.S. evidenced by previous studies, this qualitative research contributed to the management literature by giving a European example (Belgian schools in this study) as well as revealing the relationship between the issues of distributed leadership and organizational commitment of teachers in different schools (Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016). From the practical implications, this study advised school leaders on how to enhance teachers' commitment through building up a culture of collaboration, effective communication and being visible and accessible in the daily interaction (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). School leadership teams may consider developing leadership programmes in order to empower teachers and enable their leadership skills in schools, for both 'principal-ship' and 'middle-level' leadership trainings. In order to facilitate teacher development by fostering a more empowering work culture or environment, it is also important for both principals and intermediate

level school leaders to understand the importance of having ‘*an alignment of empowering leadership behaviour across levels of management*’ (Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

In future, greater empirical focus should be given to distributed leadership in the education sector because it is a dynamic and complicated process for further exploration. This study investigated the relations between distributed leadership and teachers’ organizational commitment. Hulpia & Devos (2010) opined that the practical implications of their study were yet to be tested or implemented in large secondary school, in particular, how to support, monitor and empower teachers to participate in decision-making. In future, more studies can be done on understanding teacher empowerment through other processes. It is worth highlighting the importance of teachers’ empowerment from social or psychological perspectives through confirming the dual roles of ‘teachers’ psychological empowerment’ as a predictor variable and a mediator variable. Findings of future studies on practice of teacher empowerment will be able to contribute significantly to inform subsequent research, which may also have significant influence on teachers’ organizational commitment.

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University of Wales Trinity Saint David

DBA Programme

Module name and code

Qualitative Research SBPD7002

Title of Part Two Assignment

A Research Proposal

Organizational Commitment in the Hong Kong Police Force:

A Qualitative Study on Recruit Police Inspectors under Foundation Training

Submitted to Dr. Stephanie Lee

Student Name: CHEUNG Hoi Yan

Student ID: 1818881

Word count: 3304

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Abstract

People is the greatest asset of the Hong Kong Police Force. Police officers' commitment to the organization includes an attitude or an orientation that links the identity of the officer to the organization as well as an alignment and a belief in the organization's goals and values resulting in a strong desire to maintain membership in the police organization. Following the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government's announcement of the intention of passing the Extradition Bill, a series of protests and riots have been happening since June this year resulting in the increasing mistrust between the police and members of public. This continuous political turmoil has serious implications on police recruitment and retention. This research proposal aims to examine the organizational commitment of recruit police inspectors (RPI) currently under foundation training in the Hong Kong Police College by using a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews with twenty probationary inspectors were conducted in order to find out their motivating factors of joining the Hong Kong Police Force, to examine their reasons of remaining in the organization and to explore how their commitment can be increased.

Keywords: Organizational commitment, recruit police inspectors, qualitative research

Research Questions

This research proposal explores the organizational commitment of recruit police inspectors (RPI) who are still under probation and foundation training in the Hong Kong Police College (HKPC) by adopting a qualitative research design. The objectives of this research are:

- To find out the motivating factors of joining the Hong Kong Police Force (the Force);
- To examine why the RPI are willing to remain in the Force amid the current political turmoil;
- and
- To explore what the Force can do to increase their commitment to the organization.

Research Philosophy

Creswell & Poth (2018) articulated the importance of understanding the philosophical assumptions in conducting qualitative research, which included ontologies, epistemologies, axiology and methodology. The ontological issues in this research relate to how we understand the reality of organizational commitment of RPI at the training stage of their career and the characteristics. Using qualitative research design can help reveal multiple realities concerning staff commitment. The current research therefore aims to use grounded theory to explore the organizational commitment of RPI under the backdrop of the recent political and social turmoil arising from the anti-Extradition Bill. In order to present evidence of multiple realities, multiple forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of participants will be used to present different perspectives concerning organizational commitment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The epistemological assumption concerns the relationship between the researcher and those being researched, which in this qualitative research means that the researcher is trying to get as close as possible to those being interviewed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the process of collecting data from RPI currently under foundation training in the Police College, it is aimed to produce theoretical analyses of why they were willing to join the Force, to remain in the Force and how the organization could increase their commitment. Although the evidence given by the RPI is subjective, the researcher will attempt to interpret their perspective from an 'insider's' point of view because the researcher has also gone through this stage of career in the organization. Nevertheless, it is also important to point out the axiological assumption regarding possible biases being present during the research process. It is because the researcher is also working in the same organization and the narrative will be shaped according to the researcher's own values, position in the organization and experience.

The methodology in this research refers to the process and procedures of conducting the qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research design attempts to develop theories from research grounded in data and to try to find out some theoretic and practical implications on recruitment, retention and how to build an environment conducive to increasing staff commitment. The researcher attempts to follow the inductive logic and a path of analyzing the data from the interviews in order to develop a deeper understanding of the research questions.

Literature Review

Organizational commitment and improving performance in the workplace continue to capture the interest of organizational researchers, academia and HR practitioners in both public and private sectors (Barge & Schlueter, 1988). Organizational commitment is often defined as an individual's identification, affection and involvement in a particular organization as well as the willingness to put

extra effort and remain in an organization. Mowday, et. al (1979) defined organization commitment as a sense of loyalty to a workplace and employees would align their goals and values with the company. In addition, they would contribute beyond what they were expected. This emotional affective commitment represents the bonding of employees to the organization resulting in an alignment of employees' personal goals with the organizational goals (Mowday, et al, 1979). Allen and Meyer (1996) however found that affective commitment had been receiving more focus and attention in past research on organizational commitment, which was proven to have strong ties to employees' and organizational performance. Therefore, many of the studies in the past 15 years focused on affective commitment and its relationship with other work variables such as job satisfaction, job involvement, job stress and turnover. This finding is especially important to public service and police organization because unlike the private sector, governments seldom offer monetary rewards as the motivating factor to increase job satisfaction or to reduce turnover, for example. In the past 15 years, there have been trends of researches focusing on organizational commitment in the public sector, in particular, police organizations in the US, UK, Australia and India. However, there were few studies conducted in southeast Asian countries.

It is important to study organizational commitment in the police organizations because unlike the private sector, recruit police officers will undergo paid training before they are formally appointed as police officers to carry out duties. In the case of Hong Kong Police, for example, a probationary inspector of police and a probationary police constable will undergo 36-week and 27-week of foundation training with full pay respectively before they are deployed to a police district to perform their constabulary duty. Therefore, the issue of organizational commitment is especially important to a police organization as the cost of having an officer leaving the Force is higher than that of a private company.

Description of context and participants

This research proposal intends to study the organizational commitment of recruit police inspectors (RPI) currently under foundation training in the Hong Kong Police College by using a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews with 20 RPI were conducted on 24 September, 2019, at the School of Foundation Training (Aberdeen Campus) of the Police College in order to answer three research questions, namely, what are their motivating factors of joining the Hong Kong Police Force, why they are willing to remain in the organization and what the Force can do to enhance their commitment to the organization. Given the recent violent protests and riots arising from the anti-extradition bill, it is expected that the continuous political turmoil has serious implications on police recruitment and retention. There are a total of five intakes under the foundation training consisting of 152 RPI as at September 2019. These 20 RPI were from a purposeful sampling of the 2/2019 Intake which comprises a total of 34 RPI. They started their training on 12 August 2019 and had experienced the social instability before they joined. Amongst the 20 RPI, 18 of them are direct entry officers whilst the remaining two are force entry officers who are promoted from police constables. 17 of them aged between 21 to 25, two of them aged between 26-29 and the remaining one aged between 30-35. All of them possessed bachelor degrees and some of them have post-graduate academic qualifications.

Appointed Probationary Inspectors will undergo 36 weeks of foundation training which covers leadership, command and control, human resources management, laws, legal proceedings and police procedures, sociology in policing, psychology in policing, foot drill, physical training, tactics and use of force. RPIs must pass the 'Standard One Professional Examination' before passing out from the Hong Kong Police College as a qualified police inspector (Hong Kong Police Force, 2019).

Explanation of data collection steps

This study adopted qualitative research design by conducting two semi-structured open-ended focus group interviews with 20 RPI from the 2/2019 Intake divided into two groups. All participants were selected at random by their course instructor. Each interview lasted for one hour and 15 minutes. A list of 11 questions were prepared beforehand and attached at Appendix B. The interview questions focused on three main areas, namely the factors motivating them to join the Force, why they remain in the Force, i.e. their impression on the Force, any external or personal factors affecting their choice, and lastly their views on how the Force can increase their commitment.

Before the interview commenced, all participants were briefed by the researcher on the purpose of the interview and ethical issues concerning the whole process. The researcher who is a serving senior police officer, was aware of the imbalanced power relations with the participants. Therefore, the participants were told and repeatedly reminded throughout the process that their identities would remain anonymous and their participation was voluntary. All information collected would be analyzed as a whole and treated as confidential. They could withdraw anytime without giving any reasons. Each of the participants were given an information sheet and a consent form which they signed and returned to the researcher. The interview would be free flow and they were free to express any comments and opinions.

Explanation of data analysis

The two interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A coding scheme was developed based on the theoretical framework and research objectives of the present research. The grounded theory practice of the following steps was adopted:

- *Constructing analytic codes and categories from data*
- *Using the constant comparative method making comparisons during each stage of the analysis*
- *Advancing theory development during each step of data analysis*

- *Memo-writing to elaborate categories*
- *Sampling aimed toward theory construction* (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 5-6)

In other words, grounded theory is used to construct theory and concept from data and informs the aspects of qualitative data analysis such as coding and the role of different types of codes in concept creation (Bryman & Burgess, 2002). In this study, the coding scheme had three categories, i.e. motivating factors to join, reasons to remain in the Force and how the organization can enhance staff commitment. Each category had several sub-categories to allow further in-depth analysis. The two interviews were coded simultaneously and the interview transcripts were analyzed to build up a consistent theme or idea under each category. Finally, a diagram was developed to generate overall findings. No software tool was being used in this study.

Preliminary findings

Table 1 below summarized the main themes of the research concerning the factors that motivated the RPI to join the Force, any external and personal factors that made them stay in the Force and what the Force can do to enhance their commitment to the organization. Sub-themes under each main theme were captured with narrative and examples supporting the findings.

Table 1 - Summary of the study findings

Main themes	Sub themes	Narrative
1. Motivating factors	Serving the community	Have worked in private company before, want a sense of achievement Police work can help society to become peaceful Want to tackle crimes Police work is meaningful Want to contribute myself in the frontline Sense of satisfaction when tackling different crimes More achievement because of a bigger scope Be a role model and hope to change the impression of police

		Have been a victim of crime and want to help others just like those officers who helped me before Want to use professional knowledge to help society
	Family influence / childhood dream	Father is a police officer Father is a role model Sharing of police stories by serving police officers Wanted to be police since childhood It is my dream to be a police officer because my father is a retired police officer My father and relatives are force members, very challenging work My father is a retired officer and he showed a positive image
	Job variety	A variety of jobs and departments, different kinds of duties available Uniqueness of police work Police work has more varieties and covers more aspects Doesn't like desk bound work Disciplined force has more challenges Office work very boring Doesn't want to work in private sector, desk bound work is not suitable, want to join disciplined force
	Has joined Auxiliary Undergraduate Scheme (AUS) and Police Mentorship Scheme (PMP)	Has worked as an auxiliary police officer and as intern in police units under PMP before Want to support the frontline officers Use my skills and knowledge to help the Force to advance Has worked under AUS for four years and I have interest in police work Joined PMP and as an intern doing research in a police unit, had a strong sense of belonging during the process
2. Reasons of staying in the Force	Align with Force Vision and values	Our vision to maintain law and order Force values help to safeguard our role Force values are ideal but give me a direction Goals to achieve Training is demanding and challenging Want to equip and prepare myself to serve Values should be infused into action Force vision and values give us direction to follow
	Social turmoil	Force image is tarnished and I will to help to improve I am determined to go through this turmoil with the Force I will act instead of talk I want to tackle crimes and improve the relationship with community

		My university classmates hate the police but their manner makes me even more willing to be a police officer I want to help to resume peace and society harmony My friends' posts on social media made me even more willing to enter into the system to make changes I didn't know much about police before I joined, then I found the standard of discipline was high
	Support from family and friends	My father is proud of me and my family supports me Want to surpass my father's achievement Some friends support me although they don't support the Force Many friends do not like police but they did not say anything about my choice to be a police officer My parent and friends know that I have my own stance and belief My parents encouraged me to try and they believed in me
3. Force can do to enhance commitment	Officer-oriented	Welfare arrangements Work life balance More rest time More facilities and equipment available More funding to ease the heavy workload Training and development of officers Recognition and feedback from supervisors Effective communication Team spirit and build good relationship Support from management

Concerning the motivating factors of joining the Force, RPI who had previous experience reported that they generally did not like working in the commercial sector focusing on money or desk bound work. They preferred to serve in the Force which had a variety of jobs and a police officer could work in different departments. They also opined that police work was challenging and they wanted to contribute to serve the public, especially during the current social and political turmoil. On the other hand, over half of the RPI reported that their fathers or relatives were either retired or serving police officers. Some of them regarded police as their childhood dream. Even under different peer pressure or the social instability, they had a strong determination to become a police

officer. In addition, a majority of them had joined the AUS and PMP programmes before, which enhanced their understanding of the Force.

The interviews revealed their reasons of remaining in the Force despite the high demand of training and discipline. The RPI generally agreed that the Force vision and values gave them a direction or goal to follow. Many of them expressed that their university classmates or friends had anti-government or anti-police sentiments. However, they found that they were determined to go through this tough path with the Force. They wanted to contribute and help to resume peace and social harmony. Finally, some of the RPI mentioned that although many of their friends did not support the Force, they did not say anything about their decision to become a police officer. Many RPI also had strong support from family members and their parents believed in them.

In order to enhance their commitment to the Force, they mentioned that the most important things were recognition from the supervisors and effective communications between management and subordinates. The management should also think about how to balance the work through recruiting more people and promote work life balance. They thought that they would be more motivated if they had more training opportunities. Welfare and equipment were also important to increase staff commitment.

Discussion that emerged from findings

The present research study is one of the few studies exploring the organizational commitment of RPI under probation and foundation training in the Force. Through the semi-structured focus group interviews with 20 RPI currently under training in the Police College, several important issues were raised and discussed concerning the organizational commitment of RPI, especially during the recent social and political turmoil in Hong Kong.

Firstly, the majority of the RPI was from a family with police background, usually with a father or relative being retired or serving police officers. Many of them treated police work as a childhood dream. For those who had worked in the private sector or had previous work experience, they usually did not want to work for money and preferred a job with more varieties and serving the public. At the same time, it was revealed that many of them had joined the AUS and PMP programmes which gave them the opportunity to work as auxiliary police or as an intern in different police units. This experience allowed them to have contact with serving police officers and to learn more about the nature of police work.

Secondly, this intake of RPI commenced their training on 12 August 2019, in which they had experienced or witnessed the series of protests and conflicts between police and protesters. Many of them had friends or university classmates who were anti-government and anti-police. However, the majority of them reported that they were not discouraged by these conflicts or violent incidents. On the contrary, they were even more determined to join the Force to contribute during this difficult period and go through the turmoil as part of the Force. Most of them expressed that the demanding training and high level of discipline under training assured them that they had made the right choice. Strong family support was also one of the most important factors which affected their decision to remain in the Force.

Finally, the study explored how the Force could do to increase staff commitment. Although these RPI were still at an early stage of their career who had yet to commence their constabulary duties in the real world as police inspectors, they pointed out important elements including recognition from bosses, effective communication between management and subordinates and training. They looked for more training opportunities to learn and explore. They treasured work

life balance and wanted to have good team spirit and relationship with colleagues. They also asked for more transparency from the management as well as welfare and equipment.

Limitations

There were some limitations to the present research. Firstly, due to the time and resources constraint for this assignment, the 20 participants in this study were selected from the same intake of RPI who have the same tenure in the Force. However, due to the tight schedule of the RPI training programme, inviting RPI from other intakes was not an option on this occasion. Secondly, owing to the fact that the Force is a disciplined organization with a hierarchical structure and the researcher is a senior officer, it is inevitable that the participants, especially under training, are rank conscious and they found it difficult to express freely during the focus group interviews. Thirdly, focus group interviews might have a group conformity or synergetic effect that participants would be influenced by other people's opinions or interaction. Finally, due to the promise of anonymity of the participants, the records of the researcher's interpretations were not subject to the participants' verification. Therefore, the validity of the findings could not be enhanced.

Conclusions

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this research has important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research study responds to the need to explore and understand the motivating factors of young people joining the Force even when the external political and social environment is not favourable to becoming a police officer. It also informs the management literature on organizational commitment at the early stage of a police officer's career, i.e. under probation and foundation training. Most research on organizational commitment focused on serving police officers and mainly adopted quantitative design by using questionnaires (Boag-Munroe, 2019).

The present research extends the management literature by examining the RPI's motivating factors of joining the Force, continuing to remain in the organization and how the Force can enhance their commitment to the organization by using qualitative research design.

This research study also has important practical implications for the Force human resources practitioners on policies of recruitment and retention and how to enhance the commitment of police officers. It informed the Force senior management a few important issues. Firstly, the AUS and PMP programmes should be continued as the participants in these programmes are potential candidates who will join the Force after graduating from universities. Secondly, social instability might not necessarily deter young people to join the Force. Instead, it is one of the drivers to trigger the desire and determination of those who wants to serve the public. Finally, family support has been an important factor for the RPI to remain in the Force. Nevertheless, the most difficult part will be how to retain these people, sustain their determination to remain in the organization and how to increase their organizational commitment in the long term. These issues are worth exploring in the future.

* * * * *

Personal Reflections

During the process of doing this qualitative research assignment, I have used social constructivism to seek understanding of the environment where I work. At the early stage of planning this research proposal, I experienced difficulty in finding the participants for the focus group interviews. I wanted to do a meaningful research in order to look at organizational commitment in the Hong Kong Police Force given the recent social and political turmoil and increasing mistrust between police and members of the public. I was eager to know why young people were still willing to join the Force and how and where they found the strength to remain. The foundation training was demanding and the level of discipline was high. In every intake, many RPI resigned or was requested to leave because they could not fulfil the requirements. On the other hand, given my position in the Force, my background and work experience informed the interpretation of the research in question. I am well aware of the rank consciousness in the Force and at the same time, RPI tend to give positive answers to my research question due to the fact that they are under training. Despite my briefing and re-assurance throughout the process, I could feel that they were cautious and alert in the interviews. Nevertheless, it was a very good opportunity for me to practice the qualitative research method and reinforce my understanding on how to conduct a good qualitative research.

Questions for focus group interviews

1. Why did you join the Hong Kong Police Force (the Force)?
2. Can you tell me three main reasons of joining the Force?
3. Can you share with me your work experience before joining the Force?
4. What are your views on the Force Vision and Values?
5. What was your impression of the Force before you joined?
6. What is your impression of the Force after you joined?
7. What are your expectations of your police career and the Force as an organization?
8. Why are you willing to continue to work in the Force?
9. Can you tell me any external or personal factors affecting your decision of remaining in the Force?
10. What does it mean to be a committed police officer, in your opinion?
11. What do you think the Force can do, in what areas, to increase/improve your commitment to the organization?

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University of Wales Trinity Saint David
DBA Programme

Module name and code:
Qualitative Research SBPD7002

Student Name: CHEUNG Hoi Yan
Student ID: 1818881

A Research Proposal

Organizational Commitment in the Hong Kong Police Force:
A Qualitative Study on Recruit Police Inspectors under
Foundation Training



Agenda of this Presentation

A Research Proposal

1. Abstract
2. Research questions
3. Research philosophy
4. Literature Review
5. Explanation of data collection, context and participants
6. Data analysis
7. Discussion from findings
8. Conclusions

A hand holding a magnifying glass over a blurred background. The magnifying glass is held by a hand with dark nail polish. The background is a soft-focus image of a cityscape with greenery and buildings.

1. Abstract

People is the greatest asset of the Hong Kong Police Force. Police officers' commitment to the organization includes an attitude or an orientation that links the identity of the officer to the organization as well as an alignment and strong belief in the organization's goals and values resulting in a strong desire to maintain membership in the police organization. Following the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government's announcement of the intention of passing the Extradition Bill, a series of protests and riots have been happening since June this year resulting in the increasing mistrust between the police and members of public. This continuous political turmoil has serious implications on police recruitment and retention. This research proposal aims to examine the organizational commitment of recruit police inspectors (RPI) currently under foundation training in the Hong Kong Police College by using a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews with twenty probationary inspectors were conducted in order to find out their motivating factors of joining the Hong Kong Police Force, to examine their reasons of remaining in the organization and to explore how their commitment can be increased.



2. Research Questions

The objectives of this research are:

- To find out the motivating factors of joining the Hong Kong Police Force (the Force);
- To examine why the RPI are willing to remain in the Force amid the current political turmoil; and
- To explore what the Force can do to increase their commitment to the organization.

3. Research Philosophy

- The ontological issues in this research relate to how we understand the reality of organizational commitment of RPI at the training stage of their career and the characteristics. Grounded theory is used to explore the organizational commitment of RPI under the backdrop of the recent political and social turmoil arising from the anti-Extradition Bill.

3. Research Philosophy

- The epistemological assumption concerns the relationship between the researcher and those being researched. The researcher is trying to get as close as possible to those being interviewed and will attempt to interpret their perspective from an 'insider's' point of view because the researcher has also gone through this stage of career in the organization.

3. Research Philosophy

- The axiological assumption regarding possible biases being present during the research process. The researcher is also working in the same organization and the narrative will be shaped according to the researcher's own values, position in the organization and experience.

4. Literature Review

- Mowday, et. al (1979) defined organization commitment as a sense of loyalty to a workplace and employees would align their goals and values with the company. In addition, they would contribute beyond what they were expected.
- This emotional affective commitment represents the bonding of employees to the organization resulting in an alignment of employees' personal goals with the organizational goals (Mowday, et al, 1979).

5. Explanation of data collection, context and participants

- Semi-structured interviews with 20 RPI were conducted on 24 September, 2019, at the School of Foundation Training (Aberdeen Campus) of the Police College in order to answer the three research questions. Each interview lasted for one hour and 15 minutes.
- 20 RPI were from a purposeful sampling of the 2/2019 Intake which comprises a total of 34 RPI, who started the training on 12 August 2019 and had experienced the social instability before they joined.

5. Explanation of data collection, context and participants

Questions for focus group interviews

1. Why did you join the Hong Kong Police Force (the Force)?
2. Can you tell me three main reasons of joining the Force?
3. Can you share with me your work experience before joining the Force?
4. What are your views on the Force Vision and Values?
5. What was your impression of the Force before you joined?
6. What is your impression of the Force after you joined?
7. What are your expectations of your police career and the Force as an organization?
8. Why are you willing to continue to work in the Force?
9. Can you tell me any external or personal factors affecting your decision of remaining in the Force?
10. What does it mean to be a committed police officer, in your opinion?
11. What do you think the Force can do, in what areas, to increase/improve your commitment to the organization?

5. Explanation of data collection, context and participants

- Before the interview commenced, all participants were briefed on the purpose of the interview and ethical issues. The researcher who is a serving senior police officer, was aware of the imbalanced power relations with the participants.
- Their identities would remain anonymous and their participation was voluntary. All information collected would be analyzed as a whole and treated as confidential.

6. Data Analysis

Main Themes	Sub Themes
1. Motivating factors	Serving the community
	Family influence / childhood dream
	Job variety
	Has joined Auxiliary Undergraduate Scheme (AUS) and Police Mentorship Scheme (PMP)
2. Reasons of staying in the Force	Align with Force Vision and values
	Social turmoil
	Support from family and friends
3. Force can do to enhance commitment	Officer-oriented: recognition, training, welfare, communications



7. Discussion from Findings

- Firstly, the majority of the RPI was from families with police background and many of them treated police work as a childhood dream. Some of them did not want to work for money and preferred a job with more varieties and serving the public. Many of them had joined the AUS and PMP programmes which gave them the opportunity to work as either auxiliary police or intern in different police units. This experience allowed them to have contact with serving police officers and to learn more about the nature of police work.



7. Discussion from Findings

- Secondly, although they had experienced the series of protests and conflicts between police and protesters and had friends who were anti-government and anti-police, the majority of them reported that they were even more determined to join the Force to contribute during this difficult period and go through the turmoil as part of the Force.



7. Discussion from Findings

- Finally, regarding how the Force could do to increase their commitment, they pointed out important elements including recognition from bosses, effective communication between management and subordinates and training opportunities, etc.

8. Conclusions

Most research on organizational commitment focused on serving police officers and mainly adopted quantitative design by using questionnaires (Boag-Munroe, 2019). The present research extends the management literature by examining the RPI's organizational commitment.

8. Conclusions

This research study also has important practical implications:

- AUS and PMP programmes should be continued as the participants in these programmes are potential candidates who will join the Force
- Social instability was one of the drivers to trigger the desire and determination of those who wanted to serve the public
- Family support has been an important factor for the RPI to remain in the Force

Thank you

