

Understanding Organizational Commitment among Young Police Officers: The Roles of Work Values, Organizational Support, and Meaningful Work

Syahrul Fahri^{1,2}, Junainor Hassan^{2*} and Nur Salimah Alias²

¹ Universitas Sari Mutiara Indonesia, Indonesia.

² Faculty of Business and Communication, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

Organizational commitment remains a central concern in policing because it shapes retention, service quality, ethical conduct, and overall organizational effectiveness. Although previous studies have linked commitment to a range of individual and organizational factors, less attention has been given to the combined roles of work values, perceived organizational support, and meaningful work in explaining commitment among young police officers, particularly in developing-country contexts. This paper develops a conceptual framework that explains how work values and perceived organizational support may strengthen organizational commitment through meaningful work. Drawing on literature related to organizational commitment, work values, perceived organizational support, meaningful work, Social Exchange Theory, and policing organizations, the paper proposes seven hypotheses for future empirical testing. The framework is designed for subsequent examination through a quantitative survey and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). By integrating personal values, organizational treatment, and the psychological experience of meaningful work, this paper contributes to organizational behavior scholarship and offers a theoretical basis for strengthening commitment among young police officers.

Keywords: work values; perceived organizational support; meaningful work; organizational commitment; young police officers

INTRODUCTION

Police organizations have a vital responsibility to maintain public order, enforce the law, and protect communities. The effectiveness of these responsibilities depends not only on regulations, organizational structures, and operational capacity, but also on the commitment of police personnel. Organizational commitment is therefore an important issue in police human resource management, as committed officers are more likely to remain with the organization, uphold professional standards, adapt to institutional demands, and provide reliable public service despite the pressures associated with policing.

This issue is especially relevant for young police officers, who are still shaping their professional identity and learning how to navigate organizational life. In the early years of service, officers adapt to institutional culture, evaluate whether policing fits their expectations, and begin to imagine their long-term career within the organization. Their experiences during this period can influence how they view the institution and whether they develop a strong psychological attachment to it. Understanding the factors that support commitment among young officers is therefore important for organizational continuity, workforce development, and effective police management.

Previous studies have identified several factors associated with organizational commitment, including organizational climate, justice, leadership, job demands, and organizational support. Research also shows that employees' personal values influence how they interpret their work and relate to their organization. At the same time, perceived organizational support reflects the extent to which employees believe that the organization values

their contributions and cares about their well-being. Together, these individual and organizational factors provide an important foundation for understanding positive workplace attitudes and behavior.

Meaningful work has also received growing scholarly attention. It refers to employees' perception that their work is valuable, purposeful, and significant. Employees who experience their work as meaningful are generally more likely to identify with their roles, remain motivated, and develop stronger psychological attachment to their organizations. In policing, meaningful work may be particularly salient because officers perform duties that affect public safety, justice, and community well-being. However, meaningfulness should not be assumed simply because the occupation has social value. It is shaped by personal values, organizational treatment, and daily work experiences.

Although organizational commitment, work values, organizational support, and meaningful work have each been widely discussed, relatively few studies have examined how these variables operate together in a single conceptual framework, particularly among young police officers. Existing research often emphasizes direct links between organizational factors and commitment, while paying less attention to the psychological process through which support and values become translated into stronger organizational attachment. This leaves room to examine meaningful work as an integrating mechanism in the policing context.

This paper addresses that gap by proposing a framework that brings together work values, perceived organizational support, meaningful work, and organizational commitment. Drawing on organizational commitment theory, Organizational Support Theory, Social Exchange Theory, work values literature, and meaningful work research, the paper explains how personal values and organizational experiences may jointly contribute to commitment among young police officers. Meaningful work is positioned as the psychological mechanism through which officers interpret their work, their values, and their treatment by the organization.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual model explaining the relationships among work values, perceived organizational support, meaningful work, and organizational commitment among young police officers in North Sumatra. The paper also proposes hypotheses to guide future empirical investigation. By integrating these constructs into a unified framework, the study contributes to organizational behavior literature and provides a theoretical foundation for future research on commitment in policing organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is commonly understood as the psychological bond that connects employees to their organization and influences their willingness to remain, contribute, and identify with organizational goals. Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualized commitment through affective, continuance, and normative dimensions, while Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) emphasized identification, involvement, and loyalty. These perspectives are useful for the present study because they show that commitment is not simply a behavioral decision to stay, but a psychological condition involving attachment, obligation, and perceived membership in the organization.

In police institutions, organizational commitment has particular importance because policing is shaped by hierarchy, discipline, public accountability, ethical risk, and regular exposure to social pressure. Officers are expected to comply with rules, uphold authority, and serve the public in uncertain and sometimes stressful conditions. Yet compliance should not be confused with genuine commitment. An officer may comply because of supervision, obligation, or fear of sanction, whereas affective commitment involves emotional attachment and identification with the institution. This distinction is especially important for young officers whose organizational attachment is still developing.

Studies in public sector and policing contexts suggest that commitment is influenced by organizational climate, justice, support, job demands, leadership, and perceived mission value (Gillet et al., 2013; Lambert, Hogan, & Griffin, 2007; Piotrowski et al., 2021; Wright, 2007). Much of this literature, however, emphasizes organizational conditions, while giving less attention to how individual values and the perceived meaning of

work shape commitment among younger police personnel. This provides the basis for examining work values, perceived organizational support, meaningful work, and organizational commitment together.

Work Values

Work values refer to the beliefs, priorities, and preferences that guide how individuals evaluate work and define desirable employment outcomes. Classic and contemporary literature describes work values in terms of intrinsic values, extrinsic rewards, social relationships, altruistic contribution, security, recognition, career advancement, and work-life balance (Dose, 1997; Kalleberg, 1977; Lyons, Higgins, & Duxbury, 2010; Schwartz, 1992; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). In police work, these values may appear in the importance placed on discipline, public service, authority, teamwork, job security, recognition, promotion opportunities, and contribution to public safety. Work values are more than personal preferences; they shape how officers interpret the demands and rewards of policing. When young officers perceive alignment between their personal values and institutional values, they may be more likely to identify with the organization. Officers who value public service and social contribution, for example, may interpret policing as meaningful, while those who value stability and career development may evaluate the organization through promotion opportunities and welfare support. When personal values conflict with organizational reality, motivation, identification, and commitment may weaken. The generational dimension should be approached carefully. Studies on generational work values suggest that younger employees may place greater emphasis on recognition, development, autonomy, balance, and meaningful contribution (Twenge et al., 2010; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). However, generational categories should not be treated as stereotypes. In this paper, the term young police officers is understood as an empirical category that should be operationalized through age, years of service, rank, or cohort, depending on the available data and sampling framework. This approach helps avoid overgeneralization while keeping the analysis focused on measurable variables.

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' belief that the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Organizational Support Theory explains that employees evaluate organizational actions and infer whether the institution is committed to them. Employees who perceive stronger support are therefore more likely to respond with trust, attachment, and commitment. This logic is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which views employment relationships as reciprocal exchanges between the organization and its members (Blau, 1964). For police officers, organizational support may include fair treatment, supervisor support, welfare protection, psychological assistance, adequate equipment, training, recognition, and career development opportunities. These forms of support are especially relevant because police work involves occupational stress, public scrutiny, operational risk, and strong disciplinary expectations. In a hierarchical institution, support from supervisors may also be interpreted as support from the organization, since supervisors often represent the institution in daily interactions (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Police-related studies have linked organizational support and justice to engagement, lower burnout, job satisfaction, and commitment (Gillet et al., 2013; Piotrowski et al., 2021; Zeng et al., 2020). However, support may not operate only as a direct predictor of commitment. Supportive treatment can also influence whether officers feel that their duties are recognized, valued, and meaningful. In this paper, organizational support is therefore treated both as an organizational variable and as a condition that may strengthen meaningful work and, in turn, organizational commitment.

Meaningful Work

Meaningful work refers to the perception that one's work is valuable, purposeful, and significant. Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010) explained that meaningfulness can arise from the self, relationships, work context, and broader social contribution. Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) further conceptualized meaningful work through positive meaning, meaning-making through work, and contribution to the greater good. This construct differs from job satisfaction because it concerns the deeper interpretation of why the work matters, not merely whether employees are satisfied with work conditions. Police work has strong potential to be experienced as meaningful because it is closely related to public safety, law enforcement, social order, justice, and community protection. Even so, meaningful work does not emerge automatically from the social value of the occupation. Young officers

may experience meaningfulness when they understand the public significance of their duties, perceive alignment between personal values and institutional expectations, and receive organizational support that confirms their contribution is recognized. Meaningful work is therefore central to the present framework. It offers a psychological explanation for how individual and organizational variables may be linked to commitment. Work values may help officers see police duties as personally important, while organizational support may affirm that the institution values their contribution. When these experiences strengthen the sense that the work is meaningful, young officers may be more likely to develop affective attachment and commitment to the police organization.

Research Context

The focus on young police officers is relevant because the early stage of a policing career is formative. Young officers are developing their professional identity, adapting to institutional culture, and evaluating whether their career expectations match organizational realities. Their perceptions of values, support, and meaningful work during this period may shape future commitment and career attachment. For this reason, young police officers represent an important population for examining the proposed conceptual relationships. The North Sumatra context also has practical and scholarly relevance. Police institutions operate within specific regional conditions, including local community expectations, organizational culture, public service demands, and administrative structures. A study in North Sumatra can therefore provide context-sensitive understanding rather than treating police personnel as a homogeneous group. At the same time, the focus remains connected to broader organizational psychology concepts because work values, organizational support, meaningful work, and organizational commitment are widely used in organizational behavior research. To avoid conceptual ambiguity, future empirical work should define young police officers clearly. The definition may be based on age, years of service, rank, or generational cohort, depending on the available personnel data and sampling framework. Clear operationalization is important because it determines the scope of the population, the interpretation of findings, and the validity of conclusions.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature reviewed in this paper indicates that organizational commitment has been widely recognized as a critical outcome in organizational behavior research, particularly in public sector organizations. Previous studies consistently show that commitment is associated with organizational conditions such as leadership, organizational justice, support, and workplace climate. At the individual level, work values influence how employees evaluate their work, interact with their organizations, and develop long-term attachment. More recently, meaningful work has emerged as an important psychological construct for explaining why employees perceive their work as valuable, purposeful, and worth sustaining. Although these four constructs have received substantial scholarly attention, they are often examined separately or through direct relationships. Studies on organizational commitment commonly emphasize organizational antecedents, while research on work values tends to focus on individual preferences and career orientations. Similarly, perceived organizational support is frequently studied as a direct influence on employee attitudes and behavior, whereas meaningful work is often examined as an independent predictor of positive workplace outcomes. As a result, limited attention has been devoted to how these variables may interact within one conceptual framework.

This limitation is particularly relevant in policing organizations. Police officers work within highly structured institutions while also facing demanding operational responsibilities, public expectations, and ethical challenges. Under these conditions, organizational commitment is unlikely to be explained by organizational support or individual work values alone. Instead, officers may first interpret whether their organizational experiences and personal values give their work a sense of purpose before developing stronger psychological attachment to the institution. This suggests that meaningful work may serve as an important explanatory mechanism that has not been sufficiently integrated into previous conceptual discussions.

Another limitation concerns the population examined in earlier studies. Research has often investigated organizational commitment among general employees or public sector workers without focusing specifically on young police officers. Officers at the early stages of their careers may differ from more experienced personnel in how they interpret organizational support, evaluate work values, and develop organizational commitment.

Examining these relationships among young police officers can therefore extend current knowledge while producing insights that are more relevant to contemporary policing organizations. Based on these observations, this paper proposes an integrated conceptual framework that positions work values and perceived organizational support as antecedent variables, meaningful work as the psychological mechanism, and organizational commitment as the outcome variable. By bringing these constructs together, the paper seeks to provide a more complete explanation of how personal values and organizational experiences jointly contribute to commitment among young police officers in North Sumatra. The proposed framework also offers a theoretical basis for future empirical research using quantitative methods.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Building on the literature review, this paper proposes an integrated framework for explaining organizational commitment among young police officers through the interaction of individual and organizational factors. The framework positions work values and perceived organizational support as antecedents, meaningful work as the underlying psychological mechanism, and organizational commitment as the outcome. This structure reflects the view that employees' attachment to an organization develops not only from organizational conditions, but also from how they interpret the significance of their work.

The framework is grounded in organizational commitment theory, Organizational Support Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and meaningful work literature. Work values represent employees' internal beliefs about desirable work characteristics, whereas perceived organizational support reflects their evaluation of organizational treatment. Meaningful work explains how employees interpret whether their work aligns with personal values and organizational experiences. Organizational commitment represents the resulting psychological attachment to the organization. Accordingly, the framework proposes that work values and perceived organizational support may influence organizational commitment both directly and indirectly through meaningful work. It therefore integrates individual orientations, organizational experiences, and psychological interpretation into a single model for explaining commitment among young police officers.

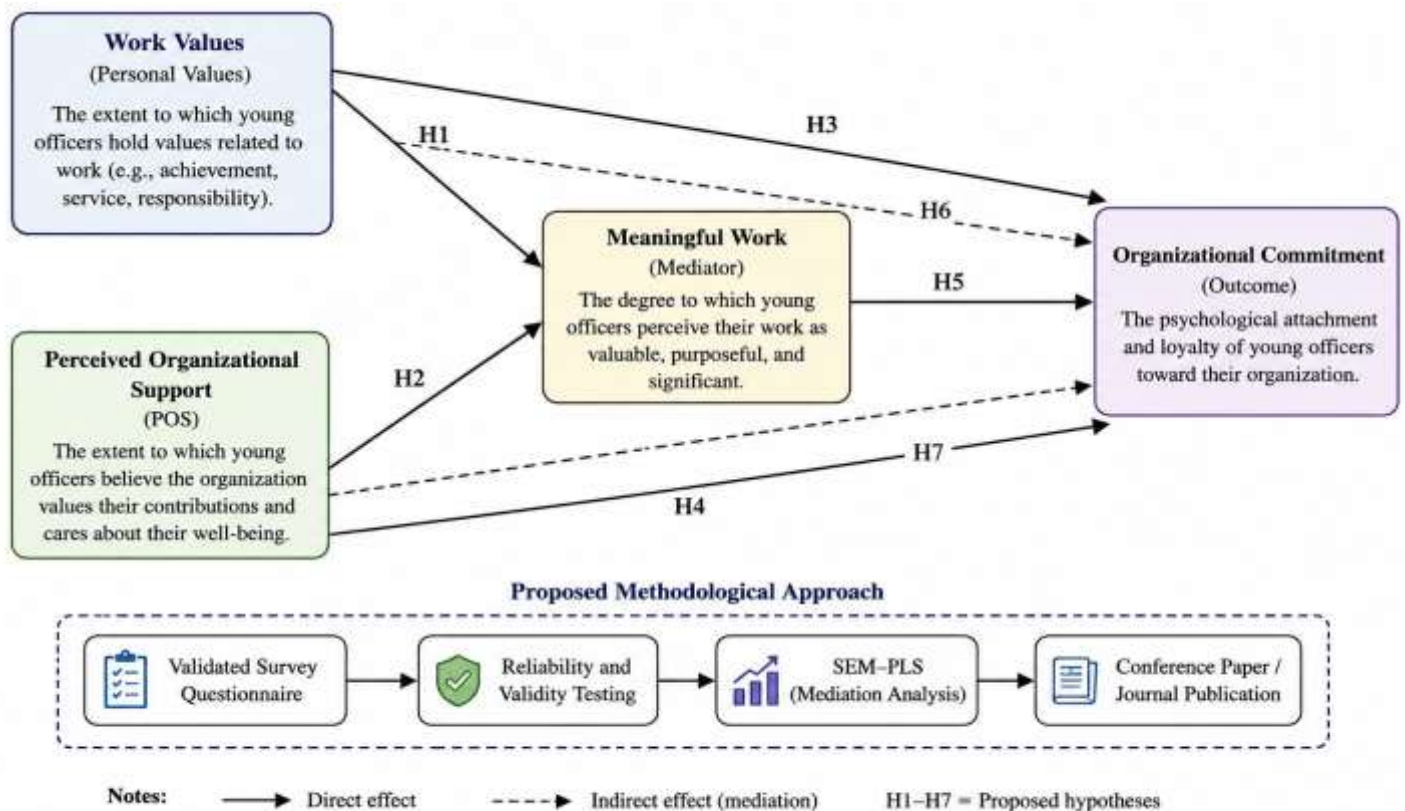


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The hypotheses are derived from the theoretical arguments presented in the preceding sections. Together, they explain the expected direct and indirect relationships among work values, perceived organizational support,

meaningful work, and organizational commitment. Table 1 summarizes the proposed hypotheses for future empirical investigation.

Table 1. Proposed hypotheses for future empirical testing

Hypothesis	Predictor / Path	Outcome	Hypothesis statement
H1	Work values	Meaningful work	Work values are positively associated with meaningful work.
H2	Organizational support	Meaningful work	Perceived organizational support is positively associated with meaningful work.
H3	Work values	Organizational commitment	Work values are positively associated with organizational commitment.
H4	Organizational support	Organizational commitment	Perceived organizational support is positively associated with organizational commitment.
H5	Meaningful work	Organizational commitment	Meaningful work is positively associated with organizational commitment.
H6	Work values → Meaningful work	Organizational commitment	Meaningful work mediates the relationship between work values and organizational commitment.
H7	Organizational support → Meaningful work	Organizational commitment	Meaningful work mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a conceptual research design based on an integrative review and critical synthesis of the literature on work values, perceived organizational support, meaningful work, and organizational commitment. Rather than reporting empirical findings, the paper develops an integrated conceptual framework to explain theoretical relationships among these constructs in the context of young police officers.

The framework was developed through a critical examination of theoretical and empirical studies on organizational commitment, Organizational Support Theory, Social Exchange Theory, work values, and meaningful work. The reviewed literature was synthesized to identify consistent theoretical relationships, unresolved conceptual issues, and opportunities to integrate the four constructs into a unified framework. Based on this synthesis, the study proposes seven hypotheses covering both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The framework is intended to provide a theoretical foundation for future empirical research on organizational commitment among young police officers.

Future studies may test the proposed model using a quantitative cross-sectional survey of young police officers in North Sumatra. Established measurement instruments can be used to operationalize each construct, while Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is appropriate for examining the proposed direct and mediating relationships because of its suitability for complex latent-variable models.

Expected Relationships

The model expects work values, organizational support, and meaningful work to be positively associated with organizational commitment. Young police officers who perceive stronger alignment between their work values and police duties may be more likely to experience their work as meaningful. Officers who perceive stronger organizational support may also feel that their contribution is recognized and valued by the institution.

Meaningful work is expected to play a central psychological role because it may explain how values and support are translated into stronger commitment. When young officers perceive their work as meaningful, they may develop stronger emotional attachment, identification, and willingness to remain within the police institution. These expected relationships should be examined empirically in future research.

Theoretical Contributions

This paper contributes to organizational behavior literature by integrating work values, perceived organizational support, meaningful work, and organizational commitment into a single conceptual framework. While previous studies have often examined these constructs separately, the proposed model highlights meaningful work as a psychological mechanism linking individual values and organizational experiences to organizational commitment.

The study also extends discussions within Social Exchange Theory by suggesting that employees' responses to organizational support are shaped not only by reciprocal exchange relationships, but also by their perception that work is meaningful. The framework therefore provides a broader explanation of how organizational and individual factors jointly contribute to commitment.

Furthermore, the paper contributes to policing literature by focusing on young police officers, a group that has received comparatively limited attention in conceptual discussions of organizational commitment. The proposed framework offers a theoretical basis for future empirical research and provides insights that may assist police organizations in strengthening commitment through supportive practices and meaningful work experiences.

Future Research Directions

The proposed framework provides several opportunities for future empirical investigation. Researchers may examine the relationships using quantitative survey methods and Structural Equation Modeling to validate the direct and indirect effects among the constructs. Future studies may also compare police ranks, years of service, organizational units, or generational cohorts to determine whether the proposed relationships vary across groups. Such investigations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of organizational commitment in policing organizations.

CONCLUSION

This paper develops an integrated conceptual framework explaining how work values and perceived organizational support may influence organizational commitment through meaningful work among young police officers. By synthesizing existing literature, the study proposes seven hypotheses that provide a theoretical foundation for future empirical investigation. The framework contributes to organizational behavior and policing literature by emphasizing meaningful work as a key psychological mechanism linking individual values and organizational experiences to commitment. It is expected to guide future empirical studies and support the development of more effective organizational strategies for strengthening commitment among young police officers.

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