



Motivations to Enter the Police Profession in the Caribbean: Evidence from a Cohort of Jamaican Police Recruits

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Abstract

While the topic of motivations for entering policing has proliferated in the Global North, there are limited studies examining the motivations of recruits who enter policing in the Caribbean. Therefore, the current effort was designed to analyze the motivations for entering the police profession by gathering data from police recruits in training at the National Police College of Jamaica via standardized, self-administered questionnaires. Data were gathered from 161 police recruits and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The analyses were based on gender, age, marital status, and educational level and sought to determine the motivations of police recruits who entered the Jamaica Constabulary Force. The findings indicated that the major motivations for entering policing in Jamaica were the desire to assist others, the opportunity to further education, and the opportunity to enforce laws. This study provides insights into the motivations for entering policing in Jamaica and is a starting point for future research on the motivations for entering the police profession in the Caribbean.

Keywords

Policing; police recruits; motivations; Jamaica; Caribbean.

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Introduction

Policing is a profession that has worldwide appeal to many individuals, evidenced by the fact that “millions of people gravitate toward a career path within the Police services” (Elntib and Milincic 2021: xx). This appeal is premised on the notion that police departments perform crucial functions in society and that men and women alike are attracted to policing as their career choice. For many individuals, the appeal of policing as a profession is surprising because policing is a complex task (Carter and Sapp 1990; Cox, Marchionna, and Fitch 2017) that is dangerous, exhausting, and unpredictable (Elntib and Milincic 2021). Despite the dangerous and unpredictable nature of policing, Archbold (2013) pointed out that the career paths of individuals who choose to become police officers begin with them making the decision or being motivated to apply for entry into police departments. Therefore, it is pertinent to consider the motivations that drive people to apply to enter the police profession (Paton et al. 2009).

Internationally, a substantial amount of research has examined the motivations of individuals who enter the police profession (Bull et al. 2011; Chu 2018; Elntib and Milincic 2021; Oberfield 2019; Panter 2017; Ramshaw and Cosgrove 2020; Waterman-Smith 2017). The research has explored areas such as personal backgrounds and motivations for choosing a career in policing; race, gender, and motivations for becoming a police officer; perceptions of justice and motivations for becoming a police officer; transgender motivations for entering policing; and comparative analyses of motivations to join the policing profession. However, a great majority of this scholarship on motivations to enter policing has generally emanated from Asia, Australia, North America, Europe, and Africa (see Chu 2018). In many respects, this has served to perpetuate an “egregious limitedness of literature” in the policing scholarship in the Caribbean.

Globally, police researchers have consistently been trying to answer the question: are people motivated to become police officers for the same reasons or for different reasons? Therefore, it is appropriate to ask whether individuals in the Caribbean share the same motivations for wanting to become police officers because the reasons for joining the police profession are diverse and varied (Aquino 2014) and may change over time (Christie 1996).

Because the topic of motivation to enter the police profession is especially limited in the Caribbean (see Wallace 2021 as an exception), this research effort examines the motivations for entering policing by using a sample of Jamaican police recruits as proxies for the study. In summary, the study was conducted to ascertain the motivations of those police recruits who made the decision to become members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and, therefore, fill an existing gap in the police scholarship on motivations for entering the police profession in the Caribbean.

Gupta (2002) identified motivation as an important management tool, especially in organizations that are heavily reliant on the skills and abilities of humans. Police departments are one of those organizations; hence, the importance of understanding the motivations of individuals who decide to enter policing. Despite the importance of the motivation to enter policing, there is no single, universally accepted definition of the term “motivation”; it appears to be an abstract concept (Helepota 2005) that can be defined in a variety of ways (Young as cited in Nyameh et al. 2013). For instance, Greenberg and Baron (2003: 190) defined motivation as “the set of processes that arouse, direct, and maintain human behaviour towards attaining some goal,” while Helepota (2005: 16) defined motivation as “a person’s active participation and commitment to achieve the prescribed results.” In this article, “motivation” is defined as “a concept to account for factors within the organism which arouse, maintain, and channel behavior toward a goal” (Dörnyei 2005: 303).

Drawing on similar research by Burke (2009), the researchers invited the recruits to discuss their motivations for becoming police officers to gain personal insights into the factors that influenced them to join the JCF and whether familial considerations, prior exposure to policing, service to country, or personal motives influenced their decisions. Motivations were examined across gender, education, age,

socioeconomic status, and marital status to create a profile of the individuals and their motivations for entering the policing profession in Jamaica.

The Study

This study was premised on several notions. First, the researchers aimed to establish new data, interpretations, understandings, and frontiers of knowledge that would assist legislators and policymakers in contemporizing policing in Jamaica by highlighting how demographic and other variables may play a role in the choice of policing as a career. The researchers envisaged that this would facilitate mechanisms that could be updated in response to the scientific knowledge gleaned from the study. Second, the researchers sought to provide contemporary insights into the motivations of individuals who enter the police profession in Small Island Developing States. Third, due to the dangerous, exhausting, and unpredictable nature of policing (Elntib and Milincic 2021) and the highly masculinized nature of policing (Chen 2015; Randhawa and Narang 2013), it was deemed critical to have an enhanced understanding of the reasons why females, when compared to males, select policing as their career choice. Finally, the study sought to de-universalize the existing scholarship on motivations for entering policing by examining the phenomenon through a Southern lens. “Universalizing” entails erroneously thinking that problems are manifested in the same manner globally while disregarding local features (Milan and Treré 2019). While universalizing is tempting, it is an erroneous practice that negatively affects knowledge creation and transference. The study sought to answer three research questions (RQ):

RQ1. What are the main motivational factors that have influenced individuals to join the JCF?

RQ2. Do motivating factors to join the police force vary across age, gender, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and marital status?

RQ3. Are individuals more likely to consider entering the police department as a lifelong goal or stepping-stone to another career?

Research on Motivations for Entering Policing

The data for this study emanated from a sample of police recruits at the JCF who were already selected via a screening process, mirroring previous research on motivations to enter the police profession that will be discussed in the following paragraphs. One of the earliest studies on motivations for entering policing (Lester 1983) listed the top five motivations for entering policing: (1) helping others; (2) job security; (3) companionship with coworkers; (4) enforcing the law; and (5) fighting crime. The next earliest study on motivations for entering policing (Meagher and Yentes 1986) found that both the male and female officers from two municipal police agencies in a state in the Midwestern United States (US) had similar personal reasons for entering policing: (1) to serve others; and (2) to obtain job security.

In Moon and Hwang’s (2004) study on motivations to enter policing in Korea, the researchers found that a steady salary and job security were the most important motivators to join the police among 410 Korean police cadets. The results emanating from Moon and Hwang’s (2004) study also indicated that gender and socioeconomic status had significant effects on Korean cadets’ motivations for entering policing. In later research by Kim and Merlo (2010), again in Korea, the results suggested that Korean women’s entry into policing was premised not only on the fact that policing is an exciting profession but also because they felt that they possessed the ability to do the job and do it well.

The results of a study conducted by Gibbs (2019) in the Northeastern US indicated that policing as a childhood dream, making a difference in the community and the opportunity to help people, and believing policing was a good transition from military to civilian life were the most commonly cited motivations for women’s entry into police agencies in that region. Conversely, the study by Gibbs (2019) found that salaries, benefits, and job security were the least cited motivations for entering policing. Similarly, Elntib

and Milincic (2021) found that participants from developing countries scored higher on their motivations that were related to job availability and benefits, helping family and friends, and family influence than participants from developed countries.

Raganella and White (2004) found that the motivations for becoming a police officer were similar regardless of race or gender and that the most influential factors for entering the New York Police Department were altruistic and practical, specifically, the opportunity to help others, job benefits, and security. Similarly, Callender et al. (2020) identified the major motivators for entry into policing as giving back to society and being salaried, while Foley, Guarneri, and Kelly (2008) cogitated that positive encounters with and positive perceptions of police officers were associated with the motivations to enter the police profession.

In summary, there are a multiplicity of factors that may motivate individuals to enter the police profession, which vary by context and across jurisdictions. The literature has identified that the motivations involved in deciding to become a police officer range from altruistic ones (e.g., helping others and serving one's country) (Meagher and Yentes 1986; Moradian and Karimaie 2012) to purely personal ones such as prestige (Chu 2018; Gau, Terrill, and Paoline 2013; Lester 1983; White et al. 2010) and financial considerations, such as job security and job benefits (Moon and Hwang 2004; Raganella and White 2004) and are diverse and varied (Aquino 2014). The literature has also identified self-fulfillment, perceptions of the police, and work-related benefits of policing as key motivational factors (Foley, Guarneri, and Kelly 2008; Moon and Hwang 2004; White et al. 2010). The data associated with this study will be evaluated to determine the applicability of these motivations in the context of the recruit's motivations for entering the JCF.

Method

Participants

The target population included police recruits at the National Police College of Jamaica (a division of the JCF) who were undergoing their recruit training. A total of 161 recruits of the JCF participated in the study (37 females and 124 males). The average age of the recruits was 23.6 years (mean = 23.6, SD = 3.38, range = 18 to 35) (see Table 1). Regarding the participants' marital statuses, 9% reported being in common-law relationships, 86% were single, approximately 4% were married, and 0% were divorced, while one recruit indicated they were separated. While the majority of the recruits were single (86%), when disaggregated by gender, 22% of the female recruits were in common-law relationships, while 2% of both the male and female recruits were married.

Less than 1% of the recruits thought they had an upper-class socioeconomic status, approximately 30% of the recruits reported belonging to the lower-class, while the majority (69%) identified themselves as belonging to the middle-class (see Table 1). The demographic data showed that 32% of the recruits had attained postsecondary education prior to joining the JCF. However, the majority had enrolled in the JCF after completing secondary school education. The two eldest recruits held undergraduate and professional graduate degrees, respectively. The majority of recruits had completed secondary school, 10 recruits between the ages of 21 and 29 had some college education, while the youngest recruit had not completed secondary school but held an associate degree. To a large extent, the profile of the recruits who participated in this study aligned with the typology of police officer recruits envisioned by the JCF (males and females, 18 to 40 years old, and holders of secondary school or higher education qualifications).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Recruit police officers	
	<i>N</i>	%
Age		
mean	23.6	
standard deviation		3.38
Gender		
Male	124	77
Female	37	23
Marital status		
Married	7	4
Single	137	86
Common-law	15	9
Divorced	0	0
Separated	1	1
Highest education level		
Some secondary	15	10
Completed secondary	90	58
Some college	10	6
Diploma/certificate	16	10
Associate degree	20	13
Undergraduate degree	1	1
Graduate/professional degree	2	2
Perceived class*		
Upper	1	1
Middle	108	67
Lower	48	30

Note: *Indicates missing data. Source: Fieldwork 2017

Design

The data for the current study were obtained through a cross-sectional study of newly recruited JCF police officers in 2017. Self-administered questionnaires regarding the police recruits' motivations for entering the police profession were used to collect the data using the purposive sampling method.

Materials

The data for this study were captured using a standardized, self-administered survey: the Police Trainee Motivation Questionnaire (PTMQ). The PTMQ is a modified variant of a previous instrument used by Pagon and Lobnikar (1996). The instrument by Pagon and Lobnikar (1996) is a validated instrument that was created to evaluate the rationale for entering policing among police recruits in Slovenia. Because the contexts of Slovenia and Jamaica are different (population demographics and culture), several questions that were contained in the demographics section of Pagon and Lobnikar's (1996) instrument and a few other questions on motivations to enter policing that were not applicable to Jamaica's setting were removed from the PTMQ; however, the effect on the questionnaire was minimal. The survey instrument also incorporated similar questions that were modified from previous research on police recruit's motivations to enter policing by Haba et al. (2009), Lester (1983), Natarajan (2008), and Raganella and White (2004).

Measurements

The instrument contained 50 questions and was divided into two sections. In section one, demographic information on the recruit police officers was recorded. Age was measured as a continuous variable, while marital status, education, and socioeconomic status were analyzed as categorical variables. Gender was a

dichotomous measure (male and female). Section two gathered data on the levels of influence that a range of factors had on motivations to enroll in the JCF.

The PTMQ contained questions covering several categories of motivations that corresponded with a wide range of motivations for joining the JCF, for example: (1) personal motives (i.e., career, variety, job security, and lifestyle); (2) social motives (i.e., making a difference in the community and helping others); (3) personal experiences and influences from others (i.e., family and friends, television role models, and negative and positive encounters with police); (4) power; and (5) drifting into the job. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = “deciding influence,” 2 = “great influence,” 3 = “moderate influence,” 4 = “minimum influence,” and 5 = “no influence”) was used to measure the level of importance of the corresponding motivational factors for entering the JCF. For example, the self-fulfillment measure gauged the recruits’ pursuit of personal and professional development as their motivation for entering the JCF. The variable was created using an index comprising 10 items in the questionnaire, including the opportunity to further education, gain a sense of achievement, become employed, and attain advancement. The responses to the items were summed to obtain a total score concerning the extent to which the participants sought self-satisfaction and career advancement ($\alpha = .72$). Questions regarding work-related benefits explored the monetary and nonmonetary advantages of being employed in the police department. There were 18 questions for evaluating the recruit’s perceptions of the JCF as having advantages or positively affecting their livelihood. This section included questions regarding the benefits of a salary, fringe benefits, and the excitement associated with policing ($\alpha = .81$). The questionnaire also contained 12 questions regarding perceptions of the JCF as a career or stepping-stone to other jobs ($\alpha = .81$).

Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was received from Assistant Commissioner of Police Norman Heywood on behalf of the JCF. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the study’s participants. Because the researchers were not residents of Jamaica, a coordinator from the National Police College distributed the questionnaires to the recruits in July 2017 and collected them immediately after completion. The questionnaire was completed by all recruits at the same time in the privacy of separate classrooms at the National Police College. Participation in the study was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to the participants. Voluntary participation was ensured by sending a letter to the police recruits from the primary researcher, which indicated that: (1) they (the potential participants) were not obligated to participate in the study; (2) if they decided to participate, they could refuse to answer any particular question(s); and (3) they could cease participation in the study without any penalty or stigmatization from their superiors.

The participants took approximately 50 minutes to complete the PTMQ, and the response rate was 100%, a rarity in quantitative research. The response rate of 100% was attributed to two factors. First, the primary researcher sent a letter to the police recruits explaining the nature and scope of the study, which generated interest prior to the questionnaire being administered. Second, due to the rigorous nature of police recruit training, the study offered the recruits a break from the monotony and rigor associated with their training. The excitement and relief offered to the recruits by the study were evinced in the completion rate of the questionnaires because only 3% of the returned questionnaires contained missing data. The missing data were of a negligible nature (e.g., area of residence) and, therefore, all the questionnaires were usable.

Data Analyses

The analytical strategy focused on objective measurements using statistical analyses. The participants’ responses were analyzed as interval data, and univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses were also conducted. The univariate analyses provided percentages and frequencies regarding the recruits’ demographic information, and a summary of the variables was used to explain their reasons for entering the JCF. The bivariate analyses assessed the correlations between the independent and dependent variables. Pearson’s correlation was used to determine significant associations between motivational and

demographic factors. The analyses also assessed whether there were significant differences between the recruits' motivations for joining the JCF across demographic characteristics.

Results

Motivations for Joining the Jamaica Constabulary Force

An analysis of the dataset for RQ1 (what are the main motivational factors that influenced individuals to join the JCF?) indicated that the three main motivations for entering the JCF were: (1) the desire to assist others; (2) the opportunity to further education; and (3) the opportunity to enforce laws. Overall, the findings of this study indicated that for a majority of the recruits (67%), the opportunity to help people, further their education, and the ability to enforce laws was a "great influence" on deciding to join the JCF. Generally, the recruits were also strongly motivated by having a sense of job security (66% selected "great influence"), opportunities for advancement (62% selected "great influence"), a sense of achievement (60% indicated "great influence"), and opportunities to prove their capabilities (55% indicated "great influence"). Most of the recruits (54%) indicated that the salary received at the JCF had a "moderate influence" on joining the department, while 29% felt that it had a "great influence." The fringe benefits (e.g., medical, pension, and overtime) offered by the JCF had a "moderate influence" on 43% and "great influence" on 31% of the participants.

The following factors had minimal influence on the recruit officers' decisions to enter policing. Gaining revenge was the least motivating factor for joining the JCF because 92% of recruits identified that this factor had "no influence" on their decision to enter the JCF. Further, the attractiveness of police officers to persons of the opposite sex (60%), previous negative experience with police officers (60%), and personal experiences as victims of crime (56%) had "no influence" on the recruits' decisions to join the JCF. The ability to use force had "no influence" on 42% of the recruits' decisions to join the JCF, and the desire for power and authority had "no influence" on 38% of the recruits who entered the JCF. Further, the inability to find employment elsewhere had "no influence" on 37% of recruits.

Analyses of the mean score highlighted the motivating factors for joining the JCF. As illustrated in Figure 1, the highest-ranked motivating factor was the opportunity for further education ($\bar{x} = 3.84$). This was followed by the opportunity to help people ($\bar{x} = 3.77$), job security ($\bar{x} = 3.70$), the opportunity for advancement ($\bar{x} = 3.66$), the opportunity to enforce laws and regulations ($\bar{x} = 3.61$), the opportunity to prove one's capabilities ($\bar{x} = 3.61$), and a sense of achievement ($\bar{x} = 3.60$). The lowest-ranked motivating factors were to gain revenge ($\bar{x} = 1.14$), having previous negative experiences with police officers ($\bar{x} = 1.61$), and attractiveness to members of the opposite sex ($\bar{x} = 1.61$).

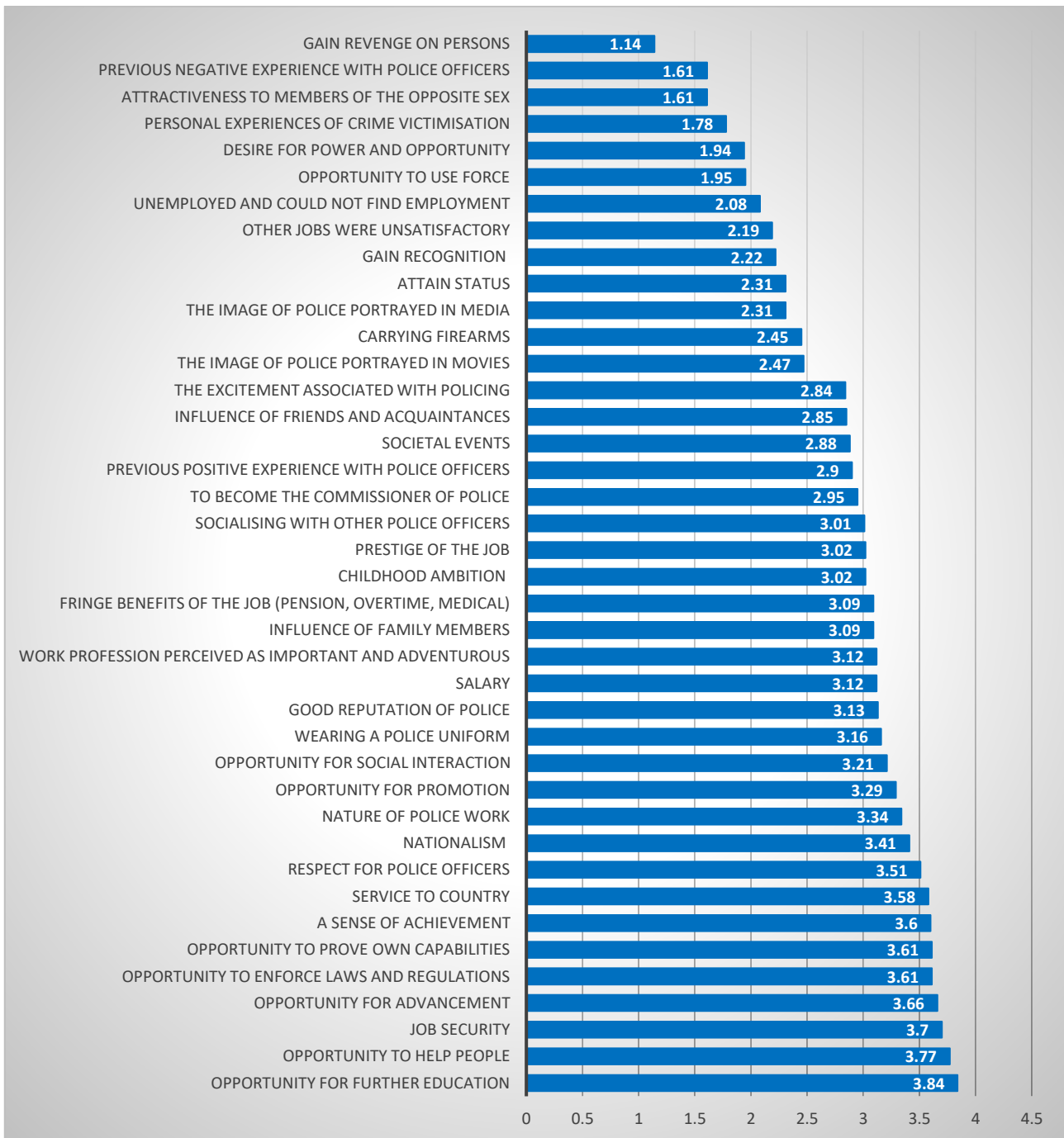


Figure 1. Mean score of motivations for joining the Jamaica Constabulary Force. Source: Fieldwork 2017

The researchers also sought to answer RQ2: do motivating factors to join the police force vary across age, gender, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and marital status? The researchers attempted to answer this question by examining motivations to join the JCF by gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, and perceived social class. Both genders reported similar main motivations for joining the JCF. The researchers observed that males and females in the study were fundamentally motivated by the same factors, namely opportunities to further their education, opportunities to assist others, and job security. Regarding motivations by gender (see Figure 2), the difference between male and female recruits' motivations to join the JCF appeared negligible.

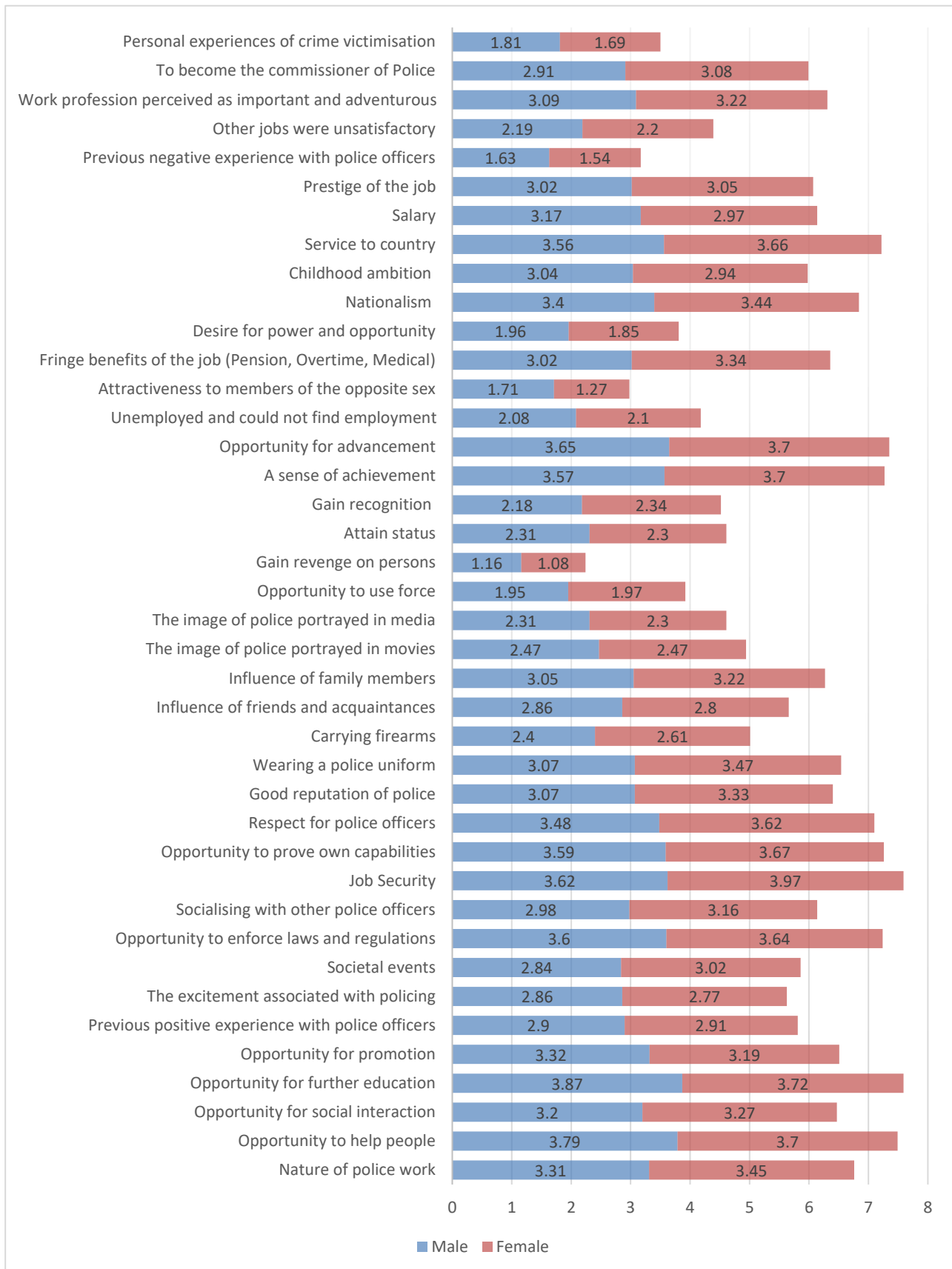


Figure 2. Mean score of motivations by gender. Source: Fieldwork 2017

The data indicated that furthering their education, helping people, and advancing themselves were the top motivators for each gender. The opportunity to further education was a “great influence” for approximately 65% of males and 68% of females and had a “deciding influence” for 8% of females and 11% of males. Further, the data indicated that 69% of the male and 62% of the female recruits were motivated to help people. The only difference was that 8% of the female and 6% of the male recruits indicated that it was a “deciding influence” in the choice to join the JCF.

Overall, 62% of the male and 63% of the female recruits were “greatly influenced” to join the JCF for advancement. Gaining a sense of achievement was also a “great influence” on joining the JCF (male \bar{x} = 3.57, female \bar{x} = 3.70). When asked to rate the level of influence that helping people had on their reasons for joining the JCF, the majority of male and female recruits responded that it had a “great influence” (male \bar{x} = 3.79, female \bar{x} = 3.70) (see Figure 2).

The analysis also revealed that male recruits were seemingly more motivated to enforce laws than female recruits, particularly because this factor was ranked higher for males than females. However, further disaggregation of the data showed that although approximately 60% of male recruits were “greatly influenced” to enforce laws (a higher percentage than the female recruits), a higher percentage of females than males responded that it was a “deciding influence” (females = 9%, males = 6%). Although securing employment was highly ranked by male and female recruits, a larger percentage of females were greatly motivated by job security. Of the female recruits, 75% indicated that they were “greatly influenced” by attaining job security, and 14% stated that job security was a “deciding influence.” Comparatively, 63% of males reported job security as a “great influence,” and 4% indicated it was a “deciding influence.”

Motivations by Marital Status

The mean scores for opportunities for further education were 3.88 for single recruits and 3.93 for recruits in common-law relationships. The opportunity to help people had a mean score of 3.86, 3.75, and 3.80 for married recruits, single recruits, and recruits in common-law relationships, respectively. The motivating factors of job security and service to country had particularly high mean scores for recruits in common-law relationships, reporting mean scores of 3.93. Generally, the recruits were single, and therefore, particular attention was given to determining what factors affected the decisions of people in this group to join the JCF. As indicated previously, approximately 85% of the recruits identified their marital status as single. Summative analyses showed that single recruits were mainly motivated to enter the JCF to further their education (see Figure 3) because 70% of the single participants indicated that the opportunity to further their education was a “great influence,” and 10% indicated that it was a “deciding influence.” Instructively, for 69% of the single recruits, achieving job security was a “deciding influence.”

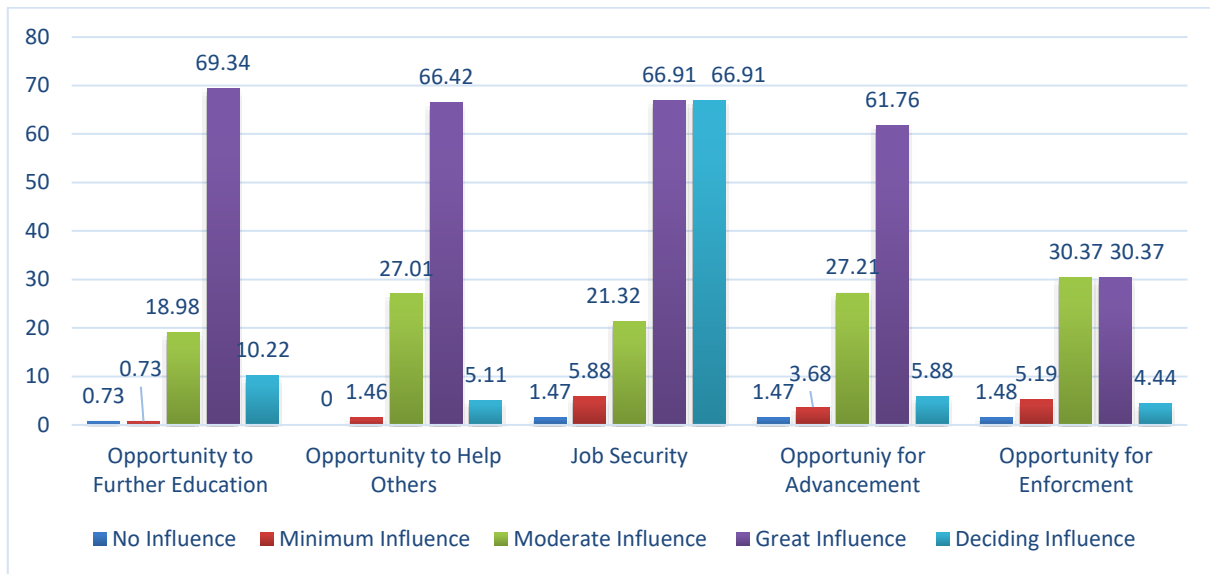


Figure 3. Highest-ranked motivations for single recruits. Source: Fieldwork 2017

The motivations to enter policing according to marital status were also measured. The findings indicated that there were marked similarities between the motivations by marital status. For example, married recruits were “greatly influenced” by the opportunity to help people. Specifically, six out of the seven married recruits found that this greatly influenced their decisions to join the JCF. The findings were quite similar for recruits in common-law relationships, who considered the ability to help people a “great influence.” The only recruit with a relationship status of separated indicated that helping others was a “deciding factor” for joining the JCF.

Motivations by Educational Attainment

Because previous analyses have demonstrated that the opportunity to further their education was a “great influence” on recruits joining the JCF, it was necessary to explore the educational attainment of the recruits upon enrolment. As stated earlier in the descriptive statistics, the majority of recruits responded to having some secondary education. As a result, the data was closely investigated. It was discovered that the opportunity to further education reported one of the highest mean scores for recruits at each educational level, with the exception of the recruit who received a graduate/professional degree. Recruits who accomplished some college, an associate degree, or a diploma or certificate displayed the highest mean scores of 3.90, 3.95, and 4.00, respectively, for wanting to further their education by joining the JCF. Importantly, the recruit with the highest level of education was more motivated to enforce laws and regulations rather than advance their education.

The data also indicated that over 70% of the recruits who had some secondary education were “greatly influenced” to join the JCF to help people. The opportunity to further their education also ranked among one of the highest motivations for this subgroup, with over 65% of the recruits indicating that it was a “great influence” and 10% identifying that it was a “deciding influence.” Further, given that most of the recruits were motivated to advance their education, it is not surprising that the opportunity for advancement was a “great influence” and “deciding influence” for about 65% and 6% of the recruits, respectively.

Instructively, 73% of recruits who had not yet completed secondary school were “greatly influenced” by opportunities to further their education. This was similar for recruits who had some college education because 70% found it to be a “great influence” and 10% indicated it was a “deciding influence.” Moreover, 75% of the recruits who held an associate degree were “greatly motivated,” and 10% indicated that it was a “deciding influence.” Across all the educational levels, the opportunity to help people was generally a “great influence.” In particular, 80% of the recruits who received some secondary schooling, 50% of the

recruits who achieved a college degree and an associate degree, and 81% of the recruits with diplomas or certificates indicated that the opportunity to help people was a “great influence” on their choice to enter policing.

Motivations by Class

The data indicated that the class structure of the recruits was mainly middle- and lower-class, with only one upper-class recruit being represented in the sample. The data provided some insights into the relationship between class structures and reasons for joining the JCF, suggesting that the motivating factor with the highest mean scores for both middle- and lower-class recruits was the opportunity to help people (middle-class $\bar{x} = 3.73$, lower-class $\bar{x} = 3.85$). The averages for attaining a sense of achievement (middle-class $\bar{x} = 3.57$, lower-class $\bar{x} = 3.65$) and opportunities for advancement (middle-class $\bar{x} = 3.67$, lower-class $\bar{x} = 3.68$) also scored high as influential factors for middle- and lower-class recruits. For both middle- and lower-class recruits, gaining revenge was not a key motivational factor for entering the JCF (middle-class $\bar{x} = 1.17$, lower-class $\bar{x} = 1.11$).

Lower-class recruits represented approximately 70% of all recruits in the sample. Notably, approximately 69% of this subgroup of police recruits were “greatly influenced” to join the JCF because they wanted to help people, while 8% indicated that helping people was their “deciding influence.” Similar to the lower-class recruits, the middle-class recruits were largely motivated to enter policing due to their desire to help people because 65% reported that helping people was a “great influence” and 6% reported that it was a “deciding influence.” The lower-class recruits were also motivated by opportunities to advance themselves because 64% were “greatly influenced” by opportunities for advancement and 9% indicated that it had a “deciding influence.” Instructively, the data established that the “deciding influence” for most of the lower-class recruits was their willingness to serve their country. Opportunities for advancement and job security were also highly ranked motivators, with 65% and 61% of the lower- and middle-class recruits, respectively, indicating that opportunities for advancement and job security were great influences on their decisions to join the JCF.

The data analyses for RQ3 (are individuals more likely to consider entering the police department as a lifelong goal or stepping-stone to another career?) revealed that the majority of the JCF recruits were interested in policing because it fulfilled a lifelong goal. The findings indicated that for approximately 57% of the recruits, policing was a lifelong goal, while 9% stated that joining the JCF was not a lifelong goal. However, further analysis revealed that a higher percentage of male than female recruits did not consider policing a lifelong goal (see Figure 4). For 60% of the recruits who identified their socioeconomic status as middle-class, policing was a lifelong goal, while for 49% of the recruits who identified themselves as lower-class, policing was a lifelong goal. In the context of education, 60% of the recruits whose highest level of education was secondary schooling indicated that policing was a lifelong goal.

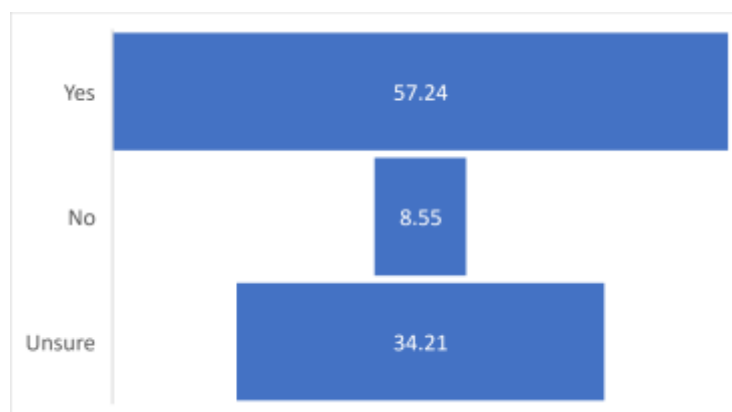


Figure 4. Policing as a lifelong goal. Source: Fieldwork 2017

Bivariate Statistics

The bivariate analyses took into account the relationship between the demographic characteristics of recruits and their motivations for joining the JCF. The bivariate associations provided a preliminary assessment of the relationships among the dependent and explanatory variables in the study. To this end, the subsequent analyses provide correlations between age, gender, educational attainment, marital status, and perceived socioeconomic status and motivations for joining the JCF. The correlations were estimated and are presented separately for each key motivational factor to thoroughly examine the bivariate associations among the key independent variables on the dependent variables (i.e., motivations for joining the JCF).

The researchers sought to determine whether there was a relationship between motivational factors (i.e., self-fulfillment, perceptions of the police department, and work-related benefits as identified in the literature) and demographic characteristics. The analysis revealed that of the three motivational factors that were identified in the literature, self-fulfillment was the only one that demonstrated significant correlations in the current study. The findings suggest some support for the relationship between the age of entry of the recruits and self-fulfillment because there was a significant yet negative correlation between the recruits' ages and their motivations to be self-fulfilled. In contrast, the marital status of the recruits was positively and significantly correlated with self-fulfillment.

Data analyses were conducted to determine which of the motivational factors of self-fulfillment were significantly correlated with the demographic variables. A disaggregation of the factors revealed that the age of the recruits upon entry was negatively and significantly correlated with opportunities for further education. Neither gender, marital status, educational attainment, nor class had a significant correlation with the recruits furthering their education. Being able to prove their capabilities, opportunities for promotions, a sense of achievement, and opportunities for advancement showed a positive and significant relationship with the recruits' marital statuses. Further, there was a significant yet negative correlation between the recruits' ages and their motivations to be self-fulfilled and a positive and significant correlation between the marital statuses of the recruits and self-fulfillment.

Multivariate Analyses

Multivariate analyses using ordinary least squares regression models were used in the final stage of the quantitative analyses. A multivariate analysis was used to determine the extent of the relationship between motivational factors, self-fulfillment, perceptions of the police department, and work-related benefits on the demographic characteristics. The strength of the relationship for each of the independent variables was measured on each of the dependent variables. The motivational factors of self-fulfillment, perceptions of policing, and work-related benefits were analyzed independently with the demographic variables. The results indicated that joining the JCF for self-fulfilling needs decreased by 2% when the age of entry into the JCF increased. Moreover, the results for regressing self-fulfillment on marital status showed that self-fulfillment increased by 31% for single recruits compared to married recruits, while the recruits' socioeconomic structures and perceptions of policing appeared not to have any statistical significance when regressed on self-fulfillment.

Discussion

The current study investigated the motivations for entering policing in the Caribbean. The participants were police recruits conducting their initial (recruit) training at the National Police College of the JCF. The data answered the RQs on motivations for entering the police profession, while comparisons between demographic variables (i.e., age, education level, gender, marital status, and socioeconomic status) and motivations to enter policing highlighted limited relationships. Importantly, the magnitude of the motivations to enter policing was affected by the demographic factors.

Regarding RQ1 (what are the main motivational factors that influenced individuals to join the JCF?), the data indicated that the ability to help others, further education, and enforce laws were the three main motivations for entering policing in Jamaica irrespective of gender. This finding is consistent with previous

research by Meagher and Yentes (1986: 321), who pointed out that “the reasons expressed by male and female police officers for career selection do not markedly differ.” Similar to other countries, motivations for policing centered around service to citizens; however, there was a need for self-fulfillment. Personal success was also a key incentive to join the police force. Conversely, the results differ from previous studies by Colvin (2017), Gibbs (2019), and Moradian and Karimaie (2012). There may be several explanations for these disparities. For instance, extant research has highlighted that motivations to join the police service may be based on country-level factors such as unemployment and poverty rates (Foley, Guarneri, and Kelly 2008). It must also be noted that motivations to enter policing are diverse and varied (The Behavioral Insights Team 2019; Eliason 2017).

An assessment of RQ2 (do motivating factors to join the police force vary across age, gender, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and marital status?) indicated that there were some differences in motivations for entry into the JCF between the male and female participants. For example, 75% of the female recruits indicated that they were “greatly influenced” by attaining job security, while for 14%, job security was a “deciding influence.” Conversely, 63% of males reported job security as a “great influence.” The study’s finding that females were more motivated by job security than their male counterparts supports Harrington’s (2003) and Sahgal’s (2007) findings; however, the findings are inconsistent with later studies by Chu (2018), Gibbs (2019), and Moradian and Karimaie (2012).

In determining whether the recruits considered an entry into policing a lifelong goal or a stepping-stone to another career (RQ3), the findings indicated that for the majority of recruits, policing was a lifelong goal. A similar conclusion was reported by Gibbs (2019) in her study on policing and motivation that was conducted in economically challenged areas in Northeastern US, which found that policing as a childhood dream was one of the most commonly cited reasons for entering the police profession. It is argued that this particular motivation of the Jamaican police recruits can be linked to Jamaica’s poor economic position. This is supported by Gibbs’s (2019) findings in locales in Northeastern US with similar socioeconomic conditions to Jamaica.

The current study also found that the desire for power and authority had no influence on the decision to enter policing for the majority of police recruits. This finding contradicts earlier research by Colvin (2017) and Lester (1983), who found that the police profession attracts authoritarian-type individuals with the need for power and authority. However, the findings of this study mirror previous research by Raganella and White (2004), who found that recruits consistently identified the least influential motivating factor, regardless of race or sex, as the power and authority associated with policing. Gaining revenge was the least motivating factor for joining the JCF because a great majority of recruits indicated that gaining revenge on individuals did not influence their decision to join the JCF. This finding is consistent with previous research by Aquino (2014) and Walker (2011).

Instructively, of the recruits who held associate degrees, 75% indicated that they were “greatly motivated” and 10% indicated a “deciding influence” regarding personal advancement as their motivation for entry into policing. This result might be ascribed to the fact that the JCF has in place an Accelerated Promotion Programme whereby police officers with high levels of education are submitted to extensive vetting and training and can be promoted to the rank of deputy superintendent of police after a four-year period. This finding is vastly different from that in some Western jurisdictions where the initial requirement to enter policing is a four-year college degree. Overall, when the data were analyzed by gender, the difference between male and female recruits’ motivations to join the JCF appeared to be negligible.

Importance of the Study and Policy Implications

This article has highlighted recruits’ motivations for entering the JCF. Without a doubt, the study has plugged a lacuna in the scholarship on motivations for entering policing and expanded the limited knowledge base on the topic in Caribbean contexts. The authors of this article submit that the study is important and has policy implications for policing throughout the Caribbean, but more specifically, for police executives in Jamaica. Quite notably, the study and its findings are of much importance because the

findings can be used by police executives in Jamaica to plan recruitment strategies that are aligned with the motivations for entering the police profession as espoused by the police recruits. This study can also be used by police executives in the jurisdiction to enhance their understanding of the motivations of individuals who enter policing in Jamaica.

The study's findings are extremely efficacious when viewed through the lens of social and political contexts because they can be used to improve the social conditions of the populace by conducting more pointed recruitment of police applicants based on the findings of what motivates individuals to enter policing in Jamaica. Simply put, this article can serve as a point of reference for future studies related to motivations for entering policing, particularly in the Jamaican context. The study can also serve as a starting point for research on motivations for entry into Caribbean police departments. This is recommended if police executives are to address the shortcomings of recruitment strategies employed by most Caribbean police departments.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with most research, the current study had limitations that should be acknowledged. The first limitation of this study is that it was based on data collected from one Caribbean jurisdiction, and the second limitation is that the total sample of female police recruits was small ($n = 37$). The first limitation was due to the unavailability of police recruits in other Caribbean islands when the research was being conducted and a lack of funding to conduct a longitudinal study because the research was self-funded. The second limitation is a function of the highly masculinized nature of police globally (Mukherjee 2018; Veldman et al. 2017), an event that the researchers had no control over. With these limitations in mind, the results should be interpreted with caution and not generalized to other police departments in the Caribbean. Despite the study's limitations, the current research makes a useful contribution to academia via its strengths, for example, the production of criminological knowledge on motivations to enter policing in Jamaica, which has not received much research attention in the Global South. Through his work, Connell (2007) has emphasized that the production of knowledge in the social sciences has been structurally skewed toward the anglophone countries in the Global North. In this regard, the current study is critical to the production of knowledge in the Global South and the development of Southern criminology.

Conclusions

This study set out to determine the motivations for entering the police profession in the Caribbean using a cohort of Jamaican police recruits as proxies for the study. The findings suggest that the recruits were mostly motivated to enter policing due to their desire to help others, for personal advancement, and to enforce laws. Conversely, the police recruits were not motivated by revenge, the use of force, or the power and authority that flows from wearing a police uniform, which runs counter to some literature on motivations to enter policing.

The researchers are of the considered view that understanding the motivations to enter policing in the Caribbean has a pivotal role to play in the selection and retention of police officers throughout the region. They are also of the view that through enhanced understanding of the rationales behind the decision-making process to enter the police profession in the Caribbean, policymakers and police executives in the region will be able to modify and enhance their recruitment approaches. Importantly, based on the findings emanating from this study, the researchers recommend further evaluations of the motivations for entering police departments in the Caribbean. Of particular interest is whether females' motivations to enter policing in the Caribbean vary significantly from their male counterparts and what can be done by police departments in the region to increase the number of female police officers within their ranks.

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