

**COMPENSATION SYSTEMS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT AS DETERMINANTS
OF WORK MOTIVATION IN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS**

**SISTEM KOMPENSASI DAN PENGEMBANGAN KARIR SEBAGAI FAKTOR
PENENTU MOTIVASI KERJA DALAM ORGANISASI POLISI**

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ABSTRACT

Compensation systems and career development are central human resource levers that influence work motivation within police organizations. This literature review synthesizes empirical and conceptual studies published between 2015 and 2025 to examine how monetary and non monetary compensation, promotion policies, career pathways, and professional development opportunities determine motivation among police personnel. The review employs a structured literature search across academic databases, followed by qualitative synthesis of twenty five peer reviewed articles and institutional reports. Findings indicate that compensation fairness and transparency, alignment of rewards with performance, and clear merit based promotion systems enhance extrinsic motivation while career development initiatives foster intrinsic motivation, professional identity, and long term retention. Career development that includes mentorship, competency frameworks, and continuous training strengthens affective commitment which amplifies motivational effects from compensation. Contextual moderators such as organizational culture, budgetary constraints, unionization, and national employment norms shape the magnitude of these relationships. Notable tensions appear when compensation policies prioritize seniority over competency, creating misalignment between motivational incentives and desired behavioral outcomes. The review highlights methodological gaps including limited longitudinal studies, inconsistent operationalization of motivation, and scarce research on combined effects of compensation systems and career development in police settings. Practical implications emphasize integrated HR strategies that balance equitable compensation with transparent career development mechanisms to sustain motivation and organizational performance. The article concludes with a research agenda calling for longitudinal mixed method studies, cross jurisdictional comparisons, and experimental evaluations of incentive structures in policing contexts.

Keywords: *Compensation Systems, Career Development, Work Motivation, Police Organizations*

ABSTRAK

Sistem kompensasi dan pengembangan karier merupakan alat utama sumber daya manusia yang memengaruhi motivasi kerja di organisasi kepolisian. Tinjauan literatur ini mensintesis studi empiris dan konseptual yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2015 dan 2025 untuk menganalisis bagaimana kompensasi moneter dan non-moneter, kebijakan promosi, jalur karier, dan peluang pengembangan profesional memengaruhi motivasi di kalangan personel kepolisian. Tinjauan ini menggunakan pencarian literatur terstruktur di basis data akademik, diikuti dengan sintesis kualitatif dari 25 artikel yang direview oleh rekan sejawat dan laporan institusional. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa keadilan dan transparansi kompensasi, keselarasan penghargaan dengan kinerja, serta sistem promosi berbasis prestasi yang jelas meningkatkan motivasi ekstrinsik, sementara inisiatif pengembangan karier memupuk motivasi intrinsik, identitas profesional, dan retensi jangka panjang. Pengembangan karier yang mencakup bimbingan, kerangka kompetensi, dan pelatihan berkelanjutan memperkuat komitmen afektif, yang memperkuat efek motivasi dari kompensasi. Moderator kontekstual seperti budaya organisasi, keterbatasan anggaran, serikat pekerja, dan norma ketenagakerjaan nasional memengaruhi magnitudo hubungan ini. Ketegangan yang menonjol muncul ketika kebijakan kompensasi memprioritaskan senioritas daripada kompetensi. Menciptakan ketidakselarasan antara insentif motivasi dan hasil perilaku yang diinginkan. Tinjauan ini menyoroti celah metodologis, termasuk studi longitudinal yang terbatas, operasionalisasi motivasi yang tidak konsisten, dan penelitian yang minim tentang efek gabungan sistem kompensasi dan pengembangan karier di lingkungan kepolisian. Implikasi praktis menekankan strategi SDM terintegrasi yang menyeimbangkan kompensasi yang adil dengan mekanisme pengembangan karier yang

transparan untuk mempertahankan motivasi dan kinerja organisasi. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan agenda penelitian yang menyerukan studi longitudinal campuran, perbandingan lintas yurisdiksi, dan evaluasi eksperimental struktur insentif dalam konteks kepolisian.

Kata Kunci: Sistem Kompensasi, Pengembangan Karier, Motivasi Kerja, Organisasi Kepolisian

INTRODUCTION

Police organizations operate at the intersection of public service obligations and operational exigencies. Maintaining public safety while adhering to standards of legality and legitimacy places unique demands on police personnel. In such contexts, sustaining high levels of work motivation is critical to achieving consistent performance, ethical conduct, and organizational resilience. Over the last decade scholars and practitioners have increasingly focused on human resource mechanisms that influence motivation. Among these mechanisms compensation systems and career development policies stand out as determinants that shape both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of motivation within police services.

Compensation systems encompass monetary pay, allowances, benefits, and non monetary recognition. The literature indicates that fair and transparent compensation enhances perceptions of distributive justice which in turn strengthens motivation and reduces turnover intentions (Kuvaas et al., 2018; Alfes et al., 2019). In policing contexts compensation serves dual functions. First, it provides material security and acknowledges the risks and responsibilities inherent in law enforcement. Second, compensation signals organizational values and priorities. If compensation is perceived as equitable and linked to performance, it can incentivize desired behaviors. Conversely, poorly designed compensation that rewards tenure over competency may

demotivate high performers and entrench mediocrity (Townsend, 2024).

Career development includes formal promotion systems, competency based progression, training pathways, mentorship, and career planning. Career development fosters intrinsic motivation by supporting professional growth, enhancing self efficacy, and aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals. Empirical studies suggest that officers who perceive clear and fair career pathways report higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment which sustain motivation over time (Noe et al., 2017; Meyer et al., 2018). Career development also contributes to retention of skilled personnel and to building internal pipelines for leadership, thereby strengthening institutional capacity.

The relationship between compensation, career development and motivation is complex and mediated by organizational context. Leadership behavior, organizational culture, and institutional constraints such as budget and union agreements moderate how compensation and career systems influence motivation (Banks et al., 2016). For instance, transformational leadership augmenting transparent promotion practices amplifies the motivational impact of both reward and development systems (Duxbury & Higgins, 2015). In contrast, centralized bureaucratic systems with opaque promotion rules often blunt motivational responses to training and merit pay.

Recent research has emphasized the complementarity between compensation

and career development. Compensation without a credible career trajectory may produce short term compliance but not sustainable engagement. Career development without adequate remuneration may fail to retain talent when market alternatives exist. Integrated approaches that align reward structures with competency frameworks and with clear progression pathways have produced the most promising outcomes in public sector contexts including policing (Alfes et al., 2019; Van Der Heijden et al., 2020).

Despite growing interest, several knowledge gaps remain. Methodological limitations include a heavy reliance on cross sectional surveys, inconsistent definitions of work motivation, and limited longitudinal or experimental designs that can infer causality. Comparative studies across jurisdictions are also scarce, limiting understanding of how national labor markets and political contexts shape the effectiveness of HR interventions. Furthermore, few studies examine the interaction effects of compensation systems and career development simultaneously, leaving an evidence gap regarding potential synergy or substitution effects.

This literature review addresses these gaps by synthesizing empirical findings from 2015 to 2025 focused specifically on police organizations. The objective is to clarify how compensation systems and career development determinants influence work motivation, to identify mediators and moderators that shape these relationships, and to propose directions for research and practice. The review gives special attention to distinctions between extrinsic motivational drivers associated with compensation and intrinsic motivational drivers associated with career

development, while exploring their interaction within the complex institutional environment of policing.

This study contributes to the literature by offering a synthesized framework that links compensation fairness, merit based promotion, competency development and motivational outcomes in police organizations. The insights are intended to help policymakers and police leaders design integrated human resource strategies that sustain motivated, competent, and ethically grounded police workforces.

Literature Review

The scholarly conversation on compensation systems and career development in policing draws on multiple theoretical traditions. Equity theory explains how perceptions of fairness shape motivational responses to compensation. Social exchange theory provides a framework for understanding reciprocal behaviors when organizations invest in employee development. Self determination theory clarifies how career development supports intrinsic motivation by fulfilling psychological needs for competence and autonomy.

Compensation research in policing often focuses on distributive justice and the perceived link between pay and performance. Studies demonstrate that equitable salary structures and performance related allowances enhance perceptions of fairness and thereby increase motivation to perform (Kuvaas et al., 2018). However, the public sector presents constraints that complicate merit pay design. Legal frameworks, civil service rules, and union agreements often limit flexibility and create complex implementation contexts. Research finds

that when merit pay is implemented with transparent criteria and robust appraisal systems, motivational impact increases. When appraisal systems are perceived as biased or opaque, pay for performance can produce cynicism and reduce motivation.

Career development research emphasizes the role of structured progression, competency frameworks, and continuous learning in shaping intrinsic motivation. Clear promotion criteria and opportunities for meaningful professional growth foster affective commitment which is strongly linked to sustained motivation (Meyer et al., 2018). Mentorship and supervisory support play crucial roles in translating formal career systems into lived experiences that support learning and motivation.

Empirical studies highlight the interactive effects between compensation and career development. For instance, compensation enhancements tied to certification or advanced training create incentives for career development activities. Conversely, career development programs that do not offer commensurate recognition or advancement may fail to retain high performers. Organizational culture mediates these relationships. Police services characterized by an organizational learning climate and supportive leadership show stronger motivational responses to both compensation and career initiatives (Govaerts et al., 2017).

Another recurrent theme in the literature is the differential effects on motivational subtypes. Compensation mechanisms typically influence extrinsic motivation such as effort levels tied to reward. Career development mechanisms influence intrinsic motivation including professional pride and internalized standards of performance. Both types of

motivation are necessary for effective policing because police work requires both compliance with formal procedures and discretionary judgment guided by professional norms.

Several contextual moderators alter the effectiveness of HR systems in policing. Budget constraints limit the scope of monetary incentives. Public scrutiny and media attention shape the political feasibility of prominent pay awards. Unionization influences the design and negotiation of compensation policies. National labor market conditions determine external opportunities and thus affect retention. Comparative research shows that countries with more flexible public personnel regimes achieve higher alignment between pay, career progression, and motivation, whereas highly regulated systems struggle to create performance oriented incentives.

The literature also points to methodological issues. Motivation is frequently measured through self reported surveys that capture intention rather than actual behavior. There is a need for more objective performance metrics and longitudinal tracking to assess sustained motivational effects. Moreover, mixed method approaches that combine survey data with qualitative insights about organizational meaning making are particularly valuable in uncovering why certain HR systems succeed or fail in specific policing contexts.

In sum, existing research supports the proposition that compensation systems and career development are significant determinants of work motivation in police organizations. The evidence suggests that integrated, fair, and transparent HR systems that align rewards with competency development and career pathways produce the most robust

motivational outcomes. Yet, critical research gaps remain, notably the need for longitudinal studies, cross jurisdictional comparisons, and experimental evaluations of combined HR interventions.

METHOD

This study employs a structured literature review methodology. The review focused on peer reviewed articles and high quality institutional reports published between 2015 and 2025. Academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar were searched using combinations of keywords such as police compensation, merit pay, career development, promotion systems, work motivation, and law enforcement human resource management. Inclusion criteria required that studies focus explicitly on police or comparable public safety organizations and examine relationships between compensation or career development and motivational outcomes.

After initial retrieval, articles were screened by title and abstract for relevance. Full texts were then reviewed to ensure empirical content and methodological transparency. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were included to capture a wide array of evidence. Studies that focused on general public sector contexts were considered where direct police research was unavailable but the mechanisms were applicable. A total of twenty five studies and reports meeting inclusion criteria were selected for detailed synthesis.

Data extraction captured study characteristics including author, year, country context, study design, sample size, HR variables examined, motivational outcomes measured and main findings. Coding was performed to identify

recurrent themes such as perceptions of fairness, appraisal quality, leadership support, training linkages and budgetary constraints.

A narrative synthesis approach was adopted. Studies were grouped thematically according to their primary focus on compensation systems, career development, or integrated HR approaches. Where possible, comparisons across jurisdictions and study designs were drawn to identify boundary conditions and moderators. The narrative synthesis prioritized conceptual coherence and the identification of mechanisms linking HR systems to motivational outcomes.

Limitations of the method include potential publication bias favoring studies with positive findings and language restrictions as the review prioritized English language publications. While the inclusion of diverse methodologies enhances comprehensiveness, heterogeneity in measures precluded statistical meta analysis. The narrative synthesis therefore emphasizes theoretical integration and policy relevant insights rather than pooled effect sizes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed yields a coherent narrative linking compensation systems and career development to work motivation in police organizations. This narrative unfolds along several interrelated strands. First, compensation influences motivation predominantly through perceptions of distributive justice and perceived organizational support. Second, career development influences motivation primarily by fulfilling psychological needs for competence and professional growth. Third, the interaction between compensation and career development creates opportunities for synergistic

effects when both elements are aligned. Fourth, contextual moderators such as leadership, culture and fiscal capacity shape the effectiveness of these HR interventions. Finally, practical implications and future research needs emerge clearly from the accumulated evidence.

Compensation systems function as a foundational determinant of extrinsic motivation within police organizations. Compensation covers base salary, hazard pay, overtime, allowances for specialized duties, and benefits related to health and retirement. Empirical studies demonstrate that police officers evaluate compensation against multiple reference points. These include internal equity relative to peers, external equity relative to private sector or other public sector roles, and perceived procedural fairness in how compensation decisions are made. When officers perceive compensation as fair and procedurally transparent, they are more likely to experience organizational trust and motivation to go beyond minimum job requirements. Conversely, perceptions of inequity generate resentment and disengagement which may manifest in reduced discretionary effort and higher turnover intentions. This pattern is robust across different national contexts though the magnitude of effects depends on cultural expectations and labor market competitiveness.

Career development constitutes the primary avenue through which intrinsic motivation is nurtured. Career development in policing includes structured promotion systems, competency based career ladders, targeted training leading to certification, secondment opportunities, and leadership development programs. Officers who see a credible pathway for progression and skill

enhancement are more likely to invest in their roles and demonstrate higher commitment. Career development satisfies core psychological needs for mastery, competence, and professional identity. The literature shows that career systems emphasizing competency and learning create a professionalization dynamic that increases intrinsic motivation and supports long term retention.

The interaction between compensation and career development is critical. Compensation that is linked to achievement of competencies or acquisition of certifications provides an extrinsic incentive to engage in career development activities. At the same time, career development that leads to higher status, responsibility and intrinsic rewards amplifies the motivational impact of compensation. Studies that examine combined interventions find that officers exposed to both meaningful career development opportunities and commensurate compensation increases show higher motivation and better performance outcomes than those exposed to only one type of intervention.

A recurrent mechanism identified across studies is perceived organizational support. Compensation and career development both act as signals that the organization values and invests in its personnel. This perceived investment invokes reciprocity norms where officers respond with increased effort and loyalty. Social exchange theory provides a robust explanatory framework for this dynamic. Officers interpret training and promotion opportunities as favoring their professional future and therefore reciprocate. Similarly, pay increases or targeted rewards are perceived as organizational recognition that encourages reciprocal commitment.

Leadership and supervisory practices significantly moderate these relationships. Leaders who actively communicate the rationale for compensation policies and who integrate career development into performance conversations strengthen the motivational impact of HR interventions. Effective line managers provide coaching, feedback and visible endorsement of training achievements which enhances both the perceived fairness of compensation and the meaningfulness of career pathways. Without such leadership reinforcement, compensation and career initiatives risk appearing bureaucratic or symbolic, thereby reducing their motivational value.

Organizational culture constitutes another important moderator. Police services with a learning culture and transparent promotion practices demonstrate stronger motivation responses to HR interventions. In such environments career development is perceived as authentic and aligned with organizational mission. By contrast, cultures that reward conformity or prioritize seniority irrespective of competence weaken the motivational link between career development and performance.

Budgetary constraints and political considerations also shape feasible compensation and career policies. Many police organizations operate within tight public budgets where large pay increases or sweeping promotion reforms are politically sensitive. Studies show that even modest but well targeted compensation measures such as performance based allowances or certification premiums can produce meaningful motivational effects when implemented with clarity and fairness. Similarly, low cost career development

interventions that include mentoring, internal mobility and on the job learning can yield motivational returns without major budgetary outlays.

Unionization and collective bargaining arrangements influence how compensation and career rules are designed and implemented. Systems with strong union presence often negotiate across the board pay scales and seniority rules which may constrain merit based differentiation. Research suggests that collaborative design involving unions can create feasible models that balance fairness and performance incentives. Where unions feel included in design processes and where performance criteria are transparent, merit linked systems become more acceptable.

The evidence also clarifies important nuances in motivational dynamics. Compensation tends to exert stronger effects on measurable behaviors tied to effort and attendance while career development exerts stronger effects on discretionary performance, professionalism and ethical comportment. For example, officers who receive targeted pay for overtime may increase hours worked but not necessarily improve procedural justice behaviors unless career development and ethical training are simultaneously emphasized.

Another nuance concerns the dimension of organizational commitment. Career development bolsters affective commitment which is associated with greater intrinsic motivation. Compensation can support continuance commitment by raising the costs of leaving but cannot substitute for affective bonds. Therefore compensation policies focused solely on retention via monetary inducements may secure short term stability but not the internalized

professional motivation necessary for high quality discretionary policing.

The literature identifies several empirical gaps that warrant attention. Longitudinal studies tracking changes in motivation over time after implementation of compensation or career reforms remain scarce. Many studies rely on cross sectional self reports which capture perceived motivation rather than behavioral outcomes. There is also a shortage of rigorous experimental designs or quasi experimental evaluations that assess causal effects. Comparative cross jurisdictional studies would enhance understanding of how institutional differences condition HR effectiveness. Finally, integration of objective performance metrics alongside subjective motivational measures would strengthen evidence about the pathways through which HR systems influence actual policing outcomes.

Despite these gaps, the accumulated evidence supports practical recommendations. Policymakers should pursue integrated HR approaches that combine transparent compensation

practices with credible career development pathways. Leadership training for line managers is crucial to communicate rationale, provide feedback and reinforce learning to translate HR investments into motivational outcomes. Where budgets are constrained, targeted allowances and competence certification premiums aligned with career progression can produce effective motivational signals. Engagement with unions and oversight bodies at the design stage increases legitimacy and feasibility of reforms.

In conclusion, compensation systems and career development are mutually reinforcing determinants of work motivation in police organizations. Their combined effects, when implemented fairly and supported by leadership and culture, produce both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation necessary for ethical and effective policing. Future research should prioritize longitudinal mixed method designs and cross contextual comparisons to deepen knowledge about how best to design HR systems that sustain motivated and professional police workforces.

No	Study (Author, Year)	Context	Main Focus	Key Findings	Similarities with This Study	Differences from This Study
1	Kuvaas et al. (2018)	Norway – Police & Public Sector	Compensation and motivation	Pay fairness is positively associated with employee motivation	Aligns with findings on distributive justice and motivation	Includes private sector comparison, not exclusively police organizations
2	Alfes et al. (2019)	United Kingdom – Public Organizations	Integrated HR practices	Perceived practices influence motivation and organizational trust	Supports integrated approach influencing motivation	Uses broader public sector samples, not police-specific
3	Bishopp et al. (2016)	United States – Metropolitan Police	Training and career development	Training and career opportunities enhance commitment and discretion	Demonstrates career development effects on commitment	Focuses mainly on training, while this study integrates compensation systems

4	Govaerts et al. (2017)	Belgium Education & Police	–	Learning climate and training transfer	Learning climate moderates training transfer effectiveness	Supports role of organizational culture in motivation	Emphasizes training transfer mechanisms rather than compensation
5	Van der Heijden et al. (2020)	Netherlands Police	–	Career development and retention	Career systems significantly influence retention and motivation	Confirms importance of career development in motivation	Uses longitudinal career metrics different from this study
6	Banks et al. (2016)	International Public Sector	–	Leadership and rewards	Ethical leadership strengthens acceptance of HR reforms	Highlights moderating factors in HR effectiveness	Emphasizes leadership more than compensation structure
7	Townsend (2024)	United Kingdom Police	–	HR devolution and implementation	HR devolution affects fairness perception and motivation	Confirms importance of implementation context	Focuses on governance and policy rather than compensation mechanisms
8	Meyer et al. (2018)	International Public Sector	–	Commitment theory	HR practices influence affective, continuance, and normative commitment	Provides theoretical basis for commitment outcomes	Conceptual review with limited empirical police data
9	Noe et al. (2017)	United States Management Literature	–	Training transfer and motivation	Training relevance increases motivation and application	Supports motivation as a key mediator	Concentrates on training science rather than compensation
10	Albrecht et al. (2021)	Australia Government Agencies	–	Engagement and HR practices	Engagement mediates HR practices and performance outcomes	Reinforces motivational pathways between HR and performance	Focuses on general engagement, not police institutions

This table synthesizes ten representative studies and situates this review within their empirical and conceptual landscapes. Similarities include shared emphasis on fairness, the role of organizational culture, and the relevance of career development for motivation. Differences arise in contextual focus, with some studies analyzing broader public sectors or emphasizing leadership or training transfer mechanisms. This review distinguishes itself by examining compensation systems and career development together in the specific policing context and by

highlighting interactive effects and practical policy levers.

CONCLUSION

This literature review demonstrates that compensation systems and career development function as central determinants of work motivation in police organizations. The evidence accumulated between 2015 and 2025 indicates that fair and transparent compensation systems enhance extrinsic motivation and reduce turnover intentions while structured career development fosters intrinsic motivation, professional identity and long term retention. Importantly, the interaction

between these two HR domains produces synergistic effects when compensation is aligned with competency based advancement and when career pathways carry tangible recognition and status.

Perceived organizational support emerges as a recurring mechanism that links compensation and career initiatives to motivational outcomes. When officers interpret compensation enhancements and career investments as signals of organizational valuation, reciprocity processes motivate them to increase effort and display discretionary behaviors consistent with organizational goals. Leadership and supervisory practices are critical moderators. Effective leaders who endorse HR reforms, provide feedback and integrate career development into performance conversations amplify the motivational potency of both compensation and career systems. Organizational culture that supports learning and competency based progression further strengthens these effects.

Policy implications flow from these findings. First, integrated HR strategies are preferable to isolated interventions. Designing compensation policies without accompanying career development pathways may produce short term gains in retention but not the intrinsic professional motivation that sustains high quality policing. Second, transparency and procedural fairness are essential. Officers must perceive both compensation rules and promotion criteria as just and consistent to avoid cynicism and disengagement. Third, leadership development for line managers should be prioritized to ensure that HR policies are enacted meaningfully and reinforced through daily supervision. Fourth, where budgets are constrained, targeted

compensation measures such as certification premiums and role specific allowances combined with low cost career development interventions such as mentorship and internal mobility can yield significant motivational returns.

Research implications include a call for longitudinal studies that track motivational trajectories following HR interventions and for quasi experimental designs that can strengthen causal inference. Comparative studies across national contexts can illuminate how institutional frameworks condition HR effectiveness. Mixed method research that combines survey based motivation measures with objective performance metrics and qualitative case studies would enrich understanding about the mechanisms at work.

In sum, compensation systems and career development are necessary but not sufficient conditions for sustained work motivation in police organizations. Their effectiveness depends on fairness, alignment, leadership endorsement and cultural receptivity. Policymakers seeking to strengthen motivation and performance in policing should therefore adopt holistic HR reforms that integrate pay, career pathways and managerial capability. Implemented thoughtfully, such reforms hold promise for building motivated, competent and ethically grounded police workforces that can uphold public safety while maintaining legitimacy and trust.

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