An Analysis of the Motivations of Police Trainees to Join the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

Wendell C. Wallace
The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

Abstract

Internationally, a substantial amount of research has examined the motivation for individuals to become police officers, however, very little is known about the reasons why citizens of Trinidad and Tobago choose this profession. As a result, the focus of this study is on police recruits who recently entered formal academy training. The current effort used a descriptive research method with questionnaires as the data-gathering instrument. Using survey data collected from one hundred and sixty police recruits at the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) Police Academy who were two months into their induction training, this study attempts to answer four questions: (1) what are the factors that motivate recruits to choose the police profession, (2) who are the people (background characteristics) that decide to become police officers in Trinidad and Tobago, (3) how do personal characteristics influence citizens’ motivations to join the TTPS, and (4) whether becoming a member of the TTPS was a lifelong career goal or a stepping stone to another career? The motivations were compared across the group (male/female) to determine the competing motivations. Analyses indicated that recruits were motivated differently in relation to their decision to pursue policing as a career. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications for the TTPS, particularly with regard to recruitment as well as for policy and future research.

Keywords: Motivations; police trainees; induction; training; Trinidad and Tobago Police Service