

Article

Integration in the Organizational Environment of the Spanish National Police

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Abstract: In the present study, a model of relations is tested between the dimensions of socialization, personal resources such as optimism and self-efficacy, and the resources obtained during integration into the organization such as social support or collective efficacy in the prediction of the attitudes and behaviors of the Spanish National Police. Participants were members of the Spanish National Police ($N = 123$). The findings confirm some of the hypotheses, although other findings are contrary to the predictions. The percentage of variance explained in the regression analyses varies between 48% of the variance of stress and 24% of the variance of task commitment. The findings open new lines of research for the future given the positive impact of human resource management on satisfaction and commitment at work, as well as job stress and excellent performance.

Keywords: organizational socialization; social support; personal resources; job satisfaction; occupational stress

1. Introduction

Police work is one of the most comprehensive public services offered to citizens, ranging from the penal and repressive area to that of welfare and humanitarianism. At present, this task also includes administrative and even civil issues, and therefore very high specialization and capacity for adaptation may be demanded of the agents. In addition, being a police officer implies “being with people in the worst moments of their lives” whether they are victims or criminals, and, in any case, being guarantors of their safety and even their integrity (Organic Law 2/1986 on Security Forces and Corps; Organic Law 10/1995, Penal Code and its subsequent amendments).

The level of alert that the police officers must maintain and the demands to which they are subjected are therefore considered high, as recent studies [1] on this same group point out. These demands can lead to a high level of occupational stress experienced by police officers, which may result in personal distress and harm for their health. The authors [1] emphasize that when the demands of the task overwhelm professionals, their resources may prove insufficient. From the approach of Positive Psychology, which postulates the ability of individuals and groups to optimize their resources, this study aims to explore the police force resources to face their daily task and whether such resources contribute to an excellent performance in police work and, at the same time, to the workers’ personal well-being.

The reason why the Spanish National Police is chosen in this study is that, among the professionals dedicated to get in touch with the public in emergencies, they are responsible for citizen security in a scenario in which the antiterrorist alert level has been raised to four (out of five) in the country since 2015, thus concurring the conditions of the accused level of demands related to threat of death and safety for the general public and themselves, and also the long term effects of the same demands.

The research gap, which this article means to fill, is about creating a new and inexpensive path to solve stress problems in the work environment with the resources at hand, as human resources are. Additionally in this article, it is understood that social networks with its origin in human resources contribute to the sustainability of organizations.

The relationship between employees' health and well-being continues to receive empirical attention, as do business strategies aimed at promoting them [2,3], as human resources are the manpower and the most important source of effectiveness of organizations. Based on the theory of Job Demands and Resources (hereinafter JDR) of Bakker and Demerouti [4], reviewed by these same authors in 2013 [5], we propose that workers' personal and job resources influence their commitment through a positive process, and their exhaustion through a negative process, and these, in turn, influence job performance.

The models of demands and control at work, precursors of the JDR, proposed that the interactions between the levels of job demands and control produce different types of psychosocial experiences at work, such as high-stress and low-stress jobs, and active and passive jobs [6] (p. 31). The jobs in which high stress is experienced are characterized by high job demands and low control, while low stress jobs are located at the opposite end. Passive jobs are characterized by low demands and low control, whereas those with high demands and high control are called active jobs. The extension of this model with the dimension of social support proposes a buffering effect of the negative effects of high stress at work [7].

The above-mentioned models have been used as predictors of health problems, such as cardiovascular risk [7], burnout syndrome [8], and diseases of the digestive system [6] (p. 135). They have also been associated with organizational outcomes and behaviors. For example, high-stress jobs, characterized by high demands and low control, have been linked to higher levels of work harassment [9], lower workers' psychological empowerment, and lower job satisfaction [10]. Fink and Schaubroeck [11] also found that the interaction between demands, support, and control predicted symptoms of health, sick leave, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with the supervisor. Hagedoorn and Van Yperen [12], in a study carried out with 555 nurses, suggested that control at work reduced fatigue in high-demand jobs. In addition, high levels of support produced high levels of intrinsic motivation, regardless of the levels of demands and control.

Later on, Bakker et al. [4] also contemplated the impact of the job on personal well-being. This idea is based on the statements of Hobfoll [13] about the conservation and accumulation of positive resources sought by individuals. What can be indicated as a valuable resource to conserve? According to Karasek [6,14], social support is the variable that develops the most potential within the possible scenarios of his Demands-Control model. Such support is one of the possible social resources that, according to Gruman and Saks [15], can be acquired through socialization. Although some authors [6] have stated that the organizational culture provides the individual with extraordinary resources [16], the influence of the organization on the demands-resources relationship, on the one hand, and workers' outcomes, on the other, have received less attention. Although some empirical studies have analyzed the influence of organizational variables such as the climate of safety and have related them to demands and resources and their influence on employees' health and commitment [17], in general, empirical research has paid little attention to the combination of predictors of different levels, as Schaufeli and Taris [18] requested.

Socialization in the National Police is a long-term process. This process implies, firstly, a formal and intentional training in the National Police School and, secondly, in the jobs to which police members are destined during the first year of work. This training continues through regulated and formal actions and also through an informal, interpersonal process. This process allows the person to integrate progressively into the police culture. This is another reason to choose the Spanish National Police as an organization, because the emphasis made in training of the human resources begins quite early (even before the state exam) and continues throughout the whole of the police officer career. In addition, the training goes beyond just pure knowledge and is focused as well on interpersonal skills, thus reflected on the curriculum and personnel laws and regulations made to rule the corporation. Considering this explanation, we are going to declare that one of the aims of the socialization process for these professionals and the organization will integrate the anonymous applicant into the social internal network of the National Police, furthermore, taking advantage of this network to improve the results and efficacy in everyday work by counting on the significant others (from which borrowing external resources) and the social background and support from the environment. Ultimately, if the named social network is correctly assembled, the whole of the organization should work as a living being and so being sustainable, therefore being able to maintain the environmental requirements to keep employees' well-being and also to help recover those who can't achieve welfare.

In short, the present study aims to test the relations between the dimensions of socialization, personal resources—optimism, self-efficacy—and the resources obtained during integration into the organization—social support and collective efficacy—to predict the attitudes and behaviors of National Police officers.

Based on the literature reviewed to date, in the present study, the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 1. *Organizational socialization, social support, and professional resources—optimism, self-efficacy and collective effectiveness—will predict commitment to police work. It will be tested if the level of commitment of police officers is influenced by or has variations depending on the environmental and professional resources that the participants can count on.*

Hypothesis 2. *Organizational socialization, social support, and professional resources—optimism, self-efficacy and collective effectiveness—will predict police agents' job stress. It will be tested if the level of stress of police officers is influenced by or has variations depending on the environmental and professional resources that the participants can count on.*

Hypothesis 3. *Organizational socialization, social support, and professional resources—optimism, self-efficacy and collective effectiveness—will predict police agents' job satisfaction. It will be tested if the level of satisfaction of police officers is influenced by or has variations depending on the environmental and professional resources that the participants can count on.*

Hypothesis 4. *Organizational socialization, social support, and professional resources—optimism, self-efficacy and collective effectiveness—will predict excellent performance in police work. It will be tested if the level of excellent task performance of police officers is influenced by or has variations depending on the environmental and professional resources that the participants can count on.*

The hypotheses are displayed in Figure 1. (Please, see Figure 1).

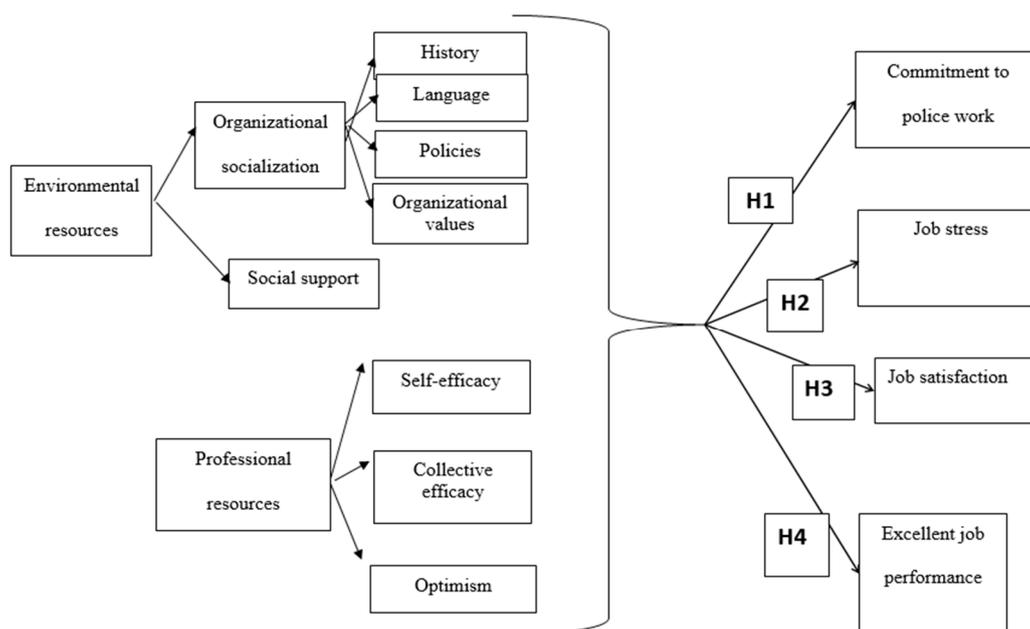


Figure 1. Study hypotheses.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Members of the National Police (NP) participated in the study. The sample comprised 123 participants from all over Spain, whose mean age was 39.77 years ($SD = 8.7$) and of whom 91.9% were men. Concerning education, 30.9% had university studies, and 22.8% combined their work with some kind of studies. Of them, 40.7% had a family member in the NP. They worked an average of 41.87 h ($SD = 12.9$) a week (ordinary) and 1.64 h ($SD = 6.3$) a week (extraordinary); 32.5% worked in shifts, whereas 32.5% worked in shifts including the night shift, 22.1% in alternate shifts, and 12.2% in shifts but without the night shift. The mean job tenure in the institution was 171 months ($SD = 111.2$).

2.2. Instruments

The survey built for the occasion was given the name of “Occupational Health Questionnaire”, and was to be taken in 20 min (average). As it is going to be specified, most of the questions in the survey were rated in a five-point Likert type with a closed number or answers.

2.2.1. Socio-Demographic Data

Participants were asked about their age, gender, province of origin, among other data (weekly hours of work, shift on which they worked, etc.).

2.2.2. Organizational Socialization

To evaluate this variable, we used the Organizational Socialization Scale [19], which contains 34 items, of which, in this questionnaire, we included those pertaining to the dimensions of history, language, policy, and organizational values. The reliability of the dimensions was equal to or greater than $\alpha = 0.78$ in prior studies (19). In the present study, the reliability was $\alpha = 0.64$ for History, $\alpha = 0.74$ for Language, $\alpha = 0.63$ for Policy, and $\alpha = 0.68$ for Organizational Values. Examples of the items used are: “I would be a good source of information about the background of the police” (History), “I understand most of the Police acronyms and abbreviations” (Language), “I know what is important in the police to get things done” (Policy), or “The goals of the police are my goals” (Organizational Values).

2.2.3. Social Support

To evaluate this variable, we used the MOS (Medical Outcomes Study) scale (Sherbourne & Stewart, 1991) to assess the perceived social support, validated in Spanish by Bailón, Luna, Medina, and Revilla [20]. Participants are asked how often they have the support of people like those described in the six items that are rated on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from one (*never*) to five (*always*). An example item is: *“How often do you have the following types of support when you need them—someone whose advice you really want”*. In the validation of Bailón et al. (2005), the reliability was $\alpha = 0.94$, whereas in this study, it was $\alpha = 0.96$.

2.2.4. Self-Efficacy

The scale on beliefs about personal efficacy proposed by Knight and Riggs was used to evaluate this variable [21]. It consists of six items whose reliability was $\alpha = 0.64$, with the original alpha ranging between 0.81 and 0.87 in various applications made in the same study and varying the professions and organizational levels. An item example is: *“When my performance is poor, it is due to my lack of capabilities.”*

2.2.5. Collective Efficacy

This variable was assessed with the scale on beliefs about the collective effectiveness of Knight and Riggs [21], which contains four items and has been previously used, showing adequate psychometric properties, with alpha values between 0.81 and 0.87 in various applications made in the same study and varying the professions and organizational levels. An item example is: *“Members of this department have excellent work skills.”* In the questionnaire we used, reliability was $\alpha = 0.70$.

2.2.6. Optimism

We used the LOT (*Life Orientation Test*) scale of Scheier and Carver (1985) in its adaptation to Spanish of the LOT-R [22], with seven items. In this study, we inverted the negative items and used the global measure of optimism that included all seven items, with adequate reliability ($\alpha = 0.77$) compared with $\alpha = 0.70$ the original study. An item example is: *“In difficult times, I usually expect the best”*.

2.2.7. Commitment to Police Work

To evaluate this variable, we used the Commitment Implication Scale (Cognitive Component) of Betanzos and Paz [23], which measures, through five items, the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with his/her work. Examples of items are: *“Most of my interests are centered around police work”* and *“My personal goals have to do with my work on the police force”*. The reliability of the original questionnaire was $\alpha = 0.84$, and in the present study, it was $\alpha = 0.79$.

2.2.8. Job Stress

To evaluate this variable, we used the scale of Garland and Ivie [24] which includes items referring to stress-related work and burnout, with a total of eight items. Global reliability was $\alpha = 0.75$ compared with $\alpha = 0.87$ of the original study. Examples of items are: *“I feel that I cannot go on anymore”* or *“I’m in a bad mood, irritable or impatient about little problems”*.

2.2.9. Job Satisfaction

We used the Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction proposed by Phua and Thompson [25] and adapted to Spain by Fernández and Topa [26], which contains four items and was designed to assess emotional satisfaction, as a global and positive emotional response towards the job in general. Despite its brevity, the scale has shown adequate reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$) in the original study of Phua and Thompson [25]. In this work, reliability was also acceptable ($\alpha = 0.80$). An example item is: *“I enjoy my work”*.

2.2.10. Excellent Work in the Police Force

To evaluate this variable, we used the translated version of the Task Performance Scale, which is part of the *Individual Work Performance* (IPW) questionnaire [27] and includes five items that evaluate a person's ability to perform the task according to indicators such as the quality of work done, planning and organization, and the ability to prioritize. The five items obtained a reliability of $\alpha = 0.71$ compared to $\alpha = 0.78$ of the original study. Examples of the items are: "I have managed my work well so that it was done on time", "The planning of my work has been adequate".

All the response scales were the five-point Likert-type, ranging from one (*totally disagree*) to five (*totally agree*).

3. Procedure

The protocol of this study was approved by the Ethics committee of the UNED. The data from this research were collected through the application of the questionnaire called the "Occupational Health Questionnaire". Participants were recruited among members subscribed to the NP-related web forums. The potential participants received an invitation email, with the link to the online survey. The invitations were sent by the web administrators of the forums, without the members of the research team having access to the email addresses of the potential participants, in order to maintain their anonymous identities.

In the online survey, prior to completion, participants received information about the guarantee of anonymity and data protection to which their replies would be submitted, in addition to a summary of the objectives of the investigation, and they were requested to give their informed consent to participate in the study.

4. Results

4.1. Correlational and Descriptive Analysis

The central tendency and dispersion measures and Pearson correlations of the study variables were calculated and are shown in Table 1. The sample scores of the variables commitment to police work ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.88$) and collective efficacy ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.63$) stood out, as the former had the highest mean standard deviation, and the latter had the lowest mean and the second lowest standard deviation (See Table 1).

4.2. Statistical Hypothesis Test

To continue with the statistical analyses to test the hypothesis, Hierarchical Regression Analyses was used on the "outcome variables", this technique is meant to see which of the variables are involved in the results and which are not adding anything to it.

Related to Hypothesis 1, the organizational socialization (History, Language, Policy, and Organizational Values) accounted for 10% of the variance of commitment to police work. After introducing the collective efficacy and self-efficacy, the model accounted for 22% and, after adding optimism, the global model explained 24% of the variance of the commitment to police work. The variables whose contribution to the prediction of the equation was statistically significant were Policy, as part of the Organizational Socialization, and Collective Efficacy (See Table 2).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix ($N = 123$).

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Organizational socialisation	12.30	1.64	-											
(A) History	2.83	0.75	0.63 **	-										
(B) Language	2.77	0.89	0.68 **	0.33 **	-									
(C) Policies	3.31	0.59	0.48 **	-0.01	0.02	-								
(D) Organizational values	3.39	0.61	0.44 **	-0.00	-0.06	0.28 **	-							
2. Social support	3.08	0.57	0.43 **	0.26 **	0.47 **	0.04	0.09	-						
3. Self-efficacy	3.34	0.57	0.46 **	0.29 **	0.15	0.28 **	0.38 **	0.17	-					
4. Collective efficacy	2.61	0.63	0.09	-0.08	0.18 *	0.09	-0.02	0.18	0.12	-				
5. Optimism	2.07	1.16	-0.01	-0.00	0.02	0.03	-0.07	-0.08	-0.17	0.24 **	-			
6. Commitment to police work	4.43	1.88	-0.01	0.06	-0.08	-0.17	0.19 *	0.02	0.13	0.35 **	0.27 **	-		
7. Job stress	2.27	0.82	-0.03	0.01	0.14	-0.03	-0.26 **	-0.03	-0.15	-0.29 **	-0.64 **	-0.22 *	-	
8. Job satisfaction	3.69	0.89	0.23 *	0.10	-0.05	0.14	0.42 **	0.15	0.31 **	0.09	0.35 **	0.20 *	-0.45 **	-
9.Excellent job performance	3.33	0.55	0.59 **	0.29 **	0.39 **	0.38 **	0.27 **	0.31 **	0.34 **	0.11	0.11	0.00	-0.06	0.18 *

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$.

Table 2. Hierarchical regression analyses on Commitment to police work.

	Model 1	2	3
Predictor variables	β^a	β^a	β^a
Organizational socialization			
History	0.08	−0.02	−0.01
Language	−0.10	−0.06	−0.05
Policies	−0.24 *	−0.24 *	−0.23 *
Organizational values	0.25 *	0.17	0.18
Social support	0.04	0.08	0.06
Self-efficacy		0.17	0.14
Collective efficacy		−0.35 **	−0.31 *
Optimism			0.15
R ²	0.10	0.22	0.24
ΔR^2	0.10	0.12	0.02
F _(8,114)	2.63	4.67 **	4.51 **
ΔF	2.63	8.92 **	2.84 ***

Note: * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.001$, *** $p < 0.095$ tendency value.

To test Hypothesis 2, Organizational Socialization (History, Language, Policy, and Organizational Values) was introduced. The model explained 9% of the job stress variance, which increased to 18% when adding collective efficacy and self-efficacy, and after adding optimism, the global model explained 48% of the variance of job stress. The variable whose contribution to the prediction of the equation was statistically significant was optimism (See Table 3).

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analyses on job stress.

	Model 1	2	3
Predictor variables	β^a	β^a	β^a
Organizational socialization			
History	−0.03	0.06	−0.01
Language	0.17	0.13	0.12
Policies	0.04	0.04	−0.00
Organizational values	−0.25 *	−0.19	−0.19
Social support	−0.08	−0.12	−0.04
Self-efficacy		−0.14	−0.00
Collective efficacy		0.31 *	0.14
Optimism			−0.58 **
R ²	0.09	0.18	0.48
ΔR^2	0.09	0.09	0.30
F _(8,114)	2.27	3.60 *	13.16 **
ΔF	2.27	6.40 *	65.832 **

Note: * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.001$.

In order to test Hypothesis 3, Organizational Socialization was introduced. The model explained 21% of the variance of job satisfaction and increased to 24% with the addition of collective efficacy and self-efficacy, and reached 31% of the variance of job satisfaction when optimism was added. The variables whose contribution to the prediction of the equation was statistically significant were values within the organizational socialization and optimism (See Table 4).

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analyses on Job satisfaction.

	Model 1	2	3
Predictor variables	β^a	β^a	β^a
Organizational socialization			
History	0.11	0.04	0.08
Language	−0.12	−0.12	−0.11
Policies	0.02	0.00	0.02
Organizational values	0.39 ***	0.34 ***	0.34 ***
Social support	0.14	0.15	0.10
Self-efficacy		0.17	0.09
Collective efficacy		−0.10	−0.02
Optimism			0.29 ***
R ²	0.21	0.24	0.31
ΔR^2	0.21	0.03	0.08
F _(8,114)	6.15 **	5.06 **	6.52 **
ΔF	6.15 **	2.05	13.04 **

Note: ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

To test Hypothesis 4, Organizational Socialization was introduced. The model explained 37% of the variance of excellent performance in police work. After introducing the variables collective efficacy and self-efficacy, the model explained 38% of the variance. Finally, after adding optimism, the global model explained 39% of the variance of the criterion variable. The change of R^2 when adding the last variable was 0.01, assuming that optimism accounts for 1% of the variance of excellent performance in police work, with a significance of $p = 0.18$, that is, not significant. The model barely improved its explanatory efficiency when adding variables, and it lost the significance of $p = 0.000$ that it had at the first step. Therefore, we only considered Block 1 of the model, that is, organizational socialization, which explained 37% of the variance of excellent performance (See Table 5).

Table 5. Hierarchical regression analyses on Excellent Job performance.

	Model 1	2	3
Predictor variables	β^a	β^a	β^a
Organizational socialization			
History	0.17	0.15	0.17
Language	0.30 *	0.29 *	0.29 *
Policies	0.32 **	0.30 **	0.31 **
Organizational values	0.19	0.16	0.16
Social support	0.09	0.09	0.08
Self-efficacy		0.09	0.06
Collective efficacy		0.02	0.05
Optimism			0.11
R ²	0.37	0.38	0.39
ΔR^2	0.37	0.01	0.01
F _(8,114)	13.82 **	9.95	9.00
ΔF	13.82 **	0.54	1.86

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

The variables whose contribution to the prediction of the equation was statistically significant were language and policy, both as part of organizational socialization.

5. Discussion

5.1. Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of the present study was to analyze the socialization of National Police officers in their organization through a model in which the resources of socialization, social support, and professional resources predicted attitudes and behaviors, specifically, commitment to police work, job stress, job satisfaction, and task performance. In view of the findings, we can conclude that the goal has been met, as some of the hypotheses were confirmed and, although others have revealed findings that were contrary to our expectations, they open new horizons of future research. We can confirm the general statement according to which, when dealing with their work, National Police officers can count on a number of personal and professional resources and products of the socialization process, which were analyzed in the study. Some of them were very efficient and others less so.

Regarding the JDR model, findings are aligned with it so that personal resources contribute to a positive spiraling way upwards in which social networks improve workers wellbeing and on the contrary, the lack of social support and sense of effectiveness spirals downwards letting workers exhausted.

5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications

In the case of environmental resources, socialization was an important factor in the prediction of all the proposed results: Commitment, stress, job satisfaction and excellent performance. The relationship with excellent task performance is stronger, which might imply that the higher the socialization, the National Police officers feel that their performance is better, they feel like “*real*” police officers. This finding could lead to a possible exploration of individuals’ identification and identity and their relationship with task performance, as, in this study, social support was shown to influence the outcomes, but conjointly with other variables, and it was not a sole determinant of any particular outcome [28]. Therefore, there is the opportunity to keep on researching to find out if the role of socialization is central because is related to identity or it is training and the emphasis along the integration of the police officer on interpersonal skills, which makes socialization entwined into the Spanish National Police officers’ so called DNA.

On the other hand, we found that job stress and job satisfaction have the same referents, that is, they are influenced by external and internal resources, giving rise to the idea of a parallel and inverse path of these relations [29]. This means that the National Police officers will feel stressed or satisfied with their work depending on the distribution of the same resources they take as referents, as other studies recently stated [30]. As for commitment, except that optimism is not one of the available resources when the officer feels and behaves with a higher level of commitment to police work.

Finally, it was disconcerting to find that, when organizational socialization has advanced, the role of social support is less significant for National Police employees, contrary to the predictions of our model. This finding could be interpreted in various ways, but perhaps one of them is associated with the limitation of how this variable was measured. The present study did not use a specific scale to assess the different types of social support at work, but instead, we used an instrument for assessing support in general, which comes from research in the field of health, and focuses on the existence of social support in general. In this regard, it is suggested that future research should use a support measure specifically designed for the work environment.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Some of the limitations of this work are due to the sample size and data collection procedure. Given the cross-sectional nature of this study, the results must be taken with caution. As it is not an experimental or longitudinal design, the studied relations cannot be considered as a successive process of correspondence among variables, or in terms of antecedents and consequences. Causal relationships cannot be established from the present findings.

This study clears the way to the specific exploration of the different ways in which socialization becomes a procedure by which new employees acquire valuable resources that will help them to cope with their tasks better in the future. It also provides evidence, albeit preliminary, of the differential role of the different types of learning produced by socialization in the different types of indicators of personal well-being and of quality in task performance. Among other future horizons for research, our study suggests the possibility that organizational culture, specifically power distance orientation and perceived status could also influence employees' outcomes [31].

It is interesting to bring to the reader's attention that police organizations are mostly composed by males, which could be a variable to study in the future, even considering partial subcultural references that can influence the socialization process.

5.4. Conclusions of the Findings

Finally, to sum up, the present study provides initial evidence on the impact of Human resource management on satisfaction and commitment at work, as well as job stress and excellent performance, following the suggestion of other recent studies [32]. For investigation and daily work, it will mean that the importance of creating a social network to support employees' needs is capital. Furthermore, socialization is a landmark when the intention of the organization is to integrate a member and improve their efficiency. The reason for it is that the single employee has its resources amplified by counting on the "significant others" in the work environment; thus integration and sustainability in organizations would be possible and profitable, and investing in social training, an interesting new horizon for corporations. In fact, the idea of sustainable organizations as the ones providing resources beyond the classic and entering in psychological domains is feasible [33].

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