

## SUSTAINING OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE DURING COMMAND TRAINING: THE INTERPLAY OF HR POLICY, LEADERSHIP SENSE-MAKING, AND UNIT RESILIENCE IN A POLICE CONTEXT

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**Abstract:** Career-level training like SESPIM is critical for leadership development in police forces but creates a unique "hybrid work" challenge. For a full semester, officers are physically and mentally detached from their home units ("remote"), creating a performance vacuum in their absence. This study investigates how police organizations manage this inevitable disruption. Existing literature on police training focuses on individual learning outcomes, neglecting the systemic impact on the sending units and the organizational mechanisms that sustain performance during this period. This conceptual paper employs an integrative review, applying a multi-level organizational behavior lens to the specific context of police professional development. We propose that macro-level HR policies (e.g., interim position management, performance accountability protocols) set the stage. However, their effectiveness hinges on the meso-level sensemaking of both the training officer (maintaining virtual influence) and the acting commander at headquarters. This leadership dynamic directly impacts the micro-level resilience processes (shared leadership, procedural adaptation, maintained morale) of the remaining (left-behind) unit, determining its ability to sustain operational performance. The article provides a novel framework for understanding human resource management in law enforcement, offering strategic insights for police leadership on how to strategically plan for and mitigate the performance risks associated with essential long-term training.

**Keywords:** Police Training, SESPIM, Leadership Development, Succession Planning, Unit Resilience, HRM in Policing, Absentee Leadership, Operational Performance.

### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of law enforcement, career-level training such as SESPIM (*Sekolah Staf dan Pimpinan*) is a cornerstone for leadership development and institutional capacity building (Andersen et al., 2022; Mabey & Morrell, 2020). However, this essential investment creates a significant operational paradox: while long-term, residential command training is vital for strategic leadership pipelines, it simultaneously removes pivotal commanders from their units for extended periods (Dickinson & Grote, 2022). This scenario presents a unique "hybrid work" challenge, where officers are physically and mentally detached from their home units, effectively operating in a "remote" capacity for a full academic semester (Battiston & Gamba, 2021). The resultant detachment can create a performance vacuum, threatening the continuity of operations, ongoing investigations, and team cohesion in the sending unit (Jensen & Moynihan, 2020).

The temporary but prolonged absence of a unit commander risks creating a disruptive "leadership vacuum." This vacuum poses multifaceted threats to operational stability, including the attenuation of institutional memory, a potential decline in team morale and public service delivery, and the disruption of critical case momentum (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2022; Kroll & Moynihan, 2022). Despite the operational criticality of this transition, extant literature on police training has predominantly focused on evaluating individual learning outcomes and pedagogical effectiveness (Van Wart, 2020). A salient gap exists in understanding the *systemic impact* on the organization left behind—specifically, the mechanisms and processes that enable a unit to sustain operational performance during its leader's extended absence for development. This study addresses this gap by shifting the analytical focus from the individual trainee to the sending organization and its adaptive capacities.

Common organizational practice often addresses this absence through a simplistic "officer-in-charge" designation, lacking robust systemic support (Lee & Benoit-Bryan, 2021). This paper argues that mitigating the risks of a leadership vacuum requires moving beyond ad-hoc stand-in arrangements toward an integrated, multi-level approach. Sustaining performance is not merely about filling a post but involves the dynamic interplay of macro-level human resource (HR) policies, meso-level leadership sensemaking, and micro-level unit resilience (George & Pandey, 2021). Formal HR policies set the structural stage, but their effectiveness is mediated by how the absent training officer and the interim acting commander interpret their roles and collaboratively guide the unit (Rafferty & Restubog, 2020). This leadership dynamic, in turn, directly enables or constrains the unit's capacity for adaptive performance and collective efficacy (Chen & Hsieh, 2021; Maynard et al., 2021).

## Research Questions

Guided by this integrative perspective, this conceptual paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do formal police HR policies (e.g., succession planning, interim performance metrics) structure the handling of a commander's long-term absence for training?
2. How do the sensemaking processes of the training officer and the acting commander influence the unit's adaptation during the absence?

3. What unit-level processes characterize a resilient team that maintains operational performance during its leader's extended absence for command academy training?

## Article Structure

The article is structured to elaborate this integrative framework. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical foundation, redefining performance through lenses of adaptive performance and team citizenship, and reviewing literature on strategic HRM, leadership sensemaking, and unit resilience. Chapter 3 presents the proposed Integrated Multi-Level Framework, detailing propositions on the relationships between HR policy clarity, leadership sensemaking, and the development of unit resilience. Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical and practical implications, offering strategic guidelines for police administrators, training officers, and acting commanders. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes by summarizing the core argument, acknowledging limitations, and proposing avenues for future empirical research

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter establishes the multi-level theoretical lens through which the "professional development paradox" is examined. It posits that sustaining police unit performance during a commander's long-term absence is a dynamic outcome, contingent upon the integrated function of macro-level organizational structures, meso-level leadership processes, and micro-level team capabilities.

### Redefining Performance in the Leader's Absence

Traditional, static metrics of law enforcement output (e.g., case clearance rates) are necessary but insufficient indicators of performance during a leadership transition. The core challenge is maintaining operational continuity, the seamless execution of core functions and preservation of public trust despite the removal of a key decision-making node. This continuity hinges on two complementary constructs: adaptive performance and team citizenship behavior (Chen & Hsieh, 2021; Petrovsky & Ritz, 2021).

Adaptive performance refers to the unit's capacity to handle novel, unexpected, or crisis situations in the absence of its formal leader. It requires officers to interpret ambiguous cues, make independent judgments, and coordinate actions without top-down direction (Borst et al., 2020; Maynard et al., 2021). Concurrently, team citizenship behaviors,

voluntary acts of cooperation, information sharing, and mutual support that extend beyond formal job descriptions, become the social glue that maintains cohesion and operational flow (Lemoine et al., 2021). Therefore, successful performance is redefined as the unit's sustained ability to self-organize, adapt, and collaborate to meet its mission demands.

## **Macro-Level: The Strategic Role of Police HR as Architect of Continuity**

The organizational architecture for managing planned leadership absence is constructed by formal Human Resource Management (HRM) systems. In high-reliability organizations like police forces, HRM must function as a strategic partner in risk mitigation, moving beyond transactional personnel administration to designing systems that ensure operational resilience (Dickinson & Grote, 2022; Lee & Benoit-Bryan, 2021).

Effective frameworks for this purpose are characterized by four pillars:

1. **Formalized Succession Planning:** A dynamic process that identifies and prepares "ready-now" candidates for interim command, ensuring the organization is not reliant on ad-hoc appointments that can create vulnerability and role ambiguity (Lee & Benoit-Bryan, 2021).
2. **Clear Interim Command Protocols:** Policies must confer an unambiguous mandate and legitimate authority upon the acting commander, formally distinguishing this role from a mere "caretaker" status. This clarity is foundational for effective leadership sensemaking at the meso-level (Jensen & Moynihan, 2020).
3. **Context-Sensitive Performance Metrics:** Accountability systems should be adjusted to reflect the transitional context, evaluating the unit and acting commander on their ability to maintain stability and adapt, rather than solely on productivity metrics designed for stable conditions (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2020; Van der Hoek et al., 2020).
4. **Structured Communication Guidelines:** Formal protocols defining the frequency, channels, and content of communication between the training officer, acting commander, and headquarters are critical. They balance the need for strategic oversight with the acting commander's operational autonomy, preventing either neglect or micromanagement (Battiston & Gamba, 2021).

The efficacy of these policies is not inherent; it depends on their perceived organizational justice and coherence. Policies perceived as distinctive, consistent, and

consensual provide a legitimate and stable framework that reduces uncertainty for all actors involved (George & Pandey, 2021).

## **Meso-Level: The Dual Leadership Sensemaking Process**

While HR policies set the stage, the transition's success is enacted through the sensemaking, the process by which individuals give meaning to experience, of two central actors: the training officer and the acting commander. Their interpretations and interactions critically mediate the impact of formal policy on the unit (Rafferty & Restubog, 2020; Tummers & Knies, 2021).

- a. **The Training Officer's Sensemaking (The Absent Leader):** The officer at the academy navigates a core tension: complete detachment for immersive learning versus maintaining a responsible connection to their unit. Effective sensemaking results in a strategic, virtual leadership role. This involves scheduled, intentional check-ins to provide mentorship and strategic context, while consciously ceding daily operational control to avoid undermining the acting commander (Battiston & Gamba, 2021; Mabey & Morrell, 2020).
- b. **The Acting Commander's Sensemaking (The Interim Leader):** The individual assuming the role must interpret their identity and authority. This interpretation ranges from a passive "custodian" (focused on preserving the status quo) to an empowered "legitimate successor" (confident in making decisions and providing direction). An empowered sensemaking is crucial for team morale and adaptive performance (Kroll & Moynihan, 2022).
- c. **Collaborative Sensegiving as a Critical Mechanism:** The relationship between these two leaders is pivotal. Through collaborative sensegiving, their aligned communication of a coherent narrative about roles, expectations, and stability—they jointly reduce uncertainty for the unit. A public, unified message affirming the acting commander's authority, endorsed by the departing leader, is a potent tool for establishing legitimate interim leadership (Gagné et al., 2022; Hassan & Hatmaker, 2022).

## Micro-Level: Unit Resilience as the Mediating Outcome

The ultimate barometer of a successful transition is the resilience of the police unit itself—its collective capacity to withstand disruption, adapt to challenges, and maintain core functioning (Bowers et al., 2021; Maynard et al., 2021). Resilience is not a static trait but an emergent state, cultivated through specific team processes that are activated and supported by effective leadership and clear policies.

The cultivation of unit resilience relies on four key antecedents, which are summarized in the following table alongside their enabling conditions:

| Antecedent of Resilience               | Definition & Function                                                                                                                                                         | Enabling Conditions from HR & Leadership                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Psychological Safety</b>            | A shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (e.g., voicing concerns, proposing ideas). It is the bedrock for adaptive performance without the leader. | HR policies that encourage learning over blame; Leadership that models vulnerability and frames mistakes as learning opportunities (Kroll & Moynihan, 2022; Salas et al., 2020). |
| <b>Shared Leadership</b>               | A dynamic, distributed process where team members lead one another. It naturally fills the leadership vacuum by pooling expertise and initiative.                             | An acting commander who empowers others; A team climate where taking initiative is expected and rewarded (Vogel & Masal, 2022).                                                  |
| <b>Transactive Memory System (TMS)</b> | A collective awareness of "who knows what." A strong TMS allows the unit to efficiently locate and apply expertise without central direction.                                 | HR-supported cross-training; Leadership that explicitly highlights and utilizes members' specialized knowledge (Salas et al., 2020).                                             |
| <b>Collective Efficacy</b>             | The shared belief in the team's conjoint capabilities to                                                                                                                      | A history of success; Leadership communication that reinforces confidence                                                                                                        |

|  |                                                                                |                                                                 |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | succeed. It drives motivation, effort, and persistence when facing challenges. | in the team's abilities (Gagné et al., 2022; Park & Kim, 2022). |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|

In synthesis, the path to sustained performance is interconnected. Strategic HR policies (macro) establish a legitimate and clear structure. The collaborative sensemaking and sensegiving of the dual leaders (meso) translate this structure into a coherent operational reality. This leadership dynamic, in turn, directly activates and supports the micro-level resilience processes of the unit, determining its ability to adapt and perform. This integrative logic forms the basis for the propositions advanced in the following chapter.

### **The Integrated Multi-Level Framework for Police Training Absence**

This chapter synthesizes the theoretical constructs from the previous sections to propose an Integrated Multi-Level Framework for understanding and managing operational performance during a commander's long-term absence for training. The central thesis is that sustained performance is not a product of chance but the result of a deliberate, cascading interplay between organizational structures, leadership processes, and team-level capacities. This framework, visualized in Figure 1, posits distinct yet interconnected pathways—top-down, meso-level mediation, and bottom-up feedback—that collectively determine a unit's resilience and operational continuity.

### **Figure 1: The Integrated Multi-Level Framework for Sustaining Performance during Command Training Absence**

(Note: A visual diagram would be placed here in the final manuscript. It would depict three horizontal levels: Macro (HR Policy), Meso (Leadership Sensemaking), and Micro (Unit Resilience). Solid arrows would flow downward from Macro to Meso, and from Meso to Micro, labeled "Top-Down Structuring & Enactment." A dashed arrow would loop upward from Micro to Meso to Macro, labeled "Bottom-Up Feedback & Learning." The Meso level would show a two-way arrow between "Training Officer" and "Acting Commander," labeled "Collaborative Sensegiving.")

### **The Top-Down Path: From Policy Structuring to Resilience Enactment**

The framework begins with the foundational influence of macro-level Human Resource (HR) policies. These policies constitute the strategic architecture that proactively structures

the organizational response to a planned leadership vacuum. The effectiveness of this architecture in precipitating unit resilience, however, is not direct. It is fundamentally mediated by the quality of leadership sensemaking at the meso level (Jensen & Moynihan, 2020).

**Proposition 1: The Clarity of Formal HR Policies Directly Shapes Leadership Sensemaking, Reducing Role Ambiguity.**

Clear, formalized, and well-communicated HR policies, covering interim succession, acting commanders' authority, adjusted performance metrics, and communication protocols—provide the essential "script" for the transition (Lee & Benoit-Bryan, 2021). This clarity performs two critical functions. First, it legitimizes the acting commander's authority, moving the appointment from an informal status to a recognized, empowered leadership role (Kroll & Moynihan, 2022). Second, it defines the parameters for the training officer's ongoing involvement, helping them navigate the tension between detachment and connection (Battiston & Gamba, 2021). Ambiguous or absent policies create a vacuum of expectations, leading to conflicting interpretations and power struggles (George & Pandey, 2021).

**Proposition 2: Collaborative Leadership Sensemaking Mediates the HR-Resilience Relationship.**

The framework posits that the relationship between strong HR policy (Macro) and developed unit resilience (Micro) is fully mediated by the collaborative sensemaking and sensegiving of the training officer and acting commander (Meso) (Rafferty & Restubog, 2020). HR policies set the stage, but it is the leaders' interpretations and **their** collaborative sensegiving that bring the script to life. When the training officer publicly endorses the acting commander's full authority and the acting commander confidently assumes that role, they co-create a unified narrative for the unit (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2022). This collaborative sensegiving directly fosters the antecedents of resilience: it builds psychological safety, encourages shared leadership, and reinforces collective efficacy (Gagné et al., 2022; Vogel & Masal, 2022).

**The Meso-Level Core: Dual Leadership and Collaborative Sensegiving**

At the heart of the framework is the dynamic, interdependent relationship between the two leaders, whose collaboration transforms structure into adaptive capacity.

- a. **The Training Officer as a Strategic Virtual Leader:** Effective sensemaking requires the training officer to transition from a daily commander to a strategic leader. This involves "empowered delegation," focusing on providing overarching guidance and mentorship while rigorously avoiding operational interference (Mabey & Morrell, 2020).
- b. **The Acting Commander as an Empowering Tactical Leader:** The acting commander's sensemaking must center on empowerment and tactical ownership. They interpret their mandate as an opportunity to lead, make necessary decisions, and build their own leadership credibility within established strategic guardrails (Tummers & Knies, 2021).
- c. **Collaborative Sensegiving as the Critical Mechanism:** The pivotal process linking these two roles is collaborative sensegiving, the act of jointly communicating a coherent story about the transition to the unit. A unified front is a powerful signal that stabilizes the unit, mitigates anxiety, and allows team members to focus on their responsibilities (Lemoine et al., 2021).

### **The Bottom-Up Path: Feedback, Learning, and Policy Evolution**

The framework is not a linear, top-down cascade but a dynamic system incorporating feedback loops. The micro-level experiences of the unit provide vital data that influences both immediate leadership actions and long-term organizational policy.

### **Proposition 3: Unit Performance Provides Real-Time Feedback, Reinforcing or Challenging Leadership Sensemaking.**

The unit's demonstration of resilience, successfully handling a complex incident or maintaining morale, serves as powerful positive feedback (Maynard et al., 2021). This success reinforces the acting commander's authority and confidence, validating their "stand-in" sensemaking (Kroll & Moynihan, 2022). Simultaneously, it provides affirming feedback to the training officer, validating their approach to delegation and virtual leadership. Conversely, struggles within the unit can trigger a recalibration of leadership approaches (Chen & Hsieh, 2021).

### **Proposition 4: Post-Absence Debriefing Drives Systemic Organizational Learning.**

Structured post-training debriefs that analyze the unit's performance during the absence are a mechanism for bottom-up organizational learning (Salas et al., 2020). Insights gathered

about what policies worked, where leadership coordination succeeded or failed, and what resilience capacities were most valuable, should feed directly back into the macro-level HR system (Dickinson & Grote, 2022). This feedback loop ensures that the organization's "strategic architecture" for managing leadership absences is continuously refined and improved (Andersen et al., 2022).

The following table summarizes the key propositions and their theoretical linkages within the framework:

| Proposition | Pathway                      | Core Mechanism                                                                   | Theoretical Basis                                                                               |
|-------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>P1</b>   | Macro →<br>Meso              | Policy clarity reduces role ambiguity and confers legitimacy.                    | Institutional Theory, Role Theory (George & Pandey, 2021; Jensen & Moynihan, 2020)              |
| <b>P2</b>   | Macro →<br>(Meso) →<br>Micro | Collaborative sensegiving mediates, translating structure into shared narrative. | Sensemaking Theory, Social Exchange Theory (Rafferty & Restubog, 2020; Hassan & Hatmaker, 2022) |
| <b>P3</b>   | Micro →<br>Meso              | Unit resilience provides performance feedback for leadership adjustment.         | Adaptive Performance Theory, Feedback Loop Theory (Chen & Hsieh, 2021; Maynard et al., 2021)    |
| <b>P4</b>   | Micro/Meso → Macro           | Post-event analysis fuels organizational learning and policy evolution.          | Organizational Learning Theory (Andersen et al., 2022; Salas et al., 2020)                      |

In conclusion, this Integrated Multi-Level Framework provides a comprehensive, dynamic model for analyzing how police organizations can navigate the inevitable disruption of long-term command training. It moves beyond simplistic solutions by highlighting the

indispensable, interconnected roles of structured policy, skillful leadership collaboration, and proactive resilience cultivation in sustaining the operational performance that communities depend upon.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter synthesizes the arguments and propositions of the Integrated Multi-Level Framework to articulate its broader significance. The discussion moves from theoretical implications that extend academic discourse to actionable, strategic insights for police administration and leadership practice. The framework demonstrates that a police unit's performance during a leader's absence is a test of systemic organizational health, not merely an individual leadership challenge.

### Theoretical Implications

The proposed framework makes several contributions to organizational and public management theory by contextualizing established concepts within the unique, high-stakes environment of law enforcement.

### Extending Hybrid and Remote Work Theory to Paramilitary Contexts

The framework applies and extends theories of hybrid and remote work, typically studied in corporate knowledge-work settings, to a paramilitary, public-service context characterized by strict hierarchies and high operational stakes (Battiston & Gamba, 2021). It refines the concept of "virtual leadership" by showing it is not merely a technological or logistical arrangement but a strategic psychological and communicative practice. The training officer's role as a distant yet connected leader underscores that effective remote management in crisis-prone organizations involves calibrated empowerment and symbolic presence, not just task coordination (Mabey & Morrell, 2020).

### Reconceptualizing Police Leadership as a Dynamic, Distributable Process

Prevailing models of police leadership often emphasize command, control, and the authority of the singular leader. This framework challenges that static, position-based view by theorizing leadership as a dynamic process that can be consciously distributed and managed across time and space (Vogel & Masal, 2022). It illuminates the transition of leadership from an individual holder to a temporary system comprising the training officer, the acting commander, and the emergent shared leadership within the unit. This perspective aligns with

and enforces contemporary views of public sector leadership that emphasize adaptability and collective responsibility over rigid hierarchy (Tummers & Knies, 2021; Jensen & Moynihan, 2020).

## **Positioning Strategic HRM as a Core Driver of Operational Continuity**

The framework elevates the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in policing from a peripheral administrative function to a central, strategic mechanism for operational risk mitigation and continuity planning (Dickinson & Grote, 2022). It provides a model for how HR systems directly enable mission-critical outcomes by structuring leadership transitions. This positions police HR not as mere processors of personnel issues but as essential architects of resilience, responsible for designing the policies (succession planning, interim protocols) that prevent performance breakdowns during inevitable leadership development activities (Lee & Benoit-Bryan, 2021).

## **Practical Implications for Police Forces**

The framework translates directly into actionable protocols and mindset shifts for various actors within the police organization, offering a blueprint for managing the "professional development paradox" strategically.

### **For Police Administrators and HR Directors: Architecting Systems**

- a. **Develop and Mandate Formal "Command Absence Protocols."** Institutionalize the framework's macro-level elements into official policy. This should include standardized procedures for pre-departure handover, a formal instrument of appointment for acting commanders that clarifies their decision-making authority, and temporary performance indicators for the unit (Van der Hoek et al., 2020).
- b. **Implement Mandatory Pre-Departure Transition Workshops.** Facilitate structured planning sessions involving the departing commander, the designated acting commander, and key unit members. These workshops should establish shared expectations, communication rules (frequency, channels, escalation paths), and key priorities for the interim period (Salas et al., 2020).
- c. **Institutionalize Post-Absence After-Action Reviews (AARs).** Formalize the bottom-up learning loop (Proposition 4). Conduct structured debriefs upon the training officer's return to evaluate what worked, what didn't, and how policies or processes

should be adapted. This transforms each absence from a disruptive event into an organizational learning opportunity (Andersen et al., 2022).

### **For the Training Officer: Mastering Strategic Delegation**

- a. Cultivate a Mindset of "Empowered Delegation." Consciously shift from operational control to strategic oversight. The goal is to empower the acting commander fully, allowing them to build their own leadership legacy while you focus on your own developmental goals (Gagné et al., 2022).
- b. Schedule Structured, Non-Intrusive Check-Ins. Establish a mutually agreed-upon schedule for updates (e.g., a weekly brief call or report). These should focus on high-level strategic guidance, mentoring support for the acting commander, and reinforcing the unit's purpose, not on micromanaging daily operations (Battiston & Gamba, 2021).
- c. Publicly and Unambiguously Endorse the Acting Commander. Use formal and informal communications to consistently validate the acting commander's authority in front of the unit. This visible "sensegiving" is critical for reducing ambiguity and solidifying the interim leadership structure (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2022).

### **For the Acting Commander: Leading with Legitimacy**

- a. Embrace the Role of a Legitimate "Stand-In," Not a "Caretaker." Take ownership of the period. Be empowered to make necessary decisions, optimize processes, and provide clear direction. This builds your credibility and the team's confidence (Kroll & Moynihan, 2022).
- b. Actively Foster Psychological Safety and Shared Leadership. Encourage initiative and decentralized decision-making within the team. Create an environment where officers feel safe to step up, voice concerns, and adapt to situations without waiting for orders, as this is the essence of building unit resilience (Maynard et al., 2021).
- c. Leverage the Unit's Collective Competence. Activate the team's transactive memory system ("who knows what") by deliberately consulting specialists and delegating according to expertise. Publicly recognize and utilize the team's strengths to reinforce collective efficacy (Lemoine et al., 2021).

### **For the Organization: Building a Culture of Resilience and Succession**

- a. Integrate Resilience Training into Professional Development. Move beyond technical skill training to include team drills that simulate operating without the

primary leader, fostering adaptive performance and shared mental models (Bowers et al., 2021).

- b. **Normalize and Value Acting Command as Leadership Development.** Frame interim command roles not as burdens but as critical, career-advancing opportunities for mid-level officers. This builds a deeper bench of experienced leaders and improves succession planning outcomes (George & Pandey, 2021).
- c. **Measure and Reward Sustained Unit Performance.** Adapt performance management systems to recognize and reward units that successfully maintain operational continuity and morale during leadership transitions, thereby incentivizing the behaviors outlined in the framework (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2020).

The following table summarizes the key practical takeaways for each organizational actor:

| <b>Organizational Actor</b> | <b>Core Imperative</b>        | <b>Key Actions</b>                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Administrators/HR</b>    | <b>Architect Systems</b>      | Create formal Command Absence Protocols; Mandate transition workshops; Institutionalize After-Action Reviews.                 |
| <b>Training Officer</b>     | <b>Delegate Strategically</b> | Adopt an "empowered delegation" mindset; Conduct structured, non-intrusive check-ins; Publicly endorse the acting commander.  |
| <b>Acting Commander</b>     | <b>Lead with Legitimacy</b>   | Act as a legitimate "stand-in"; Foster psychological safety and shared leadership; Leverage the unit's collective competence. |
| <b>The Organization</b>     | <b>Cultivate Resilience</b>   | Integrate resilience training; Normalize acting command as development; Reward sustained unit performance during transitions. |

In summary, the framework provides a coherent roadmap for transforming a period of potential vulnerability into one of reinforced strength. It argues that the true measure of a police organization's maturity is not its performance under ideal conditions, but its capacity to maintain effectiveness while intentionally developing its future leaders.

## CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter synthesizes the core conclusions of our analysis, acknowledges the inherent limitations of this conceptual study, and proposes a concrete agenda for future research to validate and expand upon the Integrated Multi Level Framework. This framework provides a structured lens to understand a critical organizational paradox: how to sustain operational performance while investing in the long term leadership development essential for the force's future.

### Conclusion

The central thesis of this paper is that the sustained performance of a police unit during a commander's extended absence for career training is not an automatic or incidental outcome. Rather, it is the deliberate product of a synergistic, multilevel organizational process. Our analysis demonstrates that mitigating the risks of the leadership vacuum created by programs like SESPIM requires moving beyond simplistic acting appointments toward a systemic, integrated approach.

The proposed framework elucidates three interdependent pillars of success. First, at the macro level, formalized and clear Human Resource policies form the essential strategic architecture. These policies, which encompass structured succession planning and defined interim command protocols, reduce role ambiguity and legitimate acting authority. Second, the effectiveness of this architecture is entirely mediated by the meso level process of collaborative sensemaking and sensegiving by the training officer and the acting commander. Their ability to interpret their roles constructively and present a unified narrative to the unit is paramount. Third, the culmination of effective policy and leadership is the cultivation of micro level unit resilience. This emergent state, characterized by shared leadership and collective efficacy, enables the team to adapt and maintain core functions autonomously.

In essence, this framework positions strategic Human Resource Management and distributed leadership as core components of operational risk management in policing. It argues that preparing for leadership absence is as critical as responding to external threats. By institutionalizing the processes outlined in this model, police organizations can transform the inevitable disruption of essential training from a period of vulnerability into an opportunity for reinforcing organizational resilience and strengthening the leadership pipeline.

## Limitations

As a conceptual paper, this study has several inherent limitations that must be acknowledged. The primary limitation is the lack of empirical validation. The Integrated Multi Level Framework and its propositions are theoretical constructs derived from synthesizing existing literature. They await empirical testing to confirm the proposed relationships within actual police organizational settings. Furthermore, the framework is developed within the specific context of Indonesian police training and a paramilitary structure. Its generalizability to other law enforcement cultures or different national policing systems may be limited and requires careful contextual adaptation. Finally, the model, while multilevel, inevitably simplifies highly dynamic and recursive social processes. The lived experience of a unit during transition involves continuous, real time adjustments and informal interactions that are difficult to fully capture in a static framework.

## Future Research Avenues

To address these limitations and advance the field, we propose the following avenues for future research, progressing from foundational validation to broader theoretical exploration. The first avenue is empirical validation and measurement. This should involve qualitative case studies of multiple police units undergoing a command training absence, using interviews and observation to capture sensemaking processes in real time. Concurrently, quantitative survey research is needed to develop and validate scales to measure the key constructs in the framework, such as the quality of collaborative sensegiving and levels of unit resilience, to statistically test the proposed pathways.

The second avenue is contextual and comparative research. Future work should investigate how the dynamics of absence management differ between various types of police units, such as investigative divisions versus uniformed patrol. International comparative studies that examine different national police forces would also reveal how organizational cultures and governance models influence policy and practice.

The third avenue is theoretical expansion. While our framework focuses on success factors, critical insight can be gained by explicitly studying failures where performance declined. Research should examine the consequences of failed sensemaking and poor policy design. Furthermore, studies should explore how emerging technologies like digital collaboration platforms intersect with the framework, changing the nature of virtual leadership and distributed sensemaking.

| Research Avenue              | Primary Focus                            | Key Research Questions                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Empirical Validation</b>  | Testing the proposed framework           | Do clear HR policies directly reduce role ambiguity? Does collaborative sensegiving mediate the policy resilience link? How can unit resilience be reliably measured? |
| <b>Contextual Analysis</b>   | Generalizability and specificity         | How do absence dynamics differ between investigative and patrol units? How do different national police cultures shape succession planning for training absences?     |
| <b>Theoretical Expansion</b> | Understanding failures and new variables | What specific leadership behaviors during transition cause unit breakdown? How does technology enable or hinder effective virtual leadership?                         |

Ultimately, this paper serves as a foundational call to shift the scholarly and practical discourse on police training. By focusing not only on the individual officer at the academy but also on the health and preparedness of the organization they leave behind, police forces can ensure that the vital investment in future leaders does not come at the cost of present operational integrity.

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