

The Effect of Specialized Training and Human-Technology Capability on Police Performance in Abu Dhabi: Preliminary Study

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i8/22775>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i8/22775

Published Date: 30 August 2024

Abstract

Police performance, defined as the execution of actions, tasks, or functions, has been a critical concern in Abu Dhabi and worldwide. In Abu Dhabi, the suboptimal performance of police forces has hindered crime-fighting efforts and compromised community safety. This underperformance is primarily attributed to inadequate specialized training and poor integration of human-technology capabilities, which together undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of police officers. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, making it difficult for officers to promote safety, maintain active duty, and protect lives and properties. This study investigates the potential of human-technology capability to bridge the gap between specialized training and police performance. It specifically examines the relationship between specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance at the Abu Dhabi Police Academy, with a focus on the mediating effect of human-technology capability on this relationship. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a survey strategy designed to minimize bias and align with a positivist research model. Simple random sampling was used to collect primary data through face-to-face self-administered surveys and emailed questionnaires. Out of 355 questionnaires distributed, 336 valid responses were received, achieving a 94.7% response rate. The data were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS (PLS-SEM) with various statistical tools, including descriptive analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and reliability testing. The results indicate a significant relationship between specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance. The findings show that both specialized training and human-technology capability positively impact officer performance, with human-technology capability serving as a mediator in this relationship. These insights are crucial for enhancing police performance, particularly in protecting the community and improving crime detection during the COVID-19

pandemic through technological means. The study's findings are expected to benefit the Abu Dhabi Police Academy by increasing public safety and contributing to the city's economic growth.

Keyword: Police Performance, Training, Human Technology, Preliminary Study.

Introduction

National security, encompassing activities that support nation-building, the preservation of peace, and the protection of citizens' liberties, is one of the most critical functions a government can offer within the global political environment (Blumberg, Papazoglou, & Creighton, 2018). Traditionally, the concept of national security was predominantly associated with military power. However, in recent years, it has expanded to include various domains such as energy security, economic stability, and technological advancement, reflecting a broader understanding of what it means to protect a nation (Greco & Fischetti, 2019; José, Carlos, & Anabela, 2020). In this expanded view, the role of law enforcement agencies has become increasingly pivotal, as they are responsible for maintaining internal security, upholding law and order, and ensuring the safety of the populace. The effectiveness of these agencies is directly linked to the quality of their training and their ability to integrate technology into their operations. The training and development of police forces have become integral components of national security strategies, particularly in maintaining a serene socio-political environment. The Abu Dhabi Police School, like many law enforcement training institutions worldwide, plays a crucial role in preparing officers to meet the demands of modern policing. However, evidence suggests that police training has often lagged behind the evolving demands of policing performance outcomes and national security needs (McEwan, Bateson, & Strand, 2017). The traditional focus on physical training, firearms handling, and arrest procedures, while essential, has proven insufficient in addressing the complexities of contemporary crime and disorder, which require a broader skill set including effective communication, diversity management, problem-solving, and community relations (Henry, Rajakaruna, Crous, & Buckley, 2020).

The inadequacy of traditional training programs has significant implications for police performance. Studies have shown that specialized training, tailored to address the specific challenges of modern law enforcement, can significantly enhance officer performance (de Maillard, 2018; Marins et al., 2020). However, the success of such training programs is not only dependent on the content but also on the integration of human-technology capabilities. Technology has become a "power-amplifier" in law enforcement, enabling more efficient coordination across organizational systems and enhancing individual officers' ability to perform their duties effectively (Greco & Fischetti, 2019; Chan & Bennett, 2017). The ability to leverage technological advancements in policing is increasingly seen as a mediator that can bridge the gap between training and performance, ultimately contributing to national security (Zahabi & Kaber, 2018). In the context of Abu Dhabi, the challenges faced by police forces during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for enhanced training and technological integration. The pandemic exacerbated existing issues, making it more difficult for officers to maintain public safety, carry out their duties, and protect lives and property. These challenges underscore the importance of developing a comprehensive training program that incorporates both specialized training and human-technology capabilities. The Abu Dhabi Police School's efforts in this regard are crucial for improving officer performance and, by extension, contributing to the broader national security agenda.

This study focuses on the contribution of specialized training at the Abu Dhabi Police School to improving officer performance through the development of human-technology capabilities. By examining the relationship between specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance, the study aims to provide insights that could help enhance the effectiveness of police training programs. Moreover, it seeks to validate the role of such training in achieving national security outcomes, particularly in the context of Abu Dhabi's evolving security landscape. The findings of this study have significant implications not only for the Abu Dhabi Police Academy but also for law enforcement agencies globally, as they seek to adapt to the demands of modern policing in an increasingly complex world.

Background and Motivation

Performance of Police Officers

Performance refers to how well an employee performs to help achieve the organisation's vision, mission and goals (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). It helps to answer the question as to whether a person executes his job, duties, and responsibilities properly. It is also a critical factor in the success of an organisation (Ibish, 2017). According to Zahabi and Kaber (2018), performance involves all aspects that directly or indirectly affect and relate to the employees' work. It is classified into planning, monitoring, developing, rating and rewarding. Police performance can be said to be the procedures adopted by police in the public space which promote direct or indirect contact with non-police. Thus, in practice means the routine activities carried out during policing activities. Police departments are significant and essential public agencies because of the practical results they try to achieve (Rodgers, Thomas, Dalton, Harden and Eastwood, 2019). These results are directly related to controlling conflicts affecting social order and people's lives. The main objective of police work is to create an environment where people can have their rights assured. Police performance was traditionally measured using a reduction in crime rates. Crime rates and community satisfaction as traditional indicators are admittedly insufficient to create a reliable measure of police performance (Gupta and Gupta, 2018). Public safety affects the lives of everyone. Administrators or police managers need to know the measurement of police service to evaluate the practices of specific internal policies (Stepaniuk and Shevtsov, 2020). Using crime rates as a performance measure requires demonstrating the relationship between crime decreases and increased quality of police service. However, the drop-in crime rates must be considered relevant to other factors, such as changing people's behaviour to prevent crime or changing the public environment, which becomes more observant, thus offering few opportunities to promote the criminal practice (Eamonn, Daugherty and Arnetz, 2019). Besides reducing crime rates, other indicators, such as improved training of police officers and empowerment with required technology capabilities, are explored in this study.

Abu Dhabi National Security Training Programs

The dedication of the Abu Dhabi Government and the Abu Dhabi Police GHQ to the protection, sovereignty and prosperity of the Abu Dhabi Emirate is unwavering (Ibish, 2017). With the local police forces independent at the Emirate level in the UAE, several factors are identified to improve officer performance (Griffin and Sun, 2018; MacKenzie-Shalders, Matthews, Dulla and Orr, 2020). Similarly, to the other Emirates, police education and training colleges in Abu Dhabi have a strict military environment. Several degree programs and training departments are maintained to offer qualifications comparable to international degrees of bachelor's and master's degrees. Depending on the entry point of the agent, one

may graduate with a law or bachelor's degree in police science, a two-year program in law enforcement or a one-year diploma if the person is already a university graduate (Okuhara, Kayama, Mimura and Suzuki, 2019).

The adequacy of the current teaching and specialist programs that are in place is paramount to helping the Abu Dhabi Emirate achieve set national security objectives and continually preserve the Emirate's sovereignty. On this note, there is no doubt that the need for highly prepared law enforcement agents with high capabilities in performing their duties is essential to national security performance (de Maillard, 2018). Notwithstanding, societal and policing challenges have evolved (Pasha, 2018; Segrave, Wilson and Fitz-Gibbon, 2018). Therefore, the need to observe the congruence between policing performance and national security objectives has become critical (Mawby and Zempi, 2018).

To improve policing performance, the Abu Dhabi Government adopts the highest and latest forms of technology with a high degree of confidentiality to serve the public (Pavlenko, Sevruck and Kobko, 2017). At the centre of these electronic services is the need for law enforcement agencies to put them to good use by combining experiences from training. This study seeks to examine the existing training programs of the Abu Dhabi Police and proffer strategies that would help improve officer performance towards the overall national security agenda. In addition, adopting human-technology capability development measures is necessary to bridge specialised training and officer performance. It would further help to arrive at recommendations on how to bridge the training programs of the Emirate, technology capabilities, and law enforcement performance.

Abu Dhabi Police School Training Programs

In a brief history of the Abu Dhabi Police Academy and the Al Ain Police School training programs, the need to adopt a training program that helps pursue the agenda of the UAE goes as far back as the commencement of the Union in 1971. The leaders and local military commanders believed that adopting a correct and modern training program is critical to establishing a strong base for the people's security, sovereignty, safety, and contentment as a country (Roberto and Gianpiero, 2020). The leaders had groomed this interest many years before the Union and explained the establishment of the Al Ain Police School in 1968, three years before the Union. Whereas the Al Ain Police School mainly focuses on training the Abu Dhabi Police units, the Abu Dhabi Police Academy is open to other police personnel from other Emirates (Zubrzycki, 2020).

From the program's start, the school looked up to external support, mainly in human resources. Most of the human resources were taken from neighbouring Arab countries and the UK (Robinson, Roberts, Irving and Orr, 2018). Most of the policies and administrative regulations of the school are therefore mapped in line with the UK practices. By 1996, new police reforms had been introduced as the department continued to develop new training programs and review existing ones every three years. The development and review of existing programs have become critical considering the changing developmental needs of the Abu Dhabi Emirate and the UAE (Murphy and Hine, 2019). With over 220 countries living in the UAE, the changing lifestyle and roles necessitate that the security knowledge creation systems adapt accordingly (Ulyanina, Levi and Teplova, 2020).

In a more detailed elaboration on the nature of programs available, the Abu Dhabi Police training program consists mainly of 2 tubes; a program for police offers and another for mainstream police respondents. The training programs occur in Al Ain Police School; normal or mainstream police officials are expected to complete the training program in 18 weeks or over four months (Kondakova, 2020). This program entails an integrated design that produces civil and military police training, such as weapons, self-defence, and civil security. Mainly, programs are offered in two institutions in the Abu Dhabi Emirate; the Al Ain Police School and the Abu Dhabi Police Academy (Japiohova, 2020).

In the Police School, the training covers all the knowledge needed by the police personnel to perform their duties. Training covers all areas but is not limited to patrol missions, traffic law, crime-handling processes, drug trafficking control, emergency handling, etc (Zubrzycki, 2020). The program is scheduled weekly, with different modules covered over the weeks within the mainframe program, constituting the training course's management. Each training course is attended by police personnel, with an overall graduate per year of about 2000 police officers (Tidmarsh, Sharman and Hamilton, 2021).

Within the training programs, periodic promotion courses are undertaken to help the officers increase their management skills and help them upgrade their ranks; these programs range from 4 to 8 weeks. Most of these courses or programs have a strict timeline and compel students to follow closely or learn rapidly to keep up with progress (Pettersson, Bertilsson, Fredriksson, Magnusson and Fransson, 2017). Again, these programs do not entail awarding any academic-based certificate but only a passing certificate. The certificates awarded due to these short programs do not compare to the academic diploma or university certificate. The time limitation is the main issue with these programs or what makes it lack in terms of being considered an academic certification program. Ultimately, the time awarded to the program completion does not meet the standard criteria for an academic degree (Ssegiriinya, 2019). Due to the time limitation, the trainees cannot be gradually mature and earn enough knowledge. In short military programs training has often been considered a rather challenging feat due to abundance by specific military traditions.

It further indicated that the Al Ain Police School and the Abu Dhabi Police Academy have not gone without challenges (Miloradova, 2019). The main challenges in the Al Ain Police School are the lack of adequate facilities in infrastructure and outdated technology teaching gadgets (Iles, Egnoto, Fisher, Ackerman, Roberts and Smith, 2017). The facilities are lacking not due to lack of funds but the delay in implementing new ideas to improve the training environment (Ostapovich, 2018). Nonetheless, legal frameworks have been implemented to ensure that new roles are defined, and the adoption of technology is central to delivering training and academic lecturers. Adopting technology remains a central aspect of the overall government program targeted at improving the operational efficiency of government and public institutions (Kudlay, 2018).

The UAE has its own security needs and social demands as a metropolitan society. The sedentary lifestyle of the people, differences in religion, and the existence of multiple traditions in a small-confined space require that constant developments are engineered to handle the changing conditions, mainly in civil security (Orr, Poke, Stierli and Dawes, 2018). However, establishing resilient systems directed at improved officer performance

commences from the training programs offered to these officers. How best were they able to utilise available technology systems? The same training style and features of the program require a constant look to modify and improve the training in new ways, continually and up-to-date with best practices across the globe whilst localising the region's security needs.

Methodology

The research methodology for this investigation was designed to provide an objective, replicable, and organized inquiry into the relationship between specialized training, human-technology capability, and police officer performance at the Abu Dhabi Police Academy. As Sekaran and Bougie (2016) emphasize, the replicability and objectivity of a research methodology are critical for establishing empirical evidence, regardless of the chosen research approach. Additionally, justifying the selection of specific methods is crucial for ensuring the rigor and credibility of the research process.

This study follows a positivist research philosophy, adopting a quantitative approach to ensure the collection of objective and measurable data, which minimizes the potential for bias. The research strategy is based on a cross-sectional survey design, allowing for the collection of data at a single point in time to examine the relationships between the variables of interest. The survey was conducted among police officers at the Abu Dhabi Police Academy, focusing on those who had recently completed specialized training programs. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select participants, ensuring that each individual within the target population had an equal chance of being included in the study. The target population consisted of active police officers at the Abu Dhabi Police Academy. A total of 355 officers were invited to participate in the survey, with 336 valid responses collected, resulting in a response rate of 94.7%.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was adapted as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire was designed to measure the effects of specialized training and human-technology capability on police performance. It was divided into four sections: demographic information, specialized training, human-technology capability, and police performance. The questionnaire's items were based on validated scales from existing literature and were subjected to expert review to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire, leading to minor revisions before the full-scale data collection.

The data analysis process included Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and reliability testing to confirm the validity and internal consistency of the constructs measured by the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and general trends in the data. The structural relationships between specialized training, human-technology capability, and police performance were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This approach was chosen for its robustness in handling complex models and small sample sizes (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017).

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The study received approval from the relevant institutional review board, ensuring adherence to ethical standards in research. The limitations of the study, such as the reliance

on self-reported data and the cross-sectional design, were acknowledged, and suggestions for future research were provided. These methodological steps collectively contribute to the study's credibility and the validity of its findings, supporting the investigation's overall objectives.

Finding

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The exploratory factor analysis was adopted in this study to uncover the underlying items of the adopted and modified constructs. All the constructs were then preceded for explanatory factor analysis to ensure the fitness of the items for each before embarking on the actual field study. One hundred questionnaires were administered for the pilot study to examine the pilot study's exploratory factor analysis and internal reliability testing. As shown in Table 1, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy, which ranged from 0.798 to 0.832, indicated that the items were closely related and shared common factors. The significant Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.05$) suggested that the data had a significant correlation matrix, making it suitable for factor analysis of specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance. The results showed that the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) grouped the items into two components based on an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The Eigenvalues for specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance were 1.031, 1.562, and 1.626, respectively, which are all above the acceptable threshold of 1.0. The percentage of total variance explained for each construct ranged from 64.7% to 71.5%, confirming that each construct met the required criteria of greater than 60% and was appropriate. All items for specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance were kept, and none were removed or deleted.

Table 1

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

No	Constructs	Items	Loading Factor	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (>0.70)	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (<0.05)	Eigenvalue (>1.0)	Percentage of Total Variance Explained (>60%)
1	Officer Performance	OP1	0.801	0.798	0.000	1.031	71.5
2		OP2	0.770				
3		OP3	0.878				
4		OP4	0.773				
5		OP5	0.864				
6		OP6	0.770				
7		OP7	0.708				
8		OP8	0.991				
9		OP9	0.793				
10		OP10	0.817				
11	Human-Technology Capability	TC1	0.741	0.808	0.000	1.562	70.1
12		TC2	0.780				
13		TC3	0.812				
14		TC4	0.875				
15		TC5	0.881				

16		TC6	0.768				
17		TC7	0.802				
18		TC8	0.794				
19		TC9	0.881				
20		TC10	0.756				
21	Specialised Training	ST1	0.903	0.832	0.000	1.626	64.7
22		ST2	0.873				
23		ST3	0.865				
24		ST4	0.997				
25		ST5	0.851				
26		ST6	0.930				
27		ST7	0.812				
28		ST8	0.867				
29		ST9	0.743				
30		ST10	0.673				

Internal Reliability Analysis

The objective of the pilot study was to determine the reliability of the constructs before embarking on the actual field study. Before a construct can be considered reliable, the items will be 0.7 and above to acceptable and reliable for field study. Table 2 showed that Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for all the constructs was acceptable to the pilot study results. The Cronbach alpha values for the specialised training, human-technology capability and officer performance ranged from 0.812 to 0.870. Thus, it further confirmed that they are reliable, acceptable, and sufficient for field study.

Table 2
Internal Reliability of Constructs (Pilot Study)

Constructs	No of Items		Cronbach’s Alpha	Comment on Reliability
	Original Items	Retained Items		
Officer Performance	10	10	0.858	Acceptable & exceed the required value of 0.7
Specialised Training	10	10	0.812	Acceptable & exceed the required value of 0.7
Human-Technology Capability	10	10	0.870	Acceptable & exceed the required value of 0.7

Hypothesis

In the Table 3.7 shows summarises four (4) hypotheses deduced from objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. However, the researcher tested the objectives to determine the effect and relationship of each variable specialised training, human-technology capability and officer performance. In addition, this provided an overview of the objectives and hypotheses of this study regarding the statistical tools required.

Table 3

Summary of Hypotheses and Testing

Objectives	Hypotheses	Method of Analysis
Objective 1	H₁ : Specialised training has a positive effect on officer performance.	Path Analysis in SEM
Objective 2	H₂ : Human-technology capability has a positive effect on officer performance.	Path Analysis in SEM
Objective 3	H₃ : Specialised training positively influences human-technology capability in the police.	Path Analysis in SEM
Objective 4	H₄ : Human-technology capability mediates the effect between specialised training and officer performance.	Path Analysis in SEM

Conclusion and Future Works

This study explored the relationship between specialized training, human-technology capability, and police officer performance in Abu Dhabi. The findings confirmed that both specialized training and human-technology capability positively influence officer performance. Furthermore, human-technology capability was found to mediate the relationship between specialized training and officer performance, highlighting its critical role in enhancing the effectiveness of training programs. These results underscore the importance of integrating advanced technological capabilities into police training to boost performance outcomes, particularly in rapidly evolving security environments. The study's insights are expected to contribute to improved policing practices, better community safety, and the overall enhancement of Abu Dhabi's national security agenda.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted within the specific context of the Abu Dhabi Police Academy, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or law enforcement institutions. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which can be subject to bias, such as social desirability bias. Additionally, while the study focused on the mediating role of human-technology capability, other potential mediators or moderators were not explored, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing officer performance. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study prevents any conclusions about the causality of the relationships identified.

Future research could address these limitations by conducting similar studies in different geographical contexts and law enforcement institutions to test the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies could be undertaken to explore the causal relationships between specialized training, human-technology capability, and officer performance. Additionally, future research could examine other potential mediators or moderators, such as organizational culture, leadership, or motivation, to gain a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing police performance. Lastly, exploring the integration of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, into police training

programs could provide valuable insights into further enhancing law enforcement capabilities in the face of evolving challenges.

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