

Bridging the Leadership Gap Through Succession Planning Strategies: A Case Study of the Royal Bahamas Police Force

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Succession planning continues to be a sustainability factor within law enforcement agencies regarding leadership continuity. Due to the hierarchical structure within the police force agencies, it is vital for leadership stability and more importantly continuance. As a result, law enforcement institutions must develop policing leadership to ensure long-term viability. Succession planning is crucial to overcoming these challenges. This exploratory single-case study examined police officer's perception of succession planning strategies, including competency models and myriad changes within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. This study was designed using qualitative methodology and a single case study design. Purposive sampling was used to select police officers from this population unit. As a result of the data analysis, the following five themes emerged: (1) caring leadership and officer well-being; (2) need to achieve; (3) organizational structure/functions; (4) political influence; (5) training and education. Based on the observations and data analysis, relevant recommendations were made to address critical issues and improve outcomes, leading to positive changes.

Keywords: succession planning, competency model, police officers, succession planning strategies, Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF)

Introduction

One major element of sustainability and institutional effectiveness, particular in public sector organizations such as the law enforcement agencies, was leadership continuity through succession planning. Many organizations globally were faced with changes whether internal or external, inclusive of law enforcement agencies. The operations of organizations in the 21st century were required to adjust to environmental changes brought about by globalization and technology improvements, and they had to be able to interpret and illustrate these changes (Lartey, 2020). Throughout the world, law enforcement agencies face these challenges, including those in The Bahamas. The Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF), in comparison to others around the world, also faced increasing challenges related to leadership succession due to restructuring, public demands, and retirement.

One proactive strategy in the identification and development of future leadership was succession planning in maintaining organizational stability, performance, and continuity (Rothwell, 2010; Groves, 2007). Organizations that include effective succession planning ensured that leadership vacancies were filled with qualified employees, while also preparing individuals who hold the competencies, experiences, and values required to lead in multifaced environments. According to Rothwell (2016), succession planning was a strong strategic human resource practice designed to ensure continuance of leadership, reducing any disruptions while preparing

qualified internal candidates for future leadership roles. Additionally, the structure of succession systems within policing organizations was found to be linked to improved leadership readiness, organizational resilience, and knowledge transfer (Kim, 2003; Groves, 2007).

These structures were clearly defined by formalized roles, levels of authority, and centralized chains of command through which decisions and information flowed vertically (Mintzberg, 1979). Weber (1947) stated that such structures were common in bureaucratic organizations and were designed to promote control and coordination through standardized procedures and a ranked system of authority. Hierarchical systems were especially clear in law enforcement because police departments were similar to paramilitary groups. Researchers found that police departments required strict rank systems and centralized leadership to keep order, ensure quick responses, and maintain accountability (Crank, 2003; Schafer, 2009). As a result, hierarchical structures in police forces, like the Royal Bahamas Police Force, made succession plans even more important to ensure leadership stability and smooth organizational operations. There were a variety of factors found globally contributing to police staff shortages including credibility problems, changing demographics, and shifting workloads (Wilson & Grammich, 2009). Budget reallocations, competing demands, and management issues exacerbated the problem, and many agencies failed to keep up with turnover rates that were higher than hiring rates. Efforts to meet staffing allocation levels rather than actual workload demands or service quality expectations made staffing needs seem less complex than they really are (Wilson & Weiss, 2012).

Reports regarding the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) indicated that it was facing a substantial shortage of staff which influenced capacity operations. As outlined by the Commissioner of Police, Shanta Knowles confirmed that approximately 2,000 more officers were required to meet the national demands since current officers' manpower was being extended to fill any gaps (Tribune Staff Reporter, 2025). An audit of manpower was conducted and found that structural deficiencies existed within the force but especially at the constable level, in which many front-line officers were falling below the required level for effective policing. These results highlighted a recurring problem that affects officers' workload, service delivery, and overall organizational efficacy. Bowleg (2025) further added that the Minister of National Security, Minister Wayne Munroe, highlighted that when he assumed his position in 2021, the agency inherited a deficit of 900 officers, coupled with workforce challenges which prohibited the closure of the gap. The RBPF created an online platform for their recruitment needs with the hopes of attracting new officers to address this shortage (Munnings, 2025). These developments within the force underscored the shortage and raised concerns about the long-term continuation and leadership continuity of the force.

Empirical research found global challenges faced by police forces in the implementation of succession plans (Papaioannou & Serdaris, 2023): As a result, gaps in leadership were evident, which further impeded organizational continuity. In addition, studies have shown that police forces have failed to adequately prepare future leaders because of a lack of transparency, insufficient leadership training for executives, and a lack of trust in the promotion process (Murphy, 2006). This made strategic changes more difficult, reduced institutional effectiveness, and affected the long-term security of police forces globally (Murphy, 2006; Papaioannou & Serdaris, 2023).

A literature review study indicated a deficiency in succession planning research that required attention. Researchers found that organizations did not do enough succession planning, and they say stated that more study was needed to look into succession planning strategies: Berns and Klarner, 2017; Darnell and Campbell, 2015; Durst and Bruns, 2016; Husain and Omer, 2016; Magasi, 2016; Odengo and Bett, 2016; Pila, Schultz, and Dachapalli, 2016; Tabatabaee, Lakeh, and Tadi, 2014.

The authors Titzer, Shirey, and Hauck (2014) stated that a systematic review of business succession strategies was necessary, as well as good research methods and real-world examples in this area. Durst and Bruns's (2016) study stated that more research should be conducted on succession planning strategies in different parts of the world and in different kinds of public organizations. Findings from these studies showed that there was limited research on succession planning (Ip & Jacobs, 2006). According to Pila et al. (2016), more study should have been conducted on the effects of workforce planning in public service organizations and other aspects of succession planning in organizations.

This study responded to the call for additional research and was the first of its kind to examine succession planning strategies in the Royal Bahamas Police Force using a qualitative methodology. The overall objective of this study was to gain empirically valuable insights into perceptions of succession planning strategies and competency models, to thereby expanding knowledge in these areas. In addition, the study addressed research gaps identified by various researchers. The research paper followed the following format. The first section described the research background, followed by the research questions, methodology, findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

Research Background

Law Enforcement Organizational Challenges

The instability in police organizations has shown patterns such as hiring difficulties, staffing shortages, retention challenges and attrition which all affect leadership continuity. A review of 82 empirical studies revealed that recruitment and retention challenges undermine organizational capacity, reduce diversity, and weaken leadership pipelines through high turnover rates (Wilson, 2022). Adams, Mourtgos, and Nix (2023) stated that more than 80% of U.S. agencies experienced with increased resignations and retirements resulting from the policing crisis in 2020, resulting in a shortage of supervisors and staff. Because of high separation rates and hiring problems, many agencies are operating below their authorized capacity (Boehme, McCrain, Mourtgos, & Tregle, 2026). Commissioner of Police Shanta Knowles indicated that an additional 2,000 officers would be necessary to fulfill national requirements, since the current personnel were fully stretched to cover existing deficiencies (Tribune Staff Reporter, 2025). Bowleg (2025) noted that Minister of National Security Wayne Munroe indicated that upon taking office in 2021, the agency faced a shortfall of 900 police officers, compounded by labor problems that hindered the resolution of this deficit. Accordingly, these global patterns suggest that the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) must develop succession planning strategies to mitigate leadership discontinuity and ensure organizational resilience.

Interestingly, it is clear that police executives have a concern about hiring and retaining staff, highlighting the threat of the agency understaffing, which affects operations negatively and further compromises organizational efficiencies while negatively impacting community development (Wilson & Grammich, 2009). Researchers found that both understaffing and workforce instability adversely affected police officers' stress levels, morale, and cohesiveness (Duret & Li, 2023; Lewis, 2022). Additionally, the reduction in staffing has been negatively associated with public safety outcomes, including increased crime rates (Hur, 2013; Mello, 2019). It is further emphasized that employee retention is a key workforce challenge, emphasizing the importance of maintaining adequate staff to meet operational demands (Wilson et al., 2010; Wilson & Weiss, 2012). For the RBPF, the absence of a proactive succession framework may compound these pressures, particularly if supervisory roles are vacated without structured leadership development pathways in place.

Leadership gaps within police organization have increased due to retirement trends. Early retirement occurs at varying career stages, making workforce forecasting and succession planning more challenging (Alkaabi & Davies, 2022). The experience of working as a police officer has been shown to have profound effects on organizational relationships, institutional coordination, and the transfer of knowledge within organizations (Cameron & Griffiths, 2017). Police retirement perceptions, such as health decline, depression, and social disconnection, may also influence officers' decisions and timing (Ruiz & Morrow, 2005). To bridge emerging leadership gaps and ensure long-term organizational sustainability, the Royal Bahamas Police Force must implement comprehensive succession planning strategies that integrate leadership development, mentoring, knowledge management, and retirement forecasting.

Lack of Succession Planning

When viewing the context for this study, there continue to be findings that stipulate there is a lack of succession planning within several industries including of the police force, whereby these organizations are more susceptible to external threats. As such, more research on this topic is required. Husain and Omer (2016) found a limitation in institutional memory and knowledge transfer. The study of police succession planning still continues to attract interest in studies around the world; however, Friedman (2021) stipulated that the subject was moderately documented and lacked extensive attention from authors. In a study conducted by Papaioannou and Serdaris (2023) 302 executives were surveyed in the Greek police service, and the researchers found that succession planning was only minimal which signified limited preparation for future leadership roles. Additionally, Murphy (2006) surveyed 719 Canadian police officers and found a lack of confidence in large police organization regarding of succession planning development. A study on 12 Florida University police department uncovered that none of the agencies utilized a step-by-step method succession planning process, despite anticipated losses of supervisory management and staff, showing the existence of a gap between workforce needs and the formulation of planning (Withrow, 2003). Research has shown that many law enforcement agencies lack formal succession planning, often relying on informal or minimal strategies that do not adequately prepare future leaders (Papaioannou & Serdaris, 2023; Withrow, 2003). According to several other researchers, there is a need for more research on succession planning. These include Berns and Klarner (2017); Branden and Sharts-Hopko (2017); Darnell and Campbell (2015); Durst and Bruns (2016); Magasi (2016); Manning, Jones, Jones, and Fernandez (2015); Odengo and Bett (2016); Pila et al. (2016); and Tabatabaee et al. (2014). In addition to the geographical locations already studied, further research is needed to explore succession planning strategies in areas other than those already reviewed by Durst and Bruns (2016) and Santora et al. (2015). In police force organizations, policing leadership is vital to organizational effectiveness; as such, the preparation of police officers in succession planning should be a concern within law enforcement agencies. Moreover, the perception of police officers regarding succession planning at the Royal Bahamas Police Force is not known. In the literature, these issues have not previously been addressed.

Problem Statement

According to Guinn (2000), organizations that utilize succession planning support the development of their talent pipeline. A review of empirical research found limited studies on succession planning in law enforcement organizations, which adds to the challenges and shortages associated with the successful continuation of leadership, particularly in ensuring that there are qualified candidates ready to step into critical roles as they become available. Papaioannou and Serdaris's (2018) study examined succession planning in law enforcement

agencies and their preparation of future leaders. The findings of the study further supported that law enforcement agencies lacked a formal succession planning system with no development or identification of critical leadership positions for the future. Schafer's (2009) findings presented that succession planning, preparation, and leadership development were underdeveloped for many police agencies, and as such, there was a struggle to replace experienced leadership. Wilson and Grammich's (2009) research found that the increased retirement of senior officers strengthened the need for succession strategies to ensure leadership continuity.

Globally, there remains a shortage of police officers in service, and the same holds true in The Bahamas. Furthermore, Kim (2010) highlighted that organizations should plan for and identify known vacancies related to retirements. To address this, the RBPF Commissioner launched a recruitment exercise. To address this complex problem, the RBPF identified a need for approximately 2,000 police officers to fulfill its national obligation. As a result of this initiative, the RBPF would be better positioned to meet its national obligations effectively.

This study addresses a critical gap in understanding succession planning strategies within the Royal Bahamas Police Force, which has been largely overlooked, as noted by previous researchers (Darnell & Campbell, 2015; Odengo & Bett, 2016). Accordingly, this study addressed this gap in literature. The perception of police officers regarding the strategies, including a competency model, for the current succession planning process and the requisite changes in the Royal Bahamas Police Force remain unknown. The findings of this study may assist with succession planning for police officers within the Ministry. This research analyzed the impact of succession planning on leadership development and its alignment with an organization's mission and vision. Using this foundation, police leaders may be better equipped to influence their organizations' future. The results of this study contributed to the existing body of literature on the topic.

Literature Review

Police leadership requires individuals to possess the ability to influence, direct, and oversee the organizations management of resources and personnel to achieve public safety objectives. Although formal authority is based on rank and legal mandates and is considered the cornerstone of leadership, cultivating and maintaining future leaders within the organization has become critical to its success. The objective of succession planning is to ensure the continuation of institutional knowledge and to prepare officers who are capable of taking on important roles of leadership within the organization. Therefore, it is paramount that police leadership adopt strategic approaches to identifying and nurturing talent, rather than rely solely on promotional processes. This strengthens organizational stability and long-term performance (Schafer, 2019; Rothwell, 2016).

Several studies argued that police leadership needed to transform their organizations by including succession planning strategies and not fully relying on conventional command and control techniques. Particularly, transformational leadership and succession planning have been linked to better organizational results, such as increased employee engagement, moral, and organizational commitment (Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2014). For police leaders to effectively maintain public trust they must demonstrate transparency, accountability, integrity, and sound decision-making. The involvement of leadership is not only about upholding rules and regulations, but more importantly about creating a healthy work environment for police officers and setting examples of professional conduct at work.

The development and implementation of effective leadership within the Royal Bahamas Police Force are dependent on officer's knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) which are vital for strategic and operational succession as outlined in the competency model. Schafer (2019) highlighted other notable competencies for

police officers which include, making decisions under duress, communication skills, professional attitudes including accountability, ethical judgement and integrity. Those officers who are able to develop such competencies are better equipped to lead teams, uphold public trust, and resolve complex situations. Pearson-Goff and Herrington (2014) found that leadership effectiveness in police organizations is strongly associated with competencies such as adaptability, ethical conduct, and interpersonal skills.

Previous findings revealed the effects of law enforcement agencies with ineffective succession planning strategies within law enforcement agencies, especially in relation to organizational performance and leadership readiness. Studies demonstrated that police agencies lacking comprehensive succession planning frameworks frequently encountered delays in leadership transitions, diminished decision-making efficacy, and insufficient readiness among mid-level officers for senior positions. A study by Skipper and Bell (2008) indicated that the lack of formal leadership development and succession strategies in policing resulted in skill deficiencies among newly promoted officers, impacting operational outcomes. As outlined by Campion et al. (2011) the inclusion of competency-based succession planning improved leadership preparedness of and effectively aligned training with organizational development. Furthermore, Fernet et al.'s (2023) study found that insufficient career opportunities and a lack of training adversely affected employee engagement, especially among employees in the public sector and the law enforcement agencies. Based on these findings, law enforcement agencies risk compromising their leadership pipeline without succession planning, undermining their long-term efficacy and resilience.

Purpose

The purpose of this exploratory single-case study was to investigate how police officers perceived the strategies for the current succession planning process, which included a competency model, and the needed changes within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. Yin (2018) stipulated that case studies were commonly used in organizational and public sector because they provided an in-depth examination of complex leadership and managerial practices within real-life context. Furthermore, Yin (2014) found that case studies were ideal for investigating organizational processes. The qualitative single-case study method was considered the most effective for researching this domain (Brinkmann, 2014). Using this approach, the study aimed to explore police officers' perceptions and lived experiences concerning leadership development and succession planning, which empirical research had shown are often lacking in law enforcement agencies (Rothwell, 2016; Rojek, Shjarback, Hansen, & Alpert, 2022). Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described how case studies were valuable in organizational and leadership processes by providing detailed descriptions that assisted explaining the occurrence phenomena.

In this case, the phenomenon studied revolved around a central question: "How do police officers perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within the Royal Bahamas Police Force?" The Bahamas' governmental system is composed of around 14 public sectors. This study focused on police officers in the Royal Bahamas Police Force. The study's target population was 122 officers currently employed in the RBPF. The researcher used a final sample of 119 police officers for the questionnaire and identified 10 police officers for semi-structured interviews, with a final sample of seven police officers. The researcher also selected six focus groups consisting of 30 police officers. The study was conducted in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, which is an independent nation that gained independence from the United Kingdom on July 10, 1973. The Bahamas comprises 700 islands and over 2,400 cays located in the western Atlantic Ocean. The country has a population of 324,597, and the Prime Minister is the official head of the government. Government elections are held every five years.

Research Questions

This qualitative exploratory single-case study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ Overall: How do police officers perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process, which include a competency model, and the needed changes within Royal Bahamas Police Force?

RQ1: How do police officers perceive the strategies for the current succession planning process within the Royal Bahamas Police Force?

RQ2: How do police officers perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Royal Bahamas Police Force?

RQ3: What are the police officers recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model?

Methodology, Design, Population, and Sample

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to examine the experience of police officers within the Royal Bahamas Police Force as it related to the development of leadership and more importantly succession planning. As stipulated by Brinkman (2014) the use of a case study methodology provided a practical and effective way to investigate organizational phenomena in real-world settings. A discovery-oriented approach was used in this study to understand organizational practices and leadership disparities without quantitative measurements (Merriam, 2009). Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault (2015) emphasized the importance of qualitative inquiry when investigating social and organizational processes, since it facilitated the development of concepts, insights, and patterns based on participants lived experiences. Yin (2018) further added that the case study research was valuable for analyzing contemporary issues within bounded systems, in particularly when the boundaries between phenomena and context were not clearly defined.

According to Khuzaiyah, Abdul-Mumin, McKenna, and Haji Hashim (2023), qualitative research provided valuable insights into individuals' experiences, despite a lack of a standard definition of this methodology. A qualitative study requires fieldwork to collect in-depth context-specific data in natural environments, thereby enhancing credibility and depth (Subedi, 2022). Building trust with participants was essential when collecting qualitative information, especially in an organization such as law enforcement. Moreover, Johnson (2015) noted that using open-ended inquiries further allowed participants to express their viewpoints freely, which led to a better understanding of their experiences. The capture of real-world perspectives, as outlined by Jun and Bridges (2016), provided a meaningful interpretation of organizational dynamics and human behavior.

Furthermore, the use of qualitative research was ideal when it comes to investigating groups that had diverse experiences but allowed for the examination of shared and diverse perspectives within a specific population (Choy, 2014). According to Patton (2022), when using qualitative research, a comprehensive examination included the study of individuals, interaction of individuals, and organizational context. To gain a comprehensive understanding of leadership development and organizational practices, data were collected from police officers with different positions. This method allowed the researcher to obtain various perspectives and insights derived from the participants' life experiences with the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Design

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), case studies are a form of qualitative research that is used to examine complex organizational challenges and provide in-depth information about a particular entity, such as a

group, individual or institution. By using a case study design, this study investigated police officers' perceptions of contemporary leadership development and organizational practices, encompassing competency frameworks and areas for enhancement. Furthermore, Yin (2014) stated that case studies were very useful in understanding the perceptions of participants because they allowed participants to share their thoughts and experiences of their own words. Through this approach, the researcher was able to study a bounded system in which contextual elements and variables were examined. Single-case studies, especially, provided a lot of information about how a certain organizational phenomenon evolved over time (Yin, 2014).

As such, this study utilized multiple sources to achieve a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being examined and to ensure rigor and depth (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Case study research promoted stakeholder participation, enabling participants to make significant contributions to the development, interpretation, and validation of findings. Through this process, the method strengthened the collection of data, and the reporting was ethically conducted with respect to all participants and integrity. Previous research confirms the importance of case study methodology in highlighting the efficacy of documenting contextualized experiences that guided practical decision making (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). This method provided a firm foundation for understanding organizational dynamics and leadership in a holistic way, which further assisted in making well-informed suggestions for reform.

Population and Sample

An analysis of this qualitative case study was conducted in The Bahamas and used the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) as the research setting. The Royal Bahamas Police Forces served as the central government agency responsible for maintaining public safety across the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

The focus of this study's research target population was 122 full-time police officers employed within the RBPF across various ranks such as: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Inspector, Sergeant, Corporal, and Constable. The total number of participants who completed the questionnaire was 110 officers, whereas seven participated in semi-structured interviews. A total of six focus groups were completed, which comprised 30 police officers. All officers who participated were required to be employed full-time within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. Table 1 reflects the different data collection methods used with the participants for this study.

Table 1

Number of Participants With Related Data Sources

Data sources	# of participants
Semi-structured interview	7
Questionnaire (83 can be used)	122
6 focus group	30

Non-probability sampling techniques like purposive sampling are commonly used in qualitative research. It was chosen for its ability to identify and select information that was relevant to the research topic. This technique allowed researchers to collect data that contributed to the understanding of the project's theoretical framework. For example, researchers were able to choose participants who were proficient in or well-informed about a phenomenon of interest, possess specialized knowledge and experience, or are available and willing to participate (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling identifies and selects information-rich cases to help qualitative researchers meet their research objectives (McNeeley, Beeton, & Ojima, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015).

According to Patton (2022), the benefit of purposive sampling was that it allowed researchers to select participants with extensive knowledge and expertise relevant to the research objectives of a specific study. To gain a subjective understanding of the phenomenon of interest, Jun and Bridges (2016) often used small, purposeful samples and carefully chosen case studies. In this study, the Royal Bahamas Police Force officers provided detailed information on strategic succession planning events within the organization. To achieve the research objectives, purposive sampling was utilized.

Ethical Considerations

The regulations and policies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were adhered to throughout the research process. The researcher submitted a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study, and approval was granted in writing by the Commissioner of Police in December 2025. Maintaining high ethical standard throughout the research process was crucial to protecting participants from harm and fostering respect and trust between the researcher and the participants (Øye, Sørensen, & Glasdam, 2016). Ensuring that ethical rigor is maintained throughout the research process is key and that transparency, accountability, and honesty are presented correctly and fairly. Furthermore, empirical research highlighted that key ethical safeguards—such as informed consent, confidentiality, and transparency—were critical for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative studies, particularly within organizational settings (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Empirical studies have established the importance of utilizing informed consent, confidentiality, and transparency for qualitative research to remain trustworthy (Nowell et al., 2017). All data gathered from police officers included in this study were securely saved on a personal, password-protected external hard drive and will be maintained in a locked safe for one year. Electronic data related to this study will be deleted upon completion for this retention period, as well as all physical paperwork will be properly disposed. Safeguarding the privacy and anonymity of participants is a core tenet of ethical research. The names of participants were withheld in order to maintain anonymity (Morse & Coulehan, 2015).

Alphanumeric codes ranging from SPPOP01 and SPPOP36 were assigned to each participant for the protection of their identity in this study. Using this method reduced the risk of identifying participants and protected them against potential professional or social repercussions associated with their involvement in the study. Recent empirical research underscored the need for robust data protection, privacy procedures, and ethical transparency in qualitative studies involving public-sector employees, especially within hierarchical organizations such as policing, where confidentiality issues may affect participants' responses (Nowell et al., 2017).

Data Sources Instruments

This study incorporated three instruments for this single case study which included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Yin (2014) stipulated that these many data sources enhance the depth and validity of qualitative research allowing multiple viewpoints and enabling triangulation. This methodology upheld essential qualitative characteristics including flexibility, purposive sampling, responsiveness, transparency, and transferability (Cook, Kuper, Hatala, & Ginsburg, 2016). Therefore, through the researcher's methodological strengths the study was able to achieve a comprehensive understanding of police officers' perceptions of succession planning, the inclusion of competency model frameworks and areas that required improvement in addressing leadership deficiencies.

Questionnaire

The initial data source that was used to analyze succession planning among police officers in the Royal Bahamas Police Force was a questionnaire. From the pool of participants 122 persons completed established questionnaires that were created by Rothwell (2016) and Fenner (2005) with authorization, however, with minor modifications made where applicable. Three sections were included in this questionnaire to investigate participants' career perceptions of the competency model succession planning, framework, training, and development within the force. A five-point Likert scale was used by the participants responding from "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", and "Strongly Disagree". Furthermore, Nemoto and Beglar (2014) stated that Likert-scale questionnaires are widely used because of their efficiency in data collection and their ability to produce valid and reliable results. The standardized format also facilitated consistency in responses and allowed for meaningful interpretation of attitudes and perceptions among participants (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson, & Hankinson, 2017; O'Neill, 2017).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The second data source used was semi-structured interviews for gaining in-depth insights into the police officers' experiences about succession planning and leadership development. Seven officers participated in the interviews. Kitzinger (1995) shared that semi-structured interviews are highly effective when using qualitative research because they allow for the exploration of participants' views, beliefs, and lived experiences through open-ending questions.

This method enabled the researcher to further explore relevant topics and clarify responses (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Through semi-structured interviews individuals provided the researcher with the opportunity to interact with their first-hand experience (Hong, 2023). The duration of each interview was approximately 45 to 50 minutes, and an interview guide was used to address succession planning strategies as well as key themes. The flexible nature of the interview process allowed participants to express their perspectives freely while enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions for deeper insight into their experiences, motivations, and perceptions (Belina, 2023).

Focus Groups

The final data source comprised six focus groups of 30 police officers. Focus groups are proficient at facilitating dynamic dialogues and obtaining diverse viewpoints on a specific topic. This approach enables researchers to examine group dynamics, highlighting areas of consensus and discord that may not surface in individual interviews (De Wolf, 2016). Through the utilization of focus groups, the researcher was provided with an opportunity to corroborate and elaborate on the findings from the interviews and surveys, thus improving data triangulation. Furthermore, Hewson (2018) added that data saturation was facilitated through focus groups, thereby, uncovering common experiences and highlighting repeating themes relevant to the study. Rabiee (2004) asserted that focus groups facilitate in-depth discussions among members in a conducive environment, promoting openness and interaction. The focus group sessions lasted roughly one hour, during which participants were urged to express their opinions openly regarding succession planning and leadership development within the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Findings and Results From Study

This study was guided by the research questions examining police officers' perceptions of the current succession planning process, which included the competency model and the changes needed within the Royal

Bahamas Police Force. The results for this study were obtained from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and six focus groups which contributed to a clear understanding of police officers' views of leadership development and succession planning practices. The researcher used data analysis to identify key themes that contributed to the findings and conclusions of the study.

The aim of this study was to explore police officers' views on the existing succession planning strategies of the Royal Bahamas Police Force, focusing on competency-based approaches and ways to improve leadership continuity. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and six focus groups, and were analyzed using multiple levels of coding, and presented in Table 2. From the findings, valuable insights were obtained about succession planning within the organization. Results and conclusions were grouped according to the research questions and emerging themes.

Table 2

Formulated Codes from Research Questions

Count of Codes	
Segments/frequency occurrences	Total
Caring Leadership and Officer Well-Being	46
Need to achieve	82
Organizational structure/functions	101
political influence	17
Training and Education	78
Grand Total	324

The two models that were used for this study's foundation were the competency-based model and succession planning model highlighting the importance of developing officers' knowledge, abilities, and attitudes in the overall preparation for leadership roles (McClelland, 1973; Shirey, 2008). In leadership development, competency was defined as a mix of skills and abilities that determined an individual's ability to assume more responsibility (Chang & Xue, 2020). These frameworks provided an understanding of how succession planning could be improved so that police officers would be better prepared for future leadership positions, within the police force.

Descriptive Findings

This study was guided by the research questions that focused on the examination of how police officers perceived strategies used in the current succession planning process, including the competency model, as well as the organizational changes required within the Royal Bahamas Police Force in The Bahamas. To gain an in-depth understanding of these officers' perceptions, a single case study of qualitative research design was used. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups, thus providing insight into the phenomenon under investigation.

Focus groups, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were used to gather information for this qualitative single-case study. According to Ibrahim and Rahman (2017), semi-structured interviews allowed a deeper understanding of the situation because they relied on participant feedback. Moreover, Eckerdal and Hagström (2017) noted that qualitative surveys produced rich material that could be used by researchers in a variety of fields.

Triangulation in research was the process of combining data from several sources and was used in gathering data in a variety of ways. As outlined by Mhlongo and Harunavamwe (2017) this method increased the validity

and reliability of research findings. Through triangulation, the researcher was able to lessen bias and confirm the reliability of the participant-provided data.

The presentation of qualitative data entailed examining participant behavior, journals, interview transcripts, documents, and literature and utilizing thematic analysis with coding and sorting techniques, according to Clark and Veale's (2018) research. The information for this study was gathered using questionnaires (SurveyMonkey®) and six focus groups with 30 officers participating in the study. Seven police officers took part in the semi-structured interviews. All audio recordings were transcribed using a software transcription service called pafsimpli.com. The software was obtained by the researcher to guarantee accurate transcribing of interviews.

Participants. The study included semi-structured interviews with seven participants. The researcher selected six focus groups composed of 30 police officers. The questionnaire collected 122 records, but some results could not be used due to incomplete responses from participants, which limited the overall analysis of the data collected from the police officers and other participants. Table 3 presented the police officers' demographic information regarding each data source.

Table 3

Participants Demographic Information

Demographic profile of research participants (semi-structured interviews)	
Profile	# of participants
Gender, n = 7	
Male	4
Female	3
Job titles, n = 7	
Superintendent	1
Asst. superintendent	1
Sergeant	2
Constable	3
Demographic profile of research participants (focus group interviews-six groups)	
Profile	# of participants
Gender, n = 30	
Male	14
Female	16
Job titles, n = 30	
Asst. superintendent	3
Superintendent	2
Inspector	9
Sergeant	5
Corporal	3
Constable	8
Demographic profile of research participants (questionnaire online—122 participants, but only the numbers below were captured, some participants skipped questions and three declined)	
Profile	# of participants
Gender, n = 83	
Male	54
Female	29
Age, n = 83	
21-35	38
36-50	33
51-65	11

Table 3 to be continued

Job titles, n = 81	
Chief superintendent	3
Superintendent	7
Asst. superintendent	5
Inspector	14
Sergeant	12
Corporal	6
Constable	34

Questionnaire demographics information. The final sample of police officers consisted of 83 completed questionnaires for this study. From the data obtained 36 participants skipped this question. The response rates were 65.05% for males and 34.94% for females, representing 54 males and 29 females (see Figure 1 for gender).

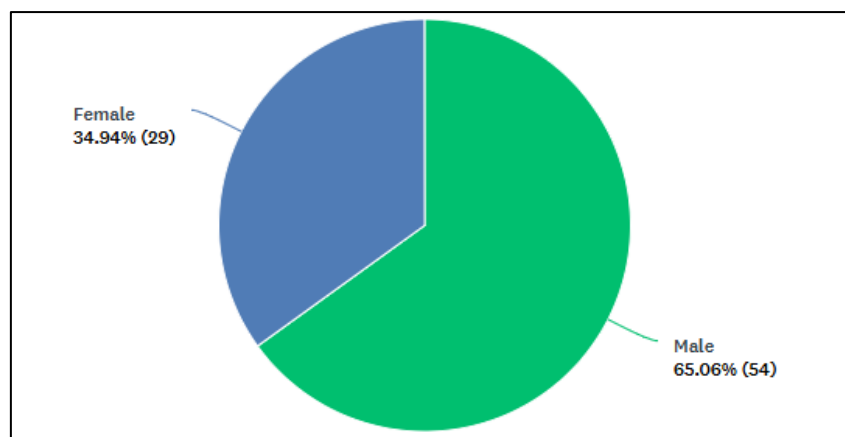


Figure 1. Gender.

Age. All participants were asked their age, and they responded accordingly. The dominant age of the participants was 21-35, representing 46.34% of the respondents. The second highest response category consisted of participants between the ages of 36 and 50 years, representing 40.24% of the respondents. The final group of participants was nearing retirement age. The third age category represented 13.41% and included participants aged 51-65 years. Figure 2 depicted the age group of the questionnaire respondents from survey monkey.

Education background. The third question addressed police officer's educational background. Thirty-six participants skipped this question. Participants with certificates represented the highest group, comprising 25% of the respondents. Participants with an Associate of Arts degree accounted for 14% of the respondents, while others reported different educational qualifications. The researcher also obtained data on other educational backgrounds (see Figure 3).

Years of employment at the Royal Bahamas Police Force. The sixth question focused on police officer's years of employment, for which participants selected from several response options. The choices included 5-10, 11-15, 16-20, and 21 years or more. Based on the participants' selections, many of participants selections, most participants had been employed for 5 to 10 years, which accounted for 43.04% of the respondents. Figure 4 outlined each participant's selection.

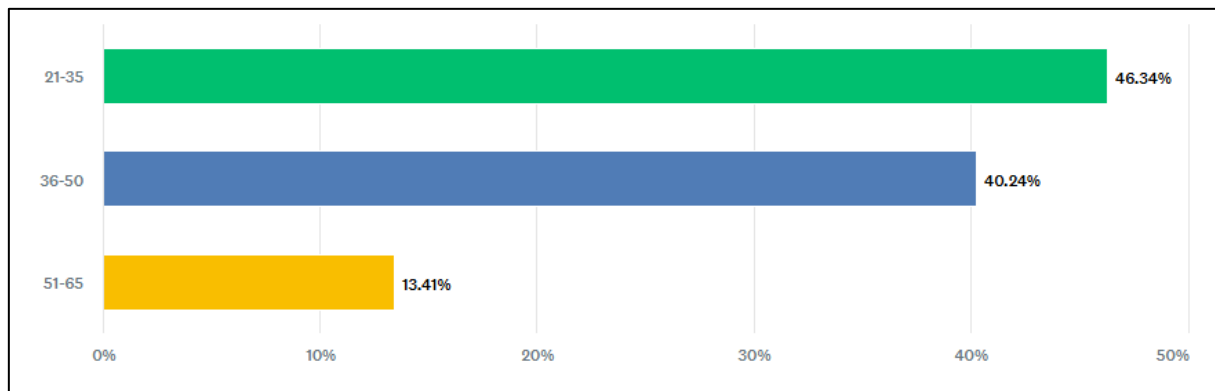


Figure 2. Age.

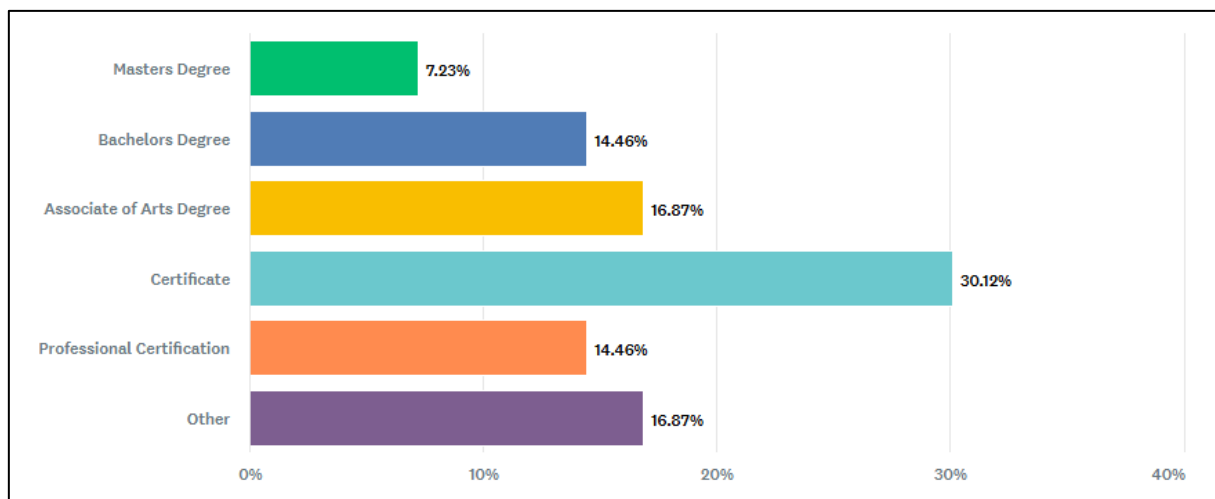


Figure 3. Qualifications.

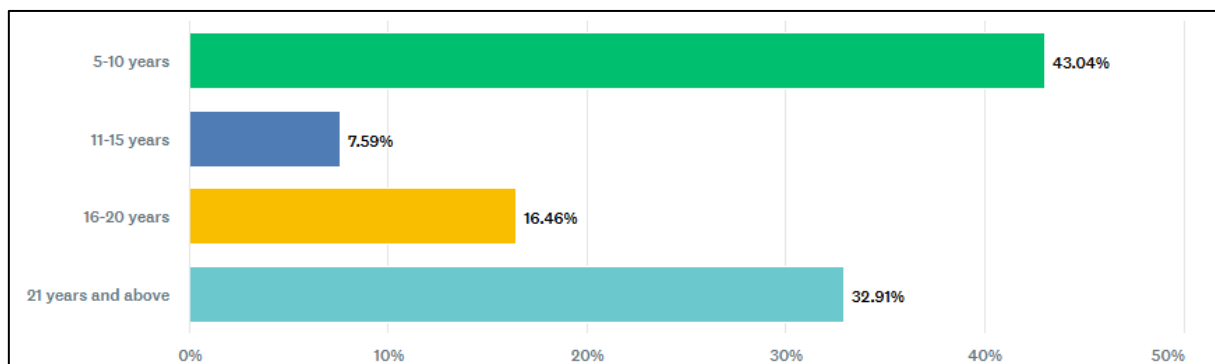


Figure 4. Years of employment.

Research Question One

The overarching first research question investigated how police officers perceived the current succession planning process and strategies, including a competency model. It also investigated the changes needed within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. After analyzing all three data sources, the researcher concluded that five themes emerged. The findings supported the three components of the competency model. Police officers identified knowledge, skills, and attitudes as important components.

The research further supported prior literature on the importance of including the competency model through caring leadership and officer well-being. It also supported the need to address organizational structure and functions, other general factors, political influence, training, and education in the Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. According to the responses of police officers to question one, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups revealed two themes. Two themes emerged from the data analysis and contributed to answering the research question. The themes were as follows:

1. Caring for leadership and officer well-being;
2. Training and education (officers are trained both locally and internationally (see Figure 5)).

Count of Codes	
Segments/frequency occurrences	Total
Caring Leadership and Officer Well-Being	46
Need to achieve	82
Organizational structure/functions	101
political influence	17
Training and Education	78
Grand Total	324

Figure 5. Generated themes.

Theme One

Caring for leadership and officer well-being. The researcher generated theme one using all three data sources. Specifically, police officers were asked about the current succession planning strategies, including a competency model, and changes that were needed within The Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. In the study, participants noted that there needed to be an increase in caring leadership and a review of officers' well-being. Based on their responses and comprehension, they perceived that more leaders needed to show care and consider officers well-being on the force. According to SPP027 view, "I believe that the attitude of the persons in leadership in some cases could change or could be adjusted". Moreover, SPPO10 stated they wanted to "see a collective group of supervisors that are willing to pass knowledge on to officers who actually are hungry to prepare for the next generations of officers". SPPO13 shared "it is their hope that leaders could see, you know, everybody started from the bottom and hope they see that when they get to the top, remember where they came from". Additionally, SPP02 shared that leaders need to "build a relationship with officers".

A study conducted by McCreary and Thompson (2006) found that leaders with positive relationship with their employees reduced burnout and psychological distress that are found among police officers in fostering procedural and organizational trust. Furthermore, participants expressed the following: SPP010 stated that when officers went through a traumatic event, leadership should have "counselling and checking up on officer's and there should be a place where they could confidently go without any repercussions just to seek help for yourself in those types of situations". SPPO11 shared "I wanted to add for example outside of trauma in the job, you know you have trauma in life, leaders need to show compassion, and when officers come to work you know, and I think when they have a supervisor or somebody who they know understands them. SPPO8 shared "so you got to show the persons that you work with that you care, that you understand what they are going through and then probably that you'll get that respect and eventually they will trust you". Additionally, SPP033 stated "creating that space for them to be able to come and share the health challenges, make them feel comfortable". SPPO21 shared as leaders "you have to be sympathetic, empathetic to their needs and their problems". Additionally, SPPO2 shared

“the welfare of officers is also paramount. Supervisors should always be concerned about the welfare of officers. You have to understand these; officers are humans as well”. All of these were important for within the Royal Bahamas Police Force where succession planning strategies prioritized caring leadership, mentoring and support systems for officers. These strategies helped bridge existing gaps while contributing to the overall improvement of police officers’ well-being and, more importantly, organizational performance.

The responses to the questionnaire further verified the insight provided by participants in face-to-face interviews and focus groups. The feedback further reinforced the theme concerning the implementation of succession planning. Question 18 revealed that 32.93% disagreed that their managers or supervisors knew who to reward and how to keep top performers motivated even when promotions are not possible. See Figure 6.

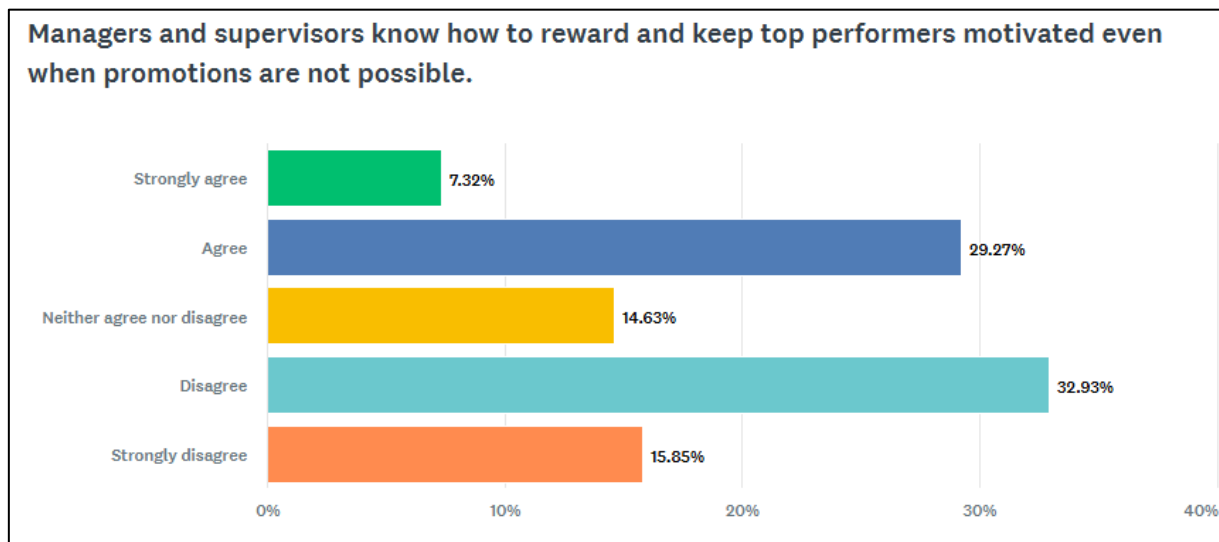


Figure 6. How to reward and keep top performers.

Theme Two

Training and education. This theme pertained to the police officers’ training and education within The Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. The study participants noted that police officers training and educational development were vital in securing leadership roles, especially when there was a vacancy. Additionally, they emphasized the need for police officers to receive adequate training and support to ensure they were able to provide the highest quality of service to the community. They argued that, without proper preparation and guidance, police officers could not effectively transition into leadership roles. Participants shared the importance of training and educational development in this study. They believed that by strengthening their knowledge and skills through continuous learning, they could provide better service as police officers and contribute to the advancement of their profession’s.

The sources used for collecting the data were semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. The participants’ responses outlined that police officers’ educational development preparation was vital to the sustainability of continued leadership through succession planning strategies at the Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. This could be accomplished through leadership development, professional development, and keeping abreast of policing, and the law enforcement profession, which was constantly evolving and changing. The development of police officers training and education was essential for organizational growth and employee development.

Continuous policing education and professional development were crucial to maintaining a highly skilled and competent police workforce. These opportunities improved policing outcomes and quality by enhancing knowledge and skills. Police officers' education development needed to be aligned with the current evidence-based practices, succession planning and emerging policing trends. Participants shared their views on the importance of policing educational development and training within the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Participant SPPO20 shared “more training so where they can stay up to date. Be current with what they have to do over”. SPPO8 indicated “I still think we need more training and I know a lot of times they focus on the public, so we need to focus on the internal guests because they are not being treated fairly or you know, being motivated or encouraged”. Moreover, SPPO13 stated “my administration when there is an internal shuffle every so often train the other person who maybe go on the next level”. SPPO20 shared “There is something called in house training where commanders and executives of different stations if you see a deficiency somewhere, then you hold your lectures to build up your team”. SPPO14 stipulated “You want to see senior persons on the job, they have experience, they have knowledge, their attitude is terrible and some of them are not willing to groom and train the future leaders of the police force”. SPPO28 shared “the organization does its part as best as possible, and I think to provide opportunities. I think earlier this year they had some training courses for the lower ranks earlier this year. It's not something that happens continuously, but I'll say that whenever the opportunity presents itself, the training and development aspect is something that is presented”.

Based on the responses to the questionnaire, the insight provided during interviews and the support from focus group sessions further reinforced the answers to the research question. Question 21 found that 29.27% of respondents disagreed that the organization used succession planning and the competency model as a means of targeting necessary training, required skills and knowledge, career development and education. See Figure 7. This same question also yielded to 29.27% of respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the question. Question 29 found that 30.12% agreed that their organization did not utilize succession planning as a tool to help develop employee career path programs, skills, knowledge, and attitudes, whereas 31.33% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

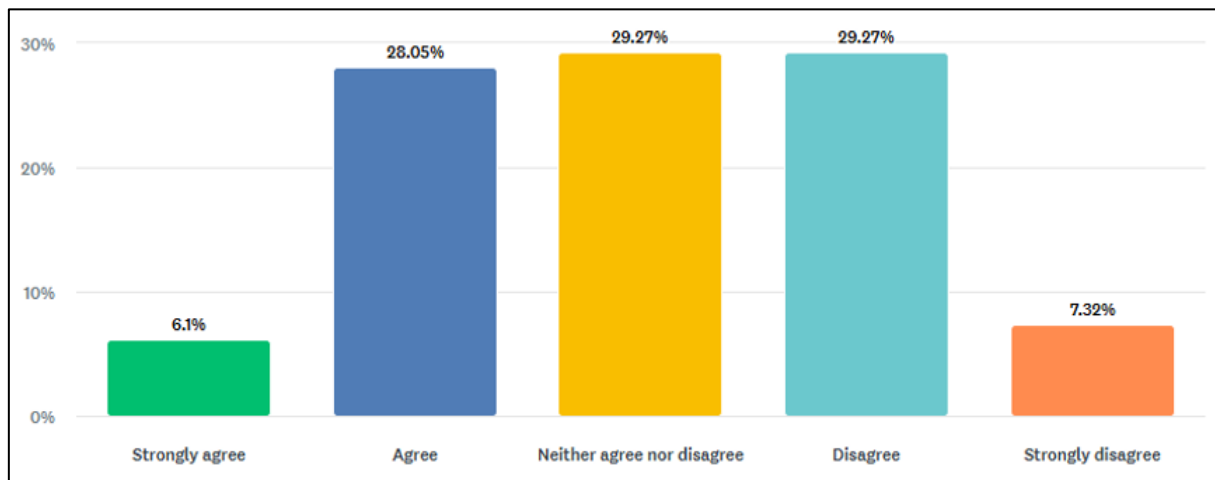


Figure 7. Question 21—Response to organization use of succession planning and competency model.

Learning was important as training and education for professional growth for leadership preparation in the Royal Bahamas Police Force were key. Preparing for college or university, as well as training and mentoring

programs, assisted officers in adjusting to changing crime rates, within the department and standards of the public. Organizations that prepared their future leaders benefited from better communication, improved problem solving, and increased employee empowerment and confidence. Education and training prepared police officers for challenging situations and helped them advance to supervisory positions. As outlined by Hasan et al. (2023), when employees underwent training and professional development, there was an improvement in job performance, motivation and leadership effectiveness in preparation for future responsibilities within the organization. Based on the participants' responses, more needed to be added to the current training and educational opportunities within the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

This further assisted in succession planning, improved leadership skills, and helped to ensure that the organization was ready for changes in future leadership. Today, Huff, and Lavender (2025) found that having a structured program geared towards leadership training had positive effects on police officers' performance, while improvements in their ability to adapt and in departmental efficiency were also evident. Ongoing training enabled police officers to be more responsible and better equipped to address modern police challenges, such as conflict resolution and community relations. From the study's findings, the Royal Bahamas Police Force needed greater investment in educational and training opportunities for all police officers. As a result, succession planning could be improved, leadership skills could be strengthened, and the organization could be better prepared for future leadership changes.

Research Question Two

The second research question of this study was: How did police officers perceive the competency model for the current succession planning process within the Royal Bahamas Police Force? This question was essential for exploring the strategies necessary for the current succession planning process at Royal Bahamas Police Force in The Bahamas. The police officers' responses from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and six focus groups revealed one theme. The theme revealed the need to achieve continuous professional training, skills development, and educational growth, which police officers identified as critical elements of employee development.

Theme Three

Need to achieve. The researcher generated theme three using all three data sources. Specifically, police officers were asked about the current succession planning strategies, including a competency model, and changes that were needed within The Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. Participants clearly outlined the importance of the need to achieve in order to stay current, pursue personal development, and prepare for promotion within the force. As outlined by SPPO31 "you don't just have to be just settle for what's here if you want to be a better officer, you want to be a better person, there are goals and stuff that you want to work on as a person". SPPO11 shared "I like to read I like to gain knowledge". On the other hand, SPPO32 stated "just go back to school". Moreover, SPPO31 highlighted "I said to be a good police officer. So, you have to understudy".

Responses from the questionnaires further endorsed the findings from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The responses further aligned with how police officers in the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF) sought to achieve personal and professional growth. In addition, the questionnaire regarding RQ2 indicated that police officers' need to achieve needed to be further developed. As the police officers' need to achieve increased, its benefits extended to both internal and external stakeholders, further supporting the development and implementation of succession planning strategies within the organization.

Question 18 found that 32.93% of police officers disagreed that managers and supervisors know how to reward and keep top performers motivated even when promotions are not possible. Whereas Question 24 found that 30.4% agreed that their organization utilized its succession plans as a tool to enhance employee morale. Question 28 found that 30.49% agreed that their organization does not utilize succession planning as a tool to help develop employee career pathing programs, skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Overall, this theme highlighted the participants' views on the importance of police officers' need to achieve in succession planning strategies within the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

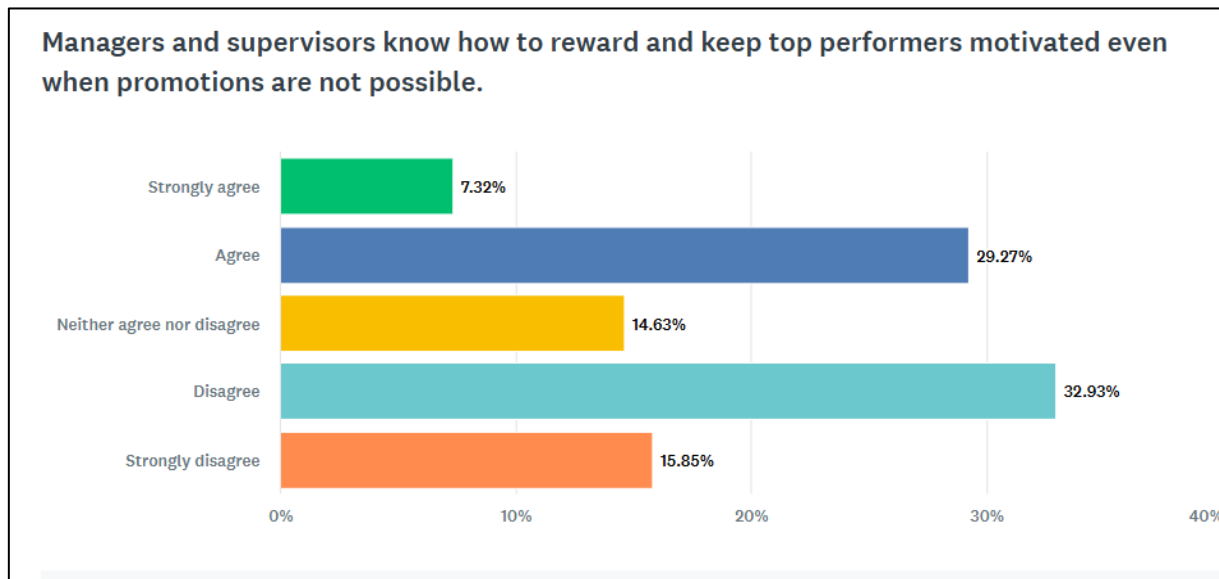


Figure 8. Question 18.

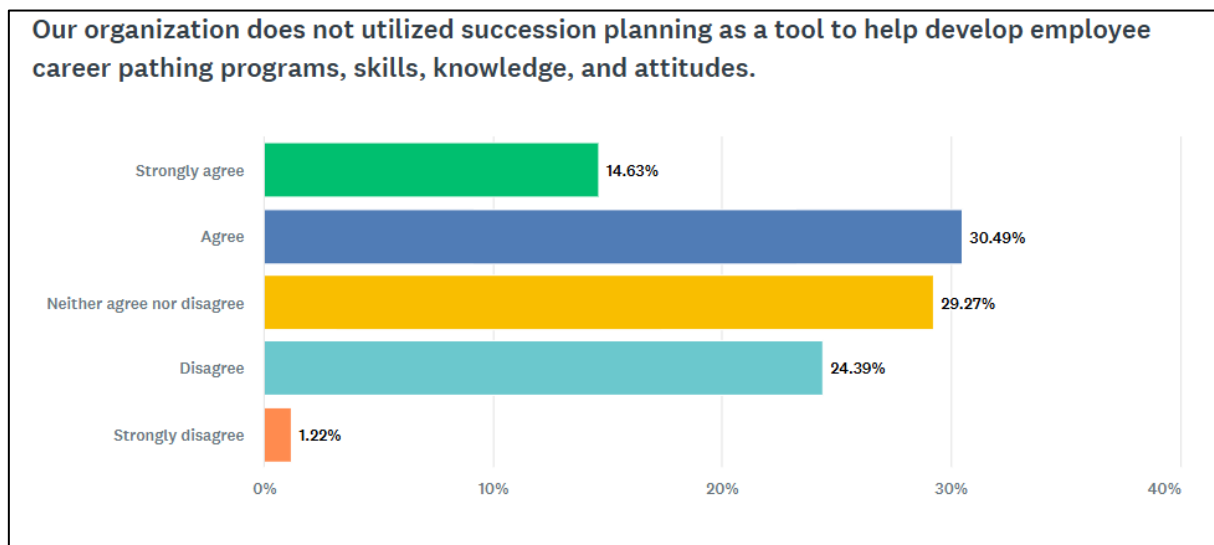


Figure 9. Question 28.

The police officers' participants expressed this third theme as important because it provided them with opportunities to develop their leadership competencies, achieve career progression, and, more importantly, make significant contributions to organizational success. Khan, Ahmed, and Ali (2024) highlighted that employees who

were achievement oriented were motivated by promotion opportunities and leadership development initiatives, which enhanced both individual and organizational growth, personally and professionally. Within policing environments, the need to achieve is often linked to officers' perceptions of fairness in promotion systems, access to professional training, and the availability of mentorship programs that support career advancement. Research findings indicated that succession planning strategies can strengthen police officers' motivation and organizational commitment in clearing the pathway for leadership preparation that leads to advancement.

Maroga, Schultz, and Smit (2024) found that having an effective succession planning process influenced employee motivation while promoting self-leadership and career development opportunities within the organization. Sharafizad, Hernandez Grande, and Farr-Wharton (2024) found that police officers who believed that leadership supported professional development opportunities exhibited higher levels of resilience and job satisfaction. As such, these findings were pertinent to the Royal Bahamas Police Force, as officers who were motivated to achieve were more than likely to engage in leadership development initiatives, thus contributing to organizational continuity. In order to bridge leadership gaps, succession planning strategies that emphasized professional growth, recognition, and equitable advancement opportunities could help foster a culture of achievement and organizational excellence.

Research Question Three

The third research question of this study was: What were the police officer's recommended changes to the strategies and the competency model? This question was essential for exploring the police officers' recommended strategies and competency model changes. The police officers' responses from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups revealed two themes. These themes were political influence and organizational structure/functions. An overview of these themes demonstrated that organizations needed to consider implementation of systematic changes for continuous improvement, thus strengthening succession planning strategies and addressing the challenges regarding political influence within the organizational structures. These themes further add to the organizational growth and continued survivability in a highly competitive environment. The following paragraphs provided the participants' views on these two themes.

Theme Four

Political influence. The researcher generated theme four using all three data sources. Specifically, police officers were asked about the current succession planning strategies, including a competency model, and changes that were needed within The Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. Participants clearly outlined the importance of political influence not being involved in the overall operations of the force since there are capable officers who can steer the force forward. According to SPPO24 stated "the reason why it is the way it is right now, I believe, is that if we were force-independent and did not have to worry about political stuff telling us what to do. We get this I believe it'll be possibly better place". SPPO28 shared "what time it is and called like political times because it's an opportunity for some persons who may not have the cases to get to the next level". In addition, SPPO10 shared "we also have good another element where political views and have favoritism. You probably have cycle and these are other elements that also plague the organization". SPPO1 stated "when we look at the top ranks of the police force, those ranks are really almost political appointments. So again today, really and truly, any person from the rank of inspector can be appointed as Commissioner of Police and as the Deputy Commissioner of Police, the Assistant Commissioners, again of course they are viewed by policymakers for the most part before they are promoted to those ranks. So again, I say that the outside influence plays a critical

role in the leadership of the organization. And I don't see anything changing anytime soon". Moreover, SPPO27 also shared "I think the challenge with alignment from my observations is that there's too much outside influence on government and that hinders transparent and effective alignment and you know succession. People are being placed in positions that they're not qualified and that affects the alignment and effective succession of the organization".

Political influence impacted police institutions. These included the involvement of politics and this external pressure, which impacted leadership decisions, succession planning, and, more importantly, the stability of the organization within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. Promotions, policy implementation, leadership appointments, and operational independence were all affected by political influences. Brown and Li (2023) stipulated that executive leadership was strongly shaped by political and managerial skills which further underlined that these executive leaders operated within an environment that was politically sensitive and influenced decision making, and more importantly organizational performances. Similarly, Jin and Rizzotti (2023) reported that political leadership and partisanship could significantly affect policing culture, leadership behavior, and operational practices within law enforcement agencies. Participants indicated that if political influences were reduced and transparency was evident, this would strengthen merit-based succession planning procedures, which were vital for accountability, professionalism to be maintained, and more importantly the sustainability of leadership within the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Theme Five

Organizational structure/functions. The researcher generated theme five from the data collected from all three data sources as it related to the responses of participants regarding how police officers perceived the current succession planning process and strategies, including a competency model, and the changes needed within the Royal Bahamas Police Force, in The Bahamas. These concepts further supported participants' views and responses on the importance of organizational structure and functions within the Royal Bahamas Police Force development. As outlined by SPPO8 "from what I gather from overall within the organization, not in black and white regarding succession planning and there is a serious shortage in our division. You have to learn as you go. Now if you have someone who would have sat in that seat and you could call, because I was able to call persons to find out some things, but there's nothing written in black and white. So, we need to bring back fairness. Want to see courage and integrity".

As for the organizational structure SPPO11 stated "the shortage is taxing not only on the body, but on the man. Because then you're working hard. And then we have to rely on the reserves who should be on their retirement relaxing, but we have to beg them to come in to supplement the shortage". SPPO11 also added "that's the force on the whole because it's a large gap. And a lot of people are leaving too because of the treatment".

SPPO9 stated that "you could be the best worker with the best appraisal, and you could still not get promoted. I mean I do believe promotion comes from God, but I guess kisses go by favorite". SPPO8 shared "this person is sacrificing every single day and cannot be rewarded. So, we need to bring back fairness I want to see courage and integrity". Moreover, SPPO13 added "you know, because nothing has changed, and in itself, that speaks for all. So, I just hope and pray that our leaders get to that place that they can implement change". SPP023 shared that "some persons like myself had passed the proficiency exams like 12 years ago and had got no elevation". SPPO2 shared "a stigma upon them for promotion. We're working now". However, SPP023 stated "We're definitely working and it shows with leadership team with females right in there".

The results from the questionnaire regarding the overarching question and RQ1 indicated the need for a review of the organizational structure and functions from the perspectives of police officers employed with the Royal Bahamas Police Force. Question 27 found that 30.49 % disagreed that their organization utilizes succession planning as a tool to help deal with the human capital shortfalls. Additionally, Question 37 found that 24.69% of respondents agreed that their organization did not perceive the strategies and competency model as effective components of the current succession planning process within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. Figure 10 and 11 depicted those results.

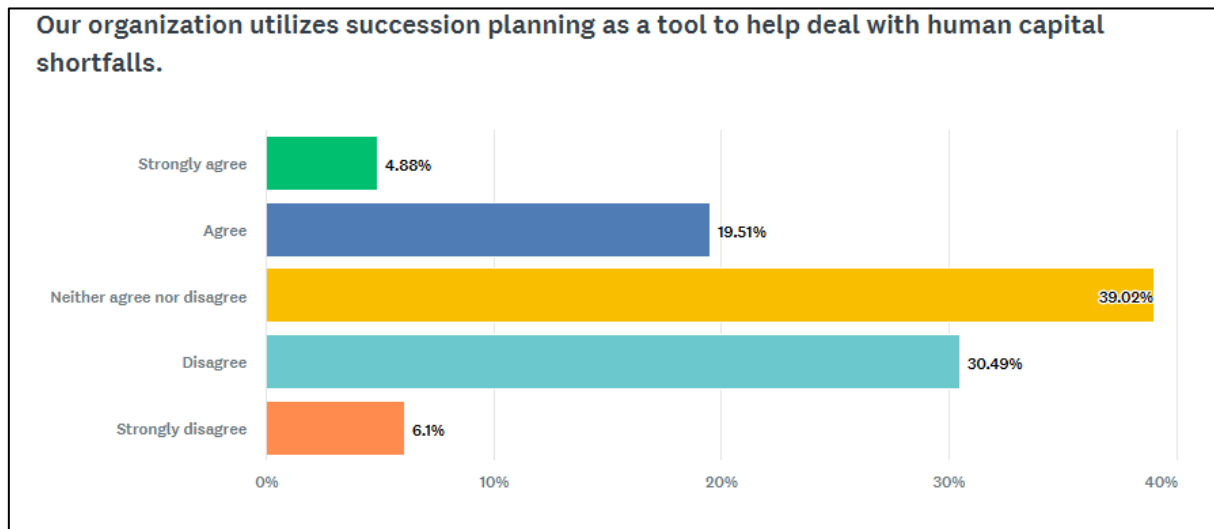


Figure 10. Question 27.

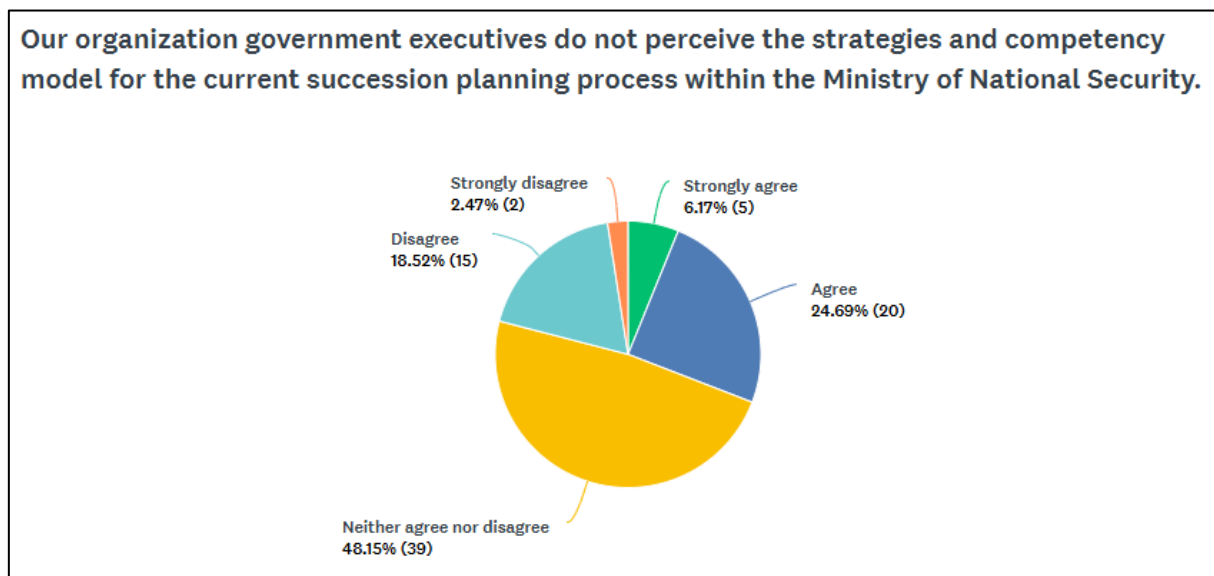


Figure 11. Question 37.

The inclusion of succession planning within police organizations was crucial for operational continuity, institutional knowledge, and the stability of leadership. According to Kim, Egan, and Moon (2014), research found that formal succession planning programs in law enforcement agencies improved leadership development and helped close talent gaps at crucial supervisory and command levels. Ritchie (2019) stated that worldwide

police organizations leadership was often confronted with outdated policies and promotion practices related to the succession planning process. Organizational structure was essential for identifying proper channels of communication and reflecting clear lines of responsibilities. As such, law enforcement organizations such as the Royal Bahamas Police Force, benefited from having a well-defined structure that supported efficient decision making and proper deployment of resources. Organizational structure further provided clarity to officers helping them understand reporting relationships, and operational procedures during emergency situations. Additionally, succession planning connected the organizational structure to leadership continuity and the preparations of officers to who were qualified to fill any critical vacancies that arose. Groves (2019) concluded that organizations with structured leadership development and succession planning systems were better able to maintain operational continuity and organizational performance. Therefore, a strong organizational structure combined with effective succession planning strategies enhanced the ability of the Royal Bahamas Police Force to maintain stability, leadership effectiveness, and quality public service delivery

Recommendations and Conclusion

Succession planning was pivotal within police organizations because it guaranteed leadership continuity for those police officers who were qualified for senior officers' positions and lessened disruptions such as unexpected resignations or vacancies. For law enforcement agencies like the Royal Bahamas Police Force, succession planning was considered vital for organizational stability, strengthening leadership capacity and improving decision making within the force. Organizations that implemented effective succession planning were able to identify and develop future leaders through leadership development programs, training and education, and mentoring.

As outlined by Wilson (2022), succession planning assisted public-sector organizations in building leadership capacity, enhancing staff development, and preparing employees for future leadership roles through competency-based strategies. Papaioannou and Serdaris (2023) found that the lack of succession and human resource planning in law enforcement agencies created serious concerns regarding leadership continuity and organizational effectiveness. Onyango (2024) found that public sector organizations, including police forces, benefited from succession planning by reducing the disruption caused by unexpected leadership vacancies and ensuring a smoother transition of responsibilities. Police organizations with robust succession planning strategies can bridge leadership gaps by ensuring that individuals are adequately prepared to assume leadership positions and possess the necessary competencies and experience.

The research revealed that promoting caring leadership and officer well-being was essential to develop future leaders in the Royal Bahamas Police Force. The recommendations were for senior police officers to be more supportive and to utilize transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was considered superior form of leadership in which leaders elevate employees' interests, and inspire others to exceed expectations (Bass, 1995; Gilbert, Horsman, & Kelloway, 2016). Copeland (2016) stated that transformational leadership was committed to the well-being of the organization, thus creating connections that increased levels of motivation and morality among subordinates. Additionally, introducing leadership development programs focuses on emotional intelligence, stress management, and employee engagement improved relationships between supervisors and junior officers. Strengthening mental health and wellness initiatives, including counselling services, peer support, and wellness workshops, was recommended and should have been made available for full utilization by officers who required these services. A study conducted by Drew, Bartels, and Herrington (2023)

found that police organizations that invested in the well-being of their officers experienced stronger leadership relationships, reduced burnout, and improved morale.

A second recommendation from the findings of this study was to include the need for achievement opportunities while focusing on recognition, career advancement, succession planning and motivation. As such, it was recommended that the Royal Bahamas Police Force develop transparent promotion pathways and leadership development opportunities to encourage officers to pursue professional growth. Formal mentoring programs, scholarships, leadership workshops, and performance-based recognition systems should be implemented to motivate officers who demonstrate leadership potential. While the Royal Bahamas Police Force had some measures in place, a consistent format needed to be finalized within the organization. The organization also needed to provide continuous professional development opportunities to prepare officers for future leadership roles. Based on the results of their study, Hassan et al. (2014) found that employees who believed they would be promoted or recognized were more likely to support succession strategies and the goals of the organization. Additionally, Belrhiti, Van Damme, Belalia, and Marchal (2020) showed that achievement motivation significantly contributed to the effectiveness of leadership in the public sector, as well as organizational development.

The third recommendation from the findings of this study was for the Royal Bahamas Police Force to review the organizational structure and the functions related to succession planning and leadership. A review of the current organizational system was recommended and where applicable, the introduction of a modernized system to ensure communication, transparency, and leadership efficiency within leadership developmental processes. A formal succession policy should be created and communicated throughout the entire police force so as to reduce uncertainty and improve the promotion system. Monitoring talent development was also important and could be accomplished through the creation of a leadership succession committee. Similarly, public sector organizations that align organizational structures with leadership development strategies experienced stronger institutional performance and workforce sustainability (Wajidi et al., 2023).

A fourth recommendation was to reduce the political influences as they related to leadership and promotional processes within the Royal Bahamas Police Force. The findings revealed that political influence could negatively affect the credibility of leadership succession planning, thereby reducing officer's trust in the promotional process. Merit-based criteria should be established to provide clear guidance and ensure a transparent process for leadership appointments. The formalization of succession planning policies should be consistent and applied fairly to ensure leadership positions were assigned based on experience, qualifications, performance, leadership competencies, and the inclusion of competency model attributes. The research findings indicated that political influence can negatively affect organizational trust, employee morale, and the effectiveness of leadership in public organizations (Ivuoma, Chukwuemeka, & Nwadiogbu, 2025). Additionally, studies revealed that high levels of employee confidence, success in succession planning, and organizational commitment were associated with merit-based promotion systems (Godspower, 2025).

The development of future leaders within the Royal Bahamas Police Force was important and required enhanced training and developmental opportunities for its officers. Therefore, continuous professional development, the promotion of higher education, and leadership training were recommended for all police officers. Leadership specialization, managerial developmental programs, and succession planning workshops were recommended to strengthen strategic thinking, problem solving skills, communication and decision making. The organization

should also establish partnerships with tertiary institutions and professional organizations to encourage officers to pursue degrees and certifications related to leadership, criminal justice, and public administration. To further enhance leadership development, especially among those officers emerging as future leaders, the organization should implement mentorship and coaching programs. Studies found that training and education greatly improved leadership competencies, organizational effectiveness, and succession readiness within the police and public sector organizations (Schafer, 2010). Additionally, Sørensen (2023) reported that professional development and continuous learning positively influenced leadership, organizational suitability and performance.

As outlined by Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002), the utilization of succession planning was a powerful tool when used to motivate and retain top leadership. Additionally, succession planning aligned organizational goals and human capital needs. Identifying and developing emerging leaders to ensure leadership continuity could be achieved through succession planning and policing programs. Employees were more likely to feel valued and supported (Beasley & Ard, 2021). Despite the pending retirement of many police officers, Ramseur, Fuchs, Edwards, and Humphreys (2018) recommended that preparation of the next generation of police officers was key. This preparation was an important step in identifying and developing potential successors in succession planning. Therefore, it was important for organizations to anticipate and plan for future staffing needs, which would contribute to long-term success. Organizations needed to plan for succession so as to ensure their leaders' success and development.

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