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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Becoming a police officer: Influential psychological factors

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Abstract

Objective: To analyse the existing relationships between motivation, self-concept and family and social influence when choosing the profession of police officer.


Methods: Cross-sectional descriptive study, through intentional sampling, carried out using a protocol for collecting information from different socio-demographic variables, the Motivation scale and the Self-concept Form-5 questionnaire. The sample consisted of 258 local police officers from the Public Security School of Andalusia (Spain).

Results: The results showed an association between the influence of family and social environment and the different motivations (achievement, affiliation and power). On the other hand, between these motivations and the different dimensions of self-concept (working, social, emotional, family and physical).

Conclusions: The prevalence of motivation can be observed. Professional motivation, self-concept and family influence are relevant variables in relation to professional choice, efficacy and productivity in professional performance. In fact, a higher degree of family self-concept promotes power motivation to face life changes.

KEYWORDS

motivation, police, professional choice, self-concept, vocational guidance

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Choice of profession, according to Rivas (2003), occupies a basic dimension of personal development and is related to a higher self-concept, greater self-esteem and a stronger notion of identity. It constitutes a facet of gradual psychosocial development (in the form of an affective, cognitive and behavioural psychological process). This process guides the person to their full socialisation, using their productive time for their insertion in the employment sphere.

Different theoretical approaches highlight the influence of different variables on professional choice. Some authors point out the importance of personality traits and the environment's social influence (Ecclestone & Pryor, 2003); others, such as Jackson and Warin (2000), state the relevance of "social comparisons." This would be, in other words, comparisons in relation to benchmark individuals or organisations and which modulate the development of an individual self-concept in each of the specific life areas. Following this same approach, Vivas-Pacheco (2007) states that the choice of a profession is determined, first, by the neighbourhood effect, that is, the presence of friends and neighbours. From this standpoint of contextual analysis, social interaction patterns between individuals are mainly the result of the set of individual preferences and environmental constraints (Baybeck & Huckfeldt, 2002) and, second, of the effects of family background, which influence children's academic achievements and social mobility. Along these lines, Campos (2012) describes variables such as parental influence, home environment, the influence of family members, studying difficulty and its duration. In addition to these factors, Foladori (2009) describes other relevant relational variables, such as family expectations and pressures regarding the student's choice of profession, the family's professional and/or working history, as well as the traditions, belief system and values. Rosenberg (1965), in turn, from the standpoint of classical theory, adds that parental influence on vocational decisions varies in line with social class, insofar as it is directly derived from the parents' expectations of themselves, as well as those deposited in their children for the future. Other authors such as González Orozco, Marín and Soto (2019) highlight the fact that, during any professional's career training, there are identity construction processes that may determine the future professional choice. Thus, just like during this career training, school experience allows the individual to refer to individual or collective referents that will determine important elements that shall influence the construction of professional identity.

Other authors such as Rivas (2003) take a more holistic approach, stating that professional choice is determined by three essential sources: first of all, by the sociogenic source, or those factors external to the person such as close family environment, stereotypes that indicate power and professional prestige and school or academic conditions. In this same line, Guevara (2015) points to factors such as geographical location, work climate, professional realisation, remuneration or promotion possibilities. Second, a psychogenic source is highlighted, characterised in turn by individual variables such as maturity and vocational counselling. As indicated by López and Sánchez (2018), making a successful vocational choice requires a certain level of development of vocational maturity that allows setting professional goals that are fulfilling for the individual and that meet the demands of the labour market. In third and final place, the third source is related to opportunity, that is, those circumstances that lay the ground for vocational behaviour, as well as the training received.

Self-concept in its different areas (work, social and emotional) is closely related to professional performance, evidencing a positive relationship between it and the evaluation of performance. At the same time, it influences the behaviour we adopt and the way we interact in different situations.

Many authors throughout the literature attempt to define self-concept from different perspectives, considering it both as a variable of a unitary or global nature and multidimensional. Self-concept can be defined as the totality of the thoughts and feelings that an individual has about him or herself and is considered a basic attitude that conditions behaviour, school performance and construction of personality (García & Musitu, 2014; Salvador-Ferrer, 2012). Thus, this concept is key for the psychological wellbeing of each person (Chacón, Padiá, Yedra, Bretón, Cepero and Zutira, 2017). In this perspective, self-concept is built through life experiences and relationships with the environment, where both the responses from oneself and those of significant persons are highly relevant (Vélez, Doner, & Sandoval, 2016). Likewise, Rodríguez (2010) describes it as the set of knowledge that every person has about themselves, that is, what each individual knows about their own way of being and acting. In short, self-concept can be

1 defined as the perceptions that everyone has about themselves, as well as the attributes they use to describe them-
2 selves. In this sense, we can say that it is fundamentally a descriptive assessment with a cognitive nuance. On the
3 other hand, García-Caneiro (2003) points out that the development of self-concept is limited by the importance of
4 individual, social and family factors from which each individual interprets the reactions and responses that other peo-
5 ple manifest in their interactions and incorporates them into their self-perceptions. Likewise, authors such as Zurita,
6 Castro, Álvaro, Rodríguez, and Pérez (2016) highlight that these are tags attributed by people themselves and that
7 they are related to physical, behavioural and emotional variables.

8 In relation to the aim of this work, authors like Super (1973) related self-concept with the stages of human
9 development, noting that the different vocational behaviours are influenced by the development stage the person is
10 at. They also highlight that people choose the profession that allows them to behave according to their personality
11 traits. This is in the sense that a person will tend to lean towards a certain profession if said profession matches what
12 they believe it is and, in addition, with what they can do.

13 In the different approaches mentioned above, several perspectives have been described and they come to differ-
14 ent conclusions. Some of them relate professional motivation and efficiency/productivity/choice to professional perfor-
15 mance. Others associate professional motivation with variables such as sex, age, culture, social class, personality, the
16 influence of family and social environment, among others. In this sense, another relevant aspect in relation to profes-
17 sional choice and performance is motivation, specifically the typology of underlying motives (of affiliation, achievement
18 and power), based on the human motivation theory of McClelland (1989). This author argued that all people have three
19 basic needs, called need for achievement, power and affiliation. The *need for achievement* was defined as always trying
20 to do things better, pursuing objectives that depend on personal efforts and not on outside variables, interpreting any
21 challenge as an opportunity for professional development and success. In turn, the *need for power* was considered the
22 desire to achieve an impact, influencing and controlling others. People with a high need for power were considered to
23 enjoy holding authority over others, feeling able to influence them in their decision making; people who like competi-
24 tive situations, are status-oriented and more interested in prestige than effective performance. Finally, the *need for affil-*
25 *iation* was defined as the desire to maintain friendly interpersonal relationships with others. People with this need
26 prefer to gain power more through the development of a favourable work environment than by the exercise of coer-
27 sive power, in order to be able to achieve personal and organisational goals in the long term.

28 Finally, to conclude with the theoretical framework of this study, it is necessary, given its peculiarities, to
29 describe the specific features of the group that prompted the interest in this work.

30 The professional profile of the police officer is made up of a series of specific characteristics for their proper per-
31 formance, which make them different from any other care profession. They also suffer a social stigma full of negative
32 connotations as a consequence of their sanctioning function. This fact prompts us to analyse the importance of the
33 motive that led the individual to decide to join the police force, as a variable that could mediate in the prevention of
34 health risks and in professional performance.

35 As stated by Orrick (2008), developing a career as a professional police officer is a complicated challenge and
36 calls for great effort, in everything from recruitment tests to the ongoing training to which they are subjected. On
37 the one hand, they find themselves in situations in which their lives are constantly at risk (Chen et al., 2006), for
38 example in violence-related and dramatic scenarios. On the other hand, there is their punitive function, reporting
39 infractions, arresting criminals and enforcing laws. Finally, we find their mediating function, as a good part of their
40 time is spent on assistance activities and conflict resolution among individuals or the community (Jordán, 2017). Sim-
41 ilarly, they usually encounter the most negative aspects of people, in which case their actions are limited to the polit-
42 ical and legislative guidelines, being obliged to ignore people's most emotional aspects (Tanigoshi, Kontos, & Remley
43 Jr., 2008). Finally, it is necessary to consider the aspects related to the more organisational characteristics, such as
44 high demand and/or low control, shift work and frequent contact with the citizen (circumstances among others for
45 which this profession is usually defined as "high stress") (Gershon, Lin, & Li, 2002).

46 After analysing the different variables described throughout this theoretical introduction, the general aim of this
47 research is to analyse the relationships existing between motivation, self-concept and family and social influence in

1 choosing the police force as a profession. More specifically, and to achieve a deeper understanding of these relation-
2 ships, we set out with two specific objectives. On one hand, to analyse the relation between levels of self-concept
3 (work, family, social, physical and emotional) and the variables: having a family member in the police force, having
4 been influenced by a family member in police force (where applicable) and the decision to choose the police force as
5 a profession. On the other hand, to examine the relationship between the motivation of achievement, power and
6 affiliation and the variables: having a relative in the police force, having been influenced by a family member and the
7 decision to choose to be a police officer as a profession.

10 2 | METHODS

12 2.1 | Design

14 A cross-sectional descriptive study through intentional sampling has been carried out.

17 2.2 | Participants

19 The sample consisted of 258 local police officers from different municipalities of Andalusia (Spain) that were com-
20 pleting their police specialisation training through the preparatory courses prior to joining the force, held at the Pub-
21 lic Security School of Andalusia (PSSA). This training centre depends on the General Directorate of Interior,
22 Emergencies and Civil Protection of the Ministry of Justice and Interior of the Government of Andalusia, for the pur-
23 pose of enriching the human capital of public security services through their training, innovation and excellence, with
24 the commitment to improve the quality of these services. Its scope of action is the Autonomous Community of
25 Andalusia. Evaluation tests were administered in the same classroom where the teaching was developed, and the
26 estimated time was about 20 min. The voluntary character of the process and the anonymity of participants, as well
27 as data confidentiality, were assured. New students are those local police officers who, having passed an open com-
28 petition, must complete their training prior to starting their employment in their final destination. Such training is
29 received from October to February of the academic year. It is required to pass this training period to be able to finally
30 join the local police force. Therefore, the only way to obtain this sample is through access to starting courses of the
31 Public Security School so as to ensure the representativeness of the sample.

32 The age range was between 23 and 39 years ($M = 29.15$, $SD = 1.032$), with 244 men (94.6%) and 14 women (5.4%).
33 In terms of educational qualifications, 76.6% had studied up to high school level, and 23.4% had completed university
34 studies. Regarding marital status, 68.8% were single, compared to 28.6% who were married or living with their partner.

35 The only inclusion criterion to participate in this research is being a student of the Public Security School of the
36 Government of Andalusia and wanting to voluntarily participate in the same.

39 2.3 | Assessment tools

41 Taking into account the objectives of this study, the following assessment tools were administered:

- 43 • First, a *protocol* for collecting information from different *socio-demographic variables* was conducted (*see Suppl. File*
44 *1 and 2 -in Spanish language-*). The Protocol consisted of 10 questions of an open character, giving information
45 about the age, sex, marital status, the existence of a family member working in the State security bodies, the influ-
46 ence that this family has had in the decision of becoming a police officer, other former labour occupations and
47 the image that person believes to bring to the local police.

- 1 • *Self-concept Form-5 (AF-5)* (García & Musitu, 2014) [see *Supp. File 1 and 2 -in Spanish language-*]. A questionnaire
 2 consisting of 30 items, which evaluates the self-concept defined in five dimensions: social, academic/professional,
 3 emotional, family and physical. Regarding the analysis of the psychometric properties of the instrument, we
 4 should note that the AF-5 questionnaire provides reliability indexes with a Cronbach alpha greater than 0.71 in all
 5 dimensions (Esnaola, Rodríguez, & Goñi, 2011).
- 6 • *Motivation scale* (Navarro, Climent and López-López, 2015). It was developed ad hoc with the purpose of
 7 obtaining information on motivation regarding the professional choice. For the development of the instrument,
 8 the classical description of the human motivation theory by McClelland (1989) was taken into account. This
 9 approach states that a person's motivation may be due to the pursuit of satisfying three main needs defined as
 10 achievement, power and affiliation. These three needs form the three dimensions of this scale, which consists of
 11 23 items with a response format of a Likert-type scale distributed across those three dimensions (achievement,
 12 power and affiliation). The validity of this instrument was assessed using the concordance between judges. The
 13 structure of the questionnaire was subject to expert opinion, and as regards the sub-dimensions of the same, it
 14 obtained a high degree of agreement (Cohen's kappa = 0.81). Moreover, once the internal consistency of the
 15 instrument was estimated through the Cronbach's alpha, the coefficients suitable for each of the dimensions of
 16 the test were obtained ($\alpha = 0.897$ for achievement motivation; $\alpha = 0.889$ in the case of power motivation; and
 17 $\alpha = 0.818$ for motivation of affiliation).

20 2.4 | Procedure

22 The research has been carried out in collaboration with the students of the Public Security School of Andalusia. To obtain
 23 a greater number of participants, the sample was collected along three consecutive promotions, more specifically in October
 24 2015, 2016 and 2017. The evaluation was carried out in the same classroom where the students received their training.
 25 The approximate completion time was 20 min. Before handing in the tests, the aim of the research was explained. In addition,
 26 the voluntary participation of students was ensured and the signing of informed consent was demanded, respecting
 27 anonymity and the principle of confidentiality. This specific study was reviewed and approved by the Director of the PSSA,
 28 before the study began, and so, for the record, the certificate was signed in Huelva, the 9th April 2015.

29 To analyse the data, we used the SPSS 20 statistical package, carrying out descriptive and comparative analyses
 30 (Student's *t*, Mann Whitney's *U*, one-way ANOVA and chi square).

33 3 | RESULTS

35 The most relevant results in relation to the study objectives are described below. Those demographic data that did
 36 not provide any results of interest have not been included. The variables analysed have been: having a family mem-
 37 ber in the police force, having been influenced by a police family member (where applicable) and the decision to
 38 choose the police profession.

41 4 | HAVING A FAMILY MEMBER IN THE POLICE FORCE

43 4.1 | Having a family member and work, social, emotional, physical and family self- 44 concept

46 In relation to the dimension of self-concept and the variable of having a relative in the police force, statistically signif-
 47 icant differences can be observed. Those persons with police family members presented a higher degree of working

TABLE 1 Having a family member in the police forces and work, social, emotional, physical and family self-concept

	M	SD	Levene test		Student t	
			F	Sig.	t	Sig. (bilateral)
Work self-concept						
WF	8.481	1.133	.416	.521	.366	.035*
NF	7.404	.945				
Social self-concept						
WF	8.552	1.102	.103	.749	1.225	.224
NF	8.211	1.227				
Emotional self-concept						
WF	7.716	1.409	.052	.820	.585	.560
NF	7.502	1.638				
Physical self-concept						
WF	8.153	1.358	1.209	.275	1.280	.204
NF	7.790	1.096				
			Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymptot. Sig. (bilateral)
Family self-concept						
WF	9.263	.782	620.500	1,701.500	-.964	.042*
NF	8.081	1.055				

* $p < .05$ WF, With Family Member ($N = 97$); NF, No Family Member ($N = 161$).

self-concept ($M = 8.48$; $SD = 1.13$) compared to those with no police in their family ($M = 7.40$; $SD = 0.94$), as well as a higher level of family self-concept ($M = 9.26$; $SD = .78$) in relation to the others ($M = 8.08$; $SD = 1.05$) (Table 1). T1

4.2 | Having a family member in the police and motivation of power, achievement and affiliation

Statistically significant differences can be observed in relation to the dimension of self-concept and the variable of having a relative in the police force. People with family members in the police force presented a higher degree of power motivation ($M = 2.80$; $SD = .61$) compared to those with no police among their family members ($M = 1.90$; $SD = .56$) (Table 2). T2

5 | HAVING BEEN INFLUENCED BY A POLICE FAMILY MEMBER

5.1 | Family influence and work, social, emotional, physical and family self-concept

In terms of the self-concept dimension and the influence of a police relative variable, we observed statistically significant differences in relation to the family self-concept sub-dimension. People who think that they have been influenced by a family member have a greater family self-concept ($M = 9.40$; $SD = .80$) compared to those that did not consider themselves influenced ($M = 8.90$; $SD = .21$) (Table 3). T3

TABLE 2 Having a family member in the police forces and power, achievement and affiliation motivation

		M	SD	Levene test		Student t	
				F	Sig.	t	Sig. (bilateral)
Power motivation	WF	2.802	.6164	.000	.990	-.434	.005*
	NF	1.903	.559				
				Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W.	Z	Asymptot. Sig. (bilateral)
Affiliation motivation	WF	3.423	.382	655.500	1,151.500	-.615	.539
	NF	3.466	.365				
Achievement motivation	WF	3.468	.195	690.000	1,771.000	-.241	.809
	NF	3.436	.216				

*p < .05 WF, With Family Member (N = 97); NF, No Family Member (N = 161).

TABLE 3 Family influence and work, social, emotional, physical and family self-concept

		M	SD	Levene test		Student t	
				F	Sig.	t	Sig. (bilateral)
Work self-concept	WI	8.394	1.154	1.685	.205	-.710	.483
	NI	8.981	.235				
Social self-concept	WI	8.514	1.159	5.731	.023	2.379	.716
	NI	8.007	.000				
Emotional self-concept	WI	7.665	1.440	1.352	.254	.122	.904
	NI	7.546	.530				
Physical self-concept	WI	8.055	1.375	3.956	.056	-.272	.788
	NI	8.327	.011				
				Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W.	Z	Asymptot. Sig. (bilateral)
Family self-concept	WI	9.401	.805	24.500	27.500	-.364	.024*
	NI	8.903	.212				

*p < .05 WI, with influence (N = 57); NI, no influence (N = 40).

5.2 | Family influence and power, achievement and affiliation motivation

In terms of the motivation dimension and the *influence of a police relative* variable, we observed statistically significant differences in relation to the *power motivation* sub-dimension. Those who considered themselves influenced by a police family member had a higher degree of power motivation (M = 2.96; SD = 0.623) compared to those who, despite having family members in the police force, did not see themselves as influenced by them when making their choice (M = 2.60; SD = .00) (Table 4). 14

6 | DECISION IN PROFESSIONAL CHOICE

6.1 | Decision in professional choice and work, social, emotional, physical and family self-concept

As can be seen in Table 5, in this case no statistically significant differences were found in this variable, that is, there is no relationship between professional decision and self-concept in its different areas. 15

TABLE 4 Family influence and power, achievement and affiliation motivation

		M	SD	Levene test		Student t	
				F	Sig.	t	Sig. (bilateral)
Power motivation	WI	2.963	.623	3.353	.077	-.077	.039*
	NI	2.604	.000				
				Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W.	Z	Asymptot. Sig. (bilateral)
Affiliation motivation	WI	3.439	.387	24.500	27.500	-.374	.709
	NI	3.375	.176				
Achievement motivation	WI	3.468	.203	20.000	23.000	-.734	.463
	NI	3.428	.000				

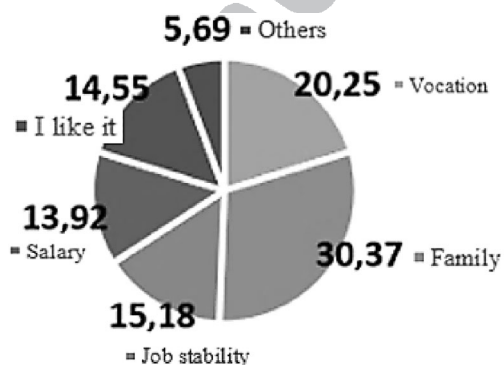
**p* < .05 WI, Influence (N = 57); NI, no influence (N = 40).

	F	Sig.
Work self-concept	.124	.987
Social self-concept	.603	.698
Emotional self-concept	.993	.428
Physical self-concept	.746	.592
Chi-square		Sig.
Family self-concept	6.356	.273

TABLE 5 Professional choice and work, social, emotional, physical and family self-concept

Motives	% (N)
Vocation	20.25% (51)
Family	30.37% (78)
Employment stability	15.18% (41)
Salary	13.92% (37)
I like it	14.55% (37)
Others	5.69% (14)

TABLE 6 Reasons for professional choice



GRAPH 1 Reasons for professional choice

TABLE 7 Professional choice and power, achievement and affiliation motivation

	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Power motivation	.258	.934
	<i>Chi-square</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Affiliation motivation	4.028	.545
Achievement motivation	8.055	.153

Having a family member in the police force is indicated as the main motive for choosing this profession (30.37%; *N* = 78). In contrast, at the opposite extreme, salary is considered one of the least appreciated reasons (13.92%; *N* = 37) (Table 6). In Graph 1, the main reasons for professional choice are detailed.

6.2 | Decision in professional choice and power, achievement and affiliation motivation

Finally, there was no statistically significant relationship between decision making in the professional scope and the reason for their choice (Table 7).

7 | DISCUSSION

As can be seen in the scientific literature, the collective of security forces and bodies has not aroused much interest from Psychology throughout history. In this work, we propose an approach to the study and knowledge in this group (specifically in the case of local police) of traditional psychological variables such as motivation, self-concept and family influence. It is evident that there is no clear consensus regarding the existence of a universal culture of the police, although there is certainty that each society's history has marked different models of police action (Guillén, 2016). In recent years, as Requena (2013) points out, an attempt has been made to implement a proximity model, where the police officer is closer to the citizen, moving away from the image of a police force with more invasive features and related to the so-called external forces of occupation, where authoritarianism and imposition prevail.

In line with the above and relating it to the findings obtained in this study, power motivation, as described by McClelland (1965), can be interpreted from two broad perspectives. On the one hand, one with a more negative connotation, where power is related to dominion-submission situations, understanding that the person wants all others to fulfil their wishes and orders, and has a need to control all situations. On the other, they can also reflect more persuasive behaviour, a characteristic of people with certain charisma and leadership who are capable of showing strengths that will help others achieve their goals. Some studies on the professional competences of the local police emphasise leadership skills, decision making and problem solving, as well as service orientation (to the public and to the organisation). All these competences are closely related to the aforementioned perspective of the concept of power motivation, being more oriented towards leadership to favour the needs of others, and more characteristic of care professions (Solé, Vilert, & Hernández, 2003).

On the other hand, one of the initial objectives of this work was to establish a differentiation between sex and the studied variables, though it was not possible given the scarce female population included in the sample (a consequence of the scarcity of women in this profession). However, from the obtained data one may see that motivation of power related to a more authoritarian model is in line with the findings by Lameiras, Rodríguez, Calado, Foltz, and González (2006) in relation to sexist attitudes in the choice of technical careers, also more traditionally associated with the "male" professions and whose explanation could be attributed to the evident masculinisation of the police profession. As Van den Eyden (1994) pointed out, these results would indicate an association with gender stereotypes, as technical careers are commonly associated with masculinity, status and power. Thus, Lameiras et al.

(2006) stated that students on technical courses tend to identify with masculine attitudes and stereotypes, which is one of the motivations for women in choosing this type of career, to be able to enjoy the privileges of status and power socially granted to the men, who take up these job positions.

Another of the findings in this study refers to a greater power motivation in those people who have family members in the police force. Several explanations can be put forward for these outcomes. On one hand, the vicarious learning of a police model more oriented to this type of motivations, based on the police profession as an exercise of power and dominion over other people, in this case, the citizenry. And on the other, the empowerment caused by the identification with all the values represented by belonging to the police forces, such as discipline, regulation and sanction, among others. In turn, Terpstra and Shaap (2015) described professional socialisation as the set of values inculcated from a differentiated police culture. This set of shared values derives from professional police practices, resulting in automated behaviour (Campeau, 2015). In those families where the professional police model has been present in the person's life, the internalisation of a specific police model that will be imitated in future professional performance is taking place unconsciously. Other studies carried out by Topa, Mariano, and Morales (2008) on the importance of social identity, in organisations and employee behaviour, showed that the identification of people with their social group encourages favourable behaviour towards their groups of belonging and reference, and towards their professional collective.

Moreover, and in terms of influence and family self-concept, it is possible that having a family member in the police force reinforces the bonds of identity and belonging to this group, as opposed to other external agents that may somehow be seen as destabilising family coherence.

Another explanation could be related to the highly vocational component of the police profession. Thus, having a family member in the police force means having someone nearby that is highly motivated by the profession, and this would undoubtedly lead this relative to talk about their profession enthusiastically in their close family environment. Some authors, such as Lorenz (2018), argue that in some cases, it is the police themselves who try to influence their children in a negative way, with the aim of preventing them from exposing themselves to the risks and sacrifices of this profession.

Likewise, the role of the family as the first agent of socialisation in the forming and consolidation of family and general self-concept acknowledges the importance of this social group in the socialisation and social protection of its members (Baptista & Oliveira, 2004). On the other hand, work has also been done on the link between socialising agents, such as family and school, and the choice of career from a standpoint more focused on the relationships and expectations of the actors involved (Bobadilla, Bürkli, Pastor, & Paredes, 2018). Likewise, Zafar (2013) found that parent approval is one of the most important factors behind the choice of career.

Another explanation for this family influence may be justified, as noted by Gómez and Vázquez (2015), in the personal and social identity as explanatory variables for people's behaviour. Belonging to a social group involves assuming the role of the group and the interiorisation of these values, with feelings of pride of belonging to it. And all these mechanisms are closely related to self-esteem, in such a way that if I consider my family or my reference group to be valuable, my feeling towards my values will also be positive.

Regarding the motives for professional choice, this study reveals that the main reason for choosing this profession is having a relative already in the police force. Along this line, we should note that in vocational guidance the role of the family is essential, providing the opportunity to choose, accept or reject the models of reference adults. These models are based on direct and indirect experiences of people with attachment bonds. This will provide an essential setting for the acquisition of knowledge and experiences related to different areas of life, including the labour market. Likewise, the family, either voluntarily or involuntarily, exerts a degree of pressure on young people to take decisions in their lives that are coherent with their values and interests.

Porfeli, Ferrari, and Nota (2013) highlight that the socialisation efforts of parents play a basic role in the success and employment focus of young people towards school and the world of work. Young people socialise by imitating adult roles within the family context (Putney & Bengtson, 2002) and learning about the working life of adults through the experiences of their parents, and this learning is translated into young people's motivation to work (Porfeli, Hartung, & Vondracek, 2008).

1 It is worth highlighting the study on professional choice in the police of Monjardet (1997), which reported similar
2 results. The research was carried out with Parisian police officers, concluding that over 11.5% were children of
3 police, and more than four fifths of the recruits personally knew police officers and gendarmes who had been influ-
4 ential in their professional choice, with these family ties being found in more than a third of the population studied.

5 Another study carried out by Dekas and Baker (2014) reported that parents are the most influential life model in
6 the career orientation their children will develop. Likewise, these authors indicated that both parents are crucial to
7 ensure that their children develop an orientation in terms of location. And on the other hand, study results showed
8 that the participants with the strongest links with their parents displayed a greater tendency to imitate their orienta-
9 tion in career terms.

10 Other authors (Lustig & Xu, 2018), in a study conducted with 269 university students, concluded that the family
11 can have a significant influence on career decisions. The results also revealed that higher levels of family cohesion
12 were associated with lower levels of confusion in decision making, commitment anxiety and external conflict in the
13 choice, and that higher levels of family adaptability were associated with lower levels of outside conflict.

16 7.1 | Limitations and future perspectives

17
18 The main limitation of this research is the difficulty of obtaining other comparative works that allow us to hold a dis-
19 cussion based on previous studies. Few studies are available on police characteristics and performance, and in most
20 of them, the analysed pathologies are related to work performance, and particularly to stress and burnout syndrome.
21 Therefore, the discussion has been based on studies focused on other populations.

22 Another of the limitations found in this paper refers to the lack of assessment instruments specifically related to
23 the professional choice and motivation of the local police. The existing evidence is related to the academic choice of
24 studies. This circumstance has led to the need to develop an ad hoc assessment instrument for this research.

25 In future research we plan to carry out studies to seek further results associated with other sociodemographic
26 variables such as sex or gender, of special relevance in this clear case of masculinised profession. In the current work
27 it was not possible to do so, due to the scarcity of female police officers taking part in the sample. This, moreover, is
28 no more than the reflection of the current reality of the local police forces in our country. So, that could also be a
29 possible line of research that would allow us to determine whether there are differences according to sex.

32 8 | CONCLUSIONS

33
34 According to the results, there are several general conclusions that can be reached from this work. In first place, it is
35 interesting that no single determining variable was identified that could explain the professional choice made by the
36 local police officers that composed this sample. Nevertheless, we observed that having a family member in the force
37 is a relevant factor in explaining a higher degree of family self-concept, as well as being a modulating factor to
38 explain greater power motivation. Finally, and in relation to family influence, we observed that it is a variable that
39 favours a greater grade of family self-concept and promotes power motivation.

41 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

42 The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

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