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# How do Croatian Police Officers Perceive Certain Characteristics of Police Management?

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## **Purpose:**

To explore the importance and existence of Croatian police managers' relevant characteristics from the perspective of police officers, and in relation to several police officers' demographic and professional characteristics.

## **Design/Methods/Approach:**

A convenience sample of 132 Croatian police officers (104 males) who attended a study programme in criminal investigation (average age 31.5 years) was examined by means of a questionnaire that – within Katz's skill theory of successful management – assesses the perceived importance and the perceived existence of technical/expert, social and strategic knowledge/skills, as well as the most representative characteristics of current police managers.

## **Findings:**

A dominant perception of the highest level of importance for all three categories of managerial knowledge/skills was detected, while possession of the said skills was mainly assessed to be at the medium level. The largest difference was found between the perceived importance and the perceived possession of social skills. Social skills were also perceived to be significantly more important than the other ones, while police managers were perceived to most frequently possess expert skills. Out of 12 offered police manager characteristics, the most frequently selected were negative ones. Finally, there were no significant and systematic effects of demographic and professional factors on the perceived importance and perceived possession of any of the three knowledge/skills categories.

## **Research Limitations/Implications:**

A larger and more representative sample would ensure the study's greater external validity and statistical power. Additional management skill items are needed in the questionnaire to improve the construct validity (besides including other relevant factors and questions useful for interpreting the trends detected).

## **Practical Implications:**

Within the research limitations, the findings suggest possible changes to the education system, staff assessment and police officers' promotion.

**Originality/Value:**

This is the first police management research in Croatia and probably the first generally within the framework of Katz's skill theory of successful management.

**UDC: 351.74(497.5)**

**Keywords:** police officers, perception, police management, categories of knowledge or skills

**Kako hrvaški policisti dojemajo določene značilnosti policijskih menedžerjev?**

**Namen:**

Namen prispevka je analizirati pomen in prisotnost relevantnih osebnostnih značilnosti in veščin/kompetenc policijskih menedžerjev v hrvaški policiji in ugotoviti, ali socialne in demografske značilnosti policistov vplivajo na to oceno.

**Metoda:**

Raziskava je bila izvedena na priložnostnem vzorcu 132 hrvaških policistov (104 moških) – študentov študijskega programa kriminalistike. Uporabljen je bil vprašalnik, ki je v skladu s Katzovo teorijo uspešnega menedžmenta meril oceno pomembnosti in prisotnosti določenih osebnostnih kompetenc pri hrvaških policijskih menedžerjih – tehničnih oz. strokovnih kompetenc, socialnih kompetenc ter strateških kompetenc. Anketiranci so ocenjevali tudi najbolj značilne osebnostne značilnosti hrvaških policijskih menedžerjev.

**Ugotovitve:**

Anketiranci so vse tri vrste kompetenc ocenili kot zelo pomembne, medtem ko so pomembnost osebnostnih značilnosti menedžerjev za njihovo uspešnost ocenili kot srednje pomembno. Največji razkorak je bil zaznan med pomembnostjo in dejansko prisotnostjo socialnih veščin/kompetenc pri policijskih menedžerjih. Socialne veščine so bile ocenjene kot pomembnejše kot drugi dve vrsti ocenjevanih veščin/kompetenc, medtem ko so bile tehnične/ekspertne veščine označene kot najbolj pogosto prisotne pri ocenjevanih menedžerjih. Od skupno 12 ocenjevanih osebnostnih značilnosti policijskih menedžerjev so bile najpogosteje izpostavljene tiste, ki jih lahko ocenimo kot negativne. Med socialnimi in demografskimi značilnostmi anketirancev in ocenjevanimi kompetencami avtorji niso ugotovili statistično značilnih povezav.

**Omejitve/uporabnost raziskave:**

Večji in bolj reprezentativni vzorec anketiranih policistov bi dal tudi bolj relevantne rezultate za hrvaško policijo. Za večjo veljavnost rezultatov bi bilo treba v vprašalnik vključiti tudi druge osebnostne značilnosti in kompetence, tako da bi lahko analizirane vsebine bolj celovito ocenili.

**Praktična uporabnost:**

Upoštevanje omejitve raziskave so lahko rezultati študije uporabni pri prihodnjem izobraževanju in selekciji policijskih vodij.

### **Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:**

Gre za prvo raziskavo o policijskem menedžmentu na Hrvaškem in verjetno eno prvih z uporabo Katzove teorije večšin v povezavi z uspešnostjo vodenja.

**UDK: 351.74(497.5)**

**Ključne besede:** policisti, policijski vodje, menedžment, kompetence, večšine, Hrvaška

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The important, complex and delicate nature of police work presupposes the perfect or at least optimal functionality of the police organisation within a challenging social and political environment. The nature and character of police work, the volume and complexity of the legal framework that governs the work, size and complexity of the police organisation and the number of employees in the police force all play important parts. In principle, the chief element in the functioning of all organisations irrespective of their type, size and nature is the so-called human factor. Human resources encompass the totality of the formal knowledge, practical skills, abilities, behaviours, social characteristics, psychological traits and realised and/or latent creative potential of the people in a society, organisation or community (Marčetić, 2007).

In this regard, police managers and police officers ('frontline executives') are key factors of the functionality of the police organisation and the most important predictor of whether police organisations can operate effectively in complex environments (Peterson, Walumbwa, Byron, & Myrowitz, 2009). Police efficiency depends on the quality of both factors as well as the quality of their interaction. In general, responsibility is not even; it is more on the side of management and less on the officers. Responsibility is proportional to the position and role of the specified factors in the organisation and, in principle, stems from the scope and content of their tasks and powers. The interaction of police management and police officers is based on a hierarchy which is formalised through legislation and manifested in police practice through subordination and coordination<sup>1</sup>.

In addition to the formal hierarchy among organisational units at different levels (external hierarchy), the hierarchical interpersonal relations among staff within individual organisational units (internal hierarchy) are important.<sup>2</sup>

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1 "Hierarchy is a set of legitimate relations on one hand and actual interpersonal relations on the other within the system and process of management. ... Subordination is a form of hierarchic relations that may be regarded as a strictly pyramidal-linear and where communication is always initiated from the top of the pyramid downwards. Coordination, as a concept in hierarchic relations in management, includes even in the preserved organisational pyramid, a two-way feedback and horizontal connections (between services, organisational units, etc.)" (Jurina, 2008: 123–124).

2 "There are three interpersonal roles of the manager: the role of representative, meaning conducting ceremonial and symbolic activities ... in which the manager appears as the 'head of the house'. The role of leader comprises relations with subordinates and includes motivation, communication and influence. The role of liason comprises maintaining information channels within the organisation and outside of it" (Buble, 2006: 19).

Interpersonal relations between managers and police officers are based on authority stemming from the managerial position. 'Formal' authority is gained by a manager through the very act of their appointment to a managerial post in the organisation, and continues for the actual term of their appointment as regulated by a written legal decision. The manager's 'actual' authority directly corresponds to their real knowledge and skills (technical, social, strategic) and the mode and scope of implementing them in the performance of managerial duties. A balance between formal and actual authority is expected as a self-understood fact, but a smaller or greater discrepancy is possible. Therefore, the system of choosing managerial staff is extremely important for the organisation since it is up to the managers to encourage, mobilise and motivate their subordinates, make best use of their potential, improve their effectiveness and raise the success rate of the entire unit.

A good proportion of research in this area is based on perceptions of police leaders' traits, abilities and behaviours in the eyes of subordinates. Pearson-Goff and Herrington (2014) concluded that most of what we know about police management leadership stems from research concentrating on 'perceptions' of police leadership rather than on objective measures (52 of 57 studies). In the literature, seven characteristics have regularly been perceived as attributes of effective police leaders. The first is being 'ethical', generally defined as exhibiting a sense of integrity and honesty and, in doing so, being able to generate a sense of trustworthiness among one's subordinates (O'Leary, Resnick-Luetke, & Monk-Turner, 2011; Schafer, 2008, 2010; Vito, Suresh, & Richards, 2011). The literature suggests that trust works in both ways, with leaders needing to be trusting of their staff as well (Wheatcroft, Laurence, & McGrory, 2012). Effective police leaders are also perceived to understand their responsibility as a 'role model' (Andreescu & Vito, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Murphy & Drodge, 2004; O'Leary et al., 2011) in leading by example. 'Communication' is another key characteristic, and the literature has conceptualised this in terms of communication within the police organisation as well as communication with one's subordinates (O'Leary et al., 2011; Schafer, 2008, 2010; Steinheider & Wuestewald, 2008) and being able to communicate across organisations and be an active voice in government and stakeholder policy development (Butterfield, Edwards, & Woodall, 2005; Meaklim & Sims, 2011). Effective police leaders are perceived to be competent 'decision makers' and able to make decisions that lead to the achievement of goals (Andreescu & Vito, 2010; Dick, 2011; Schafer, 2010). Further, the way leaders make their decisions plays an important role in them securing legitimacy and respect from their subordinates (Murphy & Drodge, 2004), with the involvement of subordinates in decision-making perceived to hold positive benefits for organisational commitment. Relatedly, effective 'thinking ability' is important with critical, strategic and creative thinking regarded as key attributes of successful leaders (Meaklim & Sims, 2011; O'Leary et al., 2011).

The relevance of how police officers perceive their leaders' attributes manifests at the level of cognitive knowledge and evaluation, and at the level of development and direction. A variety of elements – subjective and objective – affect the operationalisation of police performance management. In relation to

this, managers' individual characteristics (knowledge, skills, personality traits) along with the police system's organisational and legal characteristics are vitally important.

The research reported in the literature explores a variety of relevant police management characteristics and skills, but without some coherent theoretical framework. Therefore, we found it important to look at the properties of police management in terms of the theory of management, which emphasises three basic groups of knowledge and skills relevant to successful management in general: technical/expert, social and strategic skills (Katz, 1974):

**Technical/expert skills** – a domain expert with special knowledge and skills in a particular area or field, analytical skills of a certain specialty, the ability to use special knowledge of the profession, or skills in applying specific methods and techniques in the performance of activities and tasks.

**Social skills** (dealing with people) – the ability of managers to communicate effectively, motivate and guide individuals and groups, build relationships of cooperation and teamwork, create an atmosphere of support and safety, and ensure the participation of all employees in decision-making.

**Strategic skills** – the ability to perceive the organisation as a whole, entailing understanding of the strong interdependence of the organisation's various functions and activities, and of the impact of changes in the immediate and broader organisational environment that determine strategic directions for the organisation's activities and its development.

The main goal of this research is to present the features of Croatian police management as perceived by police officers (POs) and in relation to certain of their demographic and professional characteristics. Since most of the perceived Croatian police management features in this research refer to managers' technical/expert, social and strategic skills, the specific goals and related hypotheses are as follows:

- to present the state and congruency of the POs' *perception of the importance* and their *perception of the actual existence* of expert, social and strategic skills in the Croatian police management system. The related hypotheses presume there are no differences: (i) between the assessment of the perceived importance and perceived existence of the three types of police managers' skills (expert, social and strategic); (ii) in the perception of *importance* among the three types of police managers' skills; and (iii) in perceptions of the *existence* of the three types of police managers' skills;
- to analyse POs' perception of the *importance* of technical/expert, social and strategic skills for police managers (PMs) relative to three characteristics of POs: sex, age group and police administration category. The related hypotheses presume there are no differences in the perceived *importance* of the three types of PM skills according to the POs' gender, age and police administration category;
- to analyse POs' perception of the *existence* of technical, social and strategic skills of actual PMs relative to the POs' three characteristics. The related hypotheses presume there are no differences in the perceived *existence* of

the three types of PM skills according to the POs' gender, age and police administration category; and

- to present POs' perception of the most representative individual characteristics of actual Croatian PMs.

## 2 METHOD

### 2.1 Sample description

The convenience sample is composed of 132 police officers who attended a study programme of criminal investigation courses at the Police College of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), Croatia, during the 2014/2015 academic year. *The gender structure* of the participants in this research generally reflects the actual gender ratio of the MoI employees (1:4). As for the participants' *age structure*, the predominant age is 25–34 years (average 31.5;  $SD = 4.47$ ), which we divided into five age groups (see Table 1). The participants include all four categories of police administrations, which are equally represented. With regard to the complexity of security and crime issues, police administrations are also categorised according to area size, population size, geographic position, and crime and security level in a wider sense (Regulation on the police administrations' and police stations' county areas, seats, types and categories, 2011, 2014). The number of participants' years of service in the police is represented by five categories and in this research the prevailing length is 5–9 years, with an average of 11.1 years, which we consider relevant to ensuring the significance of the participants' replies.

Variable	Categories	N	Percentage
Gender	M	104	79.4
	F	27	20.6
Age (years)	up to 24	1	.8
	25–29	50	38.2
	30–34	47	35.9
	35–39	27	20.6
	over 40	6	4.6
Police administration category	1 <sup>st</sup> category	33	27.0
	2 <sup>nd</sup> category	26	21.3
	3 <sup>rd</sup> category	36	29.5
	4 <sup>th</sup> category	27	22.1
Length of service (years)	up to 4 years	1	.8
	5–9	69	53.1
	10–14	22	16.9
	15–19	28	21.5
	over 20	10	7.7

**Table 1:**  
Demographic  
and  
professional  
characteristics

*Demographic and professional characteristics of the 132 police officers<sup>3</sup> in the sample*

As regards the hierarchical level at which participants obtained their work experience, the dominant share of participants (81.8%) had spent their previous years of service working mostly in police stations. This fact directly impacted on their viewpoints on police management as an important component.

<sup>3</sup> Not all participants answered all of the demographic and professional questions in the questionnaire.

## 2.2 Questionnaire

Relevant data were gathered with the help of a questionnaire containing 17 items and organised into three sets – (1) demographic and professional characteristics of the examined POs (five items); (2) perceived relevance and actually exhibited technical, social and strategic PM skills (seven items); (3) the police system’s organisational-legal characteristics concerning the management (five items). Most questions were in closed form, while the second and third sets of questions were in Likert-scale format (see the categories in Table 2). For the purpose of this study, we only used questions from the first two sets:

- four questions on examinees’ (police officers’) personal characteristics (nominal and ordinal scale): gender, age group, police administration category, length of service;
- six questions on POs’ perception of the relevance of and actually exhibited technical, social and strategic PM skills (ordinal scale); and
- one question on the PMs’ most representative individual characteristics relevant to professional functioning (nominal scale).

The introductory part of the questionnaire includes a short description (definition) of the three specified categories of skills (technical/expert, social and strategic) managers must possess for successful management.

## 2.3 Procedure

The survey was conducted within the teaching process in undergraduate and graduate professional crime investigation studies at the Police College. The questionnaire was administered in three educational groups of police officers with a standard instruction stating that the questionnaire was anonymous and participation was voluntary. Although there was no time limit, the questionnaire was completed during one standard lecture.

## 2.4 Data analysis

Data were processed using descriptive and nonparametric statistics with SPSS 20 for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics Base 20, 2011; Landau & Everitt, 2004). Nonparametric statistics were applied due to the:

- (1) ordinal scale measurement of the observed variables (perception of importance and perception of the existence of relevant police management skills);
- (2) convenience sample;
- (3) the fact mostly non-equal groups were defined by the independent variables; and
- (4) the presence of mainly non-normal distributions (Howell, 1997; Siegel & Castellan, 1988).

The related tests are:

*The Wilcoxon signed-rank test* (testing the difference between the perceived importance and the perceived existence of skills relevant to police management).



*The Friedman test* (testing the congruency of the skills perceived as relevant).

*The Mann Whitney U test* (testing gender differences in the observed variables).

*The Kruskal-Wallis test* (testing the dependence of the observed variables on other personal characteristics of the examinees: age group, police administration category and duration of police employment).

### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Estimation of the importance and the level of possessing PM technical/expert, social and strategic skills

The police officers in the sample (irrespective of their age, gender, police administration category or length of service) exhibit a considerably high estimation of the importance of expert, social and strategic skills (see Table 2). Nevertheless, the median values on a scale from 1 to 5 show that the police officers regard police managers' social skills as the most important ( $Med = 5$ ,  $q^4 = 0.5$ ), and police managers' strategic skills as the least important ( $Med = 4$ ,  $q = 0.5$ ). More subtle differences in the assessed importance of the three skills would be detected if we had treated the data as measured on a pseudo-interval scale and calculated the related means and standard deviations ( $M_{ImportSocial} = 4.7$ ,  $SD_{ImportSocial} = 0.58$ ;  $M_{ImportStrategic} = 4.3$ ,  $SD_{ImportStrategic} = 0.62$ ). This is understandable because 80% of the participants are frontline POs (operatives), who primarily have high regard for expert or technical knowledge and skills.

In contrast, there is a large discrepancy between the perceived level of *importance* and the perceived level of *possession* of all those knowledge or skills categories in police managers.

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4  $q$  = semi-interquartile range



## How do Croatian Police Officers Perceive Certain Characteristics of Police Management?

**Table 2:**  
Estimation of  
POs'

	Importance of knowledge/skills	f	%	Med	Level of possession of knowledge/skills	f	%	Med
Expert skills	1 - completely irrelevant	1	.8	5	1 - extremely low	3	2.3	3
	2 - irrelevant	-	-		2 - low	18	13.6	
	3 - neither important nor unimportant	2	1.5		3 - medium	81	61.4	
	4 - important	54	40.9		4 - high	28	21.2	
	5 - extremely important	75	56.8		5 - extremely high	2	1.5	
Social skills	1 - completely irrelevant	1	.8	5	1 - extremely low	17	12.9	2
	2 - irrelevant	-	-		2 - low	59	44.7	
	3 - neither important nor unimportant	1	.8		3 - medium	48	36.4	
	4 - important	39	29.5		4 - high	8	6.1	
	5 - extremely important	91	68.9		5 - extremely high	-	-	
Strategic skills	1 - completely irrelevant	-	-	4	1 - extremely low	13	9.8	3
	2 - irrelevant	1	.8		2 - low	39	29.5	
	3 - neither important nor unimportant	8	6.1		3 - medium	69	52.3	
	4 - important	71	53.8		4 - high	10	7.6	
	5 - extremely important	52	39.4		5 - extremely high	1	.8	

Estimation of POs' perceived importance and perceived possession of PMs' expert, social and strategic knowledge or skills: frequencies, percentage and median values (Med)

The perceived level of possessed knowledge or skills is relatively low (all median marks are 3 or 2 – indicating between “low” and “medium” level). It is evident that the POs believe their present managers lack social skills ( $Med = 2, q = 0.5; M = 2.4, SD = 0.78$ ), while they mostly perceive them as possessing technical/expert knowledge or skills ( $Med = 3, q = 0; M = 3.1, SD = 0.71$ ).

### 3.2 Differences between evaluation of the perceived importance and the perceived possession of three types of knowledge or skills relevant to police managers – technical/expert, social and strategic

The large discrepancy between the perceived *level of importance* and the perceived *level of possession* of all those knowledge or skills categories for police managers, as evident from the previous distribution table, was tested using the appropriate non-parametric test (*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test*): the differences in ranks of the *perceived level of possessed knowledge or skills* and their *perceived importance* are predominantly negative, meaning the perceived level of relevant knowledge or skills possessed by PMs is significantly lower than their perceived importance (see Table 3).

Rank differences		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
(perception of possession of expert knowledge/skills by PMs – perception of importance of expert knowledge/skills for PM's function)	Negative Ranks	116	59.27	6875.00
	Positive Ranks	1	28.00	28.00
	Ties	15		
	Total	132		
(perception of possession of social skills by PMs – perception of importance of social skills for PM's function)	Negative Ranks	127	64.00	8128.00
	Positive Ranks	0	.00	.00
	Ties	5		
	Total	132		
(perception of possession of strategic skills by PMs – perception of importance of strategic skills for PM's function)	Negative Ranks	117	60.66	7097.00
	Positive Ranks	2	21.50	43.00
	Ties	13		
	Total	132		

**Table 3:**  
Descriptive statistics

*Descriptive statistics of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for testing differences in ranks of the perceived level of possessed knowledge or skills by PMs and the perceived importance of that knowledge or skills for PM's function*

The differences are clearly statistically significant (*Asymp. Sig.* < 0.001) for all three relevant types of knowledge or skills: (1) technical knowledge  $Z = -9.509$ , (2) social skills  $Z = -9.897$ , (3) strategic skills  $Z = -9.488$ .

### 3.3 Differences in perceived importance of three types of knowledge or skills relevant to police managers: expert, social and strategic

There are significant differences in perceptions of the importance of the three types of knowledge or skills relevant to PMs: with social being perceived as the most (average score of 4.66), and strategic skills the least (average score of 4.32) important for PMs. This trend is confirmed in the related Friedman test ( $\chi^2 = 27.98$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with its mean ranks (see Table 4) and *post hoc* Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Tests with a Bonferroni correction ( $PC[\alpha] = 0.017$ ), which detected significant differences in perceived importance between strategic and expert skills ( $z = -3.248$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and between strategic and social skills ( $z = -5.328$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Rank variable	Mean Rank
Perception of importance of expert skills for PMs	2.03
Perception of importance of social skills for PMs	2.21
Perception of importance of strategic skills for PMs	1.75

**Table 4:**  
Mean ranks of perceived importance of three types of knowledge or skills relevant to PMs

### 3.4 Differences in perceived existence of three types of knowledge or skills relevant to police managers: expert, social and strategic

There are significant differences in perceptions of the existence of three types of knowledge or skills relevant to PMs: expert skills is the most (average score of 3.06) and social skills the least (average score of 2.36) present in actual PMs. This trend is confirmed in the related Friedman test ( $\chi^2 = 77.43, df = 2, p < 0.001$ ) with its mean ranks (see Table 5) and *post hoc* Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Tests with a Bonferroni correction ( $PC[\alpha] = 0.017$ ), which detected significant differences in perceptions of the existence among all three PM-relevant skills: (1) social and expert ( $z = -7.751, p < 0.001$ ), strategic and expert ( $z = -5.711, p < 0.001$ ), strategic and social ( $z = -3.051, p = 0.002$ ).

**Table 5:**  
Mean ranks of perceived existence of three relevant types of knowledge or skills in PMs

Rank variable	Mean Rank
Perception of existence of expert skills for PMs	2.48
Perception of existence of social skills for PMs	1.61
Perception of existence of strategic skills for PMs	1.92

### 3.5 Gender differences

The Mann Whitney U Test with its *Asymp. Sig. p > 0.05* clearly shows that in all six observed variables (perceived importance and perceived possession of the 3 PM-relevant types of knowledge or skills) no gender differences were found (see Table 6). This is sharp evidence that male and female police officers do not have different perceptions of the importance of expert, social and strategic knowledge or skills for police managers, nor different estimations of the degree to which their current police managers possess expert, social and strategic knowledge or skills.

**Table 6:**  
Results of the Mann Whitney U test

	Importance of knowledge/skills			Level of possession of knowledge/skills		
	Gender	N	Mean rank	Gender	N	Mean rank
Expert skills	Male	104	65.15	Male	104	66.56
	Female	27	69.28	Female	27	63.85
	Test: $Z = -0.583, p = .560$			Test: $Z = -.379, p = .705$		
Social skills	Male	104	64.10	Male	104	67.81
	Female	27	73.33	Female	27	59.04
	Test: $Z = -1.408, p = 0.159$			Test: $Z = -1.153, p = .249$		
Strategic skills	Male	104	63.75	Male	104	65.93
	Female	27	74.69	Female	27	66.28
	Test: $Z = -1.506, p = 0.132$			Test: $Z = -.047, p = .963$		

*Results of the Mann Whitney U test concerning gender differences in perceived importance and perceived level of possession of knowledge/skills relevant to PMs*

Nevertheless, when observing the mean rank it is clear there is still a tendency for female officers to assess the importance of those three types of knowledge or skills higher than their male counterparts. There is also a visible tendency of male officers to more highly estimate the professional and social skills of the current police managers than their female peers, while there is no difference in estimations of the level of strategic skills.

### 3.6 Age differences

There is evidently no difference between the four age groups of police officers regarding the *perceived importance* and *perceived level of possession* of expert, social and strategic knowledge/skills relevant to PMs (*Asymp. Sig.* > 0.05, see Table 7). This means the perceived importance of knowledge or skills relevant to police managers is similar for all age groups of police officers.

	Importance of knowledge/skills			Level of possession of knowledge/skills		
	Age group	N	Mean rank	Age group	N	Mean rank
Expert skills	25–29 years	50	63.00	25–29 years	50	58.26
	30–34 years	47	69.85	30–34 years	47	75.14
	35–39 years	27	58.81	35–39 years	27	65.06
	40 & more years	6	82.33	40 & more years	6	52.33
	Test: $\chi^2 = 3.911$ , $df = 3$ , $p = .271$			Test: $\chi^2 = 7.503$ , $df = 3$ , $p = .057$		
Social skills	25–29 years	50	69.34	25–29 years	50	61.17
	30–34 years	47	65.07	30–34 years	47	69.82
	35–39 years	27	61.80	35–39 years	27	67.80
	40 & more years	6	53.50	40 & more years	6	57.42
	Test: $\chi^2 = 2.169$ , $df = 3$ , $p = .538$			Test: $\chi^2 = 1.931$ , $df = 3$ , $p = .587$		
Strategic skills	25–29 years	50	65.91	25–29 years	50	67.29
	30–34 years	47	59.56	30–34 years	47	72.21
	35–39 years	27	73.13	35–39 years	27	52.11
	40 & more years	6	74.25	40 & more years	6	58.25
	Test: $\chi^2 = 3.312$ , $df = 3$ , $p = 0.346$			Test: $\chi^2 = 6.354$ , $df = 3$ , $p = .096$		

**Table 7:**  
Results of the  
Kruskal-Wallis  
Test

*Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test concerning age differences in perceived importance and perceived level of possession of knowledge/skills relevant to PMs*

However, there is a general tendency whereby the age group 30–34 years gives the highest scores for actual possession of professional, social and strategic knowledge or skills to the current police management, while police officers of the oldest age group (40+ years) on average give the lowest scores for such knowledge or skills.

### 3.7 Police administration category differences

The first category of Police Administration is the most complex with regard to area and population size, crime and security level, and geographic/territorial position. When observing the values of the average ranks for all four Police Administration categories and all six dependent variables, two interesting tendencies may be observed (see Table 8):

- Concerning the perceived importance of all three types of knowledge or skills for police managers, it is evident that the first category of Police Administration on average provides the lowest estimation for the importance and the second highest estimation for the possession of such knowledge or skills.
- The second Police Administration category on average gives the highest estimates for the importance and the lowest estimates for the possession of such knowledge or skills in police management.

**Table 8:**  
Results of the  
Kruskal-Wallis  
Test

	Importance of knowledge/skills			Level of possession of knowledge/skills		
	PAC	N	Mean rank	PAC	N	Mean rank
Expert skills	1st category	33	56.30	1st category	33	55.82
	2nd category	26	64.92	2nd category	26	64.35
	3rd category	36	63.00	3rd category	36	67.24
	4th category	27	62.56	4th category	27	58.06
	Test: $\chi^2 = 1.401, df = 3, p = .705$			Test: $\chi^2 = 2.907, df = 3, p = .406$		
Social skills	1st category	33	53.52	1st category	33	62.85
	2nd category	26	74.88	2nd category	26	49.90
	3rd category	36	64.50	3rd category	36	69.58
	4th category	27	54.37	4th category	27	60.24
	Test: $\chi^2 = 10.769, df = 3, p = .013$			Test: $\chi^2 = 5.555, df = 3, p = .135$		
Strategic skills	1st category	33	60.80	1st category	33	68.38
	2nd category	26	66.40	2nd category	26	47.96
	3rd category	36	60.36	3rd category	36	66.96
	4th category	27	59.15	4th category	27	58.85
	Test: $\chi^2 = 0.854, df = 3, p = 0.837$			Test: $\chi^2 = 7.398, df = 3, p = .060$		

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test concerning police administration category (PAC) differences in perceived importance and perceived level of possession of relevant knowledge or skills among PMs

The specificity of the second PAC concerning the perceived importance of PMs' social skills is confirmed by the related Kruskal-Wallis test ( $\chi^2 = 10.77, df = 3, p = 0.013$ ) and *post hoc* Mann-Whitney U Tests with a Bonferroni correction ( $PC[\alpha] = 0.008$ ), which detected significant differences between the first and second ( $Z = -2.965, p = 0.003 < 0.0085$ ) and the second and fourth ( $Z = -2.785, p = 0.005 < 0.0085$ ) PACs.

### 3.8 Police managers' personal characteristics relevant for professional functioning

Managers' success also depends on their individual characteristics relevant for professional functioning. In management theory and practice, it is well known that there are generally accepted lists of positive/desirable and negative/undesirable professional personality characteristics for managers in the context of their impact on the managers' success. Out of 12 offered characteristics (six positive and six negative ones), the six most frequent ones are the negative

characteristics, indicating a very negative perception of police managers by police officers (see Table 9). Starting from the most frequent (rank 1) to the least frequent characteristic (rank 12), the dominant characteristics of the police managers – as perceived by their subordinates – may be presented as follows:

rank	Personal characteristics
1	Lack of objectivity
2	Superficiality
3	Lack of independence
4	Dishonesty
5	Indecisiveness
6	Unprofessional conduct
7	Decisiveness
8	Professionality
9	Systematic approach
10	Independence
11	Objectivity
12	Honesty

**Table 9:**  
**Individual characteristics relevant for professional functioning**

#### 4 DISCUSSION

Participants in this research were mainly police station employees. Consequently, the conclusions primarily refer to the characteristics of police management at this level of hierarchy. Projection of the obtained results onto the middle and highest levels of police management cannot be considered automatic, nor can the assumption of the same or similar characteristics of police management at lower and higher levels be *a priori* discarded.

The current status of police managers' knowledge and skills, as revealed by the results, cannot be considered satisfactory. The research ascertained there is a dominant perception of *the highest level of importance* for all three categories of managerial knowledge/skills (technical, social, strategic), which is necessary for successfully managing organisational units in the police. However, the actual possession of such knowledge/skills was largely assessed to be at the *medium level*, meaning there is a significant disparity, implying a dysfunctional state in police management. There are multiple and cumulative reasons for this condition: no social skills acquisition in previous formal education, failures in selection procedures when choosing a candidate for a managerial position in which their social skills are not adequately identified and valued, systematic non-fulfilment of the conditions prescribed in the Regulation on police officers job classification (2011, 2012, 2013). Namely, according to this Regulation, among other things, a candidate must have completed a training programme on improving work of officers higher up the hierarchy appropriate to the rank they are appointed to. A logical question arises here: do officers who advance in their jobs truly possess the required skills or are they appointed to a managerial position through an arbitrary decision?

Especially striking is the discrepancy between the perceived importance and the perceived possession of social knowledge/skills (Table 3). The importance of this was felt by the participants in their daily procedures and experience of police work and, given their dissatisfaction with the quality of their superiors' conduct towards them, they expressed highest respect for the importance of social skills in police managers (Andrescu & Vito, 2010; Fleming, 2004; Vito & Higgins, 2010).

A significant difference was detected in assessing the relevance of certain skills (Table 4) and here another question arises: why do police officers in Croatia assess social skills as the most important and strategic skills as the least important? The reason for this might be: (1) specific police officers' experience is acquired on the lowest i.e. operative level of the police system (police administration), reflecting interactions chiefly with the lowest managerial level; (2) consequences experienced by possessing or not possessing the three types of skills (lack of reciprocity), but also (3) a need for qualities that will mostly facilitate and improve managing on that level. To be more concrete, the role and significance of strategic skills is primarily reflected on the highest level of police management while on the operative level of management specialised expert skills and competencies are more important, together with the ability to apply specific methods and techniques when doing jobs in a certain organisational police unit. On the other hand, social skills and competencies were assessed as the most important to possess in order to support subordinates and have a good organisational climate for the highly stressed police work, which involves the solving of conflict situations on an everyday basis (Euwema, Kop, & Baker, 2004).

Internal working conditions are very much defined by the quality of interpersonal relations, which directly depend on police managers' conduct, especially the way they treat the police officers and how they organise their daily activities. Finally, there are at least implicit expectations that managers of police administrations must differ from the frontline executives in terms of higher levels of social competencies because their position stands out chiefly due to managing jobs and coordinating working teams, and not so much in terms of technical/expert requirements.

The significant differences in perceptions of police managers possessing the three skills (Table 5) may be due to a misbalance in all areas of police managers' training, the criteria established for selecting managers, and may be partly influenced by expectations expressed in the perceived relevance of the skills. Namely, police trainings designed to develop social skills are significantly less represented than expert competence training. On the other hand, in the criteria for promotion police officers' social skills are not even indirectly (within achievements that include them) represented as intensively as technical/expert skills. Finally, if police officers have greater expectations of managers' social rather than technical/expert skills, then the same low level of social and technical skills can be perceived in favour of technical skills (they will be perceived as more present). This effect is known in users' evaluation of public services, and forms part of the broader phenomenon of *expectancy disconfirmation* (Poister & Thomas, 2011).

Due to the available data, we could not expect to observe systematic differences between male and female police officers regarding perceptions



of the importance and perceptions of the actual existence of the three types of managerial skills. There is a mild tendency (its significance would not change drastically by changing the sample) among female officers to assess that managers' possession of all three skills more than male officers who tend to assess managers' possession of social and technical skills as more significant (Table 6). This can possibly be explained by their higher professional criteria (being more systematic, analytical and sensible) than their male colleagues. Namely, people with higher professional criteria are expected to assess as significant all the professionally desirable qualities and strictly assess a lack of them. A possible cause of the higher professional criteria in female officers might be their intrinsic motivation for the profession of a police officer since this job is, due to its requirements, only chosen by few highly motivated females.

Checking of the perceived significance and actual possession of the three skills in police managers according to age differences (Table 7) was based on the expectation that longer work experience not only gives a better insight into the skills of the managers, but also forms a more critical opinion of which skills really count. The results of this research failed to confirm this, even though a tendency was identified whereby officers aged 30 to 40 assess the possession of the three qualities in their superiors more than others, especially the oldest officers (over 40), who assess them the lowest. Such results may reflect the unevenness of the age groups observed but also the heterogeneity of police officers of the same age group, according to various working requirements for a certain category of the police administration.

On the other hand, they might reflect the growth of professional cynicism with the length of employment. Namely, the misbalance of demands and rewards or resources is reinforcing itself within a negative spiral of exhaustion and cynicism (Bakker, Killmer, Siegrist, & Schaufeli, 2000). In this process, the work relations of professionals with their colleagues and clients typically become less rewarding, as emotional exhaustion evokes negative attitudes to clients, colleagues and the organisation at large (Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999). In this regard, Bakker and colleagues (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2003) showed that job rewards, such as supervisory coaching and performance feedback, may play an important role in buffering the relationship between job demands and burnout (particularly exhaustion and cynicism from senior police officers).

Nevertheless, we believe the reason is multifaceted and based on differences in levels in the nature and mode of work, leadership styles, employees' experience and training, level of police cynicism, management experience, being used to the everyday pressure of police work etc. In connection to this, we can repeat Morreale and Ortmeier's statement (2005) about the common mind-set of police managers whereby "many believe that because they were promoted or appointed to positions of authority and responsibility they have a right to make all decisions unilaterally". This means that empowering subordinates or putting them first arises from their social construction as being an efficient police manager or leader.

The differences in the perceived importance of the three groups of skills, and in perceptions of their actual existence in police managers, among police officers

from different types of police administrations (Table 8) were led by expectations that various working requirements of certain police administrations generate different skill structures of their managers, but also different assessments of their significance. Generally, these expectations were not confirmed since it emerged that only in assessing social skills did the second category of police administrations value these skills more than others. Moreover, a tendency of the second police administration category is obvious (albeit not significant) to assess the importance the most and the possession of all three qualities the least, which might point to the higher criteria of police officers from the first category of police administration. The tendency of the first police administration category to assess the three skills with the lowest grades is interesting, although not significant.

One still cannot expect to obtain systematic differences in assessments of the significance and actual managerial possession of the three skills among the four police administration categories from such a sample, and one may question how heterogeneous the very police administrations are according to the factors relevant for assessing the three skill types. Although on the grounds of these tendencies no sensible explanation can be offered, one might speculate the reasons for understatement. Namely, with this level of data it is unclear if the present tendencies are the results of a representative sample or there might be relevant factors that were not included in the questionnaire.

Regarding the personality traits of police managers, one research finding was the participants' perception of predominantly negative personal characteristics of the PMs. This finding points not only to isolated cases of weakness within police management but to a weakness in the overall system which has a destructive impact on the functioning of police organisations.

The work of police officers is complex, responsible and highly stressful, thus making it extremely important that the work atmosphere and organisational climate within a police organisation is satisfactory. Internal or micro work conditions (atmosphere or climate) are by and large determined by the quantity and quality of interpersonal relations among employees on a day-to-day level. The social knowledge/skills of police managers impact directly on police officers' motivation and self-confidence and this impact may be *positive*, *neutral* or *negative*. They mainly relate to interpersonal relationships and depend on the character, stands and behaviour of police managers, or on their behaviour (communication, motivation, directing and leadership) towards their subordinate police officers. The quality of the impact managers have on staff is manifested in the professional satisfaction and work élan/enthusiasm of police officers and, consequently, in the success/effectiveness of the police unit.

## 5 CONCLUSION

A relatively small sample of participants was chosen to represent the entire population of highly educated police officers and the research sought to broadly diagnose their perception of the subjective elements of police management. The research tackles a relatively rare topic, especially in the Croatian environment, a topic related to aspects of police management. The main outcome of this research

shows the participants are not satisfied with collaboration, managerial support for subordinates, the lack of feedback and communication, and taking responsibility for staff well-being. Qualitative insufficiency in all of the individual elements of police management significantly restricts the potential and functionality of police organisations. Cumulative effects of the insufficiencies/negativities generate negative impacts on the organisation, making it dysfunctional and inadequately effective, in the long term limiting the development and prosperity of both the organisation and its employees.

Related to this is a need to engender organisational commitment by providing support to subordinates, giving feedback, promoting collaboration, and giving them a voice in the decision-making process (Densten, 2002, 2005; Johnson, 2012, 2015; Vito & Higgins, 2010). Thus, police officers are in need of more personal interaction, coaching and mentoring. The suggested improvements indicate there is room to improve the procedure for selecting police managers and normative instruments, such as institutional (job positions, salary, education, police ranks, promotions) and individual stimulations (accountability, work assessment, rewards).

The research results may be viewed as relevant indicators of the state of police management and may offer guidelines for further (more comprehensive and in-depth) studies, while also being a useful tool for making improvements in the organisational-managerial system of the Croatian police. However, in forming systematic guidelines for possible changes in the education system as well as in staff assessment and police officers' promotion, it is necessary to conduct research on a bigger sample that is representative of the whole system of police management (with even numbers in age groups), increase the number of questionnaire items referring to the same types of skills (to generate composite results on a higher measurement scale), but also add new questions to directly assess factors relevant to the three skills observed and to evaluate them. The effect of these factors could be examined by applying the focus group method, which would directly explain the observed tendencies.

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