



Career Meaning-Making through State-Funded Education: Evidence from Singapore's Policing Institution

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ABSTRACT

The scholarship schemes have increasingly become strategic instruments for human resource development in modern police organizations. This study examines how long-established scholarship policies function as mechanisms for leadership development and talent governance within the Singapore Police Force (SPF). Employing a qualitative dominant mixed methods approach, the research integrates descriptive quantitative mapping of official scholarship data with qualitative analysis of publicly available awardee testimonies. The findings reveal that SPF scholarship schemes are embedded within a coherent institutional architecture spanning pre-service and in-service stages, locally and overseas, and jointly governed by central and sectoral agencies. Beyond structural design, officers experience scholarship pathways as formative career processes that shape strategic capacity, leadership learning, professional identity, and service values through the interaction of education, rotational assignments, and early responsibility. The study demonstrates that the impact of scholarships depends less on study location than on policy design and career integration. By situating the SPF case within human resource development and public sector leadership frameworks, this research contributes to policing studies and offers comparative insights for police organizations seeking to strengthen leadership development through education scholarship, including in the Indonesian National Police (INP).

Keywords: education scholarship, human resources development, Singapore police force, policy design.

ABSTRAK

Skema beasiswa semakin berkembang sebagai instrumen strategis dalam pengembangan sumber daya manusia di organisasi kepolisian modern. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kebijakan beasiswa yang telah berlangsung lama berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pengembangan kepemimpinan dan tata kelola talenta di lingkungan Kepolisian Singapura (*Singapore Police Force/SPF*). Dengan menggunakan pendekatan *mixed-methods* yang didominasi metode kualitatif, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan pemetaan kuantitatif deskriptif atas data resmi beasiswa dengan analisis kualitatif terhadap testimoni penerima beasiswa yang tersedia secara publik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa skema beasiswa SPF tertanam dalam suatu arsitektur kelembagaan yang koheren, mencakup tahap *pre-service* dan *in-service*, baik pendidikan dalam negeri maupun luar negeri, serta dikelola secara bersama oleh lembaga pusat dan sektoral. Di luar aspek desain struktural, personel kepolisian memaknai jalur beasiswa sebagai proses karier yang bersifat formatif, yang membentuk kapasitas strategis, pembelajaran kepemimpinan, identitas profesional, serta nilai-nilai pengabdian melalui interaksi antara pendidikan, penugasan rotasional, dan pemberian tanggung jawab sejak dini. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dampak beasiswa lebih ditentukan oleh desain kebijakan dan integrasinya dengan jalur karier dibandingkan oleh lokasi studi semata. Dengan menempatkan kasus SPF dalam kerangka pengembangan sumber daya manusia dan kepemimpinan sektor publik, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian ilmu kepolisian serta menawarkan wawasan komparatif bagi organisasi kepolisian yang berupaya memperkuat pengembangan kepemimpinan melalui beasiswa pendidikan, termasuk di Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia (Polri).

Kata kunci: beasiswa pendidikan, pengembangan SDM, kepolisian Singapura, desain kebijakan.

INTRODUCTION

Singapore's transformation from a newly independent and resource-constrained state in the 1960s into a highly developed country has been widely attributed to its long-term investment in human capital (Cheang & Lim, 2023). Since the early post-independence period, the Singapore government has treated scholarships as a central state strategy to develop a competent, loyal, and professional bureaucracy, including within the police force. Education, both domestic and overseas, has been systematically used not merely to upgrade individual qualifications but to cultivate future leaders capable of supporting state building, institutional consolidation, and policy capacity over time (OECD, 2021; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Within this broader governance approach, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) has emerged as one of the earliest uniformed institutions to institutionalize scholarship-based career development as part of its long-term organizational strategy (Ye, 2021).

In this context, contemporary scholarship schemes in policing are no longer framed as individual career incentives, but as strategic investments aimed at shaping future leaders capable of operating across operational, policy, and inter-agency domains (Wu et al., 2015; Terpstra & Schaap, 2022). The literature emphasizes that advanced education enables police officers to navigate policy complexity, ethical dilemmas, and cross-sectoral coordination more effectively, thereby strengthening organizational performance beyond routine law enforcement functions (Mawer, 2017; Blagg & Blom, 2018). As a result, scholarship policies are increasingly expected to contribute not only to technical competence but also to the internalization of organizational values, adaptive capacity, and public service orientation over the long-term (Putri et al., 2021).

Research on police education and leadership development further demonstrates a strong association between advanced education and improved decision-making quality, ethical judgment, and strategic performance within policing institutions (Loveday, 2018). Empirical studies indicate that in developed policing systems, scholarships are systematically embedded within structured career pipelines that combine education with rotational postings, leadership grooming, and progressive responsibility (Ye, 2021). However, the literature has tended to prioritize formal training outcomes and institutional reform agendas, while paying comparatively limited attention to how long-standing scholarship systems operate across different career stages, particularly the distinction between pre-service and in-service pathways. Extensively, how officers themselves interpret the long-term impact of such educational schemes on their careers and professional identities (Frade & Walsh, 2026).

Parallel to this, the state of the art in public sector human resource governance underscores the importance of policy coherence, whereby education, promotion, and leadership development are integrated within a unified institutional design rather than implemented as fragmented initiatives (Staroňová & Gajduschek, 2019). In the policing sector, this approach is reflected in differentiated scholarship architectures that distinguish elite leadership tracks, merit-based reinforcement mechanisms, and specialist pathways, while maintaining strong institutional bonding and career integration (Miao et al., 2019). Evidence from mature systems suggests that such integrated scholarship designs contribute not only to leadership acceleration but also to officers' mental resilience and sustained organizational commitment, particularly in high pressure operational environments (Lu & Petersen, 2023; Dudinskaya, 2025).

Building on this literature, this study adopts a human resource development (HRD) framework that conceptualizes scholarships as an integrated policy cycle linking organizational needs, educational design, implementation processes, and long-term outcomes. The scholarship model for HRD emphasizes a sequential logic comprising: (1) needs analysis; (2) program design; (3) implementation; (4) output; (5) outcomes, all of which are continuously reinforced through monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Setiabudi et al., 2020). Within this framework, scholarships operate at the intersection of organizational objectives and individual development, requiring alignment between institutional competency needs, university-based learning processes, and post-study career deployment. Such an approach is particularly relevant to policing organizations, where both pre-service and in-service scholarships must translate academic learning into leadership capacity, professional identity, and organizational effectiveness over time (Setiabudi et al., 2020).

Despite this growing body of literature, empirical studies that combine system level analysis of scholarship architectures with insight into officers' perceptions across career stages remain limited, particularly in the context of policing institutions outside Western Europe and North America. By applying this HRD oriented scholarship model to the case of SPF, this study positions awardee testimonies and scholarship pathways as empirical manifestations of how structured needs

analysis, coordinated university collaboration, and sustained monitoring contribute to measurable outcomes such as enhanced competencies, officer engagement, and institutional effectiveness, thereby providing a coherent analytical lens for comparative learning in the Indonesian policing context.

By integrating policy level mapping of scholarship schemes with analysis of awardee testimonies, this research seeks to advance understanding of how long established scholarship policies function as instruments of leadership formation, strategic capacity building, and professional socialization within policing institutions. Within this context, this study raises the following research questions: *How are diverse scholarship schemes structured and governed to support long-term leadership development in a police organization? How do officers perceive and make sense of these scholarship experiences across different career stages in relation to their professional roles and institutional trajectories?* While the primary analytical focus remains on the Singapore Police Force (SPF), the insights generated from this analysis offer comparative relevance for other police organizations, including the Indonesian National Police (INP), particularly in efforts to systematically map, refine, and expand existing scholarship frameworks with LPDP.

METHOD

Two primary types of data were used in this study. First, descriptive quantitative data were obtained from official Singapore government sources, including publicly accessible websites and policy documents issued by SPF, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and the Public Service Commission (PSC). These data include information on the types of scholarships available, administering institutions, study locations, destination countries, and fields of study. All quantitative data were compiled, categorized, and processed by the author to produce a systematic mapping of the SPF scholarship landscape. Secondly, qualitative data were drawn from officially published testimonies of SPF scholarship awardee, as presented in SPF scholarship booklets. Taken together, the descriptive quantitative policy data provide a structured overview of the scholarship landscape, while the qualitative testimonies offer contextualized and interpretive insights into officers' lived experiences, reflecting the complementary strengths of combining quantitative description with inductive qualitative analysis in policy-oriented research (Schutt, 2018).

Analytical Strategy

The quantitative component of the study employs descriptive policy analysis to map the structure of SPF scholarship schemes, focusing on key dimensions such as scholarship type, administering authority (PSC, MHA, or SPF), study location (local vs. overseas), destination countries, and disciplinary fields. This mapping serves to clarify the scope, differentiation, and institutional layering of scholarship policies within the SPF system. Hereafter, the qualitative component applies thematic analysis to awardee testimonies in order to identify recurring patterns in how officers describe the impact of scholarships on their careers, leadership development, strategic thinking, and professional values. Following established qualitative procedures, the analysis involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, and refinement through iterative comparison across testimonies (Nowell et al., 2017). Only themes articulated by multiple awardees were treated as analytically significant, while singular narratives were considered individual experiences rather than representative patterns.

Testimonials were document based qualitative analysis, not human subject interviewing. The awardees listed in Table 1 were purposively selected for testimonial analysis to capture variation across time, scholarship type, and career trajectory within the Singapore Police Force. The sample spans scholarship cohorts from the early 1990s to the 2010s, allowing the analysis to reflect how scholarship experiences are perceived across different institutional phases and policy contexts. In addition, the selected awardees represent a range of scholarship schemes, including force-specific and centrally administered scholarships, as well as both local and overseas education pathways, thereby enabling comparison across different forms of educational support. At the time their testimonies were recorded (SPF, 2018; SPF, 2021), the awardees occupied diverse organizational positions, ranging from operational roles to senior leadership appointments within the SPF and the Ministry of Home Affairs, providing insight into how scholarship experiences are perceived and interpreted over time by officers who have undergone different scholarship pathways and different stages of professional development.

Table 1. Testimonial Sample of Singapore Police Force Scholarship Awardees

No	Name	Scholarship 's year	Scholarship Schemes	Position at the time of testimony
1	Lim Kok Thai	1991	Local Merit Scholarship (LMS)	Deputy Commissioner, SPF
2	Tan Chye Hee	1992	The Singapore Police Force Scholarship	Deputy Commissioner, SPF
3	Lau Peet Meng	1994	The Singapore Police Force Scholarship	Deputy Commissioner, SPF
4	Zhang Weihuan	2001	The Singapore Police Force Scholarship	Deputy Assistant Commissioner, SPF
5	Xie Xingmao	2005	The Singapore Police Force Scholarship	Assistant Director of Police, MHA
6	Tan Yong Liang	2007	The Singapore Police Force Scholarship	Assistant Director, Joint Ops, MHA
7	Shaun Lim Yung Shen	2012	President's Scholarship + SPF Scholarship	Inspector, SPF
8	Joshua Ebenezer Jesudason	2013	President's Scholarship + SPF Scholarship	Investigation Officer, SPF

This purposive sampling strategy aligns with qualitative research principles that emphasize maximum variation in order to enhance analytical depth and transferability, rather than statistical representativeness (Nowell et al., 2017; Schutt, 2018). The testimonies were drawn from officially published SPF and MHA materials, ensuring consistency of source credibility and institutional relevance.

Validity and Rigor

To enhance analytical rigor, source triangulation was applied by cross referencing quantitative policy data with qualitative testimonial evidence and official institutional narratives (Carter et al., 2014). This approach helps ensure that interpretations are grounded in multiple forms of evidence rather than relying on a single data source. The study prioritizes analytical and policy relevance over statistical generalization, with the aim of generating insights into how scholarship systems function as integrated human resource development instruments in a policing context.

FINDINGS

Institutional Architecture of Scholarship Schemes

The scholarship landscape within SPF is embedded in a broader Home Team's human resource ecosystem that distinguishes between force specific scholarships and cross agency scholarship schemes administered at the ministerial level. The MHA Uniformed Scholarship, are structured as competitive schemes across multiple Home Team agencies, including the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), Singapore Prison Service (SPS), and the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), requiring SPF candidates to compete with officers from parallel security institutions for limited awards (MHA of Singapore, 2026). Alongside these, other scholarships, most notably the Singapore Police Force Scholarship (SPFS) managed by PSC, are designed exclusively for careers within the SPF and are positioned as elite leadership pathways aligned with long-term SPF's policing roles (SPF, 2024).

This dual structure reflects a policy design in which talent development operates simultaneously through organization specific grooming mechanisms and interagency meritocratic competition, reinforcing both institutional identity and whole of government cohesion. Official MHA's scholarship documents further illustrate that scholarship schemes are differentiated not only by agency affiliation, but also by career track, stage of entry, and disciplinary orientation, while remaining anchored to a common Home Team mission of safeguarding internal security (MHA of Singapore, 2026). Historical accounts of the SPF scholarship programme likewise underscore that local and overseas scholarships have long functioned as strategic instruments for attracting, selecting, and retaining high potential officers, with scholars subsequently deployed across leadership, policy, and operational roles both within and beyond the SPF (National Archives of Singapore, 2004). Taken together, these features portray a scholarship system that is not monolithic, but layered and competitive, balancing force specific leadership cultivation with cross

agency talent circulation within Singapore's internal security architecture.

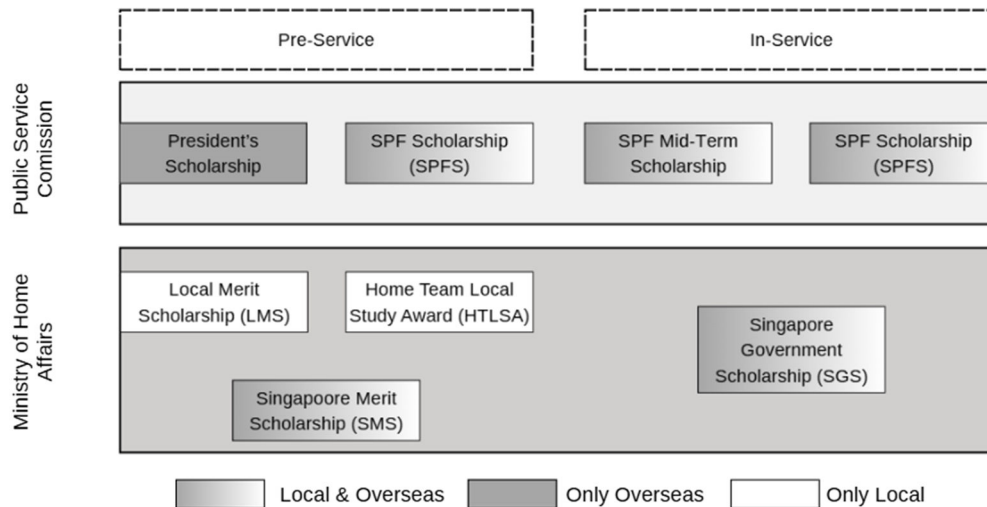


Figure 1. Institutional Structure of SPF's Scholarship Schemes by Career Stage and Administering Authority

Source: Author's analysis (SPF, 2024; MHA of Singapore, 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024; 2025; 2026)

As illustrated in Figure 1, scholarship schemes are clearly differentiated along three dimensions: career stage (pre-service and in-service), multi-layered institutional architecture (PSC and MHA), and study modality, i.e., local and overseas. This structure reflects a deliberate policy design in which scholarships are embedded within a broader human resource development framework rather than administered as isolated educational benefits.

At the pre-service level, elite scholarships administered by the PSC, such as the President's Scholarship and the SPF Scholarship (SPFS), function as early talent identification mechanisms, signalling long-term leadership expectations prior to entry into the force. In parallel, MHA's managed schemes such as the Local Merit Scholarship (LMS) and the Home Team Local Study Award (HTLSA) provide alternative entry pathways that emphasize manpower sustainability and operational alignment that study at a local university, while the Singapore Merit Scholarship (SMS) provides two options, local and overseas. At the in-service stage, the sponsorship schemes reinforce leadership development for mid-career officers to enable them to demonstrate performance, as of extending the scholarship system across the full policing career lifecycle.

From a theoretical perspective, such a design aligns with arguments that effective public sector human resource development requires balancing organizational specificity with whole of government integration (Staroňová & Gajduschek, 2019). In the SPF context, force specific scholarships strengthen professional socialization and identity formation, while cross agency competition introduces broader benchmarks of excellence and inter agency legitimacy. Especially with the existence of two scholarship schemes, namely pre-service and in-service. This case therefore, exemplifies how scholarship governance can function simultaneously as a leadership grooming mechanism and a coordination tool within a wider internal security. Importantly, the findings show that governance responsibilities are functionally differentiated but institutionally coordinated, with PSC setting overarching meritocratic standards and aligning scholarship pathways with operational and leadership needs. This layered governance arrangement supports policy coherence between education, career deployment, and leadership progression, consistent with the HRD framework.

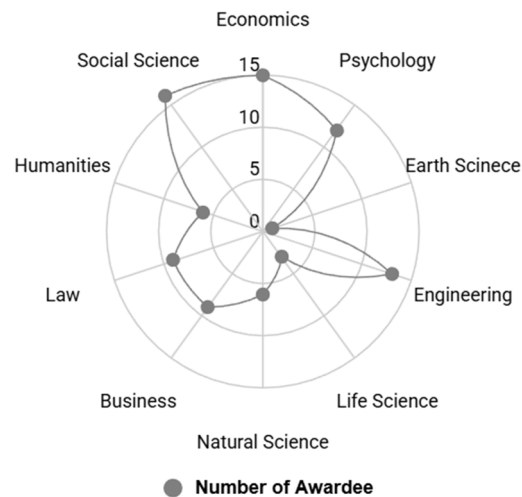


Figure 2. Distribution of Fields of Study among Scholarship Awardee, 2016-2025
Source: Author's calculation (MHA of Singapore, 2016; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2022; 2023; 2024; 2025)

Hereafter, as shown in Figure 2, awardees pursue studies across social sciences, economics, engineering, psychology, law, business, and natural sciences, with no single discipline overwhelmingly dominant. It indicates that scholarship awardee fields of study reveal a high degree of disciplinary diversity, suggesting that SPF scholarship policy prioritizes broad-based competency development rather than narrow technical specialization or policing studies. This distribution indicates that educational scholarship is intended to cultivate a mix of analytical, managerial, technological, and socio-behavioural competencies relevant to contemporary policing challenges. The prominence of social sciences and economics points to an emphasis on policy analysis and governance capacity, while the presence of engineering and natural sciences reflects the growing importance of technological and operational innovation. The diversity of fields further suggests that the SPF does not prescribe a singular educational pathway for leadership development, but instead adopts a pluralistic approach that accommodates different professional orientations within a unified institutional framework.

This pattern resonates with contemporary scholarship on police professionalism, which emphasizes the need for multidimensional skill sets to address complex policy, organizational, and societal challenges (Terpstra & Schaap, 2022; Loveday, 2018). Scholars of public sector leadership argue that exposure to diverse academic disciplines enhances strategic thinking and ethical reasoning by enabling officers to interpret problems through multiple cognitive frames (Wu et al., 2015). The SPFS portfolio reflects this perspective by avoiding over concentration in any single field, thereby cultivating leadership cohorts with complementary forms of expertise. Such diversity is consistent with HRD perspectives that view education as a means of expanding organizational problem solving capacity rather than producing uniform technical profiles (Setiabudi et al., 2020). From a policy perspective, this finding underscores that the scholarship schemes are designed to support complementary skill sets across the organization, enabling leadership teams to draw on varied forms of expertise when addressing complex security, policy, and organizational issues.

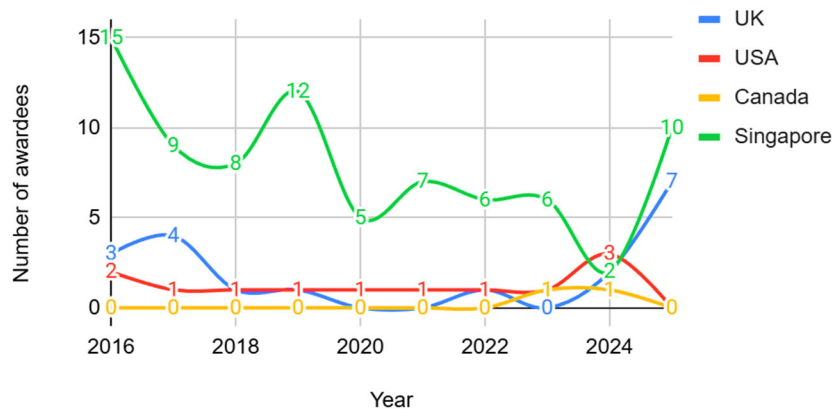


Figure 3. Trends in Scholarship Countries Destination, 2016-2025

Source: Author's calculation (MHA of Singapore, 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024; 2025)

The quantitative analysis of overseas scholarship destinations demonstrates a highly concentrated international orientation, with awardees primarily pursuing education in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, as illustrated in Figure 3. Across the observed period, these three countries account for the majority of overseas scholarship placements, while other destinations remain marginal or absent. This concentration suggests that SPF scholarship policy favours education systems associated with established governance traditions, mature public administration frameworks, and advanced policing and security studies. The temporal trend also indicates fluctuations in the number of awardees sent abroad over time, reflecting adaptive adjustments to manpower needs, fiscal considerations, and broader policy priorities rather than ad hoc individual choices. In the context of Indonesia, the number of overseas LPDP scholarship recipients from INP personnel in one year can reach 37 awardees (Pratama, 2021). Meanwhile, the total number presented in Figure 3. in overseas scholarships in almost a decade is only 33, which is still smaller than the number of scholarships in INP for one year.

Notably, overseas education functions as a selective component within the broader scholarship system rather than a universal requirement. However, the small number of overseas scholarships awarded appears to be a barrier to broad overseas education opportunities for SPF personnel. Meanwhile, local scholarships continue to play a substantial role, reinforcing institutional continuity and contextual relevance, while overseas scholarships provide targeted exposure to international perspectives and policy environments. This dual-track approach highlights how international education is strategically integrated into, rather than privileged over, domestic capacity building efforts.

Importantly, overseas scholarships constitute only one component of the broader SPF scholarship system, complementing rather than displacing local education pathways. This dual-track approach corresponds with scholarly cautions that international education yields organizational benefits only when embedded within domestic career structures and institutional deployment strategies (Peters, 2018). The SPF case thus illustrates how overseas education can be leveraged as a targeted policy instrument for strategic capacity building, while maintaining continuity and contextual relevance through locally anchored scholarship schemes.

Taken together, the findings show that the SPF scholarship system is structured as a coherent, lifecycle-oriented policy architecture that combines differentiated scholarship schemes, coordinated governance arrangements, diverse educational pathways, and selective international exposure. Rather than treating scholarships as standalone educational opportunities, the SPF embeds them within a long-term leadership development strategy that spans recruitment, mid-career reinforcement, and senior leadership preparation. This configuration is consistent with contemporary theories of public sector human capital development, which emphasize the alignment of education, career progression, and organizational values as prerequisites for sustainable leadership development in high stakes institutions such as policing (Setiabudi et al., 2020) These findings provide an empirical foundation for examining how scholarship policies function as instruments of organizational development, which is further explored through officer testimonies in subsequent sections.

Officers' Experiences and Career Meaning-Making of Scholarship Pathways ***Scholarship as an Instrument for Shaping Long-Term Career and Leadership Pathways***

The testimonies of scholarship awardees consistently indicate that both domestic and overseas scholarships are understood as entry points into long-term policing career pathways, rather than as standalone educational support. This perception emerges across generations and scholarship types. Lim Kok Thai, an awardee of the LMS (domestic), emphasized that the scholarship “*would not only see me through my university studies, but more importantly, it would offer me an exciting career in the SPF*” (SPF, 2018). This statement is significant as it demonstrates that even domestically funded scholarships are positioned as integral components of an institutional career design, rather than alternative or peripheral routes within the organization.

A similar perspective was articulated by overseas scholarship awardees. Zhang Wei-han stressed that for scholarship holders, “*it is not only a scholarship that they are signing up for but more importantly a career*” (SPF, 2021). The shared meaning articulated by both domestic and overseas awardees suggests that the location of study does not alter institutional expectations placed upon awardees. Instead, scholarships function as mechanisms of early selection and institutional socialization, binding individuals to leadership trajectories within the police force from the outset.

This orientation is further reinforced by the testimonies of younger-generation awardees. Shaun Lim Yung Shen stated that he sought a profession “*in which getting out of bed every morning would mean something*,” and found this sense of purpose within a policing career following the scholarship (SPF, 2018). Thus, scholarships not only structure formal career pathways but also shape the psychological orientation of awardees toward sustained institutional commitment.

Expansion of Strategic Capacity and Policy-Oriented Thinking

One of the most prominent impacts of scholarships identified in the awardees' testimonies is the shift from technical to operational thinking toward strategic and policy-oriented perspectives. Education, whether undertaken domestically or overseas, provides analytical frameworks that broaden how awardees conceptualize policing within the wider governance system. Lau Peet Meng noted that his experiences led him to realize that “*we can't simply think in abstract and conceptual terms because our policies have a real impact on the daily lives of Singaporeans*” (SPF, 2018). This statement underscores that the strategic capacities developed through scholarships extend beyond theoretical knowledge to encompass real-world policy consequences.

Such policy awareness is further reinforced through cross-agency exposure. Lau Peet Meng described his secondments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education as experiences that significantly expanded his intersectoral perspective (SPF, 2018). These experiences suggest that scholarships facilitate the integration of policing with broader public policy domains, preparing awardees for strategic roles that transcend internal organizational boundaries.

This pattern is also evident among later cohorts. Tan Yong Liang emphasized that his post-study experiences enabled him to understand “*the analysis and thinking behind policies and legislation*” (SPF, 2021). The consistency of these narratives across cohorts indicates that the strategic impact of scholarships is not contingent on era or study location, but rather reflects the intentional design of the scholarship policy itself.

Accelerated Responsibility, Rotational Assignments, and Early Leadership Learning

Scholarships also have a significant impact on the acceleration of responsibility and the intensity of leadership learning. Awardees frequently describe career trajectories characterized by rapid rotations and direct exposure to diverse organizational functions. Xie Xingmao stated that “*within a short period of four years, I would be put through three main postings - ground, staff, and command stints*” (SPF, 2018). This pattern illustrates that scholarships underpin a fast track leadership development model, in which learning is derived from immersive and progressive assignments.

Similar experiences were reported by Tan Chye Hee, who noted that each posting offered “*immense opportunities for personal and leadership development*” (SPF, 2021). This suggests that rotational assignments are not merely administrative transfers, but deliberately structured learning mechanisms designed to cultivate leadership competencies. Acceleration is also evident in the scale of responsibility entrusted to awardees. Lau Peet Meng emphasized that the opportunity to lead more than 1,000 personnel is “*very rarely*” available within other areas of the public service (SPF, 2018). Consequently, the impact of scholarships is reflected in the early

exposure of awardees to complex organizational leadership and high stakes decision making.

This experiential dimension is evident in the testimony of Tan Yong Liang, who reflects that his assignments in the SPF Operations Department and the Ministry of Home Affairs Joint Operations Group enabled him to develop “*a better understanding of the analysis and thinking behind policies and legislation*,” while handling high stakes security operations helped him “*grow to be adaptable, calm and composed in the face of challenges*” (SPF, 2021). Such reflections indicate that scholarships are perceived not merely as educational sponsorships, but as entry points into rotational assignments and leadership learning that integrate academic training with real world policy and operational demands.

Mental Resilience, Adaptability, and the Internalization of Service Values

Beyond structural career outcomes, scholarships also contribute to the development of mental resilience and the internalization of service oriented professional values. Testimonies across generations reveal that awardees perceive occupational pressure, uncertainty, and crisis situations as inherent aspects of policing. Tan Chye Hee emphasized that “*policing is a very demanding profession, 24/7, and it often stretches you mentally and physically*,” yet remains deeply fulfilling in moral terms (SPF, 2018). It demonstrates mental and physical endurance and possesses the capacity to adapt to complex and evolving situations.

This narrative is echoed by younger awardees. Tan Yong Liang noted that managing difficult events with limited preparation time helped him *become “adaptable, calm and composed in the face of challenges”* (SPF, 2021). Recurrence of such accounts suggests that scholarships, in combination with post-study assignments, play a crucial role in fostering psychological resilience among future police leaders.

In terms of professional values, Joshua Ebenezer Jesudason highlighted the ethical dimension of policing by stating that “*what we protect is not just the streets, but people*” (SPF, 2021). This aligns with Tan Chye Hee’s description of policing as “*real work that matters*” (SPF, 2018). Together, these testimonies indicate that scholarships reinforce a professional identity grounded in public service, rather than merely enhancing technical competence.

Taken together, the discussion suggests that the strength of the SPF scholarship system lies in its systemic integration of institutional design and lived experience. The scholarship architecture provides the structural conditions for leadership development, while officers’ interpretations and experiences translate these conditions into sustained professional capacity and identity. This integrative understanding contributes to the literature on policing by demonstrating how long-established scholarship systems function not merely as talent pipelines, but as governance instruments that align education, career progression, and institutional values over time (Terpstra & Schaap, 2022).

From a broader perspective, it contributes to the field of policing studies by offering an empirically grounded account of how scholarship based HRD operates within a non-Western yet highly institutionalized policing context. While analytically centred on the SPF, the findings provide conceptual insights for other police organizations, including INP, particularly in understanding how the existing scholarship schemes with LPDP can be mapped, diversified, and integrated into coherent long-term leadership development strategies rather than deployed as ad hoc educational benefits. However, it should be noted that the policy translation process studied by the long history of police scholarship in Singapore needs to be studied with attention to the domestic context. As Chow (2014) emphasized, that policymakers may experience incompatible policies due to the neglect of local context and generalization assumptions across nations with different economic levels, socio-cultural, and political backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on descriptive quantitative policy mapping and qualitative analysis of awardee testimonies, the findings demonstrate that SPF scholarships are embedded within a coherent, lifecycle-oriented institutional architecture that spans pre-service and in-service stages, integrates local and overseas education, and is jointly governed by central and sectoral agencies. Scholarships are not positioned as standalone educational incentives, but as strategic mechanisms linked to career deployment, leadership acceleration, and long-term succession planning.

The analysis further shows that officers experience scholarship pathways as formative career processes that shape strategic capacity, leadership learning, and professional identity over time.

Across cohorts and scholarship types, awardees interpret their educational experiences in conjunction with rotational assignments, early responsibility, and exposure to policy environments. It is reinforcing the view that leadership development in policing emerges from the interaction between formal education and experiential learning. Importantly, the convergence of narratives across domestic and overseas scholarships indicates that institutional design and career integration matter more than study location alone in determining long-term impact.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the SPF case. For the INP, the study highlights the importance of moving beyond viewing scholarships solely as educational support mechanisms toward treating them as integral components of a broader talent governance and leadership development system. Future policy development could benefit from systematic mapping of existing scholarship schemes, clearer differentiation between career stages, and stronger linkage to post-study deployment and leadership trajectories. Further research may also expand comparative analysis across policing institutions to examine how different governance contexts shape the effectiveness of scholarship based human resource development.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, there is potential bias and generalization in the testimonial data source, as it comes from official institutional documents. The authors acknowledge that this limitation could create opportunities for further research to analyse the complexities and limitations of policies that have not yet been comprehensively addressed.

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