

**THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE ON POLICE OFFICERS' TRUST
IN THE PUBLIC: MODERATING ROLE OF WORK ENGAGEMENT: (WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA)**

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ABSTRACT

This research identifies critical gaps in the existing literature on police-public relations, particularly within the socio-cultural context of Sri Lanka's Western Province. There is a notable lack of studies focusing on police officers' trust in the public, as most studies emphasize public trust in law enforcement. This study addresses this gap by exploring how police officers' perceptions of organizational justice affect their trust in the community, an area underexplored in non-Western settings. The introduction of work engagement as a moderating factor is a novel approach that provides a deeper understanding of how it influences the relationship between organizational justice and trust. These insights are crucial for enhancing policy-community relations in regions where public trust is essential for effective law enforcement. This study aimed to assess the impact of police officers' perceptions of organizational justice on their trust in the public, moderated by work engagement. A deductive approach, with a cross-sectional survey design, was employed, focusing on individual police constables as the unit of analysis. A multi-stage sampling method combining stratified random sampling and convenience sampling techniques was used to select a sample of 364 participants from a target population of 6,666 officers across four police administrative divisions in Sri Lanka's Western Province. Hypotheses were formulated based on the existing literature and empirical observations. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21 with Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that organizational justice significantly and positively affects police officers' trust in the public. Among its dimensions, procedural justice had the strongest positive effect, while distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice had moderate positive effects. Moreover, work engagement significantly moderated the relationship between organizational justice and trust. The study concludes that enhancing police officers' perceptions of organizational fairness is crucial for fostering greater trust in the public, and that this relationship is further strengthened by work engagement. These insights are essential for law enforcement agencies and policymakers seeking to improve organizational practices and strengthen police-community relations in Sri Lanka's Western Province.

Keywords: Distributive justice, interpersonal justice, informational justice, organizational justice, procedural justice, trust, work engagement