

Views of first-year Police Cadets on the Psychology course in Greece

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Abstract

The present study explores police cadets' perceptions of the Psychology course within their training context. The sample consisted of 111 first-year cadets who completed a structured questionnaire including subscales measuring attitudes toward the course, perceived professional usefulness, contribution to personal development, content evaluation, level of understanding, and comparative evaluation with other courses. The findings indicate a moderate to positive overall attitude, with particularly strong recognition of the course's professional relevance. However, lower levels of intrinsic motivation and perceived contribution to personal development were observed. The course content was evaluated as contemporary, relevant, and appropriately demanding, although it did not strongly engage students' interest. A key finding of the study is the clear preference for more interactive and experiential teaching methods, which appear crucial for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Overall, while the Psychology course is acknowledged as an essential component of police education, the results highlight the need for a pedagogical redesign focusing on applied learning and active participation.

Keywords: *Psychology, Police Cadets, Police Education, Psychology Teaching, Experiential Learning*

Introduction

Psychology constitutes an important and interdisciplinary connecting field within the education of police cadets, as the practice of modern police work requires not only legal and operational training but also a substantial understanding of human behaviour (Queirós et al. 2020). Psychological knowledge can contribute to the development of communication skills, self-regulation, crisis and conflict management, as well as to the understanding of fear, aggression, trauma, stereotypes, and prejudices (Rydberg & Terrill, 2010; Hollin, 2012). At the same time, the connection of Psychology with Criminology (Daskalakis, 1988), Law, Human Rights, and crime prevention policy broadens its educational value (Lampropoulou, 2003; Kouroutzas, 2016), as it enables future police officers to perceive police action not exclusively as the application of rules, but as a complex social practice involving the exercise of authority, communication, and the management of human relationships (Wang, Gao & Wang, 2024). Therefore, the teaching of Psychology can function as a bridge between theory and professional practice, particularly when it incorporates active and experiential pedagogical approaches, contributing to the development of a professionally trained, psychosocially competent, and socially responsible police officer (Lu & Petersen, 2023).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the views of police cadets regarding the Psychology course within the context of their training, with particular emphasis on their attitudes toward the course, their perceived professional usefulness, as well as its contribution to their personal development and cognitive attainment. At the same time, the study seeks to examine how trainees evaluate the content and difficulty of the material taught, as well as the comparative position of the Psychology course in relation to other courses in the curriculum. Interest is also placed on investigating cadets' preferences regarding teaching methodology, especially with respect to interactivity and experiential forms of learning.

Based on the above, the study is structured around the following research questions: (a) What is the overall attitude of police cadets toward the Psychology course? (b) To what extent do they perceive the course as professionally useful for the performance of their duties? (c) To what extent do they consider that it contributes to

their personal development and management of their emotions? (d) How do they evaluate the content, difficulty, and currency of the material? (e) What is the level of understanding of the basic psychological concepts that were taught? (f) How do they compare the Psychology course with other courses in the curriculum in terms of its importance and contribution? In addition, the study examines the extent to which cadets wish to strengthen teaching through experiential and interactive approaches.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study follows a quantitative, descriptive, and non-experimental design, with the aim of investigating the views of police cadets regarding the Psychology course. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. A pilot administration was conducted beforehand with a sample of ten police cadets.

The study sample consisted of 111 first-year police cadets from two Police Cadet Departments (Schools) of the Hellenic Police. The mean age of the participants was 19.05 years ($SD = 1.41$), while 59.5% of the sample were women ($n = 66$) and 40.5% were men ($n = 45$). The sample was selected using convenience sampling.

The questionnaire used in the study was specifically designed for the purposes of the study based on the literature and included closed-ended questions on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The research instrument was organised into individual thematic sections (subscales), which captured different dimensions of the educational experience. Specifically, it included: (a) the attitude toward the course subscale, (b) perceived professional usefulness, (c) perceived contribution to personal development, (d) evaluation of the content and difficulty of the material, (e) understanding of basic psychological concepts from the material already taught, and (f) comparative evaluation of the course in relation to other courses in the curriculum. In addition, individual questions were included that investigated specific aspects, such as the desire for more teaching hours and participants' preferences regarding teaching methodology (e.g., interactivity and experiential activities). Negatively worded questions were reverse-scored before analysis to ensure scale homogeneity.

Recruitment of the sample and administration of the questionnaire were conducted online through group chats of the cadets and the use of a Google Forms platform link during April–May 2025. Recruitment was carried out through social networking websites. Data collection took place under conditions that ensured the anonymity and voluntary participation of the cadets. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of the data exclusively for research purposes, while the confidentiality of their responses was ensured. The study complied with the basic ethical principles of the social sciences.

Statistical processing of the data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The analysis focused primarily on descriptive techniques, with the aim of documenting the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of the participants. Correlations between subscales were also performed.

The reliability of the subscales was examined using Cronbach's Alpha as an index of internal consistency. Most subscales demonstrated satisfactory to very good reliability (from .681 to .800), while in a few cases lower but acceptable values were observed. For the descriptive analysis of the data, measures of central tendency (mean) and dispersion (standard deviation) were used, while correlations between variables were also examined using correlation coefficients r and Corrected Item-Total Correlations. Comparisons between independent samples were conducted using the t -test.

Results

For the purposes of the statistical analysis and to capture more accurately the individual dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation, the questionnaire items were grouped into thematically coherent subscales. This procedure was based on conceptual criteria, so that each group of questions reflected a specific aspect of the participants' educational experience (e.g., attitude, usefulness, understanding). Subsequently, composite variables were created for each subscale by calculating the mean of the individual items comprising it. In this way, it became possible to provide a concise yet reliable representation of the main dimensions of the study, while also facilitating the statistical processing and interpretation of the data.

The first subscale is Attitude toward the course: It measures how positively the cadets view the course (questions: I found the Psychology course interesting; The

course corresponds to my interests; The course motivated me to learn more; Overall, I am satisfied; The course is more interesting than most others; The course was boring).

To examine the internal consistency of the subscale concerning participants' attitudes toward the course, Cronbach's Alpha (α) reliability coefficient was used. The overall reliability coefficient was $\alpha = .747$, a value considered satisfactory and exceeding the proposed threshold of .70 for the social sciences, indicating that the questions consistently measure the same conceptual construct. Analysis of the individual items (Item-Total Statistics) showed that most questions had strong correlations with the total scale, with the highest correlation observed for the variable concerning motivation to learn ($r = .634$). Although the question concerning the interest generated by the course showed the lowest correlation, it was decided to retain all items in the final analysis to ensure the content validity of the measurement instrument. Reliability could have been further improved by removing this particular item, but its retention serves the completeness of the conceptual analysis.

The second subscale, which examines the perceived professional usefulness of the course, demonstrated even higher reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha equal to .800 for all seven questions (I consider the course useful for my training; Useful for everyday police practice; It helps in understanding citizens' behaviour; It helps in managing difficult incidents; It helps in understanding delinquency; Psychology is an essential course; It is not related to the profession). This value is characterised as "very good" and indicates a highly coherent scale. Analysis of the Corrected Item-Total Correlations confirmed the homogeneity of the scale, as all values were high (from .411 to .636), clearly above the proposed threshold of .300. Furthermore, examination of the coefficient if an item were deleted showed that any removal would reduce overall reliability, demonstrating that all seven questions contribute positively and proportionately to the measurement of the construct.

The third subscale is Perceived contribution of the course to personal development. According to the results of the analysis, this subscale, consisting of two variables (It contributed to my development and It helped with emotional control), presents borderline but acceptable internal consistency for the data of a short scale. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was .620. Although in the social

sciences a value of .70 is usually considered the threshold for “good” reliability, in scales with a very small number of items (such as the present one, which has only two), values above .60 are often accepted at the exploratory stage. This occurs because the Alpha coefficient is directly affected by the number of items: the fewer the questions, the lower the coefficient tends to be.

The internal consistency of the subscale is strengthened by the positive correlation between the two questions (Inter-Item Correlation = .452), which is considered satisfactory, as it indicates that the two questions converge in measuring a common concept. In addition, the mean values of the questions (2.70 and 2.62, respectively) in a sample of 111 participants show a similar response tendency, while the standard deviations close to one (.93 and 1.02) indicate a healthy dispersion of responses around the mean. In conclusion, the subscale can be used for further statistical analyses; however, the results should be interpreted with caution due to the limited number of questions. For future use, the addition of one or two further related questions could significantly improve the reliability of the scale above the .70 level, indicating that the items consistently measure the same underlying construct. The analysis of the individual items (Item-Total Statistics) showed that most questions present strong correlations with the overall scale, with the highest correlation being observed for the variable concerning motivation to learn ($r = .634$). Although the question concerning interest in the course presented the lowest association, it was decided to retain all items in the final analysis to ensure the content validity of the measurement instrument. Reliability could have been further improved by removing this item; however, its retention serves the purpose of ensuring the completeness of the conceptual analysis.

The second subscale, which examines the perceived professional usefulness of the course, demonstrated even higher reliability, with Cronbach’s Alpha reaching .800 for all 7 items (I consider the course useful for my training; Useful for everyday police practice; Helps in understanding citizens’ behaviour; Helps in managing difficult incidents; Helps in understanding delinquency; Psychology is an essential course; It is not related to the profession). This value is characterised as “very good” and indicates a highly coherent scale. The analysis of the item-total correlation indices (Corrected Item-Total Correlations) confirmed the homogeneity of the scale, as all values were at high levels (ranging from .411 to .636), clearly above the recommended

threshold of .300. In addition, examination of the reliability coefficient if an item were deleted showed that the removal of any item would reduce overall reliability, demonstrating that all 7 items contribute positively and in a balanced manner to the measurement of the construct.

The third subscale concerns the perceived contribution of the course to personal development. According to the results of the analysis, this subscale, which consists of two variables (Contributed to my development and helped me control my emotions), presents borderline but acceptable internal consistency for the data of a short scale. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha was .620. Although in the social sciences a value of .70 is usually considered the threshold for "good" reliability, in scales with a very small number of items (such as the present scale, which contains only two), values above .60 are often considered acceptable at an exploratory stage. This occurs because the Alpha coefficient is directly affected by the number of items: the fewer the questions, the lower the coefficient tends to be.

The internal consistency of the subscale is further supported by the positive correlation between the two questions (Inter-Item Correlation = .452), which is considered satisfactory, as it indicates that the two questions converge in measuring a common construct. In addition, the mean values of the questions (2.70 and 2.62, respectively), in a sample of 111 participants, indicate a similar response pattern among the participants, while the standard deviations close to one (.93 and 1.02) indicate an adequate dispersion of responses around the mean. In conclusion, the subscale can be used for further statistical analyses; however, the results should be interpreted with caution because of the limited number of items. For future use, the addition of one or two further relevant items could substantially improve the reliability of the scale above the .70 level.

The fourth subscale concerns the content of the course and the potential difficulties associated with it. An analysis of the structure of the five questions comprising the subscale (The material was interesting; The material was extensive; The material was excessively difficult; The content was modern and up to date; Important psychological topics were covered) reveals a moderate statistical profile, and specific interventions may be required to achieve a reliable subscale.

The reliability analysis for all five questions yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .595, which approaches the acceptable threshold of .60 for exploratory studies. Some positive correlations between the items were observed, suggesting a degree of conceptual coherence. For example, the perception that the material was “extensive” was significantly correlated with the perception that it was “difficult” ($r = .506$), whereas the “currency of the content” was positively associated with the “coverage of important psychological topics” ($r = .444$).

However, the question “Was the material interesting?” appears to differ from the remaining items. The low Corrected Item-Total Correlation (.116), together with the fact that its deletion would lead to a substantial increase in Cronbach's Alpha to .660, indicates that “interest” in the material operates independently of its volume or difficulty. In other words, participants may have found the material interesting regardless of whether they considered it difficult or extensive.

Descriptively, the mean values indicate a positive evaluation of the content, with the modernity of the content and the coverage of psychological topics receiving the highest scores. In contrast, the material was not considered particularly extensive or excessively difficult, suggesting that the level of the course was appropriately adapted to the capabilities of the trainees.

In conclusion, this section can constitute a reliable subscale under the name “Evaluation of Content and Material Difficulty,” provided that the item concerning the interest of the material is excluded. With this modification, the reliability coefficient makes the subscale statistically adequate for further analyses, as the remaining four questions provide a coherent representation of the quality and degree of difficulty of the educational material.

The fifth subscale concerns understanding of the material taught, with seven questions addressing indicative topics and concepts (I understood the following concepts: Biopsychosocial model, Nervous system, Weapon-focus effect, Eyewitness memory, Social influence, Defence mechanisms, post-traumatic stress disorder). The subscale examining understanding of the seven thematic units presents satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha reaching .681. This value is considered acceptable for educational interventions and indicates that the questions adequately measure the same basic construct (cognitive acquisition). From a descriptive

perspective, participants reported high levels of understanding across most topics. The highest mean values were recorded for “Post-Traumatic Stress” and “Social Influence.” In contrast, the lowest level of understanding was observed for the “Biopsychosocial Model,” which appears to have been more difficult for the sample.

The sixth subscale constituted a comparative evaluation of the Psychology course in relation to other courses in the curriculum. It contained four questions (Psychology contributes more than other courses to understanding behaviour; I prefer Psychology to other theoretical courses; I prefer Psychology to law courses; Other courses are more important). Cronbach's Alpha for all four questions was .79, indicating good internal consistency. Despite the good overall picture, examination of the individual items indicates that the fourth, reverse-scored item (Other courses are more important) differs substantially from the others. The item presents a low association with the remaining questions, whereas the other three questions have high associations. This indicates that the fourth item does not measure the same construct as the others.

Finally, there were also several individual items (single items). The use of single items in the present statistical analysis was considered necessary for an in-depth understanding of specific aspects of the trainees' experience that are not fully captured by the overall scale score. While multidimensional scales provide a general picture of complex constructs (such as attitudes toward the course), the examination of individual questions makes it possible to identify detailed information concerning specific preferences or needs, such as the desire for more teaching hours, which could be “lost” if these responses were combined into a single mean score.

The descriptive statistics for the question concerning a possible desire to increase the number of teaching hours for the Psychology course reveal a rather negative attitude on the part of the participants. The Mean is 2.11, a value that, on the standard five-point Likert scale, is clearly close to the response option “Disagree.” This suggests that most students do not feel a need for additional teaching hours in the specific subject, even though, as observed in previous findings, they are interested in understanding behaviour. The Median, which is 2.00, confirms the above pattern, indicating that at least 50% of respondents provided a score of 2 or lower. In conclusion, although students appear to appreciate the content of the course, they

seem to consider the existing teaching time sufficient or perhaps even demanding, as the proposal to further increase the number of hours does not receive their support.

There were also several questions concerning the quality of course instruction. One strength of the teaching appears to be the use of practical examples, which received the highest mean score (3.32). This value indicates that the trainees appreciate the effort to connect theory with practice, thereby enhancing their understanding of the subject. At the same time, the pace of instruction was considered satisfactory, with a mean of 3.16, indicating that the speed at which the material was delivered was compatible with the capabilities of the sample.

The analysis of the final two variables concerning the trainees' preferences regarding the format of the course (experiential activities and interactivity) reveals the strongest and clearest tendency in the entire study. The results concerning the desired teaching methods reveal a strong need among the trainees for active participation. The variable "I would like more experiential activities" presents a very high mean score (4.04), indicating that students seek experiential learning and the application of knowledge in real-life conditions. Even higher was the acceptance of an interactive course, with the mean reaching 4.27. These values, which exceed 4 ("Agree"), represent the highest scores observed across all statistical tables, indicating an almost universal desire among the sample for a less passive teaching model.

Before the correlation analysis, a test of the normality of the data was conducted. The skewness and kurtosis indices for most subscales fell within the acceptable range between -1 and +1. Although the Knowledge subscale exhibited slightly increased kurtosis, the overall sample size permitted the use of parametric tests.

Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to investigate the relationships among the seven composite variables (subscales) that emerged from the grouping of the questions. The analysis revealed that the subscales were significantly and positively correlated with one another, indicating internal coherence in the way trainees perceive the overall educational experience of the course. The strongest statistical association was identified between Attitude toward the Course and Comparative Evaluation. This finding indicates that the more positive the trainees' attitude toward Psychology, the more they prefer it in comparison with the other courses. At the same time, Attitude showed a strong correlation with both Personal

Development and Understanding of the Material, confirming that interest in the course functions as a catalyst for the cognitive and personal development of the trainees. Also noteworthy is the moderate-to-strong correlation between Perceived Professional Usefulness and Personal Development. This association suggests that trainees who perceive the practical application of Psychology in police work also tend to believe that the course contributes to the maturation of their own personality. Finally, the strong correlation between Content and Understanding emphasises that the quality and currency of the material constitute the primary factor in the successful understanding of psychological concepts by participants. Overall, the network of correlations demonstrates that positive attitude, professional usefulness, and Content constitute the central pillars determining the perceived value of the course at the Police Academy (Table 2).

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to investigate potential differences between the two genders in the total score and in the six individual subscales of the study. The results showed that men ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.50$) obtained a statistically significantly higher total score than women ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.48$), $t(109) = 2.52$, $p = .013$. The effect size was medium (Cohen's $d = 0.49$), confirming that male trainees reported an overall more positive experience of the curriculum.

As indicated by the analysis, statistically significant differences were observed in the following subscales:

Understanding of the Material: Men scored significantly higher than women, $t(109) = 3.83$, $p < .001$. The effect size was large (Cohen's $d = 0.70$).

Content–Difficulties: Men scored higher than women, $t(109) = 2.64$, $p = .010$, $d = 0.51$.

Personal Development: A statistically significant difference was also observed in favour of men compared with women, $t(109) = 2.54$, $p = .012$, $d = 0.49$.

No statistically significant differences were observed in the Attitude, Professional Usefulness, and Comparative Evaluation subscales ($p > .05$), indicating that men and women hold similar perceptions in these areas.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of items and subscales, internal reliability coefficients α

Subscale	α	Items	M	SD	Corrected item-total correlation
Attitude toward the course	.74		2.90		
		The Psychology course seemed interesting to me	3.40	.88	.19
		The course corresponds to my interests	2.72	.98	.61
		The course motivated me to learn more	2.78	1.12	.63
		Overall, I am satisfied	3.02	.85	.38
		The course is more interesting than most other courses	2.62	1.07	.56
		The course was boring	2.86	.93	.52
Perceived professional usefulness	.80		3.35		
		I consider the course useful for my training	3.18	1.01	.47
		Useful for everyday police practice	3.35	.91	.51
		Helps in understanding citizens' behavior	3.45	.89	.44
		Helps in managing difficult incidents	3.10	.80	.41
		Helps in understanding delinquency	2.89	1.13	.61
		Psychology is an essential course	3.56	1.00	.63
		It is not related to the profession	3.94	.96	.63

Subscale	α	Items	M	SD	Corrected item-total correlation
Perceived contribution of the course to personal development	.62		2.66		
		Contributed to my development	2.70	.93	.45
		Helped me control my emotions	2.62	1.02	.45
Content and difficulties	.59		2.78		
		The material was interesting	2.70	.98	.11
		The material was extensive	2.08	1.15	.40
		The material was excessively difficult	2.51	.86	.40
		The content was modern and up to date	3.24	.75	.48
		Important psychological topics were covered	3.37	1.02	.42
Understanding of the material	.68		3.36		
		Biopsychosocial model	2.75	.88	.26
		Nervous system	3.02	.94	.41
		Weapon-focus effect	3.21	1.07	.50
		Eyewitness memory	3.48	.89	.01
		Social influence	3.67	.87	.48
		Defense mechanisms	3.59	.79	.46
		Post-traumatic stress disorder	3.78	.81	.65
Comparative evaluation	.79		3.11		
		Contributes more than other courses to understanding behavior	3.91	1.02	.72

Subscale	α	Items	M	SD	Corrected item-total correlation
		I prefer Psychology to other theoretical courses	3.00	1.04	.72
		I prefer Psychology to law courses	2.70	1.04	.68
		Other courses are more important	2.43	.92	.33
Single items					
		I would like more teaching hours	2.10	1.13	
		Practical examples were used	3.32	1.04	
		I wanted more experiential activities	4.03	.82	
		I wanted a more interactive course	4.27	.72	

Table 2. Correlations (r) among the subscales

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attitude toward the course		.438**	.587**	.474**	.592**	.640**
2. Perceived professional usefulness	.438**		.494**	.278**	.367**	.382**
3. Perceived contribution of the course to personal development	.587**	.494**		.268**	.444**	.366**
4. Content and difficulties	.474**	.278**	.268**		.619**	.460**
5. Understanding of the material	.592**	.367**	.444**	.619**		.442**
6. Comparative evaluation	.640**	.382**	.369**	.460**	.442**	

Correlation is significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Table 3. Results of the t-test for the scores (M) of men and women on the six subscales

Subscale	Men (M)	Women (M)	p-value
Attitude	2.96	2.87	.507
Professional usefulness	3.41	3.32	.533
Personal development	2.90	2.50	.012*
Content–Difficulties	2.96	2.66	.010*
Understanding of the material	3.57	3.22	<.001*
Comparative evaluation	3.24	3.03	.164

To further investigate the nature of the differences between the two genders, a t-test analysis was conducted at the level of individual items. The analysis revealed specific differences of particular interest. The item-level analysis showed that men focused more on the operational and technical aspects (e.g., presence of a weapon, post-traumatic stress, police practice), whereas women placed greater emphasis on usefulness for incident management (see Table 4).

Table 4. Results of the t-test for the scores (M) of men and women on specific items

Only the results that showed a statistically significant difference are presented.

Item	Men	Women	T	p
Clear presence of a weapon	3.80	2.81	5.27	< .001
Post-traumatic stress	4.20	3.50	4.89	< .001
Incident management	2.80	3.31	- 3.50	< .001
Contributed to my development	3.06	2.45	3.58	< .001
Use of practical examples	3.66	3.09	2.94	.004

Discussion

Attitude toward the course subscale

The results of the descriptive statistics for the attitude scale toward the Psychology course indicate a generally moderate-to-positive picture, with the means of the individual questions ranging approximately between 2.62 and 3.40. Specifically, participants evaluated the course as relatively interesting, suggesting that, in general, there is a positive initial acceptance of the course content. Similarly, overall satisfaction with the course was also at moderate levels, indicating that students did not express strong dissatisfaction, but neither did they report particularly high levels of satisfaction.

However, in more specific dimensions of the educational experience, a more neutral to low tendency can be observed. The perception that the course corresponds to the students' personal interests shows a lower mean score, while a similarly low value is recorded regarding motivation for further learning. This suggests that, although the course is recognised as relatively interesting, it does not appear to strongly activate intrinsic learning motivation among the participants.

Furthermore, the comparison with other courses reflects a more restrained attitude, as the course is not evaluated as clearly more interesting than the others. At the same time, the perception that the course was boring (after reverse scoring) remains at moderate levels, suggesting that participants' views are divided or neutral regarding the liveliness and attractiveness of the teaching.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Psychology course is accepted by participants and is evaluated as relatively interesting; however, it does not appear to achieve particularly high levels of engagement, motivation, or differentiation compared with other courses in the curriculum. These findings should also be interpreted in light of the actual conditions under which the course is taught. The present study did not investigate qualitative characteristics of the educational process, such as the instructor's teaching style, the degree of classroom interaction, or the position of the course within the overall curriculum. It is possible that these factors substantially influence the interest and motivation of the trainees.

Perceived Professional Usefulness subscale

The analysis of the mean scores reveals that participants primarily evaluate the course as a tool for professional functioning and development. The item "It is not

related to our profession” (reverse-scored) presents the highest mean in the analysis. Within a Likert scale framework, this value approaches “Strongly disagree.” Given that the subscale has high reliability, this suggests a very strong belief among the police trainees regarding the connection between the course and the professional field. The trainees do not view the course as a theoretical obligation, but rather as a subject that directly intersects with their everyday challenges (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). This belief is reinforced by the item “The Psychology course is essential for a police officer,” which receives a particularly important score, as it exceeds the neutral point (3) and indicates that the majority recognise the necessity of this knowledge. It is noteworthy that these two questions (“relevance” and “necessity”) present the highest correlations in the Item-Total Statistics (.636 and .635, respectively), indicating that they constitute the conceptual pillar upon which the entire subscale rests.

Moving to more specific aspects, the questions “it is useful for police practice” and “useful for training” are at positive levels. The mean for police practice is slightly higher, suggesting that participants perceive greater value in applying knowledge “on the street” than within the narrow context of an academic classroom. This is a classic characteristic of samples of professionals working under high-pressure conditions (Smith & Aamodt). Knowledge is evaluated according to its “instrumental” value. At the same time, the question “the course helped me understand citizens” highlights an interesting dimension. The police trainees appear to believe that the course provided them with the necessary tools to interpret social behaviour. In a profession in which communication and the management of the human factor are of primary importance (Wang, Gao, & Wang, 2024), such a mean score constitutes a vote of confidence in the course content as a means of improving the police officer’s social skills (Bennell et al., 2022).

Despite the generally positive picture, there are areas in which acceptance is more restrained. The question “I believe it will help me manage incidents” is only marginally above the midpoint. This finding implies that, although the course helps participants understand the world, it may be less successful in providing specific, practical solutions regarding how to handle an incident while it is occurring. The most controversial point of the scale is found in the question “It helped me understand delinquency,” which has the lowest mean. Here we also observe the highest standard deviation. In statistics, a high standard deviation indicates a lack of consensus.

Participants are divided: some believe that the course shed light on the causes of crime, whereas others considered it too theoretical or not applicable to the reality of everyday policing in Greece. The value of 2.89, clearly below 3, indicates that the majority did not feel that they acquired deeper knowledge about the phenomenon of delinquency through this course.

It is nevertheless important to emphasise the excellent performance of the subscale in the Item-Total Statistics table. The fact that all item-total correlations are strong indicates that the police trainees responded with a high degree of consistency. There were no “random” responses. Those who considered the course essential also tended to consider it useful.

The findings of the present study are consistent with the international literature on police education. Specifically, [Kohlström et al. \(2017\)](#), examining Swedish police trainees, found that they attributed high value both to traditional operational skills and to newer “general competencies,” such as communication, flexibility, and management of diversity. An interesting finding of their study is that trainees do not reject new skills but rather demonstrate parallel acceptance of both the operational and theoretical/social components of education. This observation strengthens the interpretation that trainees are still at an early stage of professional socialisation, during which the hierarchy of skills in terms of their “practical value” has not yet been fully established. for practice and related to their profession ([Kleygrewe et al. 2022](#)).

The highly perceived professional usefulness of the course may be associated not only with the content of the material but also with the way it is presented to trainees. The present study did not examine in sufficient depth or breadth whether instructors use examples from police practice, case studies, or experiential exercises that facilitate the connection between theory and the profession. Investigation of such qualitative parameters could provide a fuller explanation of why certain thematic units are perceived as more useful than others.

Contribution to Personal Development subscale

Regarding the interpretation of the two specific items, it can be observed that their mean values are relatively low, falling below the theoretical mean of the scale (3 on a five-point Likert scale). Specifically, the item “contributed to my development” has a mean of 2.70, whereas the item “helped me control my emotions” receives an even

lower score of 2.62. This tendency suggests that participants are cautious regarding the effectiveness of the course in terms of personal development, evaluating its contribution somewhere between “a little” and “moderately.” The lower score concerning emotional control indicates that this area benefited the least, while the standard deviations, which are close to one (.93 and 1.02, respectively), indicate dispersion in the responses, with part of the sample responding rather negatively.

Content (Material) and Difficulties subscale

Regarding the content and material, the evaluation was positive. The trainees recognised the modern and up-to-date character of the material, as well as the adequacy of coverage of critical psychological topics. The fact that the material was not considered excessively extensive or difficult to understand suggests successful instructional design, which managed to convey scientific knowledge without causing cognitive overload among the participants.

The question concerning the interest in the material constitutes one of the most interesting findings of the study, mainly because of the way it behaves statistically in relation to the other content questions. The mean was 2.70, indicating a rather neutral to cautious attitude on the part of the trainees. Although the content was evaluated as modern and up to date, the participants’ subjective interest did not follow the same upward trajectory. The statistical analysis indicates that “interest” constitutes a distinct dimension that does not necessarily coincide with the objective quality or difficulty of the material. It is characteristic that deleting this item from the subscale content substantially improves its reliability (Cronbach's Alpha), confirming that participants’ interest is influenced by factors beyond the structure of the course.

Interpretively, this low score, combined with the strong desire for interactivity, indicates that, regardless of how high-quality the material may be, it has difficulty “winning over” participants when delivered through traditional methods. It appears that trainees’ interest is inextricably linked to the way in which they are engaged in the learning process. In other words, the material is not judged to be less interesting because of its content, but possibly because of the absence of experiential elements that would make it more attractive. Therefore, this finding reinforces the need for a redesign that focuses not only on changing the content but, primarily, on enriching the teaching methodology. The interest in the material appears to function as a “bridge”

between what is taught and how it is taught, highlighting that participatory learning is the key to the meaningful motivation of trainees.

Understanding of the Material Taught subscale

Understanding of the section on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Nervous System was at satisfactory levels, exceeding the neutral point of the scale. These values indicate that the sample responded well to topics that, although they involve a relatively high degree of technical difficulty or clinical terminology, attracted interest and were understood at the level of “Very much.” The standard deviations for these items indicate relative homogeneity in the responses, with most participants concentrating around the positive response categories.

The “Eyewitness Memory” section is particularly interesting. Although its meaning is satisfactory, its statistical behaviour within the subscale is unusual. Its almost zero correlation with the total score (Corrected Item-Total Correlation) suggests that understanding this section does not necessarily correspond with understanding the other psychological topics. It appears that forensic/cognitive psychology (eyewitness memory) functioned as an “autonomous” cognitive field for the participants, which was not organically connected with the more clinical or social sections of the curriculum. Finally, the section on Defence Mechanisms constituted one of the pillars of the subscale, as it presented the strongest correlation with the overall result. This high score confirms that participants were able to assimilate concepts from psychodynamic theory and integrate them into their broader framework of understanding. Overall, apart from the Biopsychosocial Model, which presented difficulties for the sample, the remaining items form the profile of a successful cognitive intervention, in which participants feel that they mastered most of the content at a level above moderate.

The high score for understanding post-traumatic stress and defence mechanisms may perhaps indicate that participants responded better to topics that have a direct connection with everyday experience and clinical manifestations. In contrast, the biopsychosocial model, being a more abstract and holistic theoretical approach, presented the greatest challenge in terms of understanding.

Overall, the mean score of the subscale indicates that the trainees completed the program having acquired a substantial portion of the knowledge content. The high concentration of responses around the positive categories of the scale (with standard deviations around one) confirms that the majority of the sample shares this perception of cognitive adequacy, despite individual difficulties with more complex theoretical frameworks.

However, understanding of the individual thematic units may be influenced by various educational factors that were not recorded in the present study, such as the duration of instruction for each unit or the instructor's teaching experience. The incorporation of qualitative data could contribute to interpreting the differences observed among the thematic units.

Comparative Evaluation subscale

The analysis of the descriptive statistics, and specifically the mean scores of the four items of the subscale, provides a detailed picture of the preferences and attitudes of the sample. A clear hierarchy can be observed in the participants' responses, beginning with strong acceptance of the contribution of the course to understanding behaviour in comparison with other courses and ending with a more cautious attitude toward direct comparison of the subject with other courses. At the top of the hierarchy is the question concerning the contribution of Psychology to understanding behaviour, with the highest mean score. This value, which approaches 4 ("Agree"), indicates that students recognise the psychological or behavioural dimension as the dominant element of the course's comparative contribution. The fact that this item also has the highest corrected correlation with the total scale confirms that it constitutes the strongest attraction of the subscale and the most representative element of the construct being measured.

This is followed by the questions concerning comparison with other theoretical and legal courses. Here, we observe a shift toward the centre of the scale, corresponding to a neutral attitude ("Neither agree nor disagree"). It is noteworthy that students appear more receptive to theory than to the purely legal framework. This difference of 0.30 points, although small, indicates a tendency within the sample to prefer abstract concepts over a formalistic legal approach.

At the opposite end, the lowest means are observed for the question concerning the perception that other courses are more important. This low score, which falls between “Disagree” and “Neither agree nor disagree,” indicates that participants do not consider the course to be clearly inferior in importance to other courses. However, the statistical behaviour of this item is distinctive: while it has the lowest meaning, it also presents the lowest correlation with the other questions. This suggests that the item functions differently in the minds of respondents, perhaps because it introduces an external comparative factor that is not directly related to intrinsic interest in the course. Finally, standard deviations around one indicate a normal dispersion of opinions.

Single Items

These findings constitute the clearest proposal for improving the course. Although we previously observed that students do not desire an increase in teaching hours, the current findings explain that what they are requesting is not more time, but a qualitative change in the way the course is taught. The shift from simple delivery of information toward interaction and experiential learning appears to be the “key” to increasing students’ interest and satisfaction with the subject.

Correlations among the Subscales

The correlation analysis demonstrates that the trainees’ educational experience is not fragmented, but is characterised by strong internal coherence, with a positive attitude toward Psychology functioning as the central driver of course acceptance. The close statistical association of Attitude with Personal Development and Understanding confirms that trainees’ subjective interest constitutes an essential prerequisite for meaningful learning and internalisation of psychological concepts. At the same time, the significant association between Professional Usefulness and Personal Development suggests that trainees perceive the course as a holistic tool that simultaneously equips them with professional skills and emotional maturity for the demands of the field. Finally, the dependence of Understanding on the quality of Content emphasises that the provision of contemporary and applied knowledge is the determining factor that transforms theory into perceived value, making Psychology a critical pillar in the education of the modern police professional ([Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017](#); [Lu & Petersen, 2023](#)).

In summary, the results of the T-tests across the six subscales indicate that gender constitutes a differentiating factor in the learning experience:

Convergences: Men and women do not show statistically significant differences in their general Attitude toward the subject, nor in their perception of Professional Usefulness. Both groups similarly recognise the value of the course for their professional future.

Differences: Men consistently show higher scores on the Understanding of the Material, Personal Development, and Content–Difficulties subscales. This difference is particularly pronounced in Understanding of the Material, where the large effect size indicates that men felt considerably more familiar and competent with the subject matter. Examining the individual questions of each subscale through the t-test suggests that men focus more on the “hard” policing component (weapon, stress, development), whereas women focus more on social/management skills (incidents).

Conclusions

The present study revealed a multidimensional picture of how police cadets perceive the Psychology course. First, from the perspective of the literature, we emphasise that police education should be holistic. Psychology is not a “decorative” subject in the curriculum, but rather the foundation upon which professional ethics and operational effectiveness are built. The future of police education lies in the convergence of academic depth and practical application. Only through an educational process that promotes critical thinking and psychological development can the Police transform from an enforcement mechanism into an organisation providing security and social cohesion, capable of addressing the complex challenges of the twenty-first century ([Ericsson et al. 2025](#)).

The most striking finding of our study is the strong belief among the cadets in the professional usefulness of the course. Their disagreement with the statement that the course “is not related to the profession,” together with their recognition of its necessity, indicates that cadets have moved beyond the “guard” model and are moving toward that of the “professional.” They perceive Psychology not as an academic luxury, but as an essential resource for managing citizens and crises.

Despite recognising its usefulness, personal engagement remains at moderate levels. Cadets report being satisfied, but the course does not appear to internally motivate them toward further learning. This gap between “I know that I need it” and “I want to engage with it further” appears to be attributable to the traditional teaching approach, which has difficulty maintaining sustained interest.

The study revealed an almost universal demand for interactivity and experiential activities. The low standard deviation associated with these scores indicates that these are not isolated opinions, but rather a collective need among the cadets. Trainees are requesting a transition from theory to practice through simulations and active participation ([Gougoulakis et al. 2018](#)).

The interpretation of the findings should consider the particular educational context of the Police Academy. The Police Academy is not a conventional academic environment, but an institution of professional socialisation, within which trainees gradually develop their professional identity and internalise the values, practices, and expectations of the police profession (Staller et al. 2022). Within this context, the evaluation of a course depends not only on its scientific content but also on the extent to which cadets perceive that it relates to their future operational needs ([Okhrimenko et al., 2020](#); [Cordner, 2020](#)).

Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study sample was relatively limited and was drawn from only two Police Cadet Schools, which limits the generalizability of the findings to the overall population of cadets or to other educational contexts. Furthermore, the sample was selected using convenience sampling, which may introduce systematic biases and affect the representativeness of the data.

Another important limitation concerns the cross-sectional design of the study, which does not permit causal conclusions to be drawn or the development of cadets' attitudes and perceptions to be monitored over time. At the same time, the data are based on participants' self-reports, which may be influenced by socially desirable responses or subjective evaluations.

At the measurement level, although most subscales demonstrated satisfactory reliability, some showed lower internal consistency coefficients, primarily because of the small number of items, which may affect the stability of the measurements. In addition, the use of individual questions to capture specific aspects of the educational experience, although it provides useful information, does not allow reliability to be assessed to the same degree as with multivariate scales.

Furthermore, the study focuses exclusively on first-year police cadets, who are at the initial stage of their training. Consequently, their views may differ from those of more experienced trainees or serving police officers, limiting the possibility of comparing and generalising the findings across different stages of professional development. Therefore, the findings of the study should be interpreted with caution and considered indicative of the specific population and context in which the study was conducted.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, several directions for future research emerge that could enrich knowledge concerning the role of Psychology in police education. First, it would be appropriate to expand the sample by including cadets from more Police Cadet Schools, as well as trainees from different years of study. Such an approach would allow a comparative investigation of the development of attitudes and perceptions throughout the course of training.

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