

Generational Change, Digitalization, and Leadership Competencies in Hungarian Law Enforcement: Challenges for Preparing Generation Z Police Leaders

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<https://doi.org/10.47833/2026.2.ART.007>

Keywords:

Generation Z,
digitalization,
police leadership,
leadership development,
law enforcement,
conflict management,
organizational learning,
organizational modernization.

Article history:

Received 24 June 2026
Revised 25 August 2026
Accepted 27 August 2026

Abstract

Law-enforcement organizations across Europe are experiencing significant transformation driven by demographic change and digitalization. The increasing presence of Generation Z personnel, combined with rapid technological advancement, has created new challenges for leadership development, police education, and workforce management. Traditional hierarchical leadership models are being supplemented by competency-based approaches that emphasize adaptability, communication, digital literacy, and conflict-management skills. This article explores how generational change and digital transformation are discussed in relation to leadership competency requirements within contemporary law enforcement, with particular attention to the Hungarian context. Using a conceptual literature-synthesis approach, the study draws on recent literature on public administration, police leadership, organizational learning, and leadership competencies to develop a conceptual framework linking generational change, digitalization, leadership development, and conflict-management capacity. The analysis suggests that Generation Z officers bring valuable technological capabilities and innovative perspectives but require leadership-development programs that strengthen interpersonal, strategic, and conflict-resolution competencies. The literature further highlights that digitalization is reshaping leadership expectations by increasing the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and technology-supported decision-making. The article argues that leadership development should be viewed as a strategic mechanism for supporting organizational modernization in law enforcement. By integrating digital competencies, conflict-management training, and learner-centered educational approaches, Hungarian police organizations can better prepare future leaders for increasingly complex operational environments. The study contributes to the growing literature on police leadership by providing an integrated perspective on workforce transformation, digital governance, leadership development, and the proposed "Police Leadership 2.0" conceptual framework for contemporary policing.

1 Introduction

Public-sector organizations across Europe are undergoing significant transformation as a result of demographic change and digitalization. These developments are reshaping workforce composition, organizational practices, and leadership requirements within public institutions. Law-enforcement organizations are particularly affected because they must simultaneously maintain operational effectiveness,

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respond to technological innovation, and manage an increasingly diverse workforce. As a result, leadership development has emerged as a strategic priority for modern policing.

One of the most important workforce changes is the growing presence of Generation Z employees within public administration and law-enforcement organizations. Generation Z, generally defined as individuals born after the mid-1990s, entered the labor market with experiences shaped by digital technologies, online communication, and rapid access to information [2]. Compared to previous generations, younger employees often demonstrate different expectations regarding leadership, professional development, communication, and workplace participation. These changes require organizations to reconsider traditional approaches to leadership preparation and workforce management.

At the same time, digitalization has transformed the operational environment of contemporary policing. Information systems, data analytics, digital communication platforms, and emerging technologies increasingly influence police operations and decision-making processes [1]. Consequently, police leaders are expected to possess not only traditional managerial and operational competencies but also digital literacy, adaptability, strategic thinking, and the ability to manage organizational change. The integration of technology into policing therefore creates new competency requirements for future leaders.

Recent studies emphasize that effective police leadership extends beyond command-and-control models and increasingly incorporates communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and continuous learning [3], [4]. Leadership development programs must therefore prepare future leaders to operate within complex organizational environments characterized by technological change, workforce diversity, and evolving public expectations. These challenges are particularly relevant for Hungarian law enforcement, where modernization efforts continue to influence organizational structures, educational systems, and leadership-development practices.

Despite growing scholarly attention to police leadership and digital transformation, limited research has examined how generational change and digitalization interact to influence leadership competency requirements in law enforcement. Existing studies often focus on leadership, technology, or workforce demographics separately rather than exploring their combined implications for leadership development. Addressing this gap is important because future police leaders will be required to manage both technological innovation and generational diversity simultaneously.

Accordingly, this article **adopts a conceptual literature-synthesis approach** and addresses the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How is generational change discussed in the literature on law-enforcement leadership development?
- **RQ2:** What leadership competencies are associated with digitalization in contemporary policing literature?
- **RQ3:** How does the literature conceptualize the relationship between leadership development, conflict-management capacity, and organizational modernization within law enforcement?

To address these questions, the article draws upon recent literature on public administration, police leadership, organizational learning, and leadership competencies. Based on this literature, a conceptual framework is developed linking generational change, digitalization, leadership development, and conflict-management capacity. The study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically by identifying leadership competencies that may support the modernization of Hungarian law enforcement in an increasingly digital and multi-generational environment.

The article contributes in three ways. First, it provides a structured synthesis of recent research on generational transformation and digitalization in policing. Second, it develops the “**Police Leadership 2.0**” conceptual framework, which integrates generational diversity, digital competencies, adaptive leadership, and organizational learning into a single analytical model. Third, it offers policy-oriented recommendations for leadership development and organizational modernization within Hungarian law enforcement.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. **Section 2 presents the methodological and theoretical foundations of the study, including the literature-selection strategy and conceptual**

approach. Section 3 reviews the relevant literature on generational change, digital transformation, police leadership, and leadership competencies. Section 4 presents the proposed “Police Leadership 2.0” conceptual framework. Section 5 discusses the implications for contemporary policing and Hungarian law enforcement, including leadership-development and modernization considerations. Section 6 concludes the article by summarizing the main contributions, outlining policy recommendations, and identifying directions for future research.

2. Methodological and Theoretical Foundations

This article adopts a **conceptual literature-synthesis approach** to examine the relationship between generational change, digitalization, leadership development, and organizational modernization within contemporary law enforcement. The study does not collect original empirical data; instead, it integrates and synthesizes existing scholarly literature in order to develop the proposed “**Police Leadership 2.0**” conceptual framework.

2.1 Research Design

The research is designed as a **conceptual and analytical study**. Its primary objective is to identify key themes, relationships, and theoretical mechanisms discussed in recent research on police leadership, public administration, organizational learning, and digital transformation. The study focuses on how generational workforce change and technological development jointly influence leadership competency requirements in law-enforcement organizations.

2.2 Literature Selection Strategy

The literature review was conducted using a targeted search of academic publications related to public administration, police leadership, leadership development, organizational learning, conflict management, and digital transformation. Sources were selected according to the following criteria:

- **Relevance** to leadership development and policing;
- **Focus** on generational change, digitalization, or organizational modernization;
- **Publication quality**, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and academic handbooks;
- **Recency**, with emphasis on studies published between 2020 and 2026, while also including foundational leadership and public-administration literature where necessary.

The review incorporated literature from international and Hungarian sources in order to capture both broader European trends and the specific context of Hungarian law enforcement.

2.3 Theoretical Foundations

The conceptual framework developed in this study draws upon four complementary theoretical perspectives:

- **Transformational Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes motivation, professional development, and organizational change [14];
- **Adaptive Leadership Theory**, which focuses on leadership under conditions of complexity and uncertainty [16];
- **Organizational Learning Theory**, which highlights continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and institutional adaptation [17];
- **New Public Service**, which emphasizes collaboration, participation, and service-oriented governance within public administration [11].

These theoretical perspectives provide the foundation for analyzing how leadership development can support organizational modernization in digitally transforming and multi-generational law-enforcement environments.

2.4 Analytical Approach

The analysis employed **conceptual synthesis and thematic interpretation** of the reviewed literature. Key themes related to generational characteristics, digital competencies, leadership development, conflict-management capacity, and organizational modernization were identified and integrated into the proposed framework. The objective was not to test causal relationships empirically but to develop a coherent conceptual model that can guide future empirical research and policy discussions.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Generational Change and Digital Transformation in Public Administration

Generational change and digitalization are among the most influential forces shaping contemporary public administration. Across Europe, public-sector organizations are experiencing workforce transitions characterized by the increasing presence of younger generations, particularly Generation Z, while simultaneously adapting to rapid technological developments. These parallel transformations are affecting organizational structures, management practices, and leadership expectations within public institutions [1], [2]. From a conceptual perspective, these developments can be interpreted through the combined lenses of **organizational learning** and **adaptive leadership**, both of which emphasize institutional adaptation to technological and demographic change [14], [16].

Generation Z represents the first generation to have grown up entirely within a digitally connected environment. As a result, younger employees often demonstrate high levels of technological familiarity, preference for digital communication, and expectations for rapid access to information. The reviewed literature on public administration indicates that Generation Z employees tend to value continuous feedback, professional development opportunities, workplace flexibility, and participatory leadership styles [2]. These preferences differ from those traditionally associated with hierarchical public-sector organizations and may require modifications to existing management and leadership approaches.

At the same time, public administration is undergoing extensive digital transformation. Hazafi and Hazafi identify digitalization as a key driver of modernization within civil-service systems, influencing organizational efficiency, service delivery, decision-making processes, and workforce management [1]. Digital technologies increasingly support administrative operations through electronic governance systems, data-driven management, online communication platforms, and digital training environments. Consequently, public organizations require personnel who can effectively operate within technologically advanced workplaces.

The interaction between generational change and digitalization creates both opportunities and challenges. Younger employees often adapt quickly to technological innovation and may contribute positively to organizational modernization initiatives. However, generational differences in communication preferences, learning styles, and workplace expectations can create management challenges if organizations fail to adapt leadership and human-resource strategies accordingly. Adaptive leadership theory suggests that such challenges require flexible leadership approaches that encourage collaboration, learning, and organizational responsiveness rather than relying exclusively on traditional hierarchical control [16].

Within law-enforcement organizations, these developments are particularly significant. Police institutions traditionally operate within structured and hierarchical environments, yet they increasingly rely on digital technologies and must recruit, develop, and retain younger generations of employees. As a result, leadership approaches that successfully integrate technological innovation with workforce diversity are becoming increasingly important.

Table 1. Characteristics of Generation Z Relevant to Law Enforcement

Characteristic	Leadership Implications
Digital literacy	Supports technological adaptation
Preference for feedback	Requires coaching-oriented leadership
Continuous learning orientation	Encourages professional development
Collaborative communication style	Supports participatory leadership
Adaptability to technology	Facilitates organizational modernization

Source: Adapted from Paksi-Petró (2025) [2].

The literature therefore suggests that generational change and digitalization should not be viewed as separate organizational phenomena. Instead, they represent interconnected processes that collectively influence leadership requirements, workforce management strategies, and institutional modernization. Organizational learning theory further indicates that effective modernization depends on the ability of institutions to facilitate knowledge sharing, continuous learning, and collaboration across different generational groups [14]. Understanding these developments provides an important foundation for examining leadership development within contemporary law-enforcement organizations and for developing the proposed “**Police Leadership 2.0**” conceptual framework.

3.2 Leadership Development and Police Learning

Leadership development has become a central concern in contemporary policing due to increasing organizational complexity, technological transformation, and changing workforce expectations. Traditional police leadership models were largely based on hierarchical authority, command structures, and operational experience. However, the reviewed literature suggests that effective police leadership increasingly depends on communication, adaptability, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and continuous professional learning [3], [4]. These developments are consistent with **Transformational Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes motivation, professional development, and organizational change, as well as **Adaptive Leadership Theory**, which focuses on leadership under conditions of complexity and uncertainty [14], [16].

A comprehensive review conducted by **de Moura et al.** identifies a significant shift from traditional command-and-control leadership toward more adaptive and transformational approaches [3]. Contemporary police leaders are expected not only to supervise operations but also to support organizational learning, facilitate innovation, manage diversity, and guide organizational change. This evolution, often described as “**Police Leadership 2.0**”, reflects broader developments in public-sector governance and organizational management.

The literature further emphasizes that leadership development should be understood as a continuous process rather than a single training event. **Staller and Koerner** argue that police learning occurs through a combination of formal education, workplace experience, reflection, mentoring, and organizational interaction [4]. Effective leadership development therefore requires more than classroom instruction; it depends on creating learning environments that encourage critical thinking, knowledge sharing, and professional growth.

Professional learning is particularly important because contemporary police officers operate in increasingly unpredictable environments. Technological innovation, social change, and evolving public expectations require leaders who can adapt quickly and make informed decisions under complex conditions. Consequently, police organizations must promote lifelong learning and continuous competency development throughout an officer's career.

Koerner and Staller further argue that traditional police training approaches may be insufficient for preparing officers to manage complex conflicts and interpersonal challenges [5]. They propose alternative pedagogical approaches that emphasize experiential learning, scenario-based exercises, reflective practice, and problem-solving. Such approaches encourage officers to develop practical judgment, communication skills, and adaptive thinking rather than relying solely on procedural knowledge.

The relationship between leadership development and conflict management is particularly significant. Modern police leaders must frequently address organizational tensions, workplace disputes, and communication challenges within diverse teams. The reviewed literature suggests that leadership-development programs incorporating conflict-management competencies, emotional intelligence, and collaborative problem-solving can contribute to healthier organizational climates and more effective decision-making [3], [5].

Digitalization has also transformed professional learning in policing. Online learning platforms, virtual simulations, digital training systems, and technology-supported education provide new opportunities for continuous professional development. These tools are particularly relevant for younger generations of officers who often demonstrate strong familiarity with digital learning environments [2]. Consequently, leadership-development programs increasingly integrate digital technologies alongside traditional training methods.

Table 2. Key Dimensions of Leadership Development in Contemporary Policing

Dimension	Purpose	Leadership Outcome
Formal Education	Professional knowledge acquisition	Theoretical competence
Experiential Learning	Learning through practice	Operational effectiveness
Mentoring	Knowledge transfer and guidance	Leadership readiness
Reflective Learning	Critical evaluation of experience	Adaptive decision-making
Conflict-Management Training	Managing interpersonal challenges	Organizational cohesion
Digital Learning and Adaptation	Technology-supported development	Technology-enabled leadership development

Source: Adapted from de Moura et al. (2023), Staller and Koerner (2022), and Koerner and Staller (2021) [3]–[5].

Overall, the literature demonstrates that leadership development and organizational learning are closely interconnected. Effective police organizations increasingly view leadership not merely as a position of authority but as a set of competencies developed through continuous learning, reflection, and professional practice. The transition from traditional command-oriented leadership toward adaptive and transformational leadership can therefore be understood as a broader process of organizational modernization within public administration [14], [16]. As law-enforcement institutions adapt to generational change and digital transformation, leadership-development systems will play a critical role in preparing future leaders capable of managing complexity, fostering innovation, and supporting organizational modernization through the principles embodied in the proposed “**Police Leadership 2.0**” conceptual framework.

3.3 Leadership Competencies for Future Police Leaders

The transformation of public administration and law enforcement has significantly expanded the competency requirements associated with effective leadership. While traditional leadership models emphasized authority, operational expertise, and administrative control, contemporary leadership increasingly requires a broader set of interpersonal, strategic, and adaptive competencies. In modern policing environments, leaders must be capable of responding to technological change, managing workforce diversity, facilitating organizational learning, and addressing complex organizational challenges [6]. These expanded competency requirements are consistent with **Transformational Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes motivation, professional development, and organizational change, as well as **Adaptive Leadership Theory**, which focuses on leadership under conditions of complexity and uncertainty [14], [16].

Durugy et al. argue that leadership effectiveness depends not only on professional knowledge but also on the ability to influence, motivate, and collaborate with others [6]. Their research highlights several competencies that are increasingly important for organizational success, including communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and collaborative leadership. These competencies

enable leaders to operate effectively in dynamic environments characterized by uncertainty and continuous change.

Communication remains one of the most critical leadership competencies. Effective communication supports trust, organizational cohesion, knowledge sharing, and employee engagement. Within police organizations, communication skills are particularly important because leaders must coordinate diverse teams, manage operational situations, and maintain productive relationships with both internal and external stakeholders. Strong communication also contributes to conflict prevention and constructive problem-solving.

Adaptability is another key competency in the context of digital transformation. Police leaders increasingly face changing technologies, evolving operational demands, and shifting societal expectations. Adaptive leaders demonstrate flexibility, openness to innovation, and the ability to respond effectively to new circumstances. Such capabilities are essential for managing organizational modernization and supporting continuous improvement initiatives.

The reviewed literature consistently identifies emotional intelligence as a critical component of effective leadership. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to understand and regulate their own emotions while recognizing and responding appropriately to the emotions of others. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are often better equipped to manage workplace conflict, support employee well-being, and foster positive organizational climates [6].

Strategic thinking has likewise become increasingly important in public-sector leadership. Rather than focusing solely on immediate operational concerns, contemporary leaders must understand long-term organizational objectives and anticipate future challenges. Strategic leadership supports effective decision-making, resource allocation, and organizational adaptation, all of which are essential in modern law-enforcement environments.

In addition, collaborative leadership is gaining importance as organizations become more interconnected and knowledge-based. Collaborative leaders encourage teamwork, information sharing, and collective problem-solving. Such approaches are particularly valuable in multi-generational workplaces where diverse experiences and perspectives can contribute to innovation and organizational learning.

For law-enforcement organizations, conflict-management competence represents a particularly important leadership capability. Leaders who possess communication skills, emotional intelligence, negotiation abilities, and collaborative problem-solving skills are generally more successful in preventing conflict escalation and maintaining organizational cohesion. Consequently, conflict-management competence should be considered a core element of leadership development rather than a supplementary skill.

Table 3. Core Leadership Competencies for Future Police Leaders

Competency	Organizational Function
Communication	Builds trust and facilitates cooperation
Adaptability	Supports organizational change
Emotional Intelligence	Strengthens workplace relationships
Strategic Thinking	Guides long-term decision-making
Collaboration	Promotes teamwork and innovation
Conflict Management	Prevents and resolves disputes
Digital Literacy and AI Readiness	Supports digital policing and organizational transformation

Source: Adapted from Durugy et al. (2025) [6].

Comparative European research further suggests that police organizations across several EU member states are increasingly integrating digital leadership, cyber-awareness, and conflict-management

competencies into leadership-development programs. While the pace of implementation varies among countries, Hungarian law enforcement faces similar modernization pressures related to digital transformation, workforce renewal, and organizational adaptation. Consequently, the competency profile of future police leaders is becoming increasingly aligned with broader European trends in public-sector leadership development [1], [3], [6].

The literature therefore suggests that future police leaders must combine traditional professional expertise with interpersonal, strategic, and technological competencies. These capabilities are essential for managing generational diversity, supporting digital transformation, and fostering effective organizational performance. As policing continues to evolve, leadership-development programs must prioritize the systematic development of these competencies to ensure long-term organizational effectiveness and modernization through the principles embodied in the proposed “**Police Leadership 2.0**” conceptual framework.

4. Conceptual Framework

4.1 Drivers of Leadership Transformation

The literature reviewed in the previous section indicates that contemporary law-enforcement organizations are influenced by two major transformational forces: **generational change** and **digitalization**. These developments are reshaping workforce characteristics, organizational expectations, and leadership requirements. Consequently, police organizations must adapt their leadership-development systems to prepare future leaders capable of managing increasingly complex operational and organizational environments.

Generational change represents a significant organizational challenge because younger employees often possess different expectations regarding communication, learning, professional development, and workplace participation [2]. Generation Z officers are generally characterized by strong digital literacy, preference for continuous feedback, and familiarity with technology-supported learning environments. These characteristics influence how leadership is perceived and how leadership-development programs should be designed.

At the same time, digitalization has transformed public administration and policing through the widespread adoption of information technologies, digital communication systems, electronic governance tools, and data-driven decision-making processes [1]. These developments require leaders to possess competencies that extend beyond traditional administrative and operational expertise. Digital literacy, adaptability, strategic thinking, and innovation management have become increasingly important leadership requirements within modern law-enforcement organizations.

The interaction between generational change and digitalization creates new demands for leadership development. While younger officers may adapt quickly to technological innovation, organizations must ensure that technological competence is complemented by leadership, communication, and conflict-management skills. Leadership-development programs therefore serve as a critical mechanism for preparing future leaders to operate effectively within digitally transformed and multi-generational workplaces.

Figure 1. Police Leadership 2.0 Conceptual Framework



The proposed “**Police Leadership 2.0**” framework conceptualizes generational change and digitalization as the primary drivers of leadership transformation in contemporary law enforcement. These forces create new leadership competency requirements that must be addressed through structured leadership-development programs. Effective leadership development is expected to strengthen conflict-management capacity, improve organizational effectiveness, and contribute to the modernization of law-enforcement institutions.

The principal contribution of the framework is that it integrates **generational diversity, digital transformation, leadership development, and conflict-management capability** into a single analytical model. Existing leadership discussions often address these dimensions separately, focusing either on technology adoption, workforce demographics, or leadership competencies. In contrast, the proposed framework emphasizes the interaction between these factors and explains how they collectively shape leadership requirements within contemporary policing.

From a theoretical perspective, the framework extends the literature on police leadership by combining insights from transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, organizational learning, and public-sector modernization. It therefore addresses a conceptual gap concerning how technological transformation and generational workforce change jointly influence leadership development in law-enforcement organizations.

Rather than viewing technological transformation and workforce change as separate challenges, the framework treats them as interconnected processes that jointly influence leadership development. This perspective provides a foundation for understanding how police organizations can respond strategically to contemporary organizational challenges while maintaining professional effectiveness, organizational resilience, and institutional legitimacy.

4.2 Leadership Competency Development and Organizational Outcomes

The proposed framework identifies leadership development as the central mechanism connecting organizational transformation with effective policing outcomes. While generational change and digitalization create new competency demands, leadership-development programs provide the means through which these competencies can be systematically cultivated and applied within law-enforcement organizations. This perspective is consistent with **Transformational Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes the development of followers and organizational change, and with **Adaptive Leadership Theory**, which highlights the importance of learning and flexibility under conditions of uncertainty [14], [16].

The reviewed literature suggests that effective police leadership depends on a combination of interpersonal, strategic, and technological competencies rather than operational expertise alone [3], [6]. Communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, strategic thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy have emerged as critical capabilities for managing modern policing environments. These competencies enable leaders to respond to organizational change, support innovation, and maintain effective workplace relationships.

Leadership-development programs play an essential role in strengthening these competencies. Through formal education, professional training, mentoring, experiential learning, and reflective practice, organizations can prepare future leaders to address increasingly complex challenges [4], [5]. Such programs are particularly important in multi-generational workplaces where leaders must balance diverse employee expectations while maintaining organizational effectiveness and cohesion.

A central outcome of leadership competency development is enhanced conflict-management capacity. Police organizations frequently operate under conditions characterized by operational pressure, organizational change, and workforce diversity. Leaders who possess strong communication skills, emotional intelligence, and collaborative problem-solving abilities are generally better equipped to prevent conflict escalation, facilitate dialogue, and promote constructive workplace relationships [3], [5]. Effective conflict management contributes to employee well-being, organizational trust, teamwork, and operational performance.

The framework further proposes that strengthened conflict-management capacity supports effective police leadership. Leaders capable of managing interpersonal challenges, facilitating cooperation, and adapting to change are more likely to maintain organizational stability while supporting innovation and professional development. Consequently, leadership effectiveness should be viewed not solely in terms of authority or

operational control but also in terms of the ability to foster positive organizational environments and organizational learning processes [17].

Table 4. Conceptual Framework Variables and Relationships

Variable	Role in Framework	Expected Outcome
Generational Change	Independent Variable	New workforce expectations
Digitalization	Independent Variable	New competency requirements
Leadership Competencies	Mediating Variable	Enhanced leadership capacity
Leadership Development	Organizational Mechanism	Competency acquisition
Conflict-Management Capacity	Intermediate Outcome	Improved organizational climate
Effective Police Leadership	Leadership Outcome	Better decision-making and teamwork
Organizational Modernization	Final Outcome	Institutional effectiveness and adaptability

Source: Developed by the author.

The final outcome of the framework is organizational modernization. Law-enforcement institutions that successfully develop leadership competencies and conflict-management capacity are likely to be better positioned to adapt to technological innovation, workforce transformation, and changing societal expectations. Leadership development therefore functions not merely as a professional-training activity but as a strategic instrument supporting long-term organizational effectiveness, organizational learning, and institutional modernization.

The conceptual contribution of this section is that it explains how leadership development mediates the relationship between environmental transformation (generational change and digitalization) and organizational outcomes (effective leadership and modernization). Existing discussions often acknowledge the importance of leadership competencies but provide less explicit explanation of the mechanisms through which competency development contributes to organizational adaptation. The proposed framework addresses this gap by identifying leadership development and conflict-management capacity as key intermediate processes linking workforce transformation with institutional modernization.

Overall, the conceptual framework suggests that the future success of Hungarian law enforcement will depend significantly on its ability to align leadership-development systems with the realities of digital transformation and generational change. By investing in competency-based leadership development, police organizations can strengthen conflict-management capacity, improve organizational performance, and enhance their ability to respond to future challenges through the principles embodied in the proposed **“Police Leadership 2.0”** model.

5 Discussion

5.1 Generation Z and Digital Policing

The reviewed literature indicates that generational change and digitalization are closely interconnected processes shaping the future of law enforcement. The increasing presence of Generation Z personnel coincides with the rapid digital transformation of public administration, creating both opportunities and challenges for police organizations. As digital natives, Generation Z officers generally demonstrate high levels of technological familiarity and adaptability, making them valuable contributors to organizational modernization initiatives [1], [2].

However, technological competence alone is insufficient for effective leadership. Future police leaders must combine digital literacy with communication skills, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and conflict-

management capabilities. While Generation Z personnel may adapt more readily to emerging technologies, leadership development remains essential for preparing them to manage complex organizational environments and diverse teams. This perspective is consistent with **Adaptive Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes the capacity of leaders to respond flexibly to changing organizational conditions and emerging challenges [16].

The literature further suggests that traditional leadership approaches may be less effective in engaging younger employees who often prefer continuous feedback, collaborative communication, and professional-development opportunities. Consequently, leadership-development programs should incorporate mentoring, coaching, and learner-centered educational approaches that reflect changing workforce expectations. Such adaptations can improve leadership readiness while supporting employee engagement and retention.

Digital policing environments also require leaders who can effectively manage organizational change. The introduction of new technologies often alters work processes, communication patterns, and decision-making procedures. Leaders must therefore balance innovation with organizational stability while ensuring that technological developments remain aligned with legal, ethical, and professional standards. In this context, leadership development serves as a critical mechanism for helping future leaders navigate digital transformation successfully.

Comparative European research indicates that police organizations in several EU member states are increasingly integrating digital competencies, cyber-awareness, and technology-supported decision-making into leadership-development programs. Although the pace and scope of implementation differ across countries, Hungarian law enforcement faces similar pressures related to digital transformation, workforce renewal, and organizational adaptation. This alignment suggests that the challenges associated with Generation Z leadership development are not unique to Hungary but form part of a broader European modernization trend in policing [1], [3], [6].

From an **organizational learning** perspective, the interaction between experienced officers and Generation Z personnel may create opportunities for reciprocal knowledge transfer. Senior officers contribute institutional knowledge, operational judgment, and professional experience, while younger officers contribute digital competencies, technological awareness, and familiarity with emerging communication practices [17]. Leadership-development systems that facilitate such intergenerational learning can strengthen organizational resilience and support long-term modernization.

Overall, the interaction between Generation Z and digital policing highlights the growing importance of adaptive and competency-based leadership. Police organizations that effectively integrate generational diversity with technological innovation are likely to be better positioned to support modernization, organizational learning, and long-term institutional effectiveness through the principles embodied in the proposed **"Police Leadership 2.0"** framework.

5.2 Leadership Challenges and Conflict Management

The reviewed literature highlights the growing importance of conflict-management capacity within contemporary law-enforcement organizations. Digital transformation, organizational change, and workforce diversity can create new sources of workplace tension, communication challenges, and interpersonal conflict. Effective leadership is therefore increasingly dependent on the ability to manage relationships, facilitate cooperation, and resolve disagreements constructively.

The literature consistently identifies communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and collaboration as essential leadership competencies for conflict prevention and resolution [3], [5], [6]. Leaders possessing these competencies are generally more capable of recognizing emerging tensions, encouraging dialogue, and supporting mutually beneficial solutions. Such capabilities contribute to stronger organizational cohesion, employee well-being, and professional performance. These competencies are also closely aligned with **Transformational Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes relationship building, motivation, and organizational development [14].

The literature further suggests that conflict management should be integrated into leadership-development programs rather than treated as a separate or supplementary training area. Modern police leaders require practical skills in communication, negotiation, mediation awareness, and collaborative problem-solving. These

competencies are particularly important in multi-generational workplaces where differences in values, communication preferences, and professional expectations may contribute to misunderstandings or workplace disputes.

Another significant challenge concerns balancing hierarchical organizational structures with more collaborative leadership approaches. While law-enforcement institutions continue to require clear authority and accountability, contemporary leadership increasingly involves facilitation, mentoring, and relationship management. Leaders must therefore be capable of exercising authority while simultaneously fostering trust, participation, and organizational learning. This balancing process reflects the principles of **Adaptive Leadership**, which emphasize flexibility, stakeholder engagement, and the capacity to guide organizations through complex change [16].

From an **organizational learning** perspective, effective conflict management also supports knowledge sharing and intergenerational cooperation. Constructive communication and collaborative problem-solving can facilitate the exchange of operational experience, technological knowledge, and professional practices between senior officers and younger personnel [17]. Consequently, conflict-management capacity contributes not only to workplace harmony but also to organizational learning and institutional adaptation.

From a broader perspective, effective conflict-management capacity contributes directly to organizational modernization. Police organizations that promote constructive communication, collaboration, and adaptive leadership are more likely to respond successfully to technological innovation, workforce transformation, and evolving societal expectations. Leadership development should therefore be viewed as a strategic investment that strengthens both organizational effectiveness and long-term institutional resilience.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that generational change and digitalization are transforming leadership requirements within contemporary policing. Leadership-development systems that emphasize digital competence, interpersonal effectiveness, organizational learning, and conflict-management capacity can help prepare future police leaders to address emerging organizational challenges while supporting the modernization of Hungarian law enforcement through the principles embodied in the proposed “**Police Leadership 2.0**” framework.

6. Implications for Hungarian Law Enforcement

6.1 Leadership Development Reform

The reviewed literature indicates that leadership development should become a strategic priority within Hungarian law enforcement. Traditional leadership preparation has often focused on operational management, legal compliance, and administrative responsibilities. While these competencies remain important, contemporary policing increasingly requires leaders who can manage organizational change, technological innovation, and workforce diversity.

Leadership-development programs should therefore adopt a competency-based approach that integrates communication, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, adaptability, and conflict-management skills. Such programs should also emphasize continuous professional development through mentoring, experiential learning, coaching, and reflective practice. By broadening leadership-development frameworks, law-enforcement organizations can better prepare future leaders for increasingly complex operational and organizational environments.

From a policy perspective, Hungarian police education institutions should consider revising leadership curricula to include adaptive leadership, organizational learning, digital governance, and collaborative problem-solving modules. Leadership assessment systems could also be expanded beyond operational performance indicators to include communication effectiveness, team development, and conflict-management capabilities.

6.2 Digital and Conflict-Management Competencies

Digital transformation has expanded the range of competencies required for effective police leadership. Future leaders must be capable of understanding technological systems, managing digital information, supporting innovation, and utilizing data-driven decision-making processes [1]. Consequently, leadership-

development programs should incorporate digital literacy, AI awareness, cybersecurity understanding, and technology-management skills as core components of professional training.

At the same time, conflict-management competencies have become increasingly important within multi-generational and rapidly changing organizations. Communication skills, negotiation techniques, mediation awareness, and collaborative problem-solving abilities contribute significantly to organizational effectiveness and workplace cohesion. Integrating these competencies into leadership-development programs can strengthen interpersonal relationships, improve organizational climate, and reduce the likelihood of workplace conflict escalation.

The combination of digital competence and conflict-management capacity is particularly relevant because modern police leaders must simultaneously manage technological transformation and human interaction. Leadership-development systems that address both dimensions are likely to produce more adaptable and effective leaders.

Accordingly, Hungarian law-enforcement authorities should consider introducing scenario-based training exercises that combine digital decision-making with interpersonal conflict-management challenges. Such integrated training can better reflect the operational realities of contemporary policing.

6.3 Organizational Modernization

The literature demonstrates that organizational modernization depends not only on technological investment but also on human-capital development. Leadership development functions as a critical link between modernization objectives and organizational performance. Police organizations that invest in leadership competencies, continuous learning, and conflict-management capacity are better positioned to adapt to changing operational demands and societal expectations.

For Hungarian law enforcement, modernization efforts should therefore focus on aligning leadership-development systems with contemporary workforce realities. This includes supporting Generation Z employees, expanding technology-enhanced learning opportunities, strengthening mentoring structures, and promoting collaborative leadership approaches. Organizational learning mechanisms that facilitate knowledge exchange between experienced officers and younger personnel should also be encouraged [17]. Such initiatives can contribute to workforce sustainability, institutional effectiveness, and long-term organizational resilience.

Additional policy measures could include:

- establishing formal intergenerational mentoring programs,
- expanding digital-learning platforms for leadership training,
- integrating mediation-awareness modules into police education,
- developing competency-based promotion criteria, and
- creating continuous leadership-development pathways throughout an officer's career.

Ultimately, leadership development should be viewed as a strategic investment in the future of Hungarian policing. By strengthening leadership competencies, organizational learning processes, and conflict-management capabilities, law-enforcement organizations can enhance their capacity to respond effectively to technological, organizational, and societal change through the principles embodied in the proposed **“Police Leadership 2.0”** framework.

7 Conclusion

This article examined how generational change and digitalization influence leadership development and competency requirements within contemporary law enforcement. Drawing upon recent literature on public administration, police leadership, organizational learning, and leadership competencies, the study developed the **“Police Leadership 2.0”** conceptual framework linking generational transformation, digitalization, leadership development, conflict-management capacity, and organizational modernization.

The first research question explored how generational change influences leadership development in law enforcement. The reviewed literature indicates that the growing presence of Generation Z personnel is reshaping organizational expectations regarding communication, learning, professional development, and workplace participation. Compared with traditional hierarchical leadership models, younger employees often prefer collaborative leadership approaches, continuous feedback, and technology-supported learning environments. As a result, leadership-development systems must evolve to address changing workforce expectations while maintaining organizational effectiveness and professional standards.

The second research question examined the impact of digitalization on leadership competency requirements. The analysis demonstrates that technological transformation has expanded the competency profile required for effective police leadership. In addition to operational and administrative expertise, contemporary leaders increasingly require digital literacy, adaptability, strategic thinking, communication skills, and the ability to manage organizational change. Digitalization therefore reinforces the importance of continuous learning and competency-based leadership development within law-enforcement institutions.

The third research question focused on the contribution of leadership development to conflict-management capacity and organizational modernization. The literature suggests that leadership competencies such as communication, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and conflict-management skills play a crucial role in supporting organizational effectiveness. Leadership-development programs that integrate these competencies can strengthen workplace relationships, improve organizational climate, and enhance the ability of police organizations to adapt to changing operational environments.

From a theoretical perspective, the principal contribution of the study is the development of the **“Police Leadership 2.0”** framework. Unlike existing approaches that often examine generational change, digitalization, leadership competencies, or conflict management separately, the proposed framework integrates these dimensions into a single analytical model. The framework therefore addresses a conceptual gap in the literature concerning **how technological transformation and generational workforce change jointly influence leadership development and organizational modernization in law-enforcement organizations**.

The framework also improves upon existing leadership models by identifying **leadership development and conflict-management capacity as key mediating mechanisms** connecting environmental transformation with organizational outcomes. This contribution extends the literature on transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, and organizational learning by applying these perspectives specifically to the context of contemporary policing.

The study offers several practical implications for Hungarian law enforcement. Police education institutions should revise leadership curricula to include digital governance, AI awareness, organizational learning, and collaborative problem-solving. Leadership-development programs should expand mentoring structures, experiential learning opportunities, and technology-supported training platforms. In addition, competency-based promotion systems that incorporate communication effectiveness, team development, and conflict-management capabilities may strengthen long-term organizational resilience and modernization efforts.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The article is **conceptual in nature** and relies primarily on existing literature rather than original empirical data collection. Consequently, the proposed relationships should be interpreted as theoretical propositions rather than empirically verified causal relationships. Future research should examine these propositions through surveys, interviews, case studies, and comparative analyses involving police officers, trainers, and organizational leaders across different European law-enforcement systems.

In conclusion, generational change and digitalization are transforming the leadership landscape of contemporary policing. Law-enforcement organizations that invest strategically in leadership development, digital competencies, organizational learning, and conflict-management capacity will be better positioned to address future challenges while maintaining effectiveness, legitimacy, and public trust. Leadership development should therefore be regarded not merely as a training function but as a strategic instrument for the long-term modernization of Hungarian law enforcement through the principles embodied in the proposed **“Police Leadership 2.0”** framework.

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