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High-Pressure Situations Within the Colorado Policing System**
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**AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE REASON-OVER-EMOTION
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THE COLORADO POLICING SYSTEM**

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ABSTRACT

The study analysed reason over emotion leadership characteristics in high pressure situations within Colorado policing system. The specific objectives were to identify the characteristics of reasons-over-emotions applied by police leaders, examine the extent of applications of reasons over emotions leadership during pressure situation and determine the effect of reason over emotion leadership on the performance of police during high pressure situation. Multi-stage sampling techniques were employed to select 80 police officers who constituted the sample size. Data were collected primarily using structured questionnaire and interview sections, and analysed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that 97.5% participants agreed that strategic decision was the important characteristic of reason over emotion leaders in their police department, followed by 95% who agreed that maintaining objectivity is an important characteristic of reason over emotion police leaders. All the participants (with mean of 3.57) agreed to a high extent the application of reasons over emotion leadership characteristics during a high pressure situation. The regression analysis on the effect of reason-over-emotion leadership characteristics on performance of police profession showed that the coefficient of reason-over-emotion leadership characteristics was positively signed and statistically significant at 1%. The study recommends the prioritizing of reason of emotion leadership characteristics by police officers during high pressure situation as it translates to stability and orderliness.

Keywords: Reason-over-Emotion, Leadership characteristics, High-pressure situation, Community- Policing, Colorado

1. INTRODUCTION

Police profession is a high-stakes job where officers frequently face split-second decisions. Leaders in the police force are frequently called to make rapid decisions under pressure, often involving complex ethical dimensions. In such instances, a reason-over-emotion leadership approach is invaluable. Rational decision-making is essential for maintaining objectivity, protecting both officers and civilians, and ensuring public trust in the justice system. This approach prioritizes rational analysis and objective decision-making, allowing leaders to address critical situations effectively without allowing their emotions to cloud judgment (Njoku, 2020). Reason-over-emotion leadership means that while leaders remain empathetic and aware of emotional contexts, they do not allow these emotions to disproportionately influence their responses, leading to more consistent and ethically grounded outcomes (Njoku, 2025; Goleman, 1995).

Work-related stress is a significant factor among the numerous factors influencing the police work environment. Police officers are exposed to various high-pressure situations in the line of duty (Okoiye., 2011). High-pressure situations in US range from active shooter incidents and civil unrest to robbery and aggravated assault requiring emergency response scenarios which require leaders to make immediate decisions with far-reaching consequences (Njoku, 2025). These situations often provoke strong emotional responses such as fear, anger, or anxiety. The work environment, as the stage upon which police officers operate, reflects the complexities of their work, organization, and society, which can influence and be influenced by officers' work-related stress, interpersonal relationships, and job satisfaction. Understanding the main determinant factors of the police work environment is essential for developing support systems and interventions to address the special needs of officers and can enhance their individual well-being and workplace environment. Therefore, effective policing leadership increasingly emphasizes the importance of reason-based decision-making over emotional reactivity during such situations of work stress (Njoku, 2020). This paradigm, often referred to as reason-over-emotion leadership, emphasises on the capacity of leaders to maintain cognitive clarity, situational awareness, and ethical judgment when they are under stress.

The concept of reason-over-emotion leadership is critical in policing due to the nature of law enforcement challenges, where emotions can often run high, particularly in situations involving risk, conflict, or trauma. Leaders who rely on reason over emotion can navigate these scenarios with a balanced perspective, ensuring that decisions made are based on facts, ethical principles, and long-term implications rather than transient emotional reactions (McCraty & Atkinson., 2012). This leadership style is also crucial in fostering accountability within police departments, as decisions made from a rational standpoint are easier to justify and defend in public or judicial review processes, thereby increasing transparency and public trust (Tyler, 2020).

Furthermore, reason-over-emotion leadership has been associated with improved crisis management skills, as leaders are better equipped to maintain composure and communicate effectively with their teams during stressful incidents. This resilience and focus help to create a stable environment that supports officer performance and promotes effective decision-making at all levels of the organization (George, 2000). As policing faces increased scrutiny and demand for ethical conduct, adopting a reason-over-emotion

approach to leadership becomes a critical asset in fostering professionalism, accountability, and trust across communities and within law enforcement agencies.

Colorado had experienced a lot of problems with violent crime, from gang violence to domestic violence. There were more property crimes and violent crimes in the state in the 1990s, but these numbers started to go down in the 2000s because of better policing and more community involvement (Colorado crime statistics, 2025). But in the last few years, Colorado has seen a rise in some violent crimes, especially murders, aggravated assaults, and gun-related violence. The Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) says that the state saw a big rise in homicides in the early 2020s. This was partly because of gang violence, domestic disputes, and the opioid epidemic. There were 30% more murders in 2020 than in 2019, making it one of the highest rates in recent years. Leadership within the local departments such as the Colorado State Patrol, Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) and the Denver Police Department (DPD) are making significant strides in the law enforcement. Some of their efforts have included increased collaboration between federal and state agencies, robust community policing initiatives, and a focus on data-driven strategies to prevent violent crime before it occurs.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite extensive training and institutional reforms, the Colorado policing system continues to face persistent challenges related to decision-making under pressure. High-profile incidents involving excessive use of force, misjudgement in crisis situations, and escalation of conflicts have often been linked to emotionally driven responses rather than rational, evidence-based leadership. The central problem lies in the inconsistency in leadership behaviour under stress. While policing institutions advocate for professionalism and rational conduct, real-world scenarios frequently expose gaps in emotional regulation, cognitive processing, and leadership judgment. These gaps are caused by factors such as; organizational stress and burnout, Inadequate training in emotional intelligence and crisis leadership, cultural norms that may result to aggressive responses and limited accountability mechanisms

Furthermore, the increasing complexity of policing marked by technological advancements, social media scrutiny, and dynamic legal standards demands a higher level of cognitive sophistication from leaders. Emotional reactivity in such contexts can result in irreversible consequences, including loss of life, legal liabilities, and erosion of institutional credibility.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to analytically examine the characteristics of reason-over-emotion leadership and their effectiveness in high-pressure policing situations within the Colorado policing system. The specific objectives are to identify the characteristics of reasons-over-emotions applied by police leaders, examine the extent of applications of reasons over emotions leadership during pressure situation and determine the effect of reason over emotional leadership on the performance of police during high pressure situation.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Definition of Reason-Over-Emotion Leadership Characteristics

The concept of "Reason over Emotion" refers to a leader's ability to prioritize analytical thinking, sound judgment, and rational decision-making over impulsive or emotionally driven responses (Njoku, 2020). This leadership quality entails evaluating situations with a focus on facts, data, and objective criteria, even when circumstances provoke strong emotions or pressures. Leaders with this characteristic are often seen as steady and reliable, maintaining composure in critical situations and making decisions that reflect long-term benefits rather than short-term reactions.

3.2 Major Characteristics of Reasons-Over-Emotion leaders

- a. **Rational Decision-Making:** Leaders who embody "reason over emotion" rely on a logical decision-making process that prioritizes objective analysis and minimizes biases. According to Drucker (2009), "effective decision-making is not based on consensus or feelings, but on facts and logic". This principle is important in law enforcement, where decisions made in high-stakes environments can have significant consequences. Rational decision-making also involves critically assessing various perspectives and potential outcomes before arriving at an informed decision (Northouse, 2018).
- b. **Emotional Intelligence and Restraint:** While such leaders don't let emotions dictate their choices, they also recognize and manage emotions effectively, a hallmark of high emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence allows leaders to acknowledge and control their own emotions, understand the emotional responses of others, and apply this awareness to maintain calm in crises. By exercising restraint, leaders avoid reacting impulsively and instead respond in a way that upholds integrity and promotes stability (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009).

- c. **Strategic Thinking:** The "reason over emotion" trait is also closely linked to strategic thinking, where leaders focus on long-term goals and consequences rather than immediate emotional responses. This approach fosters calculated actions that align with organizational values and objectives, a vital quality in policing where public safety and community trust are primary considerations (Yukl, 2013). Strategic thinking allows leaders to anticipate challenges and respond proactively rather than reactively, prioritizing solutions that benefit the broader mission.
- d. **Maintaining Objectivity in High-Pressure Situations:** A leader who embodies reason over emotion is able to detach from the emotional intensity of a situation to maintain objectivity. Collins (2001) emphasized that effective leader "confront the brutal facts" while remaining unwavering in their principles and values. In law enforcement, where officers frequently face provocative and stressful encounters, maintaining objectivity is essential for making balanced and fair decisions.

3.3 Overview on the Importance of Reasoning-Over-Emotions in Decision-Making.

Leaders who emphasize reasoned decision-making rely on objective analysis, evidence, and a balanced perspective, allowing them to navigate complex scenarios with clarity and steadiness. Here are some key reasons why reasoning is essential over emotions in such contexts according to Njoku (2025):



Fig 1: Importance of reasoning over emotion in decision-making

- i. **Enhanced Objectivity and Fairness:** Decisions based on rational assessment rather than immediate emotional reactions promote fairness in policing. By focusing on evidence and facts, leaders can remain objective, making decisions that are consistent and grounded in fairness rather than personal biases.
- ii. **Increased Accuracy in High-Pressure Situations:** High-pressure situations, such as responding to active shooter incidents, hostage situations, or public protests, demand accuracy and level-headed decision-making. Research indicates that reasoning promotes clear-headedness and allows individuals to stay focused on the end goals rather than getting overwhelmed by immediate emotional reactions (Yukl, 2013).
- iii. **Better Problem-Solving and Decision Quality:** Leaders who base decisions on reason consider long-term implications, ethical standards, and strategic goals, which leads to better, more sustainable solutions. Studies show that decisions made through a reasoned, step-by-step evaluation process tend to yield better results than those driven solely by emotional impulses (Northouse, 2018).
- iv. **Enhanced Emotional Regulation and Stability:** Leaders, who focus on reasoning, cultivate emotional intelligence. They understand both their own emotions and those of others. This awareness helps them regulate their responses, maintaining calm and confidence even in tense situations (Goleman, 1995).
- v. **Improved Community Trust and Accountability:** Reasoned decision-making reduces the risk of impulsive actions that may harm public relations or reduce trust. Leaders who demonstrate restraint and rely on thoughtful judgment can more effectively manage sensitive situations, such as public protests or crises, thereby fostering a positive relationship with the community (Njoku, 2025).
- vi. **Increased Adaptability and Resilience:** Reasoning-driven leadership enables flexibility by encouraging leaders to assess each situation individually, without being influenced by emotional responses to past experiences. This adaptability is crucial for developing resilience, as it allows leaders to respond constructively to setbacks or unexpected circumstances.
- vii. **Reduction of Conflicts and De-escalation of Tensions:** By prioritizing reason over emotion, leaders are better able to communicate clearly, listen attentively, and find mutually acceptable solutions. Such de-escalation tactics prevent the unnecessary

intensification of conflicts, contributing to safer interactions and improved relations between law enforcement and the community.

3.4 Overview of High-Pressure, Violent cases in Colorado State

Colorado has experienced various forms of violent crime, including gang-related violence, homicides, and property crimes. Denver, the state capital, has often been a focal point for such issues due to its size and urban dynamics. The 1990s saw a significant rise in gang activity, and in recent years, there has been an uptick in violent crimes linked to drug trafficking, domestic violence, and aggravated assaults (Colorado bureau of investigation-crime statistics, 2020).

Recent data indicates a steady increase in violent crimes in some areas, particularly in Denver and Colorado Springs (Denver police department crime statistics, 2022). From Table 1 below, the total violent crimes increased substantially from 17,500 in 2011 to a peak of 32,874 in 2022, representing nearly a doubling over eleven years. This growth was especially pronounced between 2015 (20,205) and 2022 (32,874), indicating a sustained period of rising violence. After 2022, the trend reverses slightly, with totals declining to 31,650 in 2023, 31,549 in 2024, and more sharply to 27,674 in 2025. This suggests a recent stabilization and early signs of reduction, though levels remain significantly higher than the early 2010s (Colorado crime statistics, 2026). The complexity of these crimes often involving murder, non-consensual sex offense, aggravated assault and robbery crises has required law enforcement to adopt more sophisticated approaches.

Table 1: Trend of Violent cases (2011-2025) in Colorado state

YEARS	MURDER	SEX OFFENSE, NON- CONSENSUAL	AGGRAVATED ASSUALT	ROBBERY	TOTAL
2011	142	5,023	9,141	3,202	17,500
2012	163	5,665	10,181	3,356	19,365
2013	175	5,629	9,715	3,150	18,669
2014	154	5,663	10,137	3,035	18,989
2015	175	6,094	10,606	3,330	20,205
2016	204	6,350	11,788	3,554	21,896
2017	223	6,844	12,782	3,826	23,675
2018	219	7,575	14,550	3,812	26,156
2019	232	7,143	14,148	3,737	25,260
2020	307	6,579	16,981	4,007	27,874
2021	372	7,416	19,245	4,351	31,384
2022	393	6,814	21,202	4,465	32,874

2023	323	6,356	21,068	3,903	31,650
2024	268	6,206	21,282	3,793	31,549
2025	217	5,593	19,016	2,848	27,674

Source: Colorado Crime Statistics, 2026.

In response to violent crimes, Colorado law enforcement agencies have increasingly employed technology and data-driven policing strategies, such as predictive policing and surveillance systems, to address crime hotspots. Additionally, community policing has been a focus, with efforts to build trust and collaboration between police and local communities.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study Sample

The study was carried out in Colorado State, USA. Multi stage methods method was used. Firstly a purpose sampling was used to select two police departments namely; Denver Police Department and Colorado Springs Police. Also, Purpose sampling was used to select commissioned officers in both departments, and then a random sampling was used to select 150 police officers in two police departments in Colorado. All participants in the study were asked to mark a checkbox at the letter attached in front page of the questionnaire if they were interested to participate in individual interviews. Among 75 volunteer police in each department, 40 police officers were selected from each of the department (because of their job description and positions) and invited to the interview. Ultimately, a total of 80 police officers responded positively to the invitation and participated in individual interviews.

4.2 Date Collection

The quantitative data were collected through the use of a well structured questionnaire. In the qualitative phase of the study, data were collected through individual interviews and interview with police officers working in Denver police department and Colorado Springs police. Volunteers for the individual interviews were contacted physically at their work place. After explaining the aim of the study and the interviews verbally, a written information sheet was given to the interviewees, and they were asked for written consent to participate in the interviews. The main questions of the interview guide were categorized into three themes: 1) general opinions regarding the characteristics of reason over emotions applied by police officers during high pressured situations; 2) Perceptions on applications of reasons over emotions leadership during pressure situation; and 3) Opinion on the effect of reasons over

emotional leadership on the performance of police during high pressure situation. The interviews were in English.

4.3 Method of data analysis

The data was analysed by means of frequency, percentages, means, standard deviation and regression analysis.

The simple regression model used to determine the effect of reasons over emotion leadership on the performance of police during high pressure situation in the study area is explicitly stated as:

Model for respondents:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + et \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Where:

- Y = Performance of the police system (Stability/Orderliness)
- X = Reason over emotion (Actions/characteristics)
- α = Constant/ intercept
- β = Coefficient
- et = Stochastic error term

4.4 Results and Discussion

4.4.1: Characteristics of Reason-Over-Emotions

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to characteristics of reason over emotion

Characteristics	Yes		No	
	Frequency*	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Rational decision making	74	92.5	6	7.5
Emotional intelligence and restraints	66	82.5	14	17.5
Strategic thinking	78	97.5	2	2.5
Maintaining objectivity	76	95.0	4	5.0

Source: Field survey data, 2025. * indicates multiple responses

The result from Table 2 indicated that 97.5% participants agreed that strategic decision was the important characteristic of reason over emotion leaders in their police department; this is followed by 95% who agreed that maintaining objectivity is an important characteristic of

reason over emotion police leaders. 92.5% of participants agreed that rational decision making was an important characteristic of reason over emotional leaders in the police department while 82.5% of the respondents were in agreement that emotional intelligence and restraints is an important characteristic of reason-over-emotion police leaders in their department.

4.4.2: Application of Reason-Over-Emotion Leadership during Pressure Situation

Table 3: Mean distribution according to extent of application of reasons over emotion leadership characteristics

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std
1	In a high-pressure situation, officer in charge rely on available evidence rather than assumptions when making decisions.	3.81	1.21
2	Multiple options are evaluated before choosing a course of action under stress	3.83	1.17
3	Even when time is limited, an established procedures is followed to guide decisions	3.59	1.33
4	Police officer in-charge remain calm and control emotion when confronted with aggressive or distressed individuals	3.43	1.09
5	Does not allow emotional state to affect actions during tense situations	3.62	1.22
6	Use de-escalation techniques effectively when emotions are running high	3.21	1.35
7	Police leader anticipates how a situation may evolve and plan actions accordingly	3.52	1.20
8	Both immediate and long-term consequences are considered before acting in critical incidents.	3.68	1.09
9	Strategy is adapted quickly when new information becomes available during an operation	3.22	1.42
10	All individuals are treated fairly, regardless of personal biases or prior experiences	3.87	1.03
11	Actions are based on facts rather than personal opinions or external pressures	3.81	1.18
12	Impartiality is maintained when under pressure from colleagues, superiors, or the public.	3.21	1.39
	Mean cut-off	3.0	
	Grand mean response	3.57	1.18
	Number of respondents	80	

Source: Field Survey data, 2025.

The result on Table 3, which shows the extent of application of reasons over emotional leadership characteristics, revealed that the grand mean (3.57) was greater than the mean cut off of 3.0, and this implies that participant perceived to a great extent the applications of reason over

emotion leadership characteristics by the police officers during high pressure situation in the study area. The participants agreed to all the 12 statements on the extent of application of reasons over emotional leadership characteristics during a high pressure situation in the study area. Amongst the statements agreed by the participants to a high extent includes that; All individuals are treated fairly, regardless of personal biases or prior experiences (mean of 3.87); Multiple options are evaluated before choosing a course of action under stress (mean of 3.83); In a high-pressure situation, officer in charge rely on available evidence rather than assumptions when making decisions (mean of 3.81) and Actions are based on facts rather than personal opinions or external pressures(mean of 3.81).

4.4.3. Effect of Reasons-Over-Emotion Leadership on Performances of Police professional during High Pressure.

The regression result on the effect of reason over emotion leadership characteristics on performance of police professionals during high pressure situation is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Effect of Reasons-over-emotion leadership on performance of police

Variables	Linear (+)	Double-log	Semi-log	Exponential
Constant	13221.65 (0.022)***	1331.23 (0.531)**	3441.13 (1881.14)NS	2371.31 (0.051)***
Microcredit obtained	0.131 (0.034)***	0.475 (3.091)**	0.622 (0.716)*	4.617E-05 (0.903)*
R	0.912	0.730	0.610	0.685
R ²	0.882	0.644	0.589	0.622
Adj. R ²	0.755	0.602	0.534	0.595
Std. error est.	3.212	658.34	806.18	0.837
F-ratio	76.314*	425.46*	271.91*	392.81*

*, **, *** indicates significance at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively; NS indicates non significant

In Table 4, Linear regression was chosen as the lead equation because of the level of significance of variable under consideration, the R² and the F-ratio. Result of the analysis

shows that the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.882 which implied that about 88.2% of observed total variation in the performance of the police professionals was attributable to changes in application of reason over emotion leadership characteristics by the respondents. The high value of F-ratio (71.624) and the low value of standard error of the estimate (3.95315) signify the good fit of the model. The overall model was statistically significant ($P < 0.05$), implying that application of reason over emotion leadership characteristics exerts significant influence on the performance of the police professionals in the study area. The coefficient of reason-over-emotion leadership characteristics was positively signed and statistically significant at 1%. This means that enhanced application of reason-over-emotion leadership characteristics will improve the performance of police professionals in bringing stability and orderliness in the study area. The result corroborates with the findings by Njoku (2020) who conducted the research study on main and interaction effects of police professionals on leadership characteristics using quantitative methodology, his findings show that Reason over Emotion leadership characteristics influenced the performance of law enforcement professionals.

5. CONCLUSION

Reasoning over emotion in policing leadership is essential for ensuring fair treatment, maintaining public trust, and enabling effective and resilient decision-making. A reasoned approach promotes objectivity, rational decision, emotional intelligence and strategic thinking, which are crucial qualities required in high pressure environment of law enforcement. The study recommends prioritizing reasoning over emotion; police leaders not only enhance the quality of their decisions but also improve performance of their profession that upholds stability and orderliness.

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