

## Integrity and Policing: An Analysis of Individual Traits and Organizational Characteristics

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### Abstract

The purpose of this review is to provide a glimpse of antecedents at individual and organizational levels to better understand the issue of police integrity. The search process of the previous study was conducted through a reputable electronic database of Web of Science, Scopus, and ScienceDirect and was limited to the area of ethics and integrity of the police. The relevant articles found on the topic have been repeatedly reviewed to ensure the authenticity of the results. The literature findings indicated that antecedents of individual traits such as accountability, spiritual values, moral values, and professionalism is important in sustaining police integrity. Meanwhile, organizational characteristics that influence strengthening police integrity are organizational rules, ethical training, and ethical leadership. Notably, it has been a long interest of scholars on the issue of police integrity, and many recent kinds of research have been conducted to explore more antecedents relevant to the current challenges of police work. Future research should be undertaken to scrutinize various antecedents of external influences of police, such as communities' perception and trust, political authority influences, and economic factors that lead to integrity building of police.

**Keywords:** Integrity, Police, Individual Traits, Organizational Characteristics, Ethics

### Introduction

Integrity violation of public officials has been a widespread concern of the public and academic community (Lim, 2019; Peacock et al., 2020 & Wintruba, 2018). The taxonomy of integrity violations includes corruption, fraud, theft, conflict of interest, improper use of authority, manipulation, and misuse of information, discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying, waste, and abuse, and private time misconduct (Huberts et al., 1991). Among public officials, law enforcement agencies have always been associated with integrity violations,

especially policing agencies. Police agencies are public officials accountable for ensuring the public's safety. As their duties are serving the public, the relationship that is built up between citizens and police is so much more important. Hence, police officers must manage this relationship by obeying the principles of public service, such as accountability, honesty, openness, selflessness, exercising legitimate authority, and integrity. As integrity is being better understood by maintaining the public's trust and confidence in the ability to implement government policy, police must exhibit the highest standards of professional ethics and competence, working with skills, care, and diligence, and will carry out their duties with energy, goodwill, efficiency, and effectiveness (Lawton et al., 2013). Hence, the manifestation of integrity values will be accepted by society.

Transparency International (TI) develop a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) as a leading global indicator of public sector corruption with envision of having a corruption-free world to fight for social and economic justice, human rights, peace, and security. To end corruption, TI promotes transparency, accountability, and integrity at all levels across all sectors of society, particularly in government and financial institutions. They also pioneered tools and methodologies to conduct a rigorous assessment of corruption worldwide. The global level of assessment represents relative data measuring the occurrence of corruption, citizens' experiences, and attitudes toward corruption. At the national level, local sectors were investigated to identify an indication of corruption, its causes and impact, and applicable approaches to combat it. Malaysia is one of the 180 nations participating in the CPI score each year.

- In Malaysia, statistics indicate that there have been numerous public complaints concerning integrity violations by police (Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission, 2022). Recent data reported that, from January until May 2022, the public has formally complained about 208 cases of police integrity violation. Previous data from 2011 until 2020 shows that the number of public complaints against police achieved an all-time high of 3443, and the figures have risen yearly. Meanwhile, a hugely significant difference is seen in the second highest number of complaints, only 11 complaints to other law enforcement agencies. The increased complaints between police and other law enforcement agencies have become alarming issues. Do police have a weak integrity level? However, to date, no comprehensive statistics are available to justify the integrity level of police in Malaysia. So this review serves the following objective; This review aims to promote police integrity by providing a glimpse of antecedents involved at individual and organizational levels, in gaining a better understanding of integrity.

### ***Relationship between Organizational Characteristics and Individual Traits in Forming Integrity***

The employees' ethical values largely determine the company's success, and the reputation of the organization depends on the environment's choice to operate ethically. Management will personify moral values, create an ethically supportive climate, and instill shared accountability among all employees (Paine, 1994).

From the organizational perspective, ethical behaviour or integrity describes the characteristics or quality of an individual or organization's behaviour which reflects the acting quality in line with the standards, rules, and moral values established by the members of the organization and society (Kolthoff et al., 2010; Bauman, 2013). It is also regarded as the

consistency and coherence of organizational objectives with individual behaviour, personal beliefs, and values with the organizational rules, policies, and codes of conduct (Badaracco & Ellsworth, 1991). Thus, it directly influences organizational actions, decisions, and employees' moral choices (Trevinyo-Rodriguez, 2007). As such, the organization's management plays a critical function in developing integrity in the organization.

### **Individual Traits of Ethical Behaviour**

#### *Accountability*

Integrity is an essential human characteristic, a significant component of a smooth organizational function in the contemporary world. Having integrity behaviour in every person is important for employees to maintain their discipline, follow the rules and regulations of the organization, and be accountable for their actions (Said et al., 2017). Accountability refers to being accountable for police conduct, oversight of policing activities, and evaluating those activities (Feys et al., 2018). It also involves a distinction between internal accountability and external accountability. Internal accountability is associated with organizational responsibility, supervision, performance evaluation, codes of conduct, the disciplinary system, loyalty, and control. Meanwhile, external accountability refers to public hearings, annual reports, conferences, civilian oversight agencies, and criminal or civil litigation (Den Boer, 2002; Ransley et al., 2007)

#### *Spiritual Values*

Police work is closely related to a relationship with the community. In ensuring the integrity of the police, spiritual values are a pressing need. Spirituality values like empathy, compassion, and trustworthiness are matching traits that lead to integrity, and it is included in the model of community policing. As complaints are made by the public, trust building is a philosophy that underlies spiritual values and is considered a proactive approach.

#### *Moral values*

Integrity is the quality of acting in accordance or harmony with relevant moral values, norms, and rules. It is an integrity judgment that always raises a moral dimension, the question of what is right and wrong. Personal norms and values are referred to as characters and the values one brings up (Antrobust et al., 2019). Studies have demonstrated that the effects of norms on an individual's behaviour vary among individuals with different levels of moral values (Celestin & Kruschke, 2019; Rudhanto, 2022).

#### *Professionalism*

Police should act according to their professionalism enforced in the code of ethics. A scrupulous behind the definition of professionalism in the police is its public adherence to legal constraints (Johnson, & COX 2004). The initial steps to grow the professionalism of police through the police training academies as a prerequisite of the policy of entry. Professionalism helps police officers to obey the rule, and use discretion deciding without disobeying the code of ethics.

### **Organizational Characteristics Enforcing Integrity**

#### *Organizational Rules*

The organizational rules of a police agency are established by police administration, how they are communicated to the police officers, and the degree to which police officers understand,

support, and consistency of their enforcement (Klockars & Ivković, 2004; Klockars et al., 2000; Ivković, 2015). The administrative rule communicates the expectation and rules of integrity and the reasons for them. The creation of quality official rules prohibits police misconduct. Therefore, to improve police integrity, it is vital to communicate the rules effectively to the police officers and enforcement of the rules violations action. A clear formal rule either delivers the standards for sanctioning or monitoring is necessary to avoid ambiguity among police officers. Hence, effective implementation of the administrative rule is a precondition of trust-building among the police's external stakeholders.

### *Ethical Leadership*

Ethical leadership is defined as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making (Brown et al., 2005) Ethical leadership is crucial for organizational integrity (Heres, 2014; Lawton & Paez, 2014). For employees that perceived leaders who regularly pay attention to ethics, all the organization outcomes were significantly more positive (Trevino, Weaver, Gibson & Toffler, 1999). Ethical leadership plays a key role in creating, maintaining, and changing ethical culture, which includes creating integrity within the organization (Trevino et al., 1999). Such leadership must be inclusive, professional, and dedicated to ensuring organizational integrity and effectiveness (Jones & Lasthuizen, 2018). In general, ethical leadership is associated with fewer integrity violations, more ethical awareness, and stronger ethical culture (Lawton et al., 2013)

### *Ethics Training*

Ethics training positively impacts integrity-related attitudes (Antrobust et al., 2019; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2019). Scholars agree that learning to be ethical decisions matters should be the primary objective in public service training and education program (Maesschalck, 2004; Stevulak & Brown, 2011). The crucial factors why police should learn ethics are more critical. First, Police officers are the only public officials with the legal power to regularly deprive citizens of their freedom (Moll & de Oliveira-Souza, 2007). Second, the police work is discretion, and less supervision enables unethical conduct easy to occur and hard to detect (Johnson & COX, 2004; Seron et al., 2004). The impact of ethical training is a need to increase public trust and confidence in the police. However, as much as police officers undergo ethics training, they should be able to educate themselves on ethical decision-making while performing job duties.

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

Based on this review, there are several antecedents of individual traits and organizational characteristics identified to lead to police integrity. Among antecedents for organizational traits are accountability, values of professionalism and morality, and individual spirituality. Meanwhile, antecedents of organizational characteristics found in the review are organizational rules, ethical leadership, and ethics training. All of these antecedents have been discussed by previous scholars to have significantly positive effects on police integrity. Several areas requiring the need for further research have been discovered. Within the construct of this review and to grow the body of knowledge on this subject matter, it could be significant to properly investigate and create a framework to define the influence of organizational characteristics and individual traits on the integrity of the police. Moreover, in

a quick search for this review paper, there is an argument on the effectiveness of ethical training provided by police academies. Even though fostering ethical conduct is a major topic in training, the criticism revolves around the influence of police informal culture that influences the effectiveness of the training.

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