

# The Relationship between Full-Range Leadership Styles and Police Integrity

Irwan Hardy Borian, Huam Hon Tat, Ida Md Yasin

Putra Business School Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: pbs23104032@grad.putrabs.edu.my

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## Abstract

Ensuring the integrity of the police force is crucial in order to uphold public trust and preserve the effectiveness of law enforcement. The impact of leadership styles on integrity infractions is certainly significant, but current understanding is hindered by a lack of empirical research, particularly in Malaysia. This study aims to narrow this gap by investigating the correlation between full-range leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and the level of integrity among members of the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP). Integrity breaches inside the RMP force can lead to severe outcomes, such as diminished public cooperation and a climate of impunity for criminals. The current body of studies on leadership and police integrity may not comprehensively encompass the specific circumstances and dynamics of the Malaysian context. This study aims to investigate several leadership approaches and their impact on both the organizational and occupational components of police integrity. Data will be gathered by self-administered questionnaires that will be sent to a representative sample, which will be assessed using G\*power analysis. The analysis of the intricate connections between leadership styles and integrity will be conducted using structural equation modelling (SEM). The discoveries have the capacity to greatly influence our comprehension of police integrity in Malaysia. These initiatives have the potential to provide information to leadership training programs within the RMP, which in turn promote ethical behavior and enhance public confidence. This research can also facilitate future investigations into interventions and leadership development programs designed to enhance police integrity. The research conclusions were derived from the analysis of the data, culminating in the study's final findings.

**Keywords:** Full-Range Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Police Integrity

## Introduction

Integrity, referred to as "ihsān" or "sidq" in Islam, occupies a prominent position in the teachings and principles of the faith. Integrity encompasses honesty, sincerity, and the consistent commitment to moral and ethical ideals in every part of life (Shuhari et al., 2019).

Integrity is more than just speaking the truth; it also entails having sincere intentions and engaging in acts that are consistent with one's beliefs and values.

The integrity of the police is essential for establishing public confidence in law enforcement. The public regards the police force as legitimate and trustworthy when police officers demonstrate honesty. Legitimacy is crucial for efficient law enforcement, as it promotes public collaboration in investigations and cultivates a feeling of security within communities (Bradford et al., 2014). Conversely, a lack of police integrity can have a devastating effect on police-community relations. When officers are perceived as corrupt or abusive, the public becomes less likely to cooperate with investigations, and feelings of safety and security decline.

Leadership is crucial in influencing police integrity. Police chiefs establish the overall atmosphere for the entire department, and their choices and behaviours can significantly influence the conduct of police under their authority (Makayasa et al., 2020). Studies have demonstrated that ethical and transformational leadership styles, which are distinguished by qualities such as a robust moral character, effective communication, and a dedication to fair procedures, effectively foster integrity within police departments (Lasthuizen, 2008; Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2014; Porter et al., 2015). Conversely, authoritarian styles emphasizing obedience are linked to misconduct.

There exists a deficiency in our comprehension regarding the impact of various leadership styles on police integrity. Although there is evidence indicating a favourable association between ethical leadership and police integrity, further investigation is required to determine the precise processes by which leadership influences officer conduct. For example, future research could explore how ethical leadership styles influence officer perceptions of legitimacy, their willingness to report misconduct, and their susceptibility to peer pressure.

Through more investigation on the correlation between leadership and police integrity, we can formulate more efficient tactics to foster ethical policing behaviours. This research has the potential to provide valuable insights for the creation of leadership training programmes that effectively equip police officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to cultivate a culture of integrity within their departments. Additionally, it could aid in identifying warning signs that may suggest a department is susceptible to police wrongdoing.

Ultimately, the preservation of public confidence in law enforcement relies heavily on the integrity of the police force. Leadership is crucial in determining police integrity, and further investigation is required to understand the impact of various leadership styles on officer conduct. By enhancing our comprehension of this correlation, we can formulate more efficient tactics for advocating ethical policing procedures.

### **Problem Statement**

Malaysia's public sector has experienced a crisis of trust in recent years, characterised by a string of prominent scandals including deceit, corruption, governance shortcomings, and inadequate financial management methods. The 1MDB scandal, along with instances of corruption within law enforcement agencies such as the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP),

Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), Immigration Department (IDM), and Malaysian Road Transport Department (RTD), has significantly damaged the public perception of the entire sector (GIACC, 2019). The erosion of trust is also evident in the decreasing ratings on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Malaysia's score had a decline from 51 in 2020 to a concerning 47 in 2022, but it showed a little improvement to 50 in 2023 (Transparency International, 2024). This figure remains lower than the highest point reached in 2019, which was 53, thus emphasising the persistent difficulties.

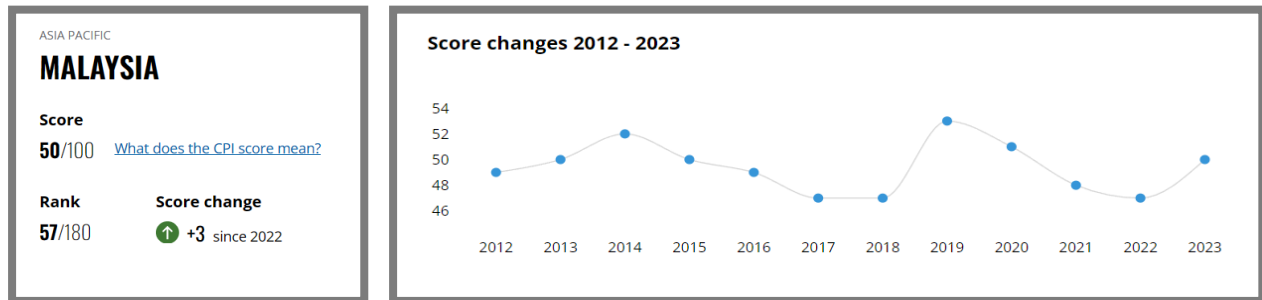


Figure 1: Malaysia's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scores between 2012-2023 (Transparency International, 2024)

The Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), as the major law enforcement organisation in the country with a substantial number of personnel, attracts significant public attention whenever cases of wrongdoing gain widespread attention. The RMP is susceptible to public complaints and internal oversight conducted by its Department of Integrity and Compliance Standards. In addition, the Public Complaints Bureau, which operates under the Prime Minister's Department, oversees the conduct of the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP). Nevertheless, the current processes appear insufficient in addressing the public's impression of a culture of impunity inside the police force.

The erosion of public trust engenders a self-perpetuating loop. Doubt among the general public regarding the efficacy of anti-corruption measures can result in a reduced inclination to report illicit activities. Consequently, this enables corruption to thrive without any restrictions, leading to a gradual erosion of confidence and generating a feeling of powerlessness among the population.

Restoring public confidence in the Malaysian public sector is a lengthy undertaking that necessitates unwavering dedication from the government and a collaborative attempt involving multiple organisations. Malaysia may restore public trust and improve the effectiveness and accountability of its public sector by adopting a comprehensive approach that includes enhanced enforcement, greater openness, ethical leadership, and public education.

Considering the aforementioned facts, leadership has a significant role in the impact of integrity on the authority of enforcement. Hence, acknowledging the substantial impact and connection between leadership styles and integrity would provide valuable understanding to the government, specifically in enhancing and identifying the leadership aspects that foster

and uphold the importance of integrity in law enforcement agencies. The findings can inform policymakers on the need of implementing effective governance mechanisms and promoting integrity among all enforcement officials, regardless of their status.

### **Research Question**

Based on relevant issues, the research question of the Full-Range Leadership style and integrity study were arisen to be answered such as below:

- 1) Does the transformational leadership is positively related to police integrity?
- 2) Does the transactional leadership is positively to police integrity?
- 3) Does the laissez-faire leadership is positively influence to police integrity?

### **Research Objective**

To accomplish the above research questions, the specific research objectives of this study were as follows:

- 1) To examine the correlation between transformational leadership and police integrity.
- 2) To examine the correlation between transactional leadership and police integrity.
- 3) To examine the correlation between laissez-faire leadership and police integrity.

### **Literature Reviews**

#### *Police Integrity*

Maintaining public trust is paramount for any police force. This trust hinges on the ethical conduct of officers, a concept embodied by the term "integrity." As former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower aptly stated, "The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible" (Borian & Khamis, 2021; Wicker, 2014). Police leadership plays a critical role in fostering this vital quality within their ranks. This literature review explores the multifaceted concept of police integrity and examines how leadership styles, particularly transformational leadership, can influence ethical conduct within police forces.

Police integrity extends beyond basic honesty. Lapidot et al (2007), characterise it as a moral-ethical aspect that influences not just the behaviour of an officer but also their professional values and dedication to the fundamental objectives of the organisation. It includes the qualities of a leader that inspire trust, as well as the constant display of ethical behaviour that strengthens that trust. The significance of leadership in fostering a culture of integrity within the police force is emphasised by this broader viewpoint.

Integrity is a fundamental and essential element for the achievement of success in any organisation, especially in the case of public organisations such as the police. When the trustworthiness of officers or leadership is doubted, it can cause both the individuals involved and the public's trust in the police force to be severely weakened (Heidenheimer & Johnston, 2002; Hoggett et al., 2019). Studies have demonstrated that having a solid basis of integrity is an essential requirement for maintaining stability within an organisation and gaining the trust of stakeholders (Kaptein & Wempe, 2002; Singh, 2022). Organisations that possess a strong commitment to ethical behaviour experience advantages such as heightened trust from

stakeholders, decreased reliance on external restrictions, and improved cooperation among members (Quah, 2015; R. B. Shaw, 1997).

Several studies in Malaysia have examined integrity procedures in the public sector. In their study, Johari et al (2020), discovered that robust risk management methods, well-defined accountability systems, and a sincere dedication to integrity by leaders are statistically significant elements that enhance integrity in the public sector. Izzaz Zahari et al. (2019) discovered that there is a direct relationship between an ethical work environment and decreased instances of corruption among public employees. These studies emphasise the crucial significance of organisational practices and leadership in promoting a culture of integrity within Malaysia's public institutions.

Leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring public trust and safety by cultivating a culture of honesty among police units. The literature review has emphasised the complex and diverse characteristics of police integrity, its crucial significance for public confidence, and the capacity of positive leadership to foster ethical behaviour inside police departments. Additional research investigating the precise mechanisms by which innovation in leadership impacts officer behaviour and decision-making can yield useful insights for the creation of police leadership programmes, ultimately enhancing the ethics and trustworthiness of the police force.

### **Full-Range Leadership**

Avolio and Bass (1991), introduced the full range leadership theory to develop leadership theories invented by Burns in 1978. While Burns first concentrated on political leaders, this theory broaden its scope to include other types of leaders, such as those in business, military and public services (Bakker et al., 2022; Curtis, 2018; Puni et al., 2018). The full range leadership theory is utilised by researchers to provide guidance to corporate leaders and enhance the performance of organisations.

Full range leadership is a conceptual framework that facilitates the comprehension of various leadership styles (Avolio, 2010). It transcends the notion that there exists only a singular type of exemplary leader. Conversely, it acknowledges the existence of multiple leadership techniques and asserts that the most suitable style to employ is contingent upon the circumstances.

The comprehensive range model comprises three primary styles which are transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership (Sosik, 2006). Transformational Leadership is a leadership style characterised by the ability of the leader to inspire and motivate subordinates to surpass their perceived limits. Transformational leaders possess a distinct and well-defined vision for the future and possess the ability to inspire and motivate individuals to actively pursue and accomplish it.

Transactional Leadership is rooted in tradition and emphasises achieving goals through a structured approach of providing incentives for desired behaviour and consequences for undesirable behaviour. Transactional leaders establish explicit expectations and enforce individuals' responsibility for fulfilling them. Laissez-Faire Leadership involves minimal

intervention from the leader, allowing followers a high degree of autonomy. This approach can yield positive results when implemented by seasoned teams, but it can also give rise to challenges in the absence of clear guidance.

The comprehensive model proposes that highly effective leaders have the ability to employ all of these types, adapting their approach according to the specific circumstances. As an illustration, a leader could employ a transformational approach to inspire a team within a period of transition, and subsequently transition to a transactional approach to guarantee the completion of daily responsibilities.

### **Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Police Integrity.**

Police integrity is a cornerstone of public trust and a critical component of effective law enforcement. Transformational leadership, a style characterized by charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, has been demonstrated to enhance police integrity and performance in several studies (Gempesao et al., 2023; Juma et al., 2022).

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that prioritises inspiring, motivating, and intellectually stimulating followers to reach their maximum capabilities and collaborate towards a common vision (Avolio & Bass, 1995). It involves surpassing mere fulfilment of fundamental requirements or anticipations and fostering a feeling of purpose and enthusiasm in relation to the task at hand.

Transformational leadership cultivates a culture of integrity inside police units by encouraging ethical decision-making and motivating personnel to respect the law. Leaders that demonstrate exemplary moral principles and prioritise ethical behaviour serve as exemplary figures for their subordinates. A study by Gempesao et al (2023), found that police units with transformational leaders exhibited lower rates of corruption and misconduct. The researchers attributed this to the positive influence of transformational leadership on ethical decision-making and professional conduct.

Furthermore, transformational leaders establish an environment characterised by trust and transparent communication, fostering a sense of security among officers to report misconduct without apprehension of retaliation. In a similar vein, Juma et al (2022), identified a positive association between transformational leadership and police integrity. According to their research, transformational leadership enhances ethical principles and encourages officers to refrain from participating in unethical behaviour.

There is a positive correlation between transformational leadership and organizational culture (Francis & Ahmad, 2021). Transformational leaders can shape a culture that values integrity, professionalism, and continuous improvement (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This particular culture can serve as a deterrent for misconduct and foster ethical conduct among police officers.



Transformational leadership motivates officers to internalise ethical principles and behave with integrity. This leadership styles theoretically sets a benchmark to a leader who should promote ethical behavior among his/her subordinates. Therefore, this discussion leading to the following hypothesis:

**H1 : Transformational leadership should have a significant positive relation with police's integrity.**

### **Relationship between Transactional Leadership and Police Integrity**

Ensuring a police force upholds strong ethical standards is essential for fostering public trust and maintaining public safety. Leadership is crucial in attaining this objective, and studies indicate an intricate interaction between two primary leadership styles: transactional and transformational. While certain studies emphasise the beneficial effect of transactional leadership on ethical behaviour, others indicate that transformational leadership has a more significant influence. This literature examines the results of these research, asserting that both leadership styles are crucial for promoting police integrity, albeit in distinct manners.

Orole et al (2015), conducted research that indicates a direct relationship between transactional leadership and police integrity. James McGregor Burns, a renowned political scientist, is attributed with originating the phrase "transactional leadership" in his landmark publication, *Leadership*. (Burns, 1978). Transactional leadership focuses on a straightforward arrangement: officers who demonstrate good performance are given rewards, while those who fail to meet expectations face negative outcomes. The implementation of a system of rewards and punishments can serve as a potent motivator for officers to comply with ethical standards. Porter et al (2015), discovered that transactional leadership in the police forces of England and Wales had a notable impact on promoting ethical behaviour. This was achieved by setting explicit expectations and offering incentives for behaving ethically. Transactional leadership promotes integrity among officers by establishing clear parameters for achievement and upholding ethical standards.

Nevertheless, research conducted by Jamaluddin (2014), and Ramshaw et al (2019), indicates that transformative leadership could have a more significant influence on promoting police integrity. Transformational leaders effectively inspire and motivate their subordinates to align themselves with the mission and fundamental values of the organisation, which encompass ethical behaviour. According to Jamaluddin's research in the Royal Malaysian Police, both leadership styles were found to have a favourable correlation with work performance. However, it was seen that transformational leadership had a more significant impact. In a similar vein, Ramshaw et al (2019), determined that both transactional and transformational leadership were essential in fostering ethical behaviour. However, transformational leadership appeared to have a greater impact on changing officers' internal values and dedication to ethical conduct.

The apparently conflicting results from this research can be resolved by acknowledging the complementary characteristics of transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership establishes a well-defined structure for upholding ethical standards,

whereas transformational leadership cultivates a stronger dedication to these principles. Optimal police leadership is likely to necessitate a combination of both methods. Transactional leadership promotes responsibility and offers instant rewards for ethical behaviour. Transformational leadership motivates officers to adopt ethical beliefs and behave with integrity, especially in situations where the consequences are not immediately clear. Ultimately, both transactional and transformational leadership approaches are essential in promoting police integrity. Transactional leadership establishes a well-defined structure for upholding ethical behaviour and ensures that individuals are held responsible for their actions. Police forces that develop leaders who can proficiently employ both leadership styles are likely to achieve greater success in upholding high ethical standards among their members. Thus, the hypothesis of this research is:

**H2 : Transactional leadership should have a significant positive relation with police's integrity.**

**Relationship between Laissez-Faire and Police Integrity.**

Establishing and upholding a robust ethical framework within law enforcement agencies is crucial for cultivating public confidence and guaranteeing the security of communities. The role of leadership is crucial in attaining this objective, and current research emphasises the harmful consequences of laissez-faire leadership on police integrity and organisational success. Laissez-faire leadership is a leadership style that is marked by a non-interventionist attitude, where there is a notable absence of guidance, oversight, and responsibility (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Leaders employing this approach offer less direction and oversight, granting their team members significant independence in making decisions and completing tasks. However, it can also result in diminished staff morale, heightened ethical infractions, and ultimately, a debilitated police force.

Studies by Swid (2014), and Robert and Vandenberghe (2021), demonstrate a negative correlation between laissez-faire leadership and employee satisfaction and commitment. When officers lack clear guidance and support from their superiors, they may experience feelings of disengagement and frustration. This can lead to decreased morale, reduced organizational commitment, and ultimately, a decline in job performance.

Perhaps even more concerning is the link between laissez-faire leadership and ethical misconduct. Huberts et al (2007), found a positive association between this leadership style and an increase in integrity violations within police forces. The absence of clear expectations, coupled with a lack of oversight and accountability, creates an environment where unethical behaviour may flourish. Officers may feel less pressure to adhere to ethical standards and may be more likely to engage in misconduct if they perceive that they will not be held accountable for their actions.

Khan et al (2021), provide a convincing rationale for this occurrence. They contend that the absence of attention and instruction from laissez-faire supervisors engenders a feeling of apprehension among cops. Consequently, this felt danger results in a decrease in their organisational identity - the feeling of being a part of and the worth obtained from their



position within the police force. Diebig and Bormann (2020), propose that a diminished sense of self-worth leads to unethical behaviour and breaches of integrity. If officers perceive a lack of support and appreciation, they could be inclined to exhibit self-serving behaviours that undermine the public's confidence in the police force.

Although the prevailing view among researchers is that laissez-faire leadership constantly harms subordinates' morale, Wong and Giessner (2018), present persuasive arguments that challenge this consensus. Their research challenges the commonly held belief that empowering and laissez-faire leadership styles cannot coexist. The statement suggests that followers' expectations regarding empowerment can influence their perception of leadership that empowers them. If a leader's actions do not match these expectations, whether by exceeding or falling short of them, followers may regard them as being laissez-faire or uninvolved. The study revealed that this difference leads to reduced evaluations of leader effectiveness.

This leadership style serves as a theoretical standard for leaders to actively encourage ethical conduct among their subordinates. Consequently, the discussion results in the subsequent hypothesis:

**H3 : Laissez-faire leadership should have a significant positive relation with police's integrity.**

**Conceptual Model**

Based on the above mention hypotheses development in the previous subsection, the research model is then shown in Figure 2. The model proposed that police's integrity is influenced by full-range leadership model comprise of transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership.

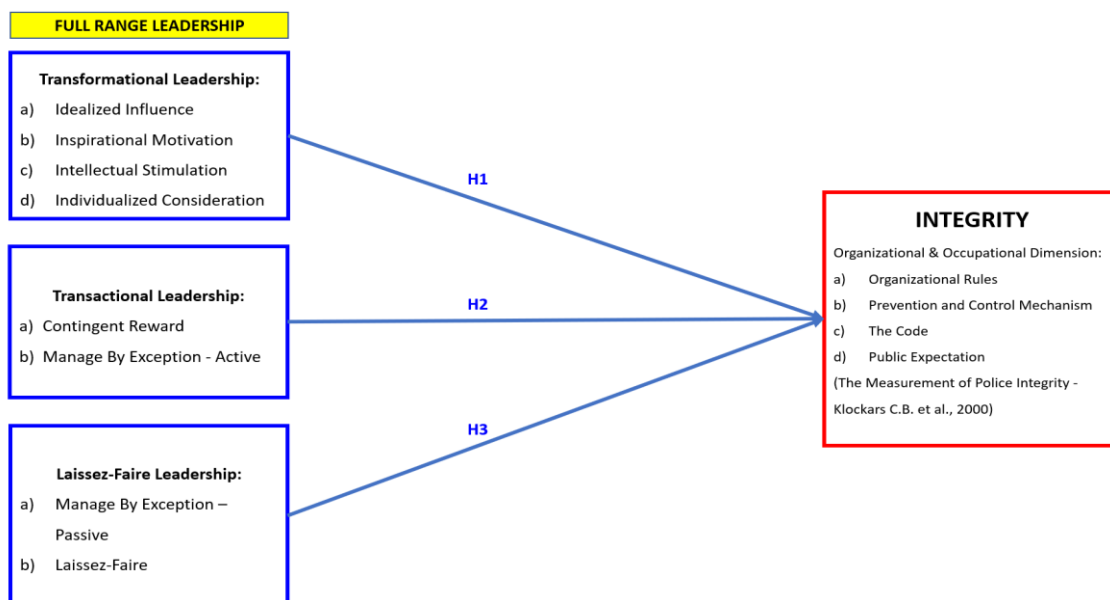


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

### **Research Methodology**

Preserving a police force that upholds exceptional ethical standards is vital for fostering public trust and ensuring safety in Malaysia. Leadership is crucial in attaining this objective, and scholars have found several leadership types that can impact police integrity. The Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) offers a complete framework for comprehending various styles, which include transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. This study examines the correlation between different leadership styles and police integrity in Malaysia. It utilises a quantitative technique with a causal research design.

This study will apply a quantitative methodology with a causal research design. This design enables researchers to surpass simply identification of relationships between leadership styles and police integrity (Jr. et al., 2023). Instead, its objective is to determine whether particular leadership styles have a direct impact on officers' dedication to ethical behaviour. The study aims to enhance the evidence about the impact of leadership on police integrity by analysing the causal connections.

The population for this study will be Malaysian Police Officers. The Malaysian Police Force plays a critical role in maintaining public safety and security. Understanding how leadership styles influence police integrity in this specific context is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote ethical conduct within the force.

Data collection will be carried out using self-administered questionnaires. This methodology enables researchers to rapidly and anonymously collect data from a substantial sample of police personnel (Awang, 2015). In order to ensure that the data collected is a true reflection of the larger community of Malaysian Police Officers, the study will utilise probability cluster sampling. This method entails the segmentation of the police force into distinct groups, such as Police Divisions, followed by the random selection of a representative sample of officers from each group. This strategy aids in reducing bias and guarantees that the data accurately represents the attributes of the entire population.

While the study utilizes causal research questions, a correlational design will be employed within the chosen quantitative framework. This design allows researchers to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and police integrity (Soo et al., 2020). The sample size for the study will be determined using G\*Power analysis. This software program calculates the minimum sample size needed to detect a statistically significant effect based on the anticipated effect size, power level, and number of variables included in the study.

The data collected will be analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a robust statistical method that enables researchers to analyse the associations between various variables, including latent variables (concepts that cannot be directly seen) like police integrity and diverse leadership styles (Memon et al., 2021;

Sarstedt et al., 2021). By including these hidden variables, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) offers a more comprehensive understanding of the interconnections involved.

Utilising SEM has numerous benefits for this study. Firstly, it enables researchers to consider and adjust for the presence of measurement error, which is an intrinsic characteristic of all surveys. Furthermore, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) allows for the simultaneous examination of the postulated causal links, while considering the potential impact of other factors that may be associated with leadership styles and police integrity. SEM allows researchers to assess the general adequacy of the model and the magnitude of the specific connections between variables. This thorough examination enables a more nuanced comprehension of how various leadership styles impact police integrity in Malaysia.

This study employs a strong quantitative methodology with a causal research design and structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis to examine the correlation between the Full Range Leadership Model and police integrity in Malaysia. The study's primary objective is to examine the Malaysian Police Force, employing probability cluster sampling to provide a thorough and representative investigation. The results of this study have the capacity to offer significant knowledge for the enhancement of police leadership training methods, fostering ethical behaviour within the Malaysian Police Force, and bolstering public confidence.

### **Conclusion.**

The present study seeks to ascertain the correlation between the full range leadership model and the integrity of police officers. An analysis of previous studies revealed that the comprehensive full range leadership model, consisting of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, has both positive and negative effects on the integrity of police personnel, as perceived by their subordinates. This study has various ramifications for both theory and practice. The theoretical significance of this work is the incorporation of previous literature on the comprehensive leadership model in the fields of sociology, management, economy, and psychology to elucidate the factors influencing integrity. Another theoretical implication is that the proposed research model can be utilized to conduct additional research on the parts of the full range leadership model and integrity. The practical implication of understanding the correlation and variables of leadership on integrity is that the enforcement department can use this information to adopt a balanced approach that promotes integrity through effective leadership. The results of this study would have a substantial impact on the ability of police and other law enforcement agencies to create and maintain an environment of integrity, ethics, and high-quality leadership. The convergence of these characteristics suggests that the full range leadership paradigm exerts a diverse impact on integrity. This study is a theoretical debate, so no empirical evidence is presented. This study proposes that additional research should be conducted to validate and explore the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to obtain more comprehensive findings in the field of study.

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### Corresponding Author

Irwan Hardy Borian, Ph.D. Candidate, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, pbs23104032@grad.putrabs.edu.my

Prof. Dr. Huam Hon Tat, Director of Research, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, huam@putrabs.edu.my

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ida Md Yasin, Lecturer, Putra Business School, Universiti Putra Malaysia, ida@putrabs.edu.my

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