

## SUSTAINING PEACE AND JUSTICE: HOW ABOUT PUBLIC'S PERSPECTIVE ON POLICE

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**Abstract:** *Public in general is known as adult. The World Health Organization defines an adult as someone is older than 19 years old, subject to national law. Adults have responsibilities and duties that children, teenagers, and the majority of people in their twenties do not, which give life meaning and purpose. The public in general should be secured of peace and justice in doing daily activities. Obviously, the police have a significant role in achieving this goal. This paper will discuss the public's perspective on police. Among the influencing factors are social media, corruption and integrity. It is also closely related to the 16th Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which promotes inclusive and peaceful societies, ensuring that everyone has access to justice, and creating inclusive institutions at all levels. No matter their ethnicity, religious or beliefs, everyone should be safe from all types of violence and feel secure as they go about their daily lives.*

**Keywords:** *Public Perception, Peace, Justice, Police, Social Media, Corruption, Integrity*

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## Introduction

Peace has a comprehensive meaning which includes inner and external peace through societal structures that promote justice, equity and harmony (McDonald, 2015). The peace and justice of an individual person are well secured by United Declaration of Human Right (UDHR). Article 1 of UDHR specified that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and everybody is endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (United Nations, 2015b). Meanwhile, article 3 stated that everyone is entitled to right to life, liberty and security (United Nations, 2015b).

In keeping abreast of the peace and justice issues, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to alter the course of global affairs. It is aiming to eradicate poverty and inequality, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that everyone can live in peace, justice, and prosperity. SDG puts focus on people all over the world with intention that nobody would be left behind. The 2030 Agenda for SDGs was endorsed by all United Nation member states in 2015. It outlines 17 Goals with a total of 169 targets (United Nations, 2018). These ambitious and broad-based Goals are connected. Out of the total of 17, goal 16 focuses on encouraging inclusive and peaceful societies, ensuring that everyone has access to justice, and creating inclusive institutions at all levels (United Nations, 2015a). High levels of armed conflict and instability have a negative effect on how well a nation develops. In the conflicting society and war experience, there would be no rules applied, hence, sexual violence, crime, exploitation, and torture are possible to happen. In creating and maintaining peace and justice, governments, civil society, and communities must collaborate together as to ensure the synergy of strengthening the rule of law, advance human rights, stop the flow of illegal weapons, fight corruption, and always make sure that everyone is included.

In researching goal 16, there is a need to understand the example of incidences occurred which challenge fundamental liberty, peace and justice of people all over the world. May 2022 witnessed that over 100 million people who were involved in war, bloodshed, human rights abuses, and persecution (United Nations, 2022). On top of that, almost 1 in 6 firms throughout the world receive solicitations for bribe payments from public authorities (United Nations, 2022). Among others, the Goal 16 targets are reduce globally the prevalence of all forms of violence and the associated fatality rates, put an end to child abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all other types of brutality and cruelty, encourage the rule of law on a national and international level and make sure that everyone has access to justice and create institutions that are efficient, responsible, and open at all levels.

### Police as peacekeeper

The peace and justice of public are two essential elements to be looked after by government of a nation. In creating a better environment and peaceful society, there is a need for greater measure of social justice (Banton, 1974). Scholar has suggested that the police profession is to secure peace keeping, which is not only focusing on technical skills solely but relational and practical skills of care too (Tomkins & Bristow, 2021).

In securing peace and public justice, police officers nowadays must acknowledge that effective policing depends on citizen cooperation. In addition to being essential for the legitimacy of the police, public support is also crucial for the attempts to reduce crime. Bitner (1990) suggested that the functions of the police in civil society as part of Western Society's aspirational goal to promote peace and stable communities and to eliminate violence (as cited in McDonald, 2015). Additionally, there are mounting evidences that public support for law enforcement much

depending on the public's belief that officers behave ethically and professionally. In light of this, police executives are facing with variety of decisions regarding how to allocate their limited time and resources to promote professionalism and integrity among civilians.

Public relations campaigns, retraining patrol officers in handling interactions with the public, enhancing supervisors' ability to observe and improve behavior of the officers in their interactions with the public, and winning over specific public segments through specific community affairs staff are a few examples of these. Police executives will be benefited from knowing more about how public perceptions of the police are formed as they decide between these possibilities. More than any other organization providing public services, police depend on community support to effectively offer services to the public and combat crime. In the majority of time, police work is violent. Since there are not enough police in every state to patrol every street corner, the police rely on the public to report crimes, emergencies, and other crime-related information that will aid their investigations. The police would find it challenging to carry out their daily duties without the support from the public and their willingness to share information.

According to Franklin et al., (2019), one only need to look at the issues connected with such study to see the usefulness of research on attitudes toward the police and the necessity for policies based on such research cops are thought of negatively. Percy, (1986) asserts that public perceptions of the police are crucial because such perceptions may affect the police's capacity to combat crime. People are less inclined to contact the police or give the officers information about illegal activities if they are feeling unhappy with the police. This is significant since studies show that a fear of crime resulting in worse assessments of the police (McGlon, 2017). Therefore, it makes sense that people's mistrust towards the police contributes to a cycle of decreased police effectiveness, higher crime, and additional mistrust of the police. As public workers, the police must also be concerned with how the public perceives them (Percy, 1986; Wu & Sun, 2010).

In this era, as has been mentioned, the collaboration of the public is necessary for efficient policing (Claxton, 1982; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), which is something police personnel today must acknowledge. Therefore, the public's perception towards police officers need to be considered. As we know, the impression of security is significant because it serves as a barometer for community socio-life elements. The responsibility for making this nation safe to live in does not fall only on the shoulders of the government but it calls for community participation. In particular, in order to keep their neighborhoods free of crime, it is crucial for the community to act as the eyes and ears of the law enforcement. No one will be frightened to commit a crime if the populace can band together and work with the police.

### **Publics' Perspective on Police**

Public perspective on police can be discussed in twofold; positivity and negativity sides of it. The police would usually seen as positive, effective and dependability when the police and the communities working together in a symbiotic relationship based on mutual respect and trust (Ekins, 2016) and when the police perform their task effectively (Nair et al., 2012). On the other note, the police is seen negatively in the case of when police practice is overaggressive, discriminatory (Corsaro et al., 2015) and criminality (Hope, 2018). The negative experiences encountered with the police would somehow lead to negative perception to police with challenge of their citizenship and their feelings of belonging (Haller et al., 2020).

The positive public perspective on police should be taken seriously since it would indirectly generating trust and the public trust is important as to ensure the legitimacy of power practices by police as an institution and for enhancing public compliance with the law (Nakhid, 2017). Research has shown that, the trust in police is positively correlated with their perception (Moule, 2020; Sun et al., 2019). Public trust in the police is the "cornerstone" of cooperation with the police (Harris & Jones, 2020). Direct and indirect interactions with police officers have the ability to crystallize into views that can last for the majority of a person's life (Wu & Sun, 2010). As views are passed down from parents to children, such experiences may have a greater impact than the experiences of adults because they may affect future generations.

The efficacy of police personnel and their capacity to prevent are seriously affected by negative public impressions of the police (Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Being the peacekeeper of the nation, there is a great need for police to conduct their tasks in the most skillfully and diligently. Competence from the public perspectives is the ability of the police to complete a task requested by the public in the most proper way; efficiently and effectively (Saruji et al., 2018). People in general have been complaining on malpractices of the police which involves bribery cases, unfair treatment, delay in service or no action unsatisfied service quality and many more (Lee & Cho, 2020; Ramli et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2020). It is deemed important to take seriously the evidence of public dissatisfaction and mistrust and to ask how legitimacy can be enhanced (Tyler, 2004)

In general, the public's perspective on police can be viewed by looking the factors affecting public perception on police. The negative public perceptions about the police can affect broader views of the police as a legitimate authority (Carmichael et al., 2021; Tyler, 2003). Among others, the identified factors are social media (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Colbran, 2018; Sun et al., 2016), personal experience of excessive force (Stamatakis, 2019), police corruption (Cetinkaya et al., 2020; Quah, 2019; S.T. Quah, 2014), racial issues (Girgenti-Malone et al., 2017), integrity police (Hickman et al., 2016; Kutnjak Ivković et al., 2018; Lobnikar & Meško, 2015). Generally, it is understood that by having to know the factors affecting public's perception of police, thus, this force can adapt and work on methods to promote a better relationship with the community and citizen (Claxton, 1982). However, in this study, the variables discussed are social media, corruption and integrity as these variables are interconnected with SDG agenda 2030.

### **Social Media**

Social media is a crucial bridge that connects public institutions with the general population (de Graaf & Meijer, 2019; Greco & Polli, 2020). It makes it possible for public organizations to communicate rapidly and effectively and receive information, interact with people and the public more intimately, attract personnel and resources, and maybe enhance decision-making and problem-solving procedures. Due to the worries about critical comments, negative exposure, and other factors, public organizations are reluctant to build a social media presence (de Graaf & Meijer, 2019; Dekker et al., 2020).

Rotten apples, or corrupt people who engage in corruption for their own benefit. However, a later response said that corruption was caused by a group behavior that was ingrained in long-standing police force customs that new recruits had to be inducted into. asserts that media coverage has included notable examples of investigative reporting, shocking revelations in court proceedings and royal commissions, as well as sensationalism and rhetorical excess (Amnesty International, 2020; Chermak et al., 2006; Mullis, 2009). There are still significant

concerns on how accurately the scope and character of corruption were reported, as well as whether the media adequately portrayed the depth of reform in police practices, despite the protracted focus and extensive coverage. Since social media sites frequently draw criticism and even abuse, they can also be a mixed blessing for the police. As an illustration, the New York Police Department (NYPD) requested users to share pictures of police officers interacting with residents using the hashtag #myNYDP. Soon after, images of police officers abusing their power on civilians inundated the internet. The case received extensive media coverage, and it's possible that it finally accomplished its opposite purpose by harming the NYPD's reputation (Allen & Whitt, 2020).

A wider project called Comparative Police Studies in the EU (COMPOSITE) that tries to comprehend organizational change in European police operations includes a research titled Best Practice in Police Social Media Adaptation (Denef et al., 2012). The research demonstrated the numerous advantages of police using social media and illustrated those advantages with examples from the real world. Interacting with the public is one of the outlined areas where law enforcement can use social media to better operations (de Graaf & Meijer, 2019; Dekker et al., 2020; Denef et al., 2012).

With the ubiquitous technology of social media, the goal 16 of SDG would like give protection to public as well as institutions such as police force. Target 16.4 puts focus on public access to information and protection fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (United Nations, 2015a). This is one of the protection given to ensure freedom of public in getting right, valid and credible information, especially from social media in current days. The misrepresentation by media on institution such as police force would tarnished the police image (Choi, 2020) and obviously violating public access to appropriate information.

#### Corruption

According to the research by (Punch, 2003), the development of institutionalized corruption in New South Wales, which went beyond a few rotten apples, was of concern to the economic side of corruption. The enforcement of "victimless crimes," such as abortion, prostitution, unlawful use of narcotics and gambling, limitations on alcohol consumption, and homosexuality, was one of the most common areas for institutionalized police corruption. They are regions where a vocal minority, frequently religious, pushes for legislation to uphold individual moral standards, but where banning an activity or substance does not reduce demand for it (Tiffen, 2004).

An essential institution for social control that exists in some capacity in all civilizations across all eras is the police as a law enforcement organization. The police play a crucial role in modern society. Without an efficient, sincere, and honest police force, a society cannot function or advance in the current environment. In one way or another, corruption abounds in the police system. The graph of arrest statistics for April 2023 on the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's official website reveals that 54.55% of civil officials are corrupt. Police authority being abused for personal benefit is known as police corruption. Examples include bribery which accepting money in exchange for not upholding the law and extortion, demanding money in exchange for not writing traffic fines, for instance (Panigrahi, 2021).

Police corruption erodes public trust in law enforcement, degrades legal respect, undermines departmental discipline, and lowers officer morale (Abdullah et al., 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2018).

Different levels of corruption can be determined based on the scope of payoffs and the amount of work put in by cops to get them. Some scholars believe that the police is underpaid, hence, there is a need for them to seek for other sources of income to sustain their wellbeing (Ramli et al., 2015; S.T. Quah, 2014). When a police department's culture allows for corruption of all forms to exist, it is considered as the most serious case of corruption. The most common kind of police corruption is accepting bribes from those who engage in the crimes of gambling, prostitutes, unlawful consumption, and drug use (Hope, 2018). This kind of corruptions are easy for the law enforcement personnel to defend since they think the general public will find them to be insignificant and relatively harmless.

A police officer stealing from a crime scene or taking a bribe would be considered as corruption by almost all definitions of the term, but police deviance also refers to when the officers violate laws, regulations, and standards without endangering anyone directly (Donner et al., 2018; Jenks et al., 2012). Police deviance has been broadened to include nepotism, favoritism, and helping a close friend to avoid a traffic citation (Cetinkaya et al., 2020; Quah, 2019). Misconduct, corruption, and police deviance may all have separate definitions yet can overlap. Police misconduct, according to (Ivković & Shelley, 2005), is the execution or omission of an act by a police officer or the entire department that is against the law (such as criminal and federal codes or internal rules). For instance, taking a bribe in exchange for a driver to avoid a speeding ticket for running a red light is an omission and planting evidence as a wrongdoing committed by a police officer or department (Ivković & Khechumyan, 2014). Therefore, illegal activities, improper behaviors, or violations of internal policies committed while on the job or performing official tasks are all covered by police corruption, deviance, and misconduct. These actions fit the criteria for police misconduct.

Agenda 16 of SDG has highlighted that the governments, civil society and communities should collaborate together to implement lasting solutions to deliver justice and combat corruption to ensure freedom and public peace and justice are secured and restored. Regardless of their ethnicity, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation, everyone should be free from fear of all sorts of violence and feel safe as they go about their daily lives. One of the focus of goal 16 is under target 16.5, which is to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in their forms (United Nations, 2015a).

### **Integrity**

Integrity reflects the quality of individual behaviour that is consistent and the ability of people to walk the talk, to integrate their words with their action (Sihombing, 2018). As discussed above, corruption is one of the barriers to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the corruption is associated with the lack of integrity (Joseph et al., 2019). Research on define integrity has investigated the characteristics of an individual with integrity is characterised as being consistent (Ekaabi et al., 2020; Yusoff et al., 2019); sincere (Nieuwenburg, 2007; Yusoff et al., 2019); responsible (Sihombing, 2018); integrity fair (Nalla et al., 2018). A research by Petter Gottschalk examines the long-held belief among the general public in nations like Norway that police personnel are morally upright people and that any ethical issues arise from a small number of "rotten apples." By suggesting a broader perspective on the issue of police ethics and misconduct, which the idea of a "barrel rotting the apples" might also be considered. According to this viewpoint, the roots of unethical behaviour can also be found in the subtleties of a potentially corrupt bureaucratic system's refusal to acknowledge its own flaws, regardless of whether these flaws were purposefully created. This paper therefore attempts to evaluate whether one of these two theses is more worthy than the other as a scientific undertaking.

Therefore, it follows that anti-corruption strategies should be focused on identifying the "rotten apples" through actions like "integrity testing", and putting policies and procedures in place reduce the opportunity for engaging in misconduct and/or corrupt practices. This is in accordance with the individualistic view of police criminality.

A research was held in Merseyside, South Wales and Metropolitan (Bethnal Green & Teddington) Constabularies, in the week of September 26th 2011 stated that in general there is not considered to be an endemic culture of abuse of power or corruption within the police (Police Integrity: In the Opinion of the General Public Research for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Findings, 2011). The degree of unethical behavior that people were aware of being reported in the media, local or national, is felt to be on a par with that found in many other walks of life; an inevitable characteristic of most organizations, part of human nature and the actions of a just few "bad apples." The people spoken to in this research were overall positive to the way policing was conducted in the United Kingdom, regarding it as a difficult job often conducted under difficult circumstances. Within this general perception it was evident that opinions varied according to the personal expectations, as well as experiences, of different social groups, different age groups and the general reputation the specific local force had earned over time. Those people interviewed from minority ethnic communities were especially positive about police integrity, seeing the United Kingdom police as being of far greater integrity than those forces in their countries of ethnic origin, where bribes are reported as part of the culture, corrupting and detrimental to good policing.

### Future Research

This study is done based on library research to conceptualize public perspective on police in a better understanding, however, it is not supported by empirical data with actual public's perspective, hence in the next future, it could improve by doing an empirical study on it. On top of that, this study could be expanded into the research related to community's value in maintaining peace and security. It would somehow increase the police-public relationships for policy development and reforms. And last but not least, this study should be having data collection from Asian countries in general and especially from Malaysia, to portray things better on community policing since scholars agreed that most of the research only done in west countries with minimal study from Asian examples (Graziano & Gauthier, 2017; Quah, 2019).

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