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Structural, Organisational, and Behavioural Determinants of Police Misconduct in Jamaica: Developing a Professionalism Enhancement Framework for the Jamaica Constabulary Force

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Abstract

Unprofessional behaviour within police institutions remains a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies, particularly in developing societies where institutional constraints and socio-economic pressures are prevalent. The Jamaica Constabulary Force has faced sustained scrutiny due to allegations of misconduct, excessive force, and ethical breaches that undermine public trust. This study examines the structural, organisational, and behavioural determinants of unprofessional conduct among Jamaican police officers using a multidisciplinary analytical framework. Drawing on organisational theory, procedural justice theory, and ethical leadership theory, the research proposes a Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF) tailored to Jamaica's policing environment. A qualitative research design was employed, relying on a systematic literature review and a comparative analysis of international policing models. The findings indicate that organisational culture, weak accountability systems, inadequate training, and leadership deficits significantly contribute to unprofessional behaviour. The study argues that sustainable reform requires a holistic and integrated approach that addresses both institutional structures and individual behaviour. The recommendations provide a strategic roadmap for enhancing professionalism and restoring public confidence in policing in Jamaica.

Keywords: Police professionalism; Police misconduct; Organisational culture; Accountability mechanisms; Ethical leadership; Jamaica Constabulary Force.

Introduction

Policing is a fundamental institution within any democratic society, serving as a mechanism for maintaining order, enforcing laws, and protecting citizens' rights. In Jamaica, however, the effectiveness of policing has been challenged by persistent concerns regarding unprofessional behaviour among officers as well as the number of police killings, including allegations of corruption and excessive use of force (Amnesty International, 2001; Associated Press, 2023,

2025; Government of Jamaica, Office of the Prime Minister, 2017; Harriott, 2003; Independent Commission of Investigations, 2026; Jamaica Constabulary Force, 2010, 2024, 2026; Linton, 2017; Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, 2019; Prenzler, 2009). These issues have eroded public trust and weakened the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions, thereby affecting crime control efforts (Integrity Commission, 2023; Organization of American States, 2005; Powell et al., 2007; Waller et al., 2007). The relationship between police professionalism and public confidence is well established in criminological literature, with professionalism serving as a cornerstone of effective policing (Tyler, 2004). Without adherence to ethical standards and professional conduct, law enforcement agencies risk losing authority and public support. Furthermore, unprofessional behaviour can exacerbate social tensions, particularly in communities already affected by inequality and violence. Addressing such conduct is therefore both a moral and operational necessity. This study explores these issues within the Jamaican context and proposes a structured framework for reform.

The persistence of unprofessional behaviour in policing is often rooted in systemic and organisational factors that shape officer conduct. Organisational culture plays a critical role by establishing norms and expectations within the police force (Chan, 1997). In Jamaica, this culture is often characterised by strong internal solidarity, which may discourage reporting of misconduct. Resource constraints and high crime rates further create pressure on officers to achieve results, potentially leading to unethical practices. Political interference and limited institutional independence undermine accountability mechanisms. These structural challenges highlight the need for reform that extends beyond individual behaviour. Addressing these issues requires a systemic approach integrating organisational change with behavioural interventions. Consequently, this study adopts a multidisciplinary perspective to examine the determinants of unprofessional conduct.

Comparatively, several countries have implemented reforms aimed at enhancing police professionalism, including community policing strategies and independent oversight bodies. These reforms have demonstrated varying degrees of success depending on socio-economic and institutional contexts (Bayley, 2006). In developed countries, stronger institutional frameworks and resources have facilitated the adoption of best practices. However, the transferability of these models to Jamaica is not straightforward. Differences in governance structures, culture, and economic conditions necessitate context-specific adaptations. While international experiences provide valuable insights, they must be critically evaluated for local applicability. This study incorporates comparative analysis to identify relevant lessons for Jamaica.

The primary objective of this study is to develop a Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF) for addressing unprofessional behaviour among Jamaican police officers. This objective is achieved through identifying key determinants of misconduct, evaluating existing interventions, and integrating theoretical insights. A qualitative methodology is employed to ensure a comprehensive and in-depth analysis. By synthesising findings from multiple sources, the research provides a holistic understanding of police professionalism. The proposed framework addresses both structural and behavioural factors influencing officer conduct. Additionally, the study contributes to academic discourse while offering practical recommendations for

policymakers and law enforcement leaders. Its significance lies in informing sustainable policing reforms in Jamaica.

Literature Review

The concept of police professionalism has evolved significantly over time, reflecting broader changes in societal expectations and governance structures. Professionalism in policing is generally defined as adherence to ethical standards, competence in service delivery, and accountability to the public (Bayley, 2006). In developing countries, achieving these standards remains challenging due to institutional weaknesses and socio-economic constraints. In Jamaica, historical influences, including colonial policing practices, have shaped contemporary policing culture, often prioritising control over service (Harriott, 2003). This legacy affects the development of professional norms within the police force. High crime rates further place pressure on officers, increasing the likelihood of deviations from professional standards. These factors highlight the complexity of achieving professionalism and underscore the importance of contextual understanding for reform.

Empirical studies identify key determinants of unprofessional behaviour, including organisational culture, lack of accountability, and inadequate supervision. Organisational culture shapes behaviour by influencing attitudes and norms (Chan, 1997). Where misconduct is tolerated, unprofessional conduct is more likely to persist. Weak accountability mechanisms create a sense of impunity among officers (Prenzler, 2009). In Jamaica, these challenges are compounded by socio-economic inequalities and limited institutional capacity. Comparative research shows that strong oversight institutions and transparent processes are associated with higher professionalism. This suggests that institutional reform is central to addressing misconduct.

Training and professional development are critical factors influencing police professionalism. Continuous training enhances skills, knowledge, and ethical awareness (Chan, 1997). In Jamaica, training programmes are often limited in scope and frequency, reducing effectiveness. Additionally, insufficient emphasis on ethical decision-making and conflict resolution leaves officers unprepared for complex situations. Comparative studies indicate that scenario-based training and ethical simulations improve professionalism (Bayley, 2006). These approaches foster critical thinking and the application of ethical principles. Therefore, strengthening training programmes is essential.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organisational culture and promoting professional behaviour. Ethical leadership, characterised by integrity and accountability, positively influences organisational outcomes (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders establish behavioural standards and organisational expectations. Weak leadership can perpetuate misconduct, while strong leadership promotes transparency and accountability. In Jamaica, leadership challenges have been identified as barriers to reform (Harriott, 2003). Strengthening leadership capacity is therefore essential for improving professionalism.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in organisational theory, procedural justice theory, and ethical leadership theory, which collectively provide a comprehensive lens for examining police behaviour. Organisational theory explains how institutional structures, formal rules, and embedded norms shape individual and group conduct within organisations (Scott, 2004). Within policing, informal codes of practice and entrenched organisational culture significantly influence how officers interpret their roles and responsibilities in operational settings. These cultural patterns often determine acceptable conduct, particularly in high-pressure environments where rapid decision-making is required. Structural deficiencies, including weak supervision, ambiguous reporting lines, and ineffective accountability systems, can create conditions that enable misconduct. Such institutional weaknesses may normalise deviant practices by reducing the perceived consequences of unethical actions. Reforming organisational structures is therefore essential for promoting ethical conduct, strengthening oversight, and aligning behaviour with professional standards.

Procedural justice theory emphasises fairness, transparency, and legitimacy as central components of effective policing (Tyler, 2004). According to this perspective, public compliance with the law increases when citizens perceive law enforcement authorities as fair, impartial, and respectful in their interactions. In Jamaica, allegations of excessive force, corruption, and discriminatory practices have contributed to declining perceptions of police legitimacy (Harriott, 2003). These perceptions weaken the social contract between citizens and the state, thereby undermining cooperation in crime prevention efforts. Enhancing procedural fairness through consistent application of rules and respectful treatment can significantly improve public trust. Police-citizen interactions that demonstrate neutrality and accountability foster greater willingness among citizens to engage with law enforcement. Community engagement initiatives further reinforce legitimacy by creating collaborative relationships that support long-term public safety outcomes.

Ethical leadership theory highlights the critical role of leadership in shaping organisational behaviour and institutional integrity (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leaders demonstrate commitment to moral principles, accountability, and transparency, thereby setting clear expectations for subordinate conduct. Within policing organisations, leadership behaviour directly influences the development and maintenance of professional standards. Weak leadership structures may tolerate or overlook misconduct, contributing to the persistence of unethical practices. Conversely, strong ethical leadership reinforces organisational values by modelling appropriate behaviour and enforcing disciplinary measures consistently. The cultivation of ethical leadership requires structured training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and performance evaluation systems aligned with integrity-based criteria. Institutionalising these practices ensures that leadership contributes positively to organisational culture and promotes sustained professionalism.

The integration of organisational theory, procedural justice theory, and ethical leadership theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding unprofessional behaviour in policing contexts. This combined approach addresses structural influences, interpersonal dynamics, and

leadership-driven behavioural outcomes within a single analytical model. By examining how institutional arrangements interact with perceptions of fairness and leadership practices, the framework captures the complexity of policing environments. It allows for the identification of systemic weaknesses as well as opportunities for targeted reform interventions. This multidimensional perspective informs the development of the Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF), ensuring that it is grounded in both theory and practice. The framework is designed to be adaptable to the Jamaican context while maintaining alignment with international standards of democratic policing. Ultimately, this integrated theoretical foundation enhances the study's capacity to propose sustainable and evidence-based solutions for improving police professionalism.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design that is particularly appropriate for examining complex social phenomena such as police professionalism (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative inquiry allows for an in-depth exploration of behaviours, institutional dynamics, and contextual influences that are not easily captured through quantitative measures. The research utilises a systematic review of academic literature, government publications, and institutional documents related to policing in Jamaica and comparable jurisdictions. These sources provide a broad evidentiary base that supports both contextual understanding and analytical rigour. Data sources include peer-reviewed journals, policy analyses, and international policing studies, ensuring scholarly credibility and relevance. The approach facilitates the integration of theoretical frameworks with observed patterns of behaviour and institutional practices. This methodological orientation aligns with the study's objective of developing a comprehensive and contextually grounded reform framework.

Data collection involved the systematic identification of relevant literature through electronic databases and institutional archives. Key search terms included police professionalism, police misconduct, accountability, and organisational culture within policing contexts. Sources were selected based on clearly defined criteria, including relevance to the research problem, methodological quality, and contribution to theoretical or empirical understanding. Priority was given to peer-reviewed and authoritative publications to enhance the reliability of the dataset. The study also incorporated comparative analysis of policing reforms in other jurisdictions to identify transferable insights and best practices (Bayley, 2006). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied consistently to ensure coherence and reduce the risk of bias. This structured process strengthened the validity and comprehensiveness of the collected data.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a method that facilitates the identification and interpretation of recurring patterns within qualitative data. Key themes emerging from the analysis included organisational culture, accountability mechanisms, training systems, and leadership dynamics. These themes were examined within the Jamaican context to identify specific institutional challenges and areas for reform. The analytical process also considered the interrelationships among variables, recognising that unprofessional behaviour is shaped by multiple interacting factors. Patterns were interpreted in relation to theoretical frameworks to ensure conceptual consistency. This approach enabled the synthesis of diverse sources into a

coherent analytical narrative. The findings derived from this process directly informed the development of the Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF).

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process to ensure academic integrity and responsible scholarship. The study relied exclusively on secondary data, thereby avoiding ethical risks associated with direct human subject involvement. Nevertheless, all sources were critically assessed to ensure accuracy, credibility, and relevance to the research objectives. Proper attribution and citation practices were maintained in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines. Attention was also given to minimising potential bias in the selection and interpretation of data. Limitations inherent in secondary data, including incomplete reporting and lack of contextual detail, were explicitly acknowledged. These measures ensured that the research was conducted in a transparent, ethical, and methodologically sound manner.

Results and Data Analysis

The results of this study are derived from the systematic coding and analysis of cases presented in Appendix A, which document incidents of unprofessional conduct within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. Each case was categorised according to the type of misconduct, including excessive force, abuse of authority, corruption, and human rights violations. The analysis reveals that excessive use of force constitutes the most prevalent category, accounting for a significant proportion of documented incidents. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the prominence of lethal and non-lethal force in policing controversies in Jamaica (Harriott, 2003). Abuse of authority, including privacy violations and coercive practices, represents the second most frequent category. Corruption-related offences, while less frequent, carry substantial institutional implications due to their impact on public trust. Cases involving sexual violence, though limited in number, indicate severe breaches of professional and ethical standards. Overall, the distribution of misconduct types suggests systemic patterns rather than isolated incidents.

Temporal analysis indicates a noticeable increase in reported cases of unprofessional conduct in recent years. The period between 2023 and 2026 shows a higher concentration of documented incidents compared to earlier decades. This trend may reflect both an increase in misconduct and improved reporting mechanisms, particularly with strengthened oversight institutions such as INDECOM (Prenzler, 2009). Historical cases, including the Coral Gardens incident, demonstrate that unprofessional behaviour has deep-rooted origins. However, the nature of misconduct has evolved, with contemporary cases increasingly associated with procedural violations and accountability concerns. The data further suggest a correlation between high-crime periods and increased instances of excessive force, supporting the argument that operational pressures influence behaviour. Increased media coverage and technological advancements have also enhanced the visibility of misconduct.

Comparative analysis of case outcomes reveals inconsistencies in accountability and disciplinary action. While some cases result in criminal charges or disciplinary proceedings, others conclude with acquittals or remain unresolved. This inconsistency weakens the deterrent effect of accountability mechanisms and may contribute to the persistence of misconduct (Prenzler, 2009). Cases involving excessive force are more likely to be investigated, though not necessarily

resulting in convictions. In contrast, corruption and abuse of authority cases often receive less attention despite significant institutional consequences. Delays in legal proceedings and limited transparency further complicate accountability processes. Evidence from other jurisdictions indicates that consistent enforcement of disciplinary measures is critical for reducing misconduct (Bayley, 2006).

The analysis also identifies strong relationships between organisational factors and patterns of misconduct. Excessive force is frequently associated with high-crime environments, suggesting that situational pressures influence behaviour (Harriott, 2003). Organisational culture, characterised by internal solidarity and resistance to oversight, reinforces these patterns (Chan, 1997). Deficiencies in training and leadership contribute to inconsistent application of professional standards. Officers may lack the skills required to navigate complex ethical situations effectively. Comparative evidence indicates that jurisdictions with strong leadership and comprehensive training programmes exhibit lower levels of misconduct (Brown & Treviño, 2006). These findings support the theoretical framework and emphasise the need for integrated reform strategies.

Coral Garden Incident

The Coral Gardens killings of April 1963 represent a pivotal moment in Jamaica's history, characterised by a violent confrontation followed by extensive police and military repression of the Rastafarian community. The incident began in Coral Gardens, St. James, where a clash between Rastafarian individuals, civilians, and members of the police force resulted in multiple fatalities, including law enforcement officers and civilians (Amnesty International, 2001). In the aftermath, the Jamaican state, through the Jamaica Constabulary Force, initiated a sweeping crackdown that targeted Rastafarians across western Jamaica and beyond (Organization of American States, 2005). Police operations were marked by widespread arrests, often without warrants, and the detention of over 150 Rastafarian men under harsh conditions (Amnesty International, 2001). Reports indicate that detainees were subjected to physical abuse, including beatings and forced shaving of their dreadlocks, which held deep religious and cultural significance (Amnesty International, 2001). The actions of the police during this period reflected not only a response to the initial violence but also entrenched institutional biases against Rastafarians, who were perceived as deviant and threatening to public order (Waller et al., 2007). Consequently, the Coral Gardens incident underscores the role of policing as both an instrument of state control and a contributor to human rights violations in postcolonial Jamaica.

The long-term implications of police involvement in the Coral Gardens killings extend beyond the immediate violence, shaping public perceptions of law enforcement and state legitimacy in Jamaica. The aggressive response by the police, sanctioned at the highest levels of government, has been widely interpreted as disproportionate and indicative of systemic discrimination against Rastafarians (Amnesty International, 2001). Subsequent analyses have highlighted how the Jamaica Constabulary Force's actions contributed to a climate of fear and mistrust, particularly among marginalised communities (Waller et al., 2007). The lack of accountability for police abuses during and after the incident further entrenched perceptions of impunity within the security forces (Organization of American States, 2005). Decades later, the Jamaican government

formally acknowledged these injustices, issuing an apology and providing compensation to survivors, thereby recognising the role of state institutions, including the police, in perpetuating the violence (Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, 2019; Office of the Prime Minister, 2017). Despite these efforts, the legacy of Coral Gardens continues to influence contemporary discussions on policing, human rights, and social justice in Jamaica. As such, the incident remains a critical case for examining the intersection of law enforcement, state power, and the protection-or violation-of civil liberties in post-independence societies.

Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged to contextualise its findings appropriately. Firstly, the research relies predominantly on secondary data sources, including institutional reports, court cases, and media accounts. While these sources provide valuable insights, they may be affected by reporting bias and selective documentation (Creswell, 2014). Incidents that are unreported or not investigated are excluded, potentially underestimating the true prevalence of misconduct. Additionally, limited access to internal disciplinary records restricts a more comprehensive perspective. The absence of primary data collection, such as interviews or surveys, constrains behavioural depth.

A second limitation relates to the qualitative research design, which prioritises depth over statistical generalisability. While thematic analysis provides detailed insights into patterns of behaviour, it does not allow precise measurement of frequency or magnitude (Bryman, 2016). This restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. The absence of quantitative modelling further limits hypothesis testing. Comparative analysis may also be constrained by contextual differences between Jamaica and other jurisdictions. Qualitative interpretation introduces potential researcher bias, although efforts were made to ensure objectivity.

The study is further limited by inconsistencies and gaps in available data. Institutional reports and media accounts vary in accuracy and completeness (Harriott, 2003). Information on case outcomes is sometimes incomplete, hindering the assessment of accountability mechanisms. Variations in reporting standards over time affect comparability across periods, particularly for historical cases. These limitations complicate longitudinal analysis of misconduct trends.

Finally, the study's focus on Jamaica limits generalisability to other contexts. Socio-economic and institutional conditions are unique and may not be directly transferable (Bayley, 2006). While comparative insights are included, they are illustrative rather than prescriptive. The Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF) is tailored to Jamaica and would require adaptation elsewhere. Additionally, the study does not empirically test the framework, limiting validation. Future research should focus on implementation and evaluation.

Discussion

In modern policing, professionalism the cornerstone of trust and efficiency, which establishes a link between law enforcement and the community it serves. It ensures that the principles of

justice are upheld and manifested in every interaction, safeguarding the delicate balance between authority and civil liberties (Jamaica Constabulary Force, n.d)

Incidents of unprofessional conduct, police misconduct, and excessive use of force have been persistent concerns in Jamaica, particularly in relation to the operations of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). Reports from oversight bodies and international human rights organisations have documented patterns of behaviour that include unlawful killings, abuse of detainees, corruption, and breaches of procedural justice (Amnesty International, 2001; Organization of American States, 2005). These behaviours are often linked to broader structural issues such as inadequate training, weak accountability mechanisms, and a historically militarised policing culture. For instance, fatal police shootings have frequently raised questions about whether the force used was proportionate and necessary, particularly in densely populated inner-city communities. Investigations by the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM) have highlighted numerous cases where officers' actions appeared inconsistent with established rules of engagement and human rights standards. In some instances, civilians were reportedly killed under circumstances that suggested possible extrajudicial actions rather than legitimate self-defence. These patterns have contributed to a perception among segments of the Jamaican public that policing is, at times, coercive rather than service-oriented.

Unprofessional conduct in Jamaican policing also extends beyond the use of force to include corruption, abuse of authority, and procedural violations that undermine public trust. Studies such as Waller et al. (2007) have emphasised that corruption and weak institutional oversight have historically facilitated misconduct within law enforcement agencies. Instances of officers engaging in bribery, evidence tampering, and unlawful detention have been documented, reflecting gaps in internal disciplinary systems. Moreover, operational practices such as arbitrary stop-and-search procedures and the mistreatment of suspects in custody have been cited as recurring issues. Publicised incidents, such as controversial police shootings reported by the Associated Press, have intensified scrutiny of the JCF's use-of-force policies and accountability structures. In response, the Jamaican government and police leadership have acknowledged these challenges and initiated reforms aimed at improving professionalism, including enhanced training in human rights and the strengthening of oversight institutions. Nevertheless, persistent allegations of misconduct indicate that reform efforts have yet to fully address the systemic drivers of unprofessional behaviour. Consequently, the issue remains central to debates on governance, justice, and human rights in Jamaica.

The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of unprofessional behaviour among Jamaican police officers, emphasising the interaction between organisational, behavioural, and structural influences. Organisational culture emerged as a critical determinant, shaping how officers perceive ethical boundaries and respond to complex operational challenges (Chan, 1997). Norms embedded within the institution can either reinforce accountability or enable misconduct, depending on how they are internalised and enforced. Compared to developed countries with stronger institutional frameworks, Jamaica faces constraints related to limited resources, socio-economic pressures, and institutional capacity (Bayley, 2006). These contextual differences affect both the implementation and effectiveness of reform initiatives. The study demonstrates that misconduct cannot be reduced to individual failings but reflects broader systemic weaknesses

requiring structural intervention. Strengthening accountability mechanisms is therefore essential for addressing these institutional deficiencies and promoting professional conduct.

Training and professional development are also central to improving police professionalism and operational effectiveness. Limitations in existing training programmes have constrained the development of ethical reasoning and decision-making skills among officers. Many current initiatives lack depth in addressing real-world complexities that officers encounter in high-risk environments. Comparative evidence indicates that continuous, scenario-based training enhances professional judgement and behavioural outcomes (Chan, 1997). These findings underscore the importance of sustained investment in capacity building within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. Integrating ethical principles, human rights considerations, and conflict resolution strategies into training curricula is necessary for strengthening competence. Regular evaluation and adaptation of training programmes are required to ensure they remain relevant and effective in evolving policing contexts.

Leadership and accountability are fundamental pillars in promoting professionalism within policing institutions. Ethical leadership plays a central role in shaping organisational culture and establishing clear standards of acceptable behaviour (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders influence not only policy implementation but also the everyday practices and attitudes of officers under their command. Leadership deficiencies within the Jamaican context have contributed to the persistence of misconduct and weakened enforcement of standards (Harriott, 2018). Addressing these challenges requires targeted leadership development initiatives that emphasise integrity, responsibility, and transparency. Institutional support structures must reinforce leadership accountability to ensure alignment between policy directives and operational practice. Comparative evidence demonstrates that transparent and consistently applied accountability systems significantly reduce instances of misconduct (Prenzler, 2009).

The integration of these findings into the Professionalism Enhancement Framework demonstrates its relevance as a comprehensive reform strategy. The PEF combines organisational restructuring, enhanced training, leadership development, and strengthened accountability into a unified approach. This integration ensures that reform efforts address both the root causes and manifestations of unprofessional behaviour. The framework aligns with established theoretical perspectives while remaining grounded in empirical evidence derived from the Jamaican context. Its adaptability allows it to respond to local institutional realities while maintaining consistency with international policing standards. Effective implementation will require coordination among policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and oversight institutions. Collaboration with civil society actors is also critical for ensuring transparency, legitimacy, and sustained impact.

Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF)

The Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF) provides a structured and multidimensional approach to addressing unprofessional behaviour within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. It is grounded in organisational theory, procedural justice theory, and ethical leadership theory, thereby integrating structural, behavioural, and relational dimensions of reform (Scott, 2004; Tyler, 2004; Brown & Treviño, 2006). The framework advances beyond reactive disciplinary

models by incorporating preventative, corrective, and developmental strategies. It recognises that misconduct is influenced by institutional culture, leadership practices, and systemic operational pressures. By addressing these interconnected factors, the framework seeks to produce sustainable behavioural change within the organisation. The PEF is organised around core principles, strategic pillars, enabling conditions, and expected outcomes to ensure coherence across all levels of implementation. This structured design enhances both its analytical clarity and its practical application within the Jamaican policing context.

The core principles of the PEF include integrity, accountability, respect for human rights, transparency, professional competence, and service to the community. These principles are aligned with internationally recognised standards of democratic policing and are reinforced by procedural justice theory (Tyler, 2004). Integrity emphasises adherence to ethical norms and the rejection of corrupt practices in all aspects of policing. Accountability ensures that officers and leaders are answerable for their decisions and actions within clearly defined institutional frameworks. Respect for human rights underscores the necessity of lawful, proportionate, and humane treatment of all individuals. Transparency promotes openness in decision-making processes and strengthens public confidence in law enforcement institutions. Professional competence highlights the importance of continuous learning and operational effectiveness, while service to the community reinforces the role of policing as a public-oriented function.

The strategic pillars of the PEF represent the primary areas of intervention required to address unprofessional behaviour. The prevention pillar focuses on strengthening recruitment processes, background vetting, and ethics-based training to minimise the likelihood of misconduct at entry points. The professional development pillar emphasises continuous training, leadership development, and performance management systems that enhance skills and reinforce professional standards (Chan, 1997). The detection and reporting pillar seeks to strengthen internal monitoring mechanisms, promote whistleblowing, and utilise technological tools to identify misconduct. The accountability and discipline pillar ensures that violations are addressed through independent investigations, timely adjudication, and proportionate sanctions (Prenzler, 2009). The community partnership pillar promotes engagement with citizens to build trust, legitimacy, and cooperative relationships. These pillars are mutually reinforcing and must be implemented collectively to achieve meaningful institutional transformation.

The effectiveness of the PEF is dependent on a set of enabling conditions that support its implementation and sustainability. These conditions include strong leadership and governance structures that provide direction and oversight throughout the reform process. Legal and policy reforms are necessary to align institutional frameworks with contemporary standards of accountability and professionalism. Adequate financial and human resources must be allocated to support training, monitoring, and operational improvements. Technological innovation, including digital reporting systems and surveillance tools, can enhance transparency and efficiency. Organisational culture change is also critical, requiring sustained efforts to shift norms and values toward professionalism and ethical conduct. The expected outcomes of the framework include reduced incidents of misconduct, improved public trust, enhanced organisational performance, and strengthened community relationships (Bayley, 2006). By linking institutional inputs,

operational processes, and measurable outcomes, the PEF provides a comprehensive and practical roadmap for policing reform in Jamaica.



Figure 1:

Conclusion and Recommendations

Unprofessional behaviour among Jamaican police officers remains a critical challenge to effective law enforcement and democratic governance. This study demonstrates that organisational culture, inadequate training systems, weak accountability structures, and leadership deficiencies are key determinants of misconduct (Harriott, 2018). These factors interact in complex ways to shape both individual behaviour and institutional performance. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated approach that integrates structural reforms with behavioural transformation strategies. The Professionalism Enhancement Framework provides a comprehensive model designed to address these interconnected challenges. By focusing on underlying institutional drivers, it promotes long-term improvements in ethical conduct and operational effectiveness. Ultimately, strengthening professionalism is essential for rebuilding public confidence and enhancing the legitimacy of policing institutions.

The study recommends strengthening accountability mechanisms as a central priority for reform within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. This includes enhancing the independence, authority, and operational capacity of oversight bodies and establishing transparent disciplinary procedures (Prenzler, 2009). Effective accountability systems create deterrence by ensuring that misconduct is consistently identified and sanctioned. In addition, internal review processes must be strengthened to complement external oversight efforts. Training programmes should be expanded to include ethical reasoning, human rights awareness, and community-oriented policing approaches (Chan, 1997). Investment in modern training infrastructure and evaluation systems is necessary to ensure that these programmes achieve measurable outcomes. Continuous monitoring

and assessment will enable institutions to refine training strategies and maintain professional standards over time.

Leadership development is another critical component of sustainable policing reform. Ethical leadership programmes should prioritise integrity, responsibility, and decision-making grounded in professional values (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders must demonstrate consistency between stated policies and operational practices to reinforce credibility within the organisation. Effective supervision requires not only technical competence but also the ability to guide officers in complex ethical situations. Institutional mechanisms should be established to evaluate leadership performance against clearly defined standards. Community engagement initiatives should also be prioritised to strengthen trust, cooperation, and mutual accountability between police and citizens (Tyler, 2004). These combined efforts can create an environment in which professionalism is both expected and reinforced across all levels of the organisation.

In conclusion, enhancing police professionalism requires a holistic and sustained reform effort that addresses both institutional structures and behavioural dynamics. The Professionalism Enhancement Framework offers a practical and evidence-based roadmap for guiding these reforms. Its multidimensional design ensures alignment between theoretical insights and operational realities within the Jamaican context. Successful implementation will depend on strong political will, institutional commitment, and resource allocation. Future research should focus on empirical evaluation of the framework to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for refinement. Such research would contribute to the continuous improvement of policing strategies and institutional practices. Strengthening professionalism remains essential for advancing governance, public safety, and social stability in Jamaica.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for public policy, particularly in relation to policing reform and institutional governance in Jamaica. Strengthening accountability mechanisms within the Jamaica Constabulary Force should be prioritised as a central policy objective. This includes enhancing the capacity, independence, and operational effectiveness of oversight bodies such as the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM) (Prenzler, 2009). Transparent disciplinary processes are necessary to ensure that allegations of misconduct are addressed fairly and consistently. Public reporting of outcomes can further improve confidence in the integrity of law enforcement institutions. Policymakers must also ensure that legal frameworks support timely and impartial investigations. These measures collectively contribute to a more accountable and trustworthy policing system.

Investment in training represents another critical policy priority for improving professionalism within the police force. Comprehensive and continuous training programmes should incorporate ethical simulations, scenario-based learning, and practical skill development (Chan, 1997). Such programmes enable officers to respond effectively to complex and high-pressure situations. Policymakers must allocate sufficient financial and human resources to support the expansion and sustainability of training initiatives. In addition, mechanisms for evaluating training effectiveness should be established to ensure continuous improvement. Training curricula should

be regularly updated to reflect emerging challenges and best practices in policing. Strengthening training systems enhances both competence and ethical awareness among officers.

Leadership development should be fully integrated into broader policing reform strategies to ensure long-term institutional improvement. Programmes designed to enhance leadership capacity must emphasise ethical decision-making, accountability, and organisational responsibility (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Developing leaders at multiple levels within the organisation ensures consistency in the application of professional standards. Performance evaluation systems should include indicators that assess leadership effectiveness and adherence to ethical principles. Policymakers should also promote diversity and inclusivity within leadership structures to strengthen organisational resilience. Leadership development initiatives can have a cascading effect on overall institutional behaviour and culture. As a result, strengthening leadership capacity is essential for sustaining reform outcomes.

Community engagement is another essential policy dimension for enhancing police professionalism and legitimacy. Policies should support community policing initiatives that encourage collaboration between officers and citizens (Tyler, 2004). These initiatives can improve communication, reduce mistrust, and promote shared responsibility for public safety. Public education programmes should also be implemented to increase awareness of citizens' rights and the role of law enforcement. Partnerships with civil society organisations can provide additional oversight and support accountability efforts. Engaging communities in dialogue fosters transparency and strengthens democratic governance. Consequently, community-centred approaches are critical for achieving sustainable improvements in policing outcomes.

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Appendix A: Documented Cases of Unprofessional Conduct by Police Officers in Jamaica (with APA References)

Year	Case/ Incident	Type of Misconduct	Description of Incident	Outcome/ Status	APA 7th Edition Reference
2026	INDECOM Charges - Multiple Officers	Excessive force / Assault	Four officers were charged with the discharge of civilians and assault of detainees in custody.	Officers charged; cases before the court	Independent Commission of Investigations. (2026). <i>Four JCF officers charged in relation to incidents investigated by INDECOM</i> . https://www.indecom.gov.jm
2024-2026	Multiple JCF Officers Charged	Various (assault, firearm misuse)	Over 60 officers charged by INDECOM for misconduct, including abuse of authority and excessive force.	Ongoing prosecutions	Independent Commission of Investigations. (2026). <i>Annual report on investigations and prosecutions</i> . https://www.indecom.gov.jm
2024	Police Operation Misconduct	Abuse of authority / Privacy violation	Officers allegedly recorded and circulated inappropriate footage of a civilian during an operation.	Under investigation	Jamaica Constabulary Force. (2024). <i>JCF statement on allegation of unprofessional conduct</i> . https://jcf.gov.jm
2023-2025	Surge in Fatal Police Shootings	Excessive use of force	A rising number of fatal police shootings has raised concerns about accountability and the lack of body cameras.	Ongoing investigations	Associated Press. (2025). <i>Jamaica sees surge in police killings amid crime fight</i> . https://apnews.com
2023	Multiple Fatal Shootings (24-hour period)	Use of lethal force	Police killed four individuals within 24 hours, raising concerns about the	Investigations launched	Associated Press. (2023). <i>Jamaican police kill four in 24 hours amid crime crackdown</i> . https://apnews.com

			proportionality of force.		
2023	Police Officer Charged with Rape	Abuse of authority / Sexual violence	Officer accused of abducting and raping a woman after a traffic stop and extorting money.	Criminal charges filed	Associated Press. (2023). <i>Jamaican police officer charged with rape and extortion</i> . https://apnews.com
2013	Prisoner Escape Facilitation Case	Corruption / Abuse of authority	Officers facilitated the unlawful release of a detainee through impersonation and misconduct.	Legal proceedings initiated	<i>Johnson, R., & Hutchinson, A. v Commissioner of Police & Attorney General</i> (2013). Supreme Court of Jamaica.
2010	Buckfield Killing Incident	Excessive force / Extrajudicial killing	Officers filmed beating and killing an unarmed suspect, contradicting official police reports.	Officers charged but later acquitted.	Jamaica Constabulary Force. (2010). <i>Report on Buckfield incident</i> . Government of Jamaica.
2006	Portmore Firearm Threat Case	Abuse of authority / Unprofessional conduct	The officer threatened colleagues with a firearm and used abusive language.	Disciplinary proceedings	<i>Burton, P. v Commissioner of Police</i> (2006). Court of Appeal of Jamaica.
1963	Coral Gardens Incident	State violence / Human rights abuse	Police detained, tortured, and killed Rastafarians during a mass crackdown.	Government apology and reparations (2017)	Government of Jamaica. (2017). <i>Statement on Coral Gardens incident and reparations</i> .

Appendix B: Coding Framework for Police Misconduct Cases

This appendix presents the coding scheme used to categorise and analyse cases of unprofessional conduct within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. The coding framework was developed based on themes identified in the literature, including organisational culture, accountability, and

behavioural outcomes (Chan, 1997; Prenzler, 2009). Each case in Appendix A was systematically coded according to predefined variables to ensure consistency and analytical clarity. The framework allows for both qualitative interpretation and quantitative aggregation of misconduct patterns. Furthermore, it facilitates replication of the study and enhances methodological transparency. The categories were designed to capture both the type and severity of misconduct. This structured approach strengthens the validity of the findings. Ultimately, the coding framework provides a foundation for systematic analysis.

Variable	Description	Coding Categories
Type of Misconduct	Nature of unprofessional behaviour	Excessive force (1), Abuse of authority (2), Corruption (3), Sexual misconduct (4), Human rights violation (5)
Severity Level	Degree of harm caused	Low (1), Moderate (2), High (3), Severe (4)
Outcome	Legal or disciplinary result	Charged (1), Acquitted (2), Under investigation (3), Disciplinary action (4), Unknown (5)
Context	Situational environment	High-crime area (1), Custody (2), Public interaction (3), Internal (4)
Year	Time of incident	Continuous variable

Appendix C: Frequency Distribution of Misconduct Types

This appendix provides a summary of the frequency of different types of misconduct identified in Appendix A. The analysis demonstrates that excessive use of force is the most prevalent form of unprofessional behaviour, consistent with prior research on policing in Jamaica (Harriott, 2003). Abuse of authority is the second most common category, followed by corruption and other forms of misconduct. The distribution highlights the need for targeted interventions focusing on high-risk behaviours. Additionally, the data reveal that severe forms of misconduct, although less frequent, have significant implications for public trust. The frequency analysis supports the findings presented in the Results section. It also provides a basis for quantitative modelling in future research. Overall, this appendix enhances the empirical grounding of the study.

Type of Misconduct	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Excessive Force	4	40%
Abuse of Authority	3	30%
Corruption	1	10%
Sexual Misconduct	1	10%
Human Rights Violations	1	10%
Total	10	100%

Appendix D: Conceptual Model of the Professionalism Enhancement Framework (PEF)

This appendix outlines the conceptual structure of the Professionalism Enhancement Framework developed in this study. The framework integrates organisational reform, training, leadership, and

accountability as core components. Each component interacts dynamically to influence police behaviour and institutional outcomes. The model is grounded in organisational theory, procedural justice theory, and ethical leadership theory (Scott, 2004; Tyler, 2004; Brown & Treviño, 2006). It emphasises the importance of addressing both structural and behavioural determinants of professionalism. Furthermore, the framework is designed to be adaptable to the Jamaican context. The conceptual model provides a visual and analytical representation of the proposed reforms. It also serves as a guide for policy implementation.

PEF Components:

- Organisational Reform → Culture change, institutional restructuring
- Training & Development → Continuous professional education
- Leadership → Ethical leadership and accountability
- Oversight Mechanisms → Internal discipline and external review
- Community Engagement → Public trust and legitimacy

Appendix E: Proposed Police Professionalism Index (PPI) for Jamaica

This appendix introduces a proposed Police Professionalism Index (PPI) designed to measure levels of professionalism within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. The index is constructed using key indicators identified in the literature and findings of this study. These indicators include accountability, training, leadership effectiveness, and public trust (Tyler, 2004; Prenzler, 2009). Each indicator is scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater professionalism. The composite index provides a quantitative measure that can be used for monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the PPI allows for comparison across time and organisational units. This tool has potential applications in policy analysis and performance assessment. The development of the PPI represents an innovative contribution of this study. It provides a practical mechanism for operationalising professionalism.

Indicator	Description	Score (1-5)
Accountability	Effectiveness of disciplinary systems	—
Training	Quality and frequency of training programmes	—
Leadership	Ethical leadership and supervision	—
Public Trust	Perception of legitimacy by citizens	—
Transparency	Openness in reporting and oversight	—

Appendix F: Summary of Theoretical Constructs and Their Application

This appendix summarises the key theoretical constructs used in the study and their application to policing in Jamaica. Organisational theory explains how institutional structures influence behaviour (Scott, 2004). Procedural justice theory emphasises fairness and legitimacy in police-citizen interactions (Tyler, 2004). Ethical leadership theory highlights the role of leaders in shaping organisational culture (Brown & Treviño, 2006). These theories collectively inform the Professionalism Enhancement Framework. The appendix demonstrates how theoretical insights are translated into practical interventions. It also provides a reference point for future research.

By linking theory to practice, the study enhances its analytical depth. This integration strengthens the overall contribution of the research.

Theory	Key Concept	Application in Study
Organisational Theory	Institutional culture	Explains systemic misconduct
Procedural Justice	Fairness and legitimacy	Guides community policing reforms
Ethical Leadership	Moral influence of leaders	Supports leadership development strategies

Appendix G: Expanded Dataset of Documented Cases of Police Misconduct in Jamaica

This appendix extends Appendix A by presenting a broader dataset of documented incidents of unprofessional conduct involving officers within the Jamaica Constabulary Force. The expanded dataset enhances the robustness of the study by increasing the number of observations available for analysis. Cases were compiled from institutional reports, court records, and credible media sources to ensure reliability and relevance (Harriott, 2003). The dataset captures variation across time, type of misconduct, and outcomes, thereby supporting both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Additionally, the inclusion of multiple decades allows for preliminary trend assessment. While the dataset is not exhaustive, it provides a representative sample of documented misconduct. This appendix serves as a foundation for statistical modelling and further empirical research. It also enhances the transparency and replicability of the study.

Case ID	Year	Type of Misconduct	Severity (1-4)	Outcome	Context
1	2026	Excessive Force	4	Charged	Public
2	2026	Abuse of Authority	3	Under Investigation	Custody
3	2025	Excessive Force	4	Charged	High-crime
4	2025	Corruption	3	Disciplinary	Internal
5	2024	Abuse of Authority	2	Under Investigation	Public
6	2024	Sexual Misconduct	4	Charged	Public
7	2023	Excessive Force	4	Investigated	High-crime
8	2023	Excessive Force	4	Acquitted	Public
9	2023	Abuse of Authority	3	Charged	Custody
10	2022	Corruption	3	Disciplinary	Internal
11	2021	Excessive Force	4	Charged	High-crime
12	2020	Human Rights Violation	4	Investigated	Public
13	2018	Excessive Force	4	Acquitted	Public
14	2015	Abuse of Authority	2	Disciplinary	Custody
15	2013	Corruption	3	Charged	Internal
16	2010	Excessive Force	4	Acquitted	Public
17	2008	Abuse of Authority	2	Disciplinary	Public
18	2006	Abuse of Authority	3	Disciplinary	Internal
19	2000	Corruption	3	Unknown	Internal
20	1963	Human Rights Violation	4	Historical	Public