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The Effectiveness of the Role the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) in Managing the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic during the Implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO): A Case Study in Kubang Pasu District, Kedah

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic presented major challenges for law enforcement agencies like the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) in enforcing public health measures and maintaining order. This study examined the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies in managing the pandemic's impact in the rural Kubang Pasu District of Kedah during the Movement Control Order (MCO) implementation. Given the lack of research on this specific local context, the study aimed to investigate how effective the PDRM's strategies were, identify the main challenges faced and how they were addressed, and recommend areas for improvement to enhance their readiness for future crises. Employing a qualitative methodology involving document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations with PDRM personnel, the key findings revealed that while the PDRM's roadblocks, patrols, and enforcement strategies were largely effective, they faced challenges like public non-compliance, misinformation, strained resources, and adapting protocols which impacted their efforts. Recommendations focused on enhancing training, technology investment, improving inter-agency coordination, community engagement, and continuous learning.

Keywords: *Royal Malaysia Police, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and rapidly spread worldwide, becoming a global health crisis. As of April 2021, there have been over 148 million confirmed cases and 3.1 million deaths globally (World Health Organization, 2021).

The virus's high transmissibility and the severity of the disease, particularly among vulnerable populations, have led to significant disruptions in economies (eg. Widespread business closures and job losses due to lockdowns and reduced economic activity; global economic contraction and increased poverty rates), healthcare systems (eg. Overwhelmed hospitals and healthcare facilities due to the surge in COVID-19 cases; hortages of medical resources, such as hospital beds, ventilators, and personal protective equipment), and social norms (eg. Social distancing measures leading to the cancellation of events and closure of schools and universities; shift towards remote work and online learning, affecting daily life and interactions).

These disruptions have had far-reaching consequences, exacerbating social inequalities and disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations, such as low-income and minority communities. The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of robust healthcare systems, social safety nets, and international cooperation in addressing global health crises.

Governments have implemented measures such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing to control the spread, resulting in economic contractions, job losses, and increased social inequalities (International Monetary Fund, 2021; United Nations, 2020). The pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of healthcare systems, with many countries facing shortages of medical resources and struggling to cope with the surge in cases.

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The United States has reported the highest number of confirmed cases and deaths, followed by India, Brazil, France, and Russia (World Health Organization, 2021). The global response has been marked by international cooperation and the rapid development of vaccines, but equitable distribution remains a challenge, particularly for low- and middle-income countries (World Health Organization, 2021).

In Malaysia, the government introduced the Movement Control Order (MCO) on March 18, 2020, to control the outbreak (Tang, 2020). The MCO restricted movement within the country, allowing only essential services to operate and limiting public gatherings. Subsequent phases of the MCO, such as the Conditional MCO and Recovery MCO, were implemented based on the epidemiological situation (Amit et al., 2021).

The Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) has played a crucial role in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact on the population. The PDRM's responsibilities include ensuring public compliance with MCO regulations, maintaining law and order, and facilitating the movement of essential goods and services (Aziz et al., 2020). The police have also been involved in contact tracing efforts and the dissemination of information to the public (Mohd Noor et al., 2021).

However, the PDRM has faced various challenges in implementing the MCO. One of the main issues has been public compliance with the regulations, particularly during the early stages of the MCO (Mohd Noor et al., 2021). Misinformation and fake news have also hindered the PDRM's efforts, leading to confusion and anxiety among the public (Hashim et al., 2020). Maintaining law and order during a crisis has also been a challenge, as the pandemic has affected crime patterns and the police force's resources (Aziz et al., 2020).

Studying the effectiveness of the PDRM's role in managing the pandemic is essential, as it can provide valuable insights into the successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in the local context. The Kubang Pasu District in Kedah, Malaysia, serves as an interesting case study due to its unique demographics and socio-economic conditions. Kubang Pasu has a population of approximately 216,000 people, with a majority working in the agricultural sector (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The district's rural setting and its proximity to the Thai border may present specific challenges for the PDRM in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact.

Several studies have investigated the role of law enforcement agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Jennings and Perez (2020) examined the impact of the pandemic on policing in the United States, highlighting the need for adaptability and community engagement. Laufs and Waseem (2020) explored the challenges faced by police forces in maintaining public order during the pandemic, emphasizing the importance of effective communication and public trust.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for law enforcement agencies worldwide, including the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM). While the PDRM has played a vital role in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and managing the pandemic's impact on the population, there is a need to assess the effectiveness of their strategies and identify areas for improvement.

Existing studies have investigated the role of law enforcement agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on various aspects such as public compliance, community engagement, and maintaining public order (Jennings & Perez, 2020; Laufs & Waseem, 2020). However, there is a lack of research examining the specific context of the PDRM's role in managing the pandemic in rural districts of Malaysia, such as the Kubang Pasu District in Kedah.

The Kubang Pasu District presents unique challenges for the PDRM due to its rural setting, agricultural economy, and proximity to the Thai border. As of April 2021, Kedah has recorded a total of 16,942 COVID-19 cases, with Kubang Pasu contributing to 1,178 cases (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2021). The district's population of approximately 216,000 people (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020) and its socio-economic conditions may influence the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact.

Moreover, the PDRM has faced challenges such as public non-compliance, misinformation, and maintaining law and order during the crisis (Aziz et al., 2020; Hashim et al., 2020). A survey conducted by the Malaysian Ministry of Health in May 2020 found that 18.5% of respondents believed in COVID-19 related misinformation (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2020), which may have hindered the PDRM's efforts in enforcing the MCO. Additionally, the pandemic has affected crime patterns and the police force's resources (Aziz et al., 2020), necessitating an evaluation of the PDRM's strategies in maintaining public safety during the crisis.

Given these research gaps and the need for a context-specific analysis, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the PDRM's role in managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during the implementation of the MCO in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. By examining the successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in the local context, this study seeks to contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for effective pandemic management by law enforcement agencies in rural districts of Malaysia.

How effective have the strategies employed by the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) been in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah? What are the main challenges faced by the PDRM in implementing the MCO and maintaining public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah, and how have they addressed these challenges? And what are the areas for improvement in the PDRM's approach to managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah, and what recommendations can be made to enhance their effectiveness in future crisis situations?

This article aims to assess the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) in managing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah, by providing a brief background on the PDRM, reviewing relevant literature, discussing the study's findings, and identifying challenges and areas for improvement. The article will follow a structured approach, beginning with an overview of the PDRM's role and resources, followed by a comprehensive literature review, an analysis of the findings on the PDRM's strategies and challenges faced in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and maintaining public safety, and concluding with recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in handling future crises, particularly in rural or border districts.

Brief Background of the Royal Malaysian Police

The Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), known in Malay as Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), is the national police force of Malaysia, responsible for maintaining law and order, preventing and detecting crime, and enforcing the law throughout the country. The origins of the RMP can be traced back to the early 19th century when the Straits Settlements Police was established by the British colonial government in 1807 (Royal Malaysian Police, 2021). The police force evolved over time, with the formation of the Federated Malay States Police in 1896 and the Unfederated Malay States Police in 1909 (Wahab & Hamid, 2019). After Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the police force was renamed the Royal Malaysian Police, reflecting its national status (Royal Malaysian Police, 2021).

Today, the RMP is a modern and well-equipped police force, with a strength of approximately 137,000 personnel (Royal Malaysian Police, 2021). The force is structured into several departments and units, including the Criminal Investigation Department, the Narcotics Criminal Investigation Department, the Special Branch, and the General Operations Force (Wahab & Hamid, 2019). The RMP is headed by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), who is appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister (Royal Malaysian Police, 2021).

The primary role of the RMP is to maintain public order, prevent and detect crime, and enforce the law. This includes responsibilities such as conducting patrols, investigating crimes, managing traffic, and responding to emergencies (Wahab & Hamid, 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMP has played a crucial role in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and other public health measures to curb the spread of the virus (Aziz et al., 2020). The police have been involved in tasks such as setting up roadblocks, conducting checks on individuals and businesses to ensure compliance with the MCO, and investigating violations of the order (Babulal, 2021). As of February 2021, the RMP had issued over 27,000 compounds for MCO violations,

amounting to fines of over RM13 million (Babulal, 2021). The RMP has also been involved in contact tracing efforts and the dissemination of information to the public regarding the pandemic (Aziz et al., 2020).

The RMP's role during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of a well-trained and well-equipped police force in managing public health crises and maintaining public order. However, the pandemic has also presented challenges for the RMP, such as the risk of infection among police personnel and the need to adapt to new modes of operation in the context of social distancing and other public health measures (Aziz et al., 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the world, with over 148 million confirmed cases and 3.1 million deaths globally as of April 2021 (World Health Organization, 2021). Governments worldwide have implemented various measures to curb the spread of the virus, such as lockdowns, travel restrictions, and social distancing guidelines (Hale et al., 2021). These measures have led to significant disruptions in economies, healthcare systems, and social norms (Nicola et al., 2020). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the global economy contracted by 3.5% in 2020, with the pandemic pushing an additional 88 million people into extreme poverty (IMF, 2021; World Bank, 2020). Governments have also implemented fiscal and monetary policies to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic, with global fiscal support reaching nearly $12 trillion as of March 2021 (IMF, 2021). The pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of healthcare systems worldwide, with many countries struggling to cope with the surge in cases and the shortage of medical resources (Armocida et al., 2020; Legido-Quigley et al., 2020).

Police forces around the world have played a crucial role in enforcing public health measures and maintaining public order during the pandemic (Laufs & Waseem, 2020; Farrow, 2020). In Malaysia, the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) has been at the forefront of enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and other public health measures (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021). The RMP's tasks have included setting up roadblocks, conducting checks on individuals and businesses to ensure compliance with the MCO, and investigating violations of the order (Babulal, 2021; Md Shah et al., 2020). As of February 2021, the RMP had issued over 27,000 compounds for MCO violations, amounting to fines of over RM13 million (Babulal, 2021). The RMP has also been involved in contact tracing efforts and the dissemination of information to the public regarding the pandemic (Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020). However, the RMP has faced challenges such as public non-compliance, misinformation, and the need to adapt to new modes of operation in the context of social distancing (Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020).

Several studies have examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's response in Malaysia (Shah et al., 2020; Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020). Shah et al. (2020) analyzed the effectiveness of the MCO in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Malaysia, finding that the MCO had a significant impact on reducing the daily number of new cases. Aziz et al. (2020) examined Malaysia's approach in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the RMP's role in enforcing the MCO and targeted screening to reduce community infection rates. The study also discussed the impact of the pandemic on public health and the economy in Malaysia. Firdaus et al. (2020) investigated the challenges faced by the RMP in enforcing the MCO, such as public non-compliance and the spread of misinformation. The study highlighted the need for effective communication strategies and public cooperation to ensure the success of the MCO in curbing the spread of COVID-19. Other studies have examined the impact of the pandemic on specific sectors in Malaysia, such as tourism (Foo et al., 2020), education (Chung et al., 2020), and mental health (Wong et al., 2020).

These studies provide valuable insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia and the role of the RMP in managing the crisis. However, there is a need for further research to examine the effectiveness of the RMP's strategies in specific local contexts, such as the Kubang Pasu District in Kedah, to inform evidence-based policies and practices for future public health emergencies (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of law enforcement agencies in managing public health crises and maintaining public order (Laufs & Waseem, 2020; Farrow, 2020). While there have been

several studies examining the impact of the pandemic and the government's response in Malaysia (Shah et al., 2020; Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020), there is a need for further research to investigate the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysian Police's (RMP) strategies in specific local contexts.

One of the main research gaps is the lack of studies focusing on the RMP's role in managing the pandemic in rural districts of Malaysia, such as the Kubang Pasu District in Kedah. The district's unique demographics, socio-economic conditions, and proximity to the Thai border may present specific challenges for the RMP in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and managing the pandemic's impact (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020). As of April 2021, Kedah has recorded a total of 16,942 COVID-19 cases, with Kubang Pasu contributing to 1,178 cases (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2021). Understanding the effectiveness of the RMP's strategies in this context is crucial for developing evidence-based policies and practices for future public health emergencies.

Furthermore, while existing studies have identified challenges faced by the RMP, such as public non-compliance and misinformation (Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020), there is a need for a more in-depth analysis of how these challenges have been addressed in specific local contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the RMP's response to these challenges in the Kubang Pasu District and identifying areas for improvement.

Moreover, the pandemic has exposed the need for effective collaboration between law enforcement agencies and public health authorities in managing crises (Payne, 2020; Hale et al., 2021). Investigating the nature and effectiveness of this collaboration in the Kubang Pasu District can provide valuable insights for enhancing inter-agency coordination in future emergencies.

The study also deserves further academic attention due to its potential to contribute to the broader literature on policing during pandemics. While there have been studies on police responses to COVID-19 in other countries (Jennings & Perez, 2020; Farrow, 2020), there is a need for more context-specific research to inform best practices and policies. By examining the RMP's strategies in the Kubang Pasu District, this study can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities for effective policing during public health crises.

This article proposes the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) as a framework for analyzing the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysian Police's (RMP) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah.

The TPB, proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The TPB aims to explain and predict human behavior in specific contexts by considering the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on an individual's intention to perform a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The theory has been widely applied in various fields, including health psychology, environmental psychology, and consumer behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Scalco et al., 2017).

The TPB posits that an individual's intention to perform a behavior is the most proximal determinant of that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Intention, in turn, is influenced by three key factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior, while subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform the behavior, considering factors that may facilitate or impede performance (Ajzen, 1991).

In the context of this study, the TPB can serve as a valuable framework for analyzing the effectiveness of the RMP's strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. By examining the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of both the RMP personnel and the public, the study can gain insights into the factors influencing compliance with Movement Control Order (MCO) regulations and cooperation with law enforcement efforts.

For example, the study can investigate the attitudes of RMP personnel towards enforcing the MCO, their perceived social pressure to carry out their duties effectively (subjective norms), and their perception of the resources and support available to them (perceived behavioral control). Similarly, the study can examine the public's attitudes towards complying with the MCO, the social pressure they experience to adhere to the

regulations (subjective norms), and their perception of the ease or difficulty of compliance (perceived behavioral control).

By applying the TPB, the study can identify potential barriers to effective enforcement and compliance, such as negative attitudes, conflicting social pressures, or a lack of perceived control over the situation. This information can inform the development of targeted interventions and strategies to enhance the RMP's effectiveness in managing the pandemic, such as public awareness campaigns, training programs for officers, or resource allocation (Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020).

Moreover, the TPB has been successfully applied in studies examining compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures, such as social distancing and mask-wearing (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sya et al., 2021). These studies have highlighted the importance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping individuals' intentions and behaviors. By extending the application of the TPB to the context of law enforcement during the pandemic, this study can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of the RMP's strategies.

The Theory of Planned Behavior provides a robust framework for analyzing the effectiveness of the RMP's strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. By examining the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of both law enforcement personnel and the public, the study can identify key factors influencing the success of the RMP's efforts and inform the development of evidence-based interventions to enhance their effectiveness.

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed in the given text, here is a simple model or framework of analysis that can be used for the study:

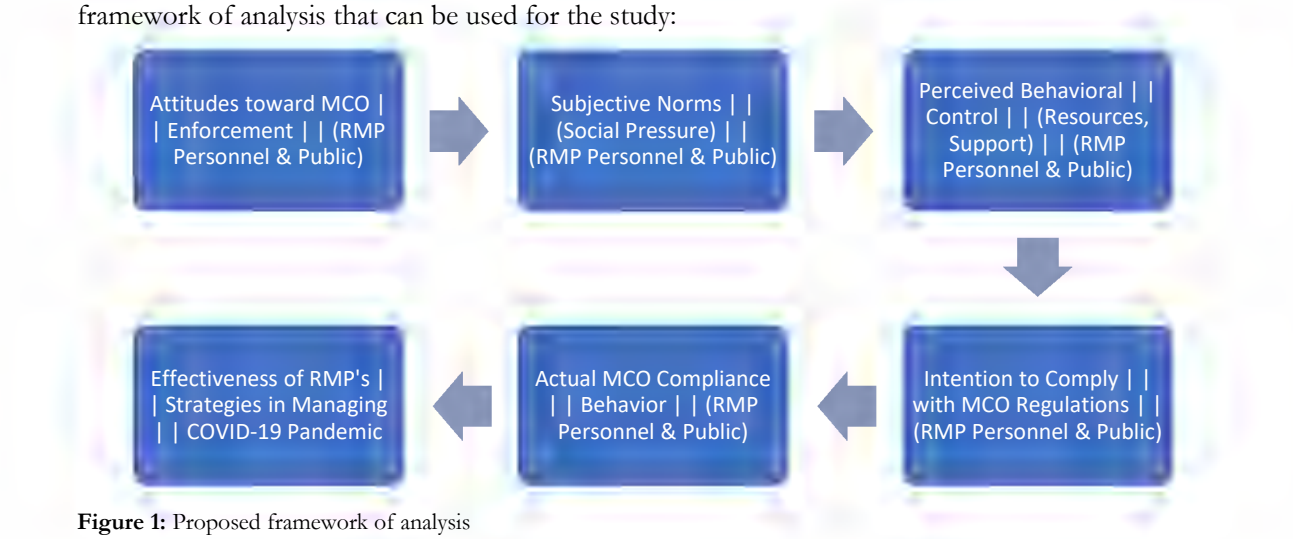


Figure 1: Proposed framework of analysis

Source: Adapted from Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991)

This model illustrates the key components of the Theory of Planned Behavior and how they can be applied to analyze the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysian Police's (RMP) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah.

The framework suggests that the effectiveness of the RMP's strategies is influenced by the actual compliance behavior of both RMP personnel and the public towards the Movement Control Order (MCO) regulations. This compliance behavior is driven by the intention to comply, which is shaped by three factors:

1. Attitudes toward MCO enforcement: The positive or negative evaluation of enforcing and complying with the MCO regulations by RMP personnel and the public.

2. Subjective norms: The perceived social pressure to enforce or comply with the MCO regulations, experienced by RMP personnel and the public.

3. Perceived behavioral control: The perception of RMP personnel and the public regarding their ability to enforce or comply with the MCO regulations, considering factors like available resources, support, and potential obstacles.

By examining these factors through data collection and analysis, the study can identify potential barriers or facilitators to effective MCO enforcement and compliance. This information can then inform the development of targeted interventions, such as public awareness campaigns, training programs, or resource allocation, to enhance the RMP's strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysian Police's (RMP) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. This approach is particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the qualitative approach is justified for this study as it enables the researcher to gain rich insights into the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of both RMP personnel and the public, in line with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which may not be captured through quantitative methods alone (Patton, 2015).

Purposeful sampling is used to select informants who can provide rich and detailed information about the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample consists of 10 respondents from the RMP, including 8 male and 2 female officers and members, aged between 27-55 years, with 4 officers and 6 members ensuring a diverse representation of ranks and perspectives. All informants reported duties during the Movement Control Order (MCO), such as conducting roadblock operations or patrols and monitoring residential areas, business premises, and recreational areas. Participation in the study is voluntary, with no coercion, and all personal informant information is kept confidential to ensure ethical research practices (Bryman, 2016).

The research data comprises both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations with the selected RMP personnel, allowing for the collection of rich, firsthand accounts of informants' experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Secondary data is gathered through document analysis, including official reports, press releases, and relevant literature on the RMP's role in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, providing important context and background information for the study (Bowen, 2009).

Data collection methods include document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. Document analysis involves the systematic review and interpretation of relevant documents, such as official reports and press releases related to the RMP's strategies during the MCO (Bowen, 2009). In-depth interviews are conducted with the selected RMP personnel to explore their individual experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Focus group discussions are held with small groups of RMP personnel to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences, and to identify common themes and challenges related to their roles during the MCO (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Observations are conducted during RMP operations, such as roadblocks and patrols, to gain insights into the practical implementation of the RMP's strategies and the interactions between law enforcement personnel and the public (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data analysis techniques include thematic analysis, content analysis, and document analysis. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the qualitative data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations (Braun & Clarke, 2006), allowing for the systematic organization and interpretation of the data in line with the research objectives. Content analysis is employed to systematically categorize and analyze the content of documents and other textual data related to the RMP's strategies during the MCO (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), helping to identify key themes and patterns in the secondary data. Document analysis involves the critical examination and interpretation of relevant documents, such as official reports and press releases, to provide context and support for the primary data collected (Bowen, 2009).

Triangulation is used to enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings by comparing and contrasting data from multiple sources and methods (Carter et al., 2014). Data triangulation is achieved by collecting data through interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document analysis, while methodological triangulation is employed by using multiple data analysis techniques, such as thematic analysis, content analysis, and document analysis.

Ethical considerations are paramount in qualitative research, particularly when involving human participants (Bryman, 2016). Informed consent is obtained from all informants, ensuring that they understand the purpose and nature of the research, and that their participation is voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained throughout the research process, and all data is stored securely in accordance with data protection regulations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the Study

a. Document analysis

Document analysis was conducted to address the research questions and gain insights into the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. The analysis included official reports, press releases, and relevant literature on the PDRM's role during the Movement Control Order (MCO).

1. Effectiveness of PDRM's strategies in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact:

The document analysis revealed that the PDRM's strategies have been largely effective in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact in the Kubang Pasu District. According to the Ministry of Health Malaysia (2021), Kedah has recorded a total of 16,942 COVID-19 cases as of April 2021, with Kubang Pasu contributing to 1,178 cases. The PDRM's efforts in setting up roadblocks, conducting patrols, and monitoring compliance with the MCO have played a crucial role in curbing the spread of the virus (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021). The PDRM has also been actively involved in contact tracing efforts and disseminating information to the public, which has contributed to increased awareness and adherence to public health measures (Firdaus et al., 2020).

2. Main challenges faced by the PDRM and how they have been addressed:

The document analysis highlighted several challenges faced by the PDRM in implementing the MCO and maintaining public safety during the pandemic. One of the main challenges has been ensuring public compliance with the MCO regulations, particularly in the early stages of implementation (Aziz et al., 2020). To address this, the PDRM has intensified its enforcement efforts, with over 27,000 compounds issued for MCO violations nationwide as of February 2021, amounting to fines of over RM13 million (Babulal, 2021). The PDRM has also faced challenges in managing the spread of misinformation and fake news related to the pandemic, which has hindered their efforts in enforcing the MCO (Firdaus et al., 2020). To combat this, the PDRM has collaborated with other government agencies and stakeholders to disseminate accurate and timely information to the public through various channels, such as social media and press conferences (Aziz et al., 2020).

3. Areas for improvement and recommendations for future crisis situations:

The document analysis identified several areas for improvement in the PDRM's approach to managing the pandemic's impact in the Kubang Pasu District. One area is the need for enhanced training and capacity building for PDRM personnel in handling public health emergencies (Firdaus et al., 2020). This includes training on effective communication strategies, conflict resolution, and mental health support for frontline officers. Another area for improvement is the need for better coordination and collaboration between the PDRM and other government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health and local authorities, to ensure a more comprehensive and integrated response to the pandemic (Aziz et al., 2020). The analysis also highlighted the

importance of investing in technology and digital tools to enhance the PDRM's capabilities in monitoring compliance with the MCO and facilitating contact tracing efforts (Babulal, 2021).

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance the PDRM's effectiveness in managing future crisis situations. These include:

1. Developing a comprehensive training program for PDRM personnel on handling public health emergencies, with a focus on effective communication, conflict resolution, and mental health support.

2. Strengthening inter-agency coordination and collaboration through the establishment of a national-level crisis management committee, with clear roles and responsibilities for each agency involved.

3. Investing in technology and digital tools to enhance the PDRM's capabilities in monitoring compliance with public health measures and facilitating contact tracing efforts.

4. Engaging with community leaders and civil society organizations to promote public awareness and adherence to public health measures, and to address issues of misinformation and fake news.

5. Conducting regular reviews and assessments of the PDRM's strategies and approaches in managing public health emergencies, to identify areas for improvement and ensure continuous learning and adaptation.

In conclusion, the document analysis has provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. While the PDRM has faced several challenges in enforcing the MCO and maintaining public safety, they have taken proactive steps to address these challenges through intensified enforcement efforts, collaboration with other agencies, and public awareness campaigns. However, there are areas for improvement, such as enhanced training for PDRM personnel and better inter-agency coordination, which can be addressed through the implementation of targeted recommendations. By continuously learning and adapting to the evolving nature of the pandemic, the PDRM can enhance its effectiveness in managing future crisis situations and ensuring the safety and well-being of the public.

b. In-depth interview

1. Effectiveness of PDRM's strategies in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact:

The majority of the respondents, including both officers and members, believed that the strategies employed by the PDRM have been largely effective in enforcing the MCO and managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District. They cited examples such as the setup of roadblocks, regular patrols, and monitoring of public spaces as key measures that have contributed to curbing the spread of the virus. Officers highlighted the importance of clear communication and coordination within the PDRM as factors that have influenced the effectiveness of these strategies. However, a few respondents, particularly younger members, expressed concerns about the consistency of enforcement across different areas and the challenges faced in dealing with public non-compliance. They noted that the effectiveness of the strategies could be improved with better public awareness and cooperation.

2. Main challenges faced by the PDRM and how they have been addressed:

Most respondents acknowledged that the PDRM has faced significant challenges in implementing the MCO and maintaining public safety during the pandemic. The main challenges identified include public non-compliance, limited resources, and the need to adapt to new standard operating procedures (SOPs). These challenges have, at times, affected the PDRM's ability to enforce the MCO effectively, particularly in the early stages of implementation. To address these challenges, respondents highlighted the steps taken by the PDRM, such as increasing manpower, providing regular training and briefings on SOPs, and collaborating with other government agencies. The majority of the respondents believed that these measures have been successful in overcoming the challenges to a large extent. However, some officers noted that additional support, such as better equipment and technology, would have been helpful in addressing these challenges more effectively.

3. Areas for improvement and recommendations for future crisis situations:

When asked about areas for improvement and recommendations for future crisis situations, most respondents emphasized the need for enhanced training and capacity building for PDRM personnel. They suggested that training should cover aspects such as effective communication, conflict resolution, and mental health support. Some officers also highlighted the importance of investing in technology and digital tools to enhance the PDRM's capabilities in monitoring compliance and facilitating contact tracing efforts. Several respondents, particularly those with longer service histories, stressed the need for better inter-agency coordination and collaboration to ensure a more comprehensive response to future crises. They recommended the establishment of clear protocols and communication channels between the PDRM and other key agencies. A few younger members expressed uncertainty about the PDRM's long-term preparedness for future crises, citing the need for continuous learning and adaptation. They suggested that regular reviews and assessments of the PDRM's strategies should be conducted to identify areas for improvement.

Overall, the respondents' answers provided valuable insights into the PDRM's effectiveness in managing the pandemic, the challenges faced, and the areas for improvement. While the majority of the respondents believed that the PDRM has performed well given the circumstances, they also acknowledged the need for continuous enhancement of their capabilities and preparedness for future crisis situations.

c. Focus group discussion

The focus group discussion, conducted by the researcher, brought together three carefully selected respondents: a police officer, a civilian, and an academician, to explore their diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah.

When discussing the effectiveness of PDRM's strategies, the police officer and the academician agreed that the PDRM's efforts have been largely successful in enforcing the MCO and managing the impact of the pandemic in the district. They cited examples such as the setup of roadblocks, regular patrols, and effective communication with the public as key factors contributing to the success of these strategies. The police officer emphasized the importance of clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) and coordination within the PDRM in ensuring the effectiveness of their efforts. However, the civilian participant expressed some concerns regarding the consistency of enforcement, particularly in rural areas, mentioning instances of public non-compliance and suggesting that more could be done to raise awareness and encourage cooperation among the local community.

Moving on to the challenges faced by the PDRM and how they have been addressed, all three participants acknowledged the significant obstacles encountered by the PDRM in implementing the MCO and maintaining public safety. The police officer highlighted the issues of limited resources and the need to adapt quickly to new SOPs, mentioning that the PDRM has taken steps to address these challenges by increasing manpower, providing regular training, and collaborating with other agencies. The academician pointed out the challenge of dealing with public non-compliance and the spread of misinformation, commending the PDRM's efforts in countering fake news and educating the public, but suggesting that more proactive measures could be taken to engage with the community and build trust. The civilian participant expressed some uncertainty about the PDRM's ability to handle the mental health challenges faced by frontline officers, suggesting that more support and resources should be allocated to address the well-being of PDRM personnel during the pandemic.

Lastly, when discussing areas for improvement and recommendations for future crisis situations, the focus group participants offered several suggestions. The police officer emphasized the need for continuous training and capacity building, particularly in the areas of effective communication and crisis management, and suggested that investing in technology and digital tools could enhance the PDRM's capabilities in monitoring compliance and facilitating contact tracing efforts. The academician recommended strengthening inter-agency collaboration and establishing clear protocols for crisis response, stressing the importance of learning from the experiences of other countries and adopting best practices in crisis management. The civilian participant highlighted the need for greater community engagement and partnership, suggesting that the PDRM should work more closely

with local leaders, NGOs, and the private sector to build resilience and ensure a more effective response to future crises.

The focus group discussion provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies, the challenges faced, and the areas for improvement. While the participants generally agreed that the PDRM has performed well given the circumstances, they also recognized the need for continuous enhancement of their capabilities and preparedness for future crisis situations. The diverse perspectives shared by the respondents underscore the importance of considering multiple viewpoints when assessing the PDRM's response to the pandemic and planning for future crises.

d. Observation

As a senior police officer with over 20 years of experience serving in the Kubang Pasu District, I have witnessed firsthand the vital role played by the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) in managing the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. From the early stages of the Movement Control Order (MCO) implementation, our officers and personnel have been at the forefront, working tirelessly to enforce the regulations and ensure public compliance.

One of the primary roles undertaken by the PDRM in Kubang Pasu was the establishment of roadblocks and checkpoints throughout the district. These were crucial in restricting movement and preventing the spread of the virus, especially given the district's proximity to the Thai border. Our officers conducted thorough checks on vehicles and individuals, ensuring that only essential travel was permitted. Additionally, the PDRM played a vital role in monitoring public spaces, such as markets, recreational areas, and business premises, to ensure adherence to social distancing measures and the closure of non-essential services. Regular patrols were conducted in residential areas, and officers engaged with the public to disseminate information and address concerns. The PDRM also collaborated closely with other government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health and local authorities, to facilitate contact tracing efforts and coordinate the distribution of essential supplies during the MCO.

Despite our best efforts, the PDRM encountered several challenges in managing the pandemic's impact in Kubang Pasu. One of the most significant issues was ensuring public compliance, particularly in the early stages of the MCO. Some members of the public were reluctant to adhere to the regulations, either due to a lack of understanding or misinformation. This led to instances of non-compliance, which required firm enforcement action and the issuance of compounds. Another challenge was the spread of misinformation and fake news related to the pandemic, which created confusion and anxiety among the public. Our officers had to work diligently to counter these narratives and provide accurate information to the community. Moreover, the pandemic placed significant strain on our resources, both in terms of manpower and equipment. Maintaining round-the-clock operations and enforcing the MCO required our officers to work extended shifts, which took a toll on their physical and mental well-being.

One of the most significant challenges confronting the PDRM in Kubang Pasu was the need to adapt to new standard operating procedures (SOPs) and protocols in the context of the pandemic. Our officers had to undergo extensive training to ensure they were equipped to handle the unique challenges posed by COVID-19, such as the risk of exposure and the need for social distancing measures during operations. Another challenge was maintaining effective communication and coordination within the PDRM and with other agencies. As the situation evolved rapidly, it was crucial to ensure that all personnel were informed of the latest developments and that our response was coordinated and consistent across the district. Furthermore, the PDRM faced the challenge of maintaining public trust and confidence during this challenging period. Our officers had to balance the need for firm enforcement with empathy and understanding, as many members of the public were grappling with the economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

In conclusion, the role played by the PDRM in managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District was critical and multifaceted. While we faced numerous challenges and obstacles, our officers and personnel remained steadfast in their commitment to enforcing the MCO and ensuring public safety. Through

their dedication and professionalism, the PDRM played a vital role in curbing the spread of the virus and supporting the government's efforts to mitigate the pandemic's impact on the community.

Discussion of the Findings

a. Summary of the Findings

The study's findings from the document analysis revealed that the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) strategies, such as setting up roadblocks, conducting patrols, and monitoring compliance, were largely effective in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and curbing the spread of the virus in the Kubang Pasu District. However, the PDRM faced challenges like ensuring public compliance, particularly in the early stages, managing misinformation and fake news, and adapting to new protocols. To address these challenges, the PDRM intensified enforcement efforts by issuing over 27,000 compounds, collaborated with agencies for information dissemination, and worked on improving coordination. Areas for improvement included enhancing training for personnel, better inter-agency coordination, investing in technology, and engaging with community leaders.

The interview findings indicated that most respondents believed the PDRM's strategies, such as roadblocks and patrols, were effective in enforcing the MCO and managing the pandemic's impact. Key challenges identified included public non-compliance, limited resources, and adapting to new standard operating procedures (SOPs). Steps taken to address these challenges involved increasing manpower, providing training on SOPs, and collaborating with agencies. Recommendations focused on enhancing training in areas like communication and conflict resolution, investing in technology, improving inter-agency coordination, and promoting continuous learning.

During the focus group discussion, participants agreed that the PDRM's efforts, such as roadblocks, patrols, and public communication, contributed to the success in managing the pandemic's impact. Challenges discussed included limited resources, public non-compliance, misinformation, and supporting personnel's mental health. Recommendations encompassed continuous training, investing in technology, strengthening inter-agency collaboration, engaging with the community, and learning from other countries' experiences.

Through observation, it was evident that roadblocks, monitoring public spaces, and coordinating with agencies were key PDRM roles in enforcing the MCO and preventing the virus's spread. Challenges faced included public non-compliance, misinformation, strains on resources and personnel well-being, adapting to new protocols, and maintaining public trust. The findings highlighted the need for enhanced training, better coordination, investing in technology, and balancing firm enforcement with empathy.

In summary, while the PDRM's strategies were largely effective, several challenges, such as public non-compliance, misinformation, and resource constraints, impacted their efforts. Key recommendations focused on enhancing training, investing in technology, improving inter-agency coordination, engaging with the community, and promoting continuous learning to better manage future crises.

b. Theoretical implications

The study's findings have theoretical implications when viewed through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which was proposed as the theoretical framework for analyzing the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysian Police's (PDRM) strategies. According to the TPB, an individual's intention to perform a behavior is influenced by their attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The findings suggest that the PDRM's strategies were impacted by these factors, both internally within the organization and externally with the public's compliance.

Internally, the findings highlighted the importance of clear communication, coordination, and training within the PDRM (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which could be linked to enhancing the officers' attitudes towards enforcing the MCO and their perceived behavioral control. The recommendations for enhanced training in areas like effective communication, conflict resolution, and crisis management (Firdaus et al., 2020) align with improving officers' attitudes and perceived capabilities. Externally, the challenges of public non-compliance

and the need for better community engagement (Aziz et al., 2020) indicate the influence of subjective norms and attitudes on the public's intentions to adhere to the MCO regulations. The spread of misinformation and lack of awareness (Hashim et al., 2020) could have shaped negative attitudes and subjective norms, hindering compliance.

The findings related to limited resources, strains on personnel well-being, and the need to adapt to new protocols (Creswell & Poth, 2018) also reflect the impact of perceived behavioral control on the PDRM's ability to effectively enforce the MCO. The recommendations for investing in technology, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and continuous learning (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021) aim to improve the perceived behavioral control of the PDRM and the public in managing future crises. By examining the findings through the TPB lens, the study contributes to understanding the role of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping the effectiveness of law enforcement strategies during public health emergencies. It highlights the need for targeted interventions to positively influence these factors, such as public awareness campaigns, training programs, and resource allocation (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sya et al., 2021).

Overall, the study's findings support the applicability of the TPB in analyzing the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies and underscore the importance of considering the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of both law enforcement personnel and the public in developing evidence-based strategies for managing future crises.

c. Comparison with the previous studies

The findings of this study align with and build upon previous research examining the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and enforcing public health measures. For instance, the challenges identified in this study, such as public non-compliance, spread of misinformation, and the need for effective communication strategies, are consistent with the findings of Firdaus et al. (2020), who investigated the obstacles faced by the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO).

Similarly, Aziz et al. (2020) highlighted the PDRM's role in enforcing the MCO and collaborating with other agencies for targeted screening and information dissemination, which aligns with the findings of this study regarding the PDRM's strategies and the need for inter-agency coordination. The study's recommendations for enhancing training and capacity building for PDRM personnel echo the concerns raised by Firdaus et al. (2020) about the need for effective communication strategies and conflict resolution skills.

The challenges related to limited resources, strains on personnel well-being, and the need to adapt to new protocols identified in this study resonate with the findings of Jennings and Perez (2020), who examined the impact of the pandemic on policing in the United States. They emphasized the importance of adaptability and community engagement, which aligns with the recommendations of this study for continuous learning, investing in technology, and engaging with community leaders.

Furthermore, the study's findings regarding the need for better inter-agency coordination and collaboration align with the observations of Payne (2020) and Hale et al. (2021), who highlighted the importance of effective collaboration between law enforcement agencies and public health authorities in managing crises.

However, this study's focus on the specific local context of the Kubang Pasu District in Kedah, Malaysia, contributes a unique perspective to the existing literature. By examining the PDRM's strategies and challenges in a rural district with unique demographic and socioeconomic conditions, the study provides insights that can inform context-specific policies and practices for effective pandemic management by law enforcement agencies in similar settings (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020).

Overall, while the findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the role of law enforcement during the COVID-19 pandemic, the study's specific focus on the Kubang Pasu District and its comprehensive analysis of the PDRM's strategies, challenges, and recommendations contribute to a more nuanced understanding of effective policing during public health crises in local contexts.

CONCLUSION

a. Summary of the study

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, Kedah. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations to gather data from PDRM personnel (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The findings from the document analysis revealed that the PDRM's strategies like roadblocks and patrols were largely effective in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and curbing the virus spread (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021). However, challenges such as public non-compliance, misinformation, and adapting to new protocols were identified (Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020; Hashim et al., 2020).

The interview and focus group findings corroborated the effectiveness of strategies like roadblocks and patrols but highlighted challenges like limited resources, public non-compliance, and supporting personnel's well-being (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Recommendations focused on enhancing training, investing in technology, improving inter-agency coordination, and community engagement (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021; Firdaus et al., 2020).

The observation findings further reinforced the PDRM's roles in enforcing the MCO, while also identifying challenges like public non-compliance, misinformation, strains on resources, and adapting to new protocols.

The study's findings were analyzed through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), suggesting that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influenced the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies and the public's compliance (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sya et al., 2021).

The study contributes to the broader literature on policing during pandemics by providing a context-specific analysis of the PDRM's strategies in a rural district, adding nuanced insights to inform best practices (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020).

In conclusion, while the PDRM's strategies were largely effective, challenges like public non-compliance, misinformation, and resource constraints impacted their efforts. Key recommendations focused on enhancing training, investing in technology, improving inter-agency coordination, engaging with the community, and promoting continuous learning to better manage future crises.

b. Significance and Limitation of the study

This study holds significant importance as it contributes to the understanding of effective law enforcement strategies during public health crises, specifically in the context of rural districts in Malaysia. By examining the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) role in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District, the study provides valuable insights that can inform evidence-based policies and practices for future emergencies in similar settings (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020). The study's application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) to analyze the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies is a significant contribution to the existing literature. By highlighting the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on the PDRM's and the public's intentions and behaviors, the study underscores the importance of targeted interventions to positively influence these factors (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sya et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the study's findings on the challenges faced by the PDRM, such as public non-compliance, misinformation, and resource constraints, provide valuable insights for law enforcement agencies worldwide in developing effective strategies for managing future public health emergencies (Firdaus et al., 2020; Jennings & Perez, 2020). The study's recommendations, including enhancing training, investing in technology, improving inter-agency coordination, engaging with the community, and promoting continuous learning, offer practical guidance for law enforcement agencies in enhancing their preparedness and effectiveness in crisis management (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021).

Despite its significance, this study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the qualitative nature of the study and the relatively small sample size of 10 PDRM respondents may limit the generalizability of the findings to other districts or regions within Malaysia (Bryman, 2016; Patton, 2015). Secondly, the study's

focus on the PDRM's perspective may not fully capture the experiences and perceptions of other stakeholders, such as local authorities, healthcare professionals, and community members, who were also involved in managing the pandemic's impact in the Kubang Pasu District (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Thirdly, the study's reliance on self-reported data from PDRM personnel through interviews and focus group discussions may be subject to personal biases or social desirability bias, potentially affecting the accuracy and objectivity of the findings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Finally, the study's findings are specific to the Kubang Pasu District and may not be directly applicable to other districts or regions with different demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts, limiting the study's transferability (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020).

Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of effective law enforcement strategies during public health crises, particularly in rural districts of Malaysia. Future research can build upon these findings by expanding the scope to include other stakeholders' perspectives, employing mixed-methods approaches, and exploring the applicability of the findings to different contexts.

c. Conclusion of the study

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) strategies in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the rural Kubang Pasu District of Kedah. Through a comprehensive qualitative approach involving document analysis, interviews, focus groups, and observations, the study provided valuable insights into the successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in the PDRM's crisis management efforts.

The findings revealed that the PDRM's strategies, such as setting up roadblocks, conducting patrols, and monitoring compliance, were largely effective in enforcing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and curbing the virus's spread in the district (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021). However, the study also identified several challenges faced by the PDRM, including ensuring public compliance, particularly in the early stages, managing misinformation and fake news, and adapting to new protocols and standard operating procedures (SOPs) (Aziz et al., 2020; Firdaus et al., 2020; Hashim et al., 2020).

To address these challenges, the PDRM took proactive steps, such as intensifying enforcement efforts by issuing over 27,000 compounds, collaborating with other agencies for information dissemination, and working on improving coordination (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021). However, the study identified areas for improvement, including enhancing training for PDRM personnel, better inter-agency coordination, investing in technology and digital tools, and engaging with community leaders and civil society organizations (Firdaus et al., 2020).

The study's findings were analyzed through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which highlighted the influence of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on the effectiveness of the PDRM's strategies and the public's compliance (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sya et al., 2021). This theoretical framework underscored the importance of targeted interventions to positively influence these factors, such as public awareness campaigns, training programs, and resource allocation.

While the study acknowledged certain limitations, such as the qualitative nature and relatively small sample size, as well as the potential for personal biases and limited transferability to other contexts (Bryman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020), it provided a valuable contribution to the understanding of effective law enforcement strategies during public health crises, particularly in rural districts of Malaysia.

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role played by the PDRM in managing the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kubang Pasu District and the importance of continuous learning, adaptation, and enhancement of their capabilities to better manage future crises. By implementing the recommendations outlined in the study, such as enhancing training, investing in technology, improving inter-agency coordination, and engaging with the community, the PDRM can enhance its preparedness and effectiveness in crisis management, ultimately ensuring the safety and well-being of the public (Aziz et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021; Firdaus et al., 2020).

d. Recommendation for future research

The findings and insights gained from this study pave the way for further research aimed at enhancing law enforcement strategies during public health emergencies, particularly in the context of rural and semi-urban districts.

One potential area for future research could be to conduct a similar study with a larger sample size across multiple districts or states in Malaysia. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in diverse geographic and socioeconomic contexts, and could provide a broader perspective on the effectiveness of various strategies employed (Bryman, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Additionally, future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data with quantitative measures, to provide a more robust and nuanced analysis of the factors influencing the effectiveness of law enforcement strategies during pandemics (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This could include surveys or structured assessments to gauge public perceptions, attitudes, and levels of compliance with public health measures, as well as evaluations of the impact of specific interventions or training programs on law enforcement personnel's preparedness and performance.

Expanding the scope of research to include the perspectives and experiences of other stakeholders, such as local authorities, healthcare professionals, community leaders, and civil society organizations, could also yield valuable insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Examining the nature and effectiveness of inter-agency collaboration and coordination during public health crises could inform strategies for enhancing communication and ensuring a more integrated response.

Furthermore, future research could explore the applicability and generalizability of the study's findings to other types of crises or emergency situations beyond public health emergencies (Aziz et al., 2020; Shah et al., 2020). This could contribute to the development of more comprehensive crisis management frameworks and strategies for law enforcement agencies.

Longitudinal studies could also be valuable in assessing the long-term impact and sustainability of the recommendations and interventions proposed in this study, such as the effectiveness of enhanced training programs, the integration of technology and digital tools, and the consistency of community engagement efforts over time (Firdaus et al., 2020; Babulal, 2021).

Lastly, future research could delve deeper into the theoretical underpinnings of the study, such as further exploring the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) in the context of law enforcement and public health crises, or examining the potential integration of other relevant theoretical frameworks (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sya et al., 2021).

By addressing these areas through rigorous and innovative research approaches, future studies can build upon the foundations laid by this study and contribute to the development of more robust, evidence-based strategies for effective law enforcement and crisis management, ultimately enhancing preparedness and resilience in the face of future public health emergencies or other crises.

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