



# A study of the impact of three leadership styles on integrity violations committed by police officers

Integrity  
violations by  
police officers

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore the connection between three aspects of leadership – role modeling, strictness, and openness – and nine types of integrity violations within the Dutch police force.

**Design/methodology/approach** – In this paper data were collected by means of a questionnaire from five regional police organizations in The Netherlands (2,130 questionnaires to regular police officers, response rate 51 percent). Respondents were requested to describe their direct supervisor's leadership qualities and the frequency of integrity violations in their unit. Multivariate analysis techniques were employed to test the relation between the three leadership styles and the nine types of integrity violations.

**Findings** – The paper finds that role modeling, strictness, and openness of leaders influence the behavior of police officers, but the impact of the variables on the different types of integrity violations varies. Role modeling is especially significant in limiting unethical conduct in the context of interpersonal relationships. Employees appear to copy the leader's integrity standards in their daily interaction with one another. Strictness is important as well, but appears to be particularly effective in controlling fraud, corruption and the misuse of resources. The impact of openness is less evident.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study in this paper has taken the field of leadership and ethics a step forward by relating different aspects of leadership with different types of violations. The results are significant for further development of theories on ethics and leadership. Future research should combine different sources and methods in order to further test the findings.

**Practical implications** – The results in this paper have implications for integrity policies and leadership training. A multifaceted leadership strategy will be most effective in safeguarding and improving the integrity of (police) organizations.

**Originality/value** – The paper shows that leadership is the most frequently cited organizational factor in discussions about the safeguarding of ethics and integrity. However, empirical data are lacking regarding the extent to which different aspects of leadership individually contribute to different kinds of integrity violations.

**Keywords** Corruption, Ethics, Police, Management styles

**Paper type** Research paper



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## Introduction

Integrity is vital to the functioning of private as well as public organizations. If the integrity of an employee or manager is in question, it may have paralyzing consequences for them as well as the organization (Cooper, 2001; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2002). Integrity is an important precondition for the smooth functioning of profit organizations (Kaptein and Wempe, 2002; LeClair *et al.*, 1998). An organization with integrity strengthens stakeholder confidence in an organization (Shaw, 1997), reduces external regulations (Hill, 1990) and conflict (Schwartz and Gibb, 1999), and enhances cooperation with stakeholders (Shaw, 1997). By contrast, integrity violations such as fraud and corruption can result in enormous financial losses, severe reputational damage, bankruptcy (Cohan, 2002; Gini, 2004) and even the implosion of a country's economic and political system (Bull and Newell, 2003; Della Porta and Mény, 1997).

In order to improve or safeguard the integrity of their organization, many boards have developed all sorts of policies, ranging from codes of conduct and whistle-blowing procedures to job-rotation and screening procedures for applicants (Kaptein, 2004; Pope, 2000; Transparency, 2001; Weaver *et al.*, 1999). Yet, of all the measures that can be taken to prevent integrity violations, the behavior of management remains the most important. Several scholars as well as practitioners argue that leadership is the key variable influencing the ethics and integrity of employees (Ciulla, 1998; Dickson *et al.*, 2001; Fulmer, 2004; Gini, 2004; Lewis, 1991; Trevino *et al.*, 2000; Zhu *et al.*, 2004).

However, not much empirical research has been conducted to determine the extent to which different aspects of leadership contribute to different kinds of integrity violations. Both of these factors, leadership as an independent variable and integrity violations as a dependent variable, are considered to be unspecified or one-dimensional. The question is whether this is a tenable assumption. The prevention of fraud, for example, might require other leadership qualities and skills than the prevention of discrimination, carelessness with confidential information or conflicting sideline activities of employees.

Therefore, in this article we examine the relationship between various aspects of leadership and various types of integrity violations. If the impact of the different leadership characteristics differs for each type of integrity violation, we can conclude that a particular type of leadership is required to manage each type of integrity violation.

The structure of the article is as follows. The first part clarifies central concepts that are used in this paper and presents four hypotheses regarding the relationship between aspects of leadership and types of integrity violations. The second part gives an overview of the design of our survey. In the third part, the findings are reported and discussed. In conclusion, the consequences for theory, research and practice are elaborated upon.

## Theory and hypotheses

### *Integrity*

Conceptual clarity about the distinction between integrity, ethics and corruption is important, especially when it concerns public debate, policy-making and theory development on an international level. The concept of corruption is most often at the heart of that debate (Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Barker and Carter, 1996; Bull and

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Newell, 2003; Caiden *et al.*, 2001; Crank and Caldero, 2000; DeCelles and Pfarrer, 2004; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2002; Menzel and Carson, 1999). It is therefore imperative to be aware of at least two definitions of corruption. First, there is a more specific or narrow interpretation. Corruption is often defined as “behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence” (Nye, 1967, p. 419; Caiden, 2001; Gardiner, 2002). The same elements can be found in the definition that is used in the work of international organizations against corruption: corruption as the abuse of office for private gain (Pope, 2000). All of these definitions portray corruption as a breach of moral behavioral norms and values that involves private interests.

A broader definition views corruption as synonymous with all types of violations of moral norms and values. This almost automatically brings us to the central concept of this article, namely integrity. This concept has become prominent in the discussion in many countries (Dobel, 1999; Fijnaut and Huberts, 2002; Huberts and van den Heuvel, 1999; Klockars *et al.*, 2000; Montefiori and Vines, 1999; Uhr, 1999). We define integrity as the quality of acting in accordance with relevant moral values, norms and rules accepted by society. Integrity is a quality of individuals (Klockars, 1997; Solomon, 1999) as well as of organizations (Kaptein and Reenen, 2001). Additionally, ethics can be defined as the collection of values and norms, functioning as standards or yardsticks for assessing the integrity of individual conduct (Benjamin, 1990). The moral nature of these values and norms refers to what is judged as right, just, or good conduct. Values are principles that carry a certain weight in one’s choice of action (what is good to do, or bad to refrain from doing). Norms indicate morally correct behavior in a certain situation. Values and norms guide action and provide a moral basis to justify or evaluate what one does and who one is (Lawton, 1998; Pollock, 1998).

In our research we use a typology of integrity violations as developed by Huberts *et al.* (1999). This typology was the outcome of an analysis of the literature on police integrity and corruption (Anechiarico and Jacobs, 1996; Barker and Roebuck, 1973; Heidenheimer *et al.*, 1989; Kleinig, 1996; Klockars, 1997; Punch, 1985, 1996; Sherman, 1974) and was assessed against the results of empirical research on internal investigations in the police force. The resulting typology covers a broad range of integrity violations by public officials.

The following integrity violations or forms of police misconduct can be distinguished:

- corruption, i.e. the abuse of office for private gain;
- fraud and theft of resources;
- conflicts of (private and public) interest as a result of giving or receiving gifts;
- conflicts of interest as a result of jobs and activities outside the organization;
- gratuitous violence against citizens and suspects;
- other improper (investigative) methods of policing;
- abuse and manipulation of information;
- ill-treatment (discrimination and sexual harassment) of colleagues or citizens;
- wastage and abuse of organizational resources; and
- misconduct whilst off duty.

This shows that integrity or appropriate behavior means much more than not being corrupt. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that corruption, “as the abuse of office for private gain”, is a crucial aspect of organizational integrity.

### *Leadership*

Many scholars as well as practitioners argue that leadership is one of, if not the most important, factor influencing the ethics and integrity of employees (Ciulla, 1998; Dickson *et al.*, 2001; Lewis, 1991; Paine, 2003; Trevino and Nelson, 1999). Although a number of relevant aspects of leadership can be identified, we explore only three of the most often cited qualities of ethical leadership in relation to integrity violations of employees:

- (1) Role modeling of managers through setting a good example for employees.
- (2) Strictness of managers in applying clear norms and sanctioning misbehavior of employees.
- (3) Openness of managers to discuss integrity problems and dilemmas.

According to Trevino *et al.* (2000), pp. 131, 134-136) these three aspects are necessary to develop a reputation for ethical leadership; together they constitute the “pillar” of the moral manager. The three aspects of leadership will be developed into three hypotheses from which another hypothesis is deduced concerning the relative impact of these aspects of leadership on integrity violations.

### *The manager as role model*

The example set by management is often cited as a determining factor in the behavior of employees in general, and more specifically, safeguarding the integrity of an organization (Ford and Richardson, 1994; Hegarty and Sims, 1978; Petrick and Quinn, 1997; Stead *et al.*, 1990; Trevino *et al.*, 1999). Some scholars speak of the foundation, others of the key or the cement (Holden, 2000). Based on a case study they conducted, Sims and Brinkman (2002) assert that the moral tone and example set by managers is the most important element of an ethical organization. Managers serve as role models for employees (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Ciulla, 1998; Dickson *et al.*, 2001; Ford and Richardson, 1994; Fulmer, 2004; Gini, 2004; Lewis, 1991; Price, 2003; Zhu *et al.*, 2004) and lead by the example they set. Their behavior reflects the norms of the organization; it conveys how things are really done in the organization. Subordinates are likely to imitate supervisors since these individuals represent significant others in the organizational lives of employees. There is thus reason to believe that the behavioral integrity of managers will influence the behavioral integrity of employees. The first hypothesis reflects that belief:

- H1. The more managers display integrity in their own behavior, the fewer integrity violations will be committed by employees.

### *Strictness of the manager*

According to the teachings of the Ethics Resource Center Fellows Program (2001), an ethical leader is more than just an ethical person and a role model: “Making ethical decisions and being an ethical person is simply not enough” (p. 10). Two additional

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characteristics of leadership will therefore be explored in this study, leading to *H2* and *H3*.

A first aspect relates to the expectation that employees are more likely to do what is rewarded, and avoid doing what is punished (Butterfield *et al.*, 1996; Paine, 1994). According to Trevino (1992), employees will refrain from committing ethical violations if they can expect that such behavior would be punished and that the level of punishment would outweigh any potential reward. Furthermore, “discipline for rule violators serves an important symbolic role in organizations – it reinforces standards, upholds the value of conformity to shared norms and maintains the perception that the organization is a just place where wrongdoers are held accountable for their actions” (Trevino *et al.*, 1999, p. 139). Managers should call employees on the carpet if necessary and discipline them (Punch, 1996). Managers should therefore be clear on what is right and what is wrong, what is permitted and what is forbidden (Bovens, 1998). It is thus reasonable to assert that managers should be clear in defining and strict in applying the organizational norms to their employees in order to prevent integrity violations in the workplace. Thus, the second hypothesis reads as follows:

- H2.* The more strictly managers enforce ethical norms and punish wrongdoers, the fewer integrity violations will be committed by employees.

#### *Openness of the manager*

Openness in an organization decreases the likelihood of employee misconduct (Mason, 2004; Trevino *et al.*, 1999). In an open organization, employees can be honest about mistakes, ask for advice when confronted with integrity-related issues, discuss integrity dilemmas and report deviant behavior. In a closed organization criticism is not tolerated, delivering bad news is not appreciated, employees are not called to account for their misbehavior, and employees are encouraged to keep their mouth shut, close their ears and avert their eyes (Bird, 1996; Kaptein and Wempe, 2002; Trevino and Nelson, 1999). Managers should therefore not only be strict and set a good example; they should also be approachable and open in the event employees need to discuss integrity issues. It follows that employees of managers who are open will - *ceteris paribus* – commit fewer integrity violations. The third hypothesis for this study is:

- H3.* The more open managers are, in the sense of offering employees opportunities to discuss and address integrity issues, the fewer integrity violations will be committed by employees.

#### *Role modeling, strictness and openness of the manager*

Our research builds on the partial theory development discussed in the preceding section and focuses on the effects aspects of leadership have on types of integrity violations by employees. Many studies that examine the significance of leadership for individual and organizational integrity focus on the integrity of leadership as such, without defining it (see, for example, Trevino and Weaver, 2003). We will relate the three aspects of leadership to specific types of integrity violations.

These three hypotheses give rise to a fourth research question: which of the three leadership characteristics is the most important in curbing integrity violations? In the literature on this subject, Paine (1994) has set the tone with her distinction between a

compliance-based approach and an integrity or values-based approach. The first focuses primarily on preventing, detecting and punishing violations while the more effective approach concentrates on instilling values that promote a commitment to ethical conduct. According to Trevino *et al.* (1999), the broader ethical context seems more important than specific compliance program goals or characteristics. One of the elements that guide employees is leadership:

Leadership was a key ethical culture factor – one of the most important factors in the study [...] Employees perceived that supervisors and executives regularly pay attention to ethics, take ethics seriously, and care about ethics and values as much as the bottom line, all of the outcomes were significantly more positive (p. 141).

Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996) Anechiarico, 2002) also argues that for public organizations, value- and culture-based strategies might be more effective than compliance, rules, and sanctions. The question is how these insights and research results relate to the three leadership characteristics discussed above. The importance of leadership is undisputed, and “setting a good example” and “openness” seem to coincide more with a values-based approach, while strictness is more consistent with a compliance-based approach with its rules and sanctions. We can thus expect that leadership characterized by “role modeling” and “openness” will contribute more to curbing integrity violations than leadership characterized by “strictness”. This results in the fourth and final hypothesis in this study:

*H4.* Leadership characterized by role modeling and openness will contribute more to curbing integrity violations by employees than leadership characterized by strictness.

## **Methodology**

### *Sample and procedure*

To test the four hypotheses, we have collected data by means of a questionnaire from police officers in The Netherlands. The Netherlands, a country with a population of 16.3 million, has about 50,000 police officers. Since 1994, the Dutch police have been organized into 25 regional police organizations and one central organization. Each police organization is largely autonomous, although the Minister of Interior bears the overall responsibility for the quality of the police. Since 1992, police organizations have paid more attention to integrity thanks to the Minister of Interior’s appeal to improve integrity and combat corruption (Lambooy, 2005). Integrity is considered to be very important for the police, because it is the institution that has to uphold and enforce the rules and norms of society. Additionally, many publications of the Ministry of Interior since then, also stressed that leadership and management are crucial to improve integrity. These characteristics make the police sector an interesting and a well-suited sector for conducting research into leadership and integrity.

The sample consisted of 6,279 randomly selected employees or 25 percent of five voluntarily participating police organizations’ employees. Each received an invitation from their board to participate in the survey. The letter explained the purpose of the study and guaranteed the anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of the information disclosed. Respondents were not required to identify themselves in any way on the questionnaire and they were given assurance that no one from their

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organization would have access to individual questionnaires. Respondents sent the completed questionnaire back to the independent researchers in a sealed envelope.

In total, 3,125 completed and usable questionnaires were received. The response rate per police organization ranged between 40 and 59 percent, and the overall response rate was 51 percent. Of the sample, 70 percent were male and 30 percent were female, with ages ranging between 18 and 60, and an average age of 39 years (S.D. = 14.95). The average term of employment in the current police organization was 14 years. In total, 70 percent of the respondents were regular police officers and 30 percent of the respondents fulfilled a supervisory function. Since the objective of the survey was to examine the relationship between aspects of leadership and integrity violations, we excluded the data obtained from respondents fulfilling a supervisory position and used only the data obtained from the regular police officers ( $n = 2,130$ ). No further questions pertaining to the background of the respondents were included – such as educational level, rank, ethnicity, and department. The boards of the police organizations feared that it might lead the officers to doubt the assurance they were given of the anonymity of their response.

There are several reasons to believe that the research results are representative of the Dutch police population. In our survey, the five participating regional police organizations came from different parts of the country. The response rate was also quite good compared to other – also less sensitive – surveys conducted in these police organizations as well as compared to similar studies in other organizations (cf. Trevino and Weaver, 2003; Tyler and Blader, 2005; Vardi and Weitz, 2004). Furthermore, the background characteristics of our respondents correspond with the composition of the total Dutch police force. Of course, we have to acknowledge that the sample might differ from other sectors and countries, which is one of the limitations of this research project. This research project concerns only a first attempt to relate types of leadership to types of integrity violations in the police sector. Further research will have to show whether the results are applicable in other contexts.

#### *Measures of independent variables*

The questions included in the questionnaire focused on the relation between the three leadership characteristics discussed previously and 20 different types of integrity violations. Respondents were requested to describe their (perception of the) direct supervisor's leadership qualities and the frequency of integrity violations committed by colleagues with the same supervisor.

The questions about leadership pertained to the direct supervisor of the respondent. Employees have more daily contact with their supervisors than with managers at higher levels. Supervisors are therefore the nearest role models. They dole out rewards and punishments and employees usually approach their supervisor first when they need to discuss problems they face in their work (Bovens, 1998). According to Trevino *et al.* (1999), the supervisory level is the most appropriate level on which to study the effect of leadership on the integrity of employees.

The leadership characteristics “role modeling”, “strictness” and “openness” were measured on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree)). The final score was arrived at by calculating the average score on all items. As analytical techniques we used Confirmative Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis. The

analyses indicated that all items had acceptable factor loadings and built reliable scales.

As shown in Table I, three questions were posed to measure role modeling, which was defined as the extent to which the supervisor sets a good example, keeps to existing rules and agreements, and is morally trustworthy. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for this factor was 0.85. Three questions were also formulated to measure strictness, that is, the extent to which the supervisor clarifies ethical decisions and norms concerning the work of employees, calls employees to account when they violate principles and standards of integrity, and is prepared to sanction employees for violating principles and standards of integrity. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for this factor was 0.67. Openness was also measured with reference to three questions, that is, the extent to which the supervisor creates opportunities for employees to discuss personal integrity dilemmas, to discuss work-related ethical problems, and to clarify the integrity policy of the organization. Openness had a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.82.

*Measures of dependent variables*

The questions regarding integrity violations pertain to respondents' perceptions of violations in their own team or unit – i.e. their immediate work environment. They do not deal with the respondent's personal transgressions, as the answer to such questions would be unreliable (Peterson, 2002). The frequency of deviant behavior was measured on a five-point scale (1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; and 5 = very often). We used the above-mentioned typology of ten categories of integrity violations.

Items	Factor loadings
<i>Role modeling</i> ( $\alpha = 0.85$ )	
My supervisor sets a good example in terms of ethical behavior	0.90
My supervisor keeps to existing rules and agreements	0.86
My supervisor is morally trustworthy	0.86
<i>Strictness</i> ( $\alpha = 0.67$ )	
My supervisor calls employees to account when they violate principles and standards of integrity	0.81
My supervisor is prepared to sanction employees for violating principles and standards of integrity	0.81
My supervisor clarifies ethical decisions and norms concerning my work	0.70
<i>Openness</i> ( $\alpha = 0.82$ )	
My supervisor is willing to clarify the integrity policy of the organization	0.87
My supervisor is accessible to me to discuss personal integrity dilemmas	0.86
My supervisor is accessible to me to discuss work-related ethical problems	0.84

**Table I.**  
Items for independent variables

**Notes:** For the factor analysis the following procedure was used: principal components analysis, missing replaced by mean, eigenvalues of factors > 1, method correlations. The Cronbach's alpha was computed by the reliability analysis, based on the covariance matrices

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We asked the integrity coordinator of each police organization to define the specific types of conduct that were prohibited within their organization, based, for example, on their internal code of conduct. This question generated 22 types of conduct prohibited in each of the five organizations, which could be classified in terms of the ten categories of Huberts *et al.* (1999). The two questions on misconduct whilst off duty (Category 10) were omitted in the final questionnaire as the boards of three police organizations viewed it as an encroachment on employees' privacy.

All questions measure employee perceptions of the leadership characteristics of their supervisor and of the frequency of integrity violations in their work environment. In the case of leadership qualities, measuring perceptions poses no problem given that it seems reasonable to do so. However, in the case of the frequency of integrity violations, perceptions seem to be a less reliable indicator. Individual employees cannot possibly be aware of the full scale of misconduct in their work environment and, in so far as they do know, they might be reluctant to reveal the true state of affairs in their work unit. Fortunately, the aim of this study is not to determine the exact number of violations. For our purposes, employee perceptions of the amount of violations that occur is a sufficient indicator of the actual frequency of violations. It is clear from the frequency of violations reported that most respondents answered the questionnaire relatively truthfully, that is, they refrained from merely giving socially desirable answers. For instance, 60 percent of the respondents say internal favoritism occurred sometimes (36.4 percent), often (19.3 percent) or very often (13.3 percent) and more than 20 percent claim to be aware of sexual harassment of colleagues (11.6 percent sometimes, 2.3 percent often, and 1.0 percent very often).

## Results

To explore the relationship between the three aspects of leadership and the specific types of integrity violations, we used correlation and regression procedures. Intercorrelations are reported in Table II. The dependent variables are in many cases strongly related to perceptions of role modeling, strictness, and openness of supervisors.

Because the correlations do not control for multiple causation, hierarchical multiple regression was used to further analyze the relationships. By choosing a step-by-step method to enter variables in the regression equation, leadership variables were included only if they added a significant increment to the explained variance. If not, they were left out of the equation after the initial analysis. We recoded the variables so that a positive coefficient implies that employees who perceive their supervisor as a role model, strict or open, perceive *fewer* integrity violations in their unit. As control variables, the regional police force, gender, and duration of employment were used[1]. Table III shows the results of the regression analysis.

In each regression analysis, all three leadership variables add a significant increment to the explained variance in almost all perceived integrity violations.

*Role modeling* has an effect on the frequency of all integrity violations listed. We find an especially strong relationship between (a lack of) exemplary behavior and favoritism within the organization, discrimination, sexual harassment, gossiping, bullying, and falsely reporting in sick.

*Strictness* has an effect on the frequency of 15 of the 20 integrity violations. A relatively strong relationship can be discerned between (a lack of) strictness and

Variables	Mean	SD	Role modeling	Strictness	Openness
Role modeling	3.35	1.02	1.00**	0.45**	0.56**
Strictness	2.86	0.83		1.00**	0.39**
Openness	3.85	0.74			1.00**
Favoritism of family and friends	4.23	0.87	0.19**	0.20**	0.17**
Favoritism/nepotism within the organization	2.95	1.15	0.42**	0.34**	0.27**
Theft of lost and found property of civilians	4.77	0.53	0.14**	0.15**	0.17**
The use of working hours for private purposes	4.05	0.87	0.19**	0.23**	0.09**
The use of organizational resources for private purposes	4.09	0.88	0.16**	0.21**	0.04**
Making special concessions to family and friends	4.40	0.76	0.21**	0.28**	0.24**
Accepting gifts with a value over 25 Euro	4.71	0.59	0.14**	0.18**	0.12**
Conflicting sideline activities	4.35	0.79	0.23**	0.24**	0.10**
Use of improper and/or disproportional violence	4.39	0.71	0.19**	0.14**	0.19**
Use of illegal investigative methods	4.46	0.73	0.17**	0.13**	0.16**
Wrongfully reporting in official reports and records	4.69	0.59	0.15**	0.13**	0.15**
Negligent use of confidential police information	4.46	0.75	0.17**	0.39**	0.21**
Discrimination within the organization	4.11	0.96	0.24**	0.21**	0.24**
(Sexual) harassment within the organization	4.30	0.83	0.22**	0.21**	0.12**
Gossiping	2.33	0.99	0.32**	0.28**	0.25**
Bullying	3.78	0.99	0.22**	0.19**	0.24**
Incorrect care of suspects	4.34	0.82	0.18**	0.15**	0.18**
Racist and sexual remarks to citizens and suspects	4.04	0.90	0.21**	0.17**	0.23**
Falsely calling in sick	3.59	1.04	0.29**	0.35**	0.22**
Careless use of organizational resources	3.63	1.10	0.16**	0.20**	0.16**

**Table II.**  
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables

**Notes:** Pearson Correlation; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 2, 130$

misusing working hours for private purposes, gossiping, falsely calling in sick and carelessness in the use of organizational resources.

Openness, the third and last characteristic of leadership is strongly related to 15 types of integrity violations. A relatively strong relationship can be discerned between openness and internal favoritism and discriminatory remarks to citizens.

When we examine the results for each type of integrity violation the following picture emerges.

- *Corruption.* All three aspects of leadership, role modeling, strictness and openness, have a significant effect on the frequency with which corruption occurs. External corruption is influenced primarily by strictness. The aspect of leaders with the strongest impact on internal corruption in the workplace is role modeling. Openness also plays a role whereas strictness appears to be less important.

Integrity violations	Type	Role modeling <i>Beta</i>	Strictness <i>Beta</i>	Openness <i>Beta</i>	Total <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Favoritism of family and friends	Corruption	0.063**	0.120**	0.087**	0.061**
Favoritism/nepotism within the organization	Corruption	0.283**	0.081**	0.164**	0.188**
Theft of lost and found property of civilians	Fraud and theft	0.062**	0.060**	0.084**	0.026**
The use of working hours for private purposes	Fraud and theft	0.107**	0.194**	Excl0.	0.064**
The use of organizational resources for private purposes	Fraud and theft	0.090**	0.097**	0.052**	0.035**
Making special concessions to family or friends	Conflict of interest through gifts	0.111**	0.101**	0.081**	0.064**
Accepting gifts with a value over 25 Euro	Conflict of interest through gifts	0.061**	0.107**	Excl.	0.038**
Conflicting sideline activities	Conflict of interest through jobs	0.105**	0.110**	0.076**	0.073**
Use of improper and/or disproportional violence	Gratuitous violence	0.121**	Excl.	0.073**	0.029**
Use of illegal investigative methods	Improper methods of policing	0.121**	Excl.	0.073**	0.029**
Wrongfully reporting in official reports and records	Improper methods of policing	0.111**	Excl.	0.071**	0.025**
Negligent use of confidential police information	Abuse and manipulation of information	0.124**	0.115**	Excl.	0.040**
Discrimination within the organization	Ill-treatment	0.161**	0.073**	0.104**	0.075**
(Sexual) harassment within the organization	Ill-treatment	0.134**	0.055**	0.094**	0.052**
Gossiping	Ill-treatment	0.261**	0.139**	Excl.	0.115**
Bullying	Ill-treatment	0.139**	0.062**	0.117**	0.067**
Incorrect care of suspects	Ill-treatment	0.115**	Excl.	0.085**	0.030**
Racist and sexual remarks to citizens and suspects	Ill-treatment	0.144**	Excl.	0.125**	0.054**
Falsely calling in sick	Wastage and abuse of organizational resources	0.146**	0.154**	0.068**	0.085**
Careless use of organizational resources	Wastage and abuse of organizational resources	0.105**	0.129**	Excl.	0.046**

**Notes:** Method Stepwise; Excl. = excluded, \*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*  $p < 0.005$ ;  $n = 2,130$

**Table III.**  
Multivariate regression analysis: relative impact of leadership aspects on integrity violations

- *Fraud and theft.* Strict managers seem to be more successful in preventing the use of working hours as well as organizational resources for private purposes than managers who set a good example. While open managers do not seem to influence the misuse of working hours at all, they have some influence on the misuse of organizational resources. The frequency at which lost property is taken for private use is influenced by openness to some degree and to a lesser degree by role modeling and strictness.
- *Conflicts of interest due to giving or receiving gifts.* With regard to the frequency at which special concessions are made whilst on duty, all leadership features, strictness, openness and role modeling, have a significant effect. As to the frequency of accepting gifts, strictness has the strongest impact.
- *Conflicts of interest due to other jobs or activities.* Conflicts of interest as a result of other jobs and activities can be influenced by managers who set a good example, who are strict and, less importantly, who are open.
- *Gratuitous use of violence.* With respect to the frequency in the use of gratuitous violence by police officers, role modeling has a clear effect, openness has a more modest effect and strictness has no effect.
- *Use of improper methods of policing.* Regarding the use of improper methods of policing, two leadership qualities influence both types of behavior included in the survey: role modeling and – to a lesser degree – openness (and not strictness).
- *Abuse and manipulation of information.* The extent of abuse and/or manipulation of confidential information seem to be influenced by strict managers and managers who set a good example.
- *Ill-treatment.* Discrimination and sexual harassment of colleagues and external parties can be restrained by role modeling and openness (and less by strictness). Managers who set a good example are most likely to change improper conduct among employees, such as gossiping, bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment. Strict and open leaders have relatively less influence, but openness has a greater impact than strictness.
- *Wastage and abuse of organizational resources.* With regard to the extent of abuse of organizational resources, managers who are strict and set a good example can be successful. Openness has some effect on falsely calling in sick, but no impact on the careless use of resources.

### **Interpretation of the results**

We started with three hypotheses concerning the relationship between leadership characteristics and the degree to which integrity violations are committed in the workplace. All three leadership characteristics have a significant effect on several of the perceived integrity violations in the respondents' work environment. The regression analyses show that setting a good example has a significant impact on all 20 types of behavior used as examples of integrity violations. The analyses also reveal that strictness and openness are related to 15 out of the 20 integrity violations. The first hypothesis can thus be confirmed without qualification whilst the second and third hypotheses can be each confirmed for three-quarters of the integrity violations

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examined. The results also show that the selected leadership characteristics are not equally important for all integrity violations identified.

The first leadership characteristic of role modeling appears to have a significant influence on all types of misconduct, with a relatively strong effect on internal corruption (favoritism), types of ill-treatment (discrimination, harassment, gossiping, bullying) and falsely calling in sick. These violations are among the twelve types of behavior on which role modeling has a greater effect than strictness and openness. This list includes all types of ill-treatment. It can be concluded that the types of integrity violations that are related to role modeling are diverse, but that many of these violations concern the quality of personal relationships, mostly within the organization (favoritism, gossiping, etc).

The second leadership characteristic, strictness, has a significant influence on 15 of the 20 integrity violations. This characteristic has little influence on violations that are directly linked to police work and “getting the job done” (violence, care of suspects, improper investigation methods, and reporting). A relatively strong effect exists for misusing working hours for private purposes, gossiping, falsely calling in sick, and the careless use of organizational resources. All but one of these integrity violations concern the misuse of organizational resources. When we compare the effect of strictness to that of the other two characteristics of leadership, strictness has the strongest effect on external favoritism, using working hours and resources for private purposes, conflicts of interest, falsely calling in sick, and careless use of organizational resources. These findings show that of all three characteristics of leadership, strictness seems to have the strongest influence on violations related to fraud (misusing hours and resources) and corruption (external favoritism, accepting gifts, conflicts of interest through sideline activities).

The third and last leadership characteristic that was examined, the openness of the manager, also has a significant effect on 15 types of integrity violations. Its effect is minimal on a variety of violations (types of fraud, conflicts of interest, misusing information, discrimination and harassment, wastage and abuse of resources). A relatively strong influence can be discerned on two integrity violations: internal favoritism and discriminatory remarks to citizens and suspects. Of all the leadership aspects, openness is most strongly related to one violation, namely taking lost property for private use.

To recapitulate, all types of integrity violations are influenced by managers setting a good example. Both strict and open leadership influence 75 percent of the examined violations. Setting a good example is the most influential of all leadership characteristics, and particularly relevant to safeguarding the integrity of internal social relationships. Strictness seems to be essential to limiting integrity violations in which organizational resources are at stake (including corruption). Openness cannot be ignored either, but it is less clear which type of integrity violation is controlled best by this leadership quality.

The findings of the survey demonstrate that a multifaceted leadership strategy will be most effective in safeguarding the integrity of an organization. The results provide a first answer to the fourth hypothesis, which concerns the leadership characteristics most effective in curbing integrity violations. Contrary to the formulated hypothesis, role modeling and openness are not in all instances more relevant than strictness. On the whole, setting a good example is the most important, but strictness appears to be at

least as important as openness. The significance of strictness is notable especially in relation to violations that are more clear-cut or concern the assets of the organization, like fraud and corruption. Strictness has a greater impact on limiting these violations than openness and role modeling. Role modeling has the greatest influence on employees' day-to-day interaction with colleagues and citizens. When supervisors set a good example, employees perceive fewer instances of discrimination, sexual harassment, gossiping, bullying, and favoritism/nepotism. Gauging the impact of the leadership quality of openness is somewhat problematic. It is seldom more influential than role modeling and strictness, but the findings do not permit more specific inferences about the relationship between openness and the different types of integrity violations.

### **Conclusions and implications**

In this article we discussed three aspects of leadership - role modeling, strictness, and openness - and examined them in relation to a typology of integrity violations as developed by Huberts *et al.* (1999). This task was carried out by means of a survey of 2,130 police officers' perceptions of the extent of integrity violations in their work environment and leadership's bearing upon the different types of infringements.

The findings show that role modeling, strictness, and openness of leaders influence the behavior of employees, but that the impact of the variables on the different types of integrity violations varies. The results thus indicate that specific leadership qualities are required to curb specific types of integrity violations. Role modeling is important and especially significant in limiting unethical conduct in the context of interpersonal relationships. Employees seem to copy the leader's integrity standards in their daily interaction with one another. Strictness is important as well, but appears to be particularly effective in controlling fraud, corruption and the abuse of resources. The impact of openness is less evident. This is an unexpected result with significant consequences for both theory and practice.

First, the findings demonstrate that it might be worthwhile to pay more attention to integrity aspects in research about the effects of leadership and leadership styles on employee conduct. The development of theory on leadership and organizational performance might benefit from taking into account "organizational integrity". As the organizational scandals of late have shown, fraud, corruption, and other integrity violations can have disastrous consequences for the reputation and performance of organizations in the private as well as the public sector.

Second, the results are significant for the further development of theories of organizational ethics and integrity. Existing theories emphasize the importance of value- and culture-based strategies. Role modeling and openness are considered more effective than strictness, including sanctioning. Our research results show that the significance of strictness is often underestimated and that it is vital to differentiate more clearly between types of integrity issues.

The research results also have consequences for the management of integrity in (police) organizations. It is clear that managers should not only focus on transforming the values and norms on employees through exemplary behavior and an open management style that encourages discussion of values and dilemmas. To be strict, in other words, to define norms clearly, to bring employees to account and to sanction

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unethical behavior appears to be important as well. Strictness acts as a deterrent to many integrity violations.

At the same time, it is important to keep the limitations of our research in mind. For our survey, we selected three aspects of leadership. More research is needed to examine the effect of other characteristics of managers on the prevalence of integrity infringements. Solomon (1999) for example, stresses the importance of honesty in leadership. Other aspects of the organizational culture and structure should also be examined. To mention a few examples, Valentine *et al.* (2002) stress the importance of a fit between personal and organizational values, Dickson *et al.* (2001) the significance of the ethical climate in the organization, and Osborn *et al.* (2002) emphasize the level of moral consciousness and reasoning of employees, the organizational measures already in place, and the type and number of violations that have occurred in the past. In that sense, the low  $R_2$  we often found in this study is not surprising, given that other leadership and organizational aspects might explain violations of employees, as well as factors outside the organization and the individual integrity of employees. Additionally, it would be worthwhile to explore in more detail the content of the supposed causal relationship between leadership characteristics and integrity violations in the workplace. For instance, do strictness and sanctions have a direct impact on integrity violations or is the indirect effect via culture and values more significant? Being strict might generate more discussion, reflection and cultural change than strategies based on openness, training, and values. Another question is whether the effect of the three leadership aspects differs with respect to positive behavior (Dunlop and Lee, 2004; Wright, 2003) and negative behavior. For example, openness could have a stronger impact on positive conduct (Kaptein, 2005; Trevino and Weaver, 2003).

A final limitation of our study concerns the methodology. Our survey of the perceptions of employees was conducted by means of a questionnaire. Besides the benefits of such a method, there are also certain limitations. A problem associated with this method concerns the possibility that the results may be influenced by common method biases (Javidan and Waldman, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Most important for the validity of this study are common rater effects[2]. One may argue that asking the same officers to describe both integrity violations and behaviors of supervisors responsible for addressing these violations virtually insures a positive relationship between these two sets of variables. This type of bias can be traced to a number of sources. According to Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), they include the tendency of respondents to try to maintain consistency between their cognition and attitudes (consistency motif); the assumptions the respondents have concerning the relationship between the items (implicit theories); the need of respondents for social approval and acceptance (social desirability); and the tendency for raters "to rate those whom they know well, or with whom they are ego involved, higher than they should" (leniency biases). The question to be answered is how the research design involving police officers answering questions on violations and leadership relates to the mentioned sources.

The consistency motif refers to respondents trying to maintain consistency between their cognition and attitudes (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003, p. 881). However, we do not believe this to be an important source of bias in this research. The questions are not about one's cognition and attitude concerning an issue; the questions are about leadership characteristics of the supervisor on the one hand and the perception of the extent

integrity violations in the team on the other hand. Another, more important, source of bias is the possibility that the answers reflect the implicit theory of respondents. Do the results reflect the actual relationship between leadership characteristics and integrity violations or are the results merely a reflection of the police officers' assumptions about that relationship? As we did not explicitly ask the respondents what their views on this relationship are, we have to rely on other research to say something about the possible existence of implicit theories. Within the field of police research, two established theories tell us something about these views of police officers. First, there is an existing body of knowledge on police culture and the conflict between street police officers, those in management positions and those responsible for policy making (Lipsky, 1980; Reiner, 1997; Reuss-Ianni, 1984). The average police officer is distrustful or skeptical of supervisors who try to "interfere" with the discretionary powers of officers on the beat. Second, the police officers are so dependent on their direct colleagues (a matter of life and death), that they are anxious about reporting wrongdoing by fellow officers: a "code of silence" exists, also called the "blue wall of silence" (Crank and Caldero, 2000; Punch, 1985; Skolnick, 2002). The combination of these factors renders it improbable that police officers will presuppose that all types of leadership have a positive influence on integrity. The implicit theory might be just the other way around, with the implication that the correlations are in fact stronger (and not weaker) than what we have found. The result that a number of relationships between independent and dependent variables are not significant also indicates that the influence of common method variance is limited.

Other possible biases result from the need for social approval (social desirability) and the tendency to rate colleagues higher than they deserve (leniency). Because officers were requested to report about the presence of integrity violations within their team, it is undeniable that collegiality might lead to underreporting the extent of integrity violations. This, however, does not necessarily influence our analysis and results. We do not need reliable absolute figures, we need reliable relative figures. Even if all officers underreport, there is no reason to expect that the differences between them are unreliable. Additionally, it is worthwhile to mention that we tried to avoid other types of error by the guaranteed confidentiality of response (social desirability bias) and by organizing surveys in different police organizations at different points in time (measurement context effect).

Nevertheless, the limitations of this exploratory study have to be acknowledged. Even though the study has taken the field of leadership and ethics a step forward by relating different aspects of leadership with different types of violations, future research should combine different sources and methods in order to test the findings. Follow-up research could also include the perceptions of external stakeholders and more objective data like the number of recorded violations, complaints, and damages to organizational assets. It would also be promising to augment this type of study in other sectors and countries. Dutch employees, for example, are considered to be quite independent in determining what is ethical. Such independence diminishes the manager's influence (Hofstede, 2001) which may affect the relationship between leadership and integrity.

The objective of this exploratory study, which was to demonstrate that different aspects of leadership have different effects on different types of integrity violations, has been achieved at least in the context of the Dutch police force. The practical

relevance of this study is that managers should realize that the types of integrity violations they want to prevent require different kinds of managerial behavior. The identification of significant connections between leadership and integrity violations is important for further research and theory development. Leaders that set a good example, who are open and who do not hesitate to be stern, can effectively influence the integrity of their employees.

### Notes

1. In the regression equations with external favoritism, conflict of interest through jobs and accepting valuable gifts as dependent variable, regional police force (entered as dummy variables) appeared to be significant. Gender was significant for arranging private discounts on duty, sidelines, discrimination, bullying, and careless use of organizational resources. Length of tenure was left out of all regression equations due to the stepwise method.
2. Because it is not feasible to address all 21 potential causes mentioned by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), we concentrate on what seems to be the most troubling ones for our research design.

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