

Revisiting Public Sentiment and Thematic Concerns: A Case Study of JPJ

Perak's 2025 Special Motorcycle Operation

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Abstract: This paper explores the public reception and operational dynamics of the Special Motorcycle Operation initiated by JPJ Perak during the Chinese New Year period in 2025. Moving beyond conventional enforcement statistics, the study adopts a sentiment-based and thematic analysis approach to assess how the public perceived this initiative, and what underlying patterns emerged regarding enforcement challenges, rider behavior, and societal expectations. Through qualitative analysis of public feedback, media reporting, and secondary enforcement data, this study identifies key themes such as the perceived imbalance between punishment and education, the socioeconomic impact on riders, and the demand for sustained community engagement. While the operation yielded a 20% reduction in offences compared to 2024 (BERNAMA, 2025), the findings reveal a more complex narrative of public support interwoven with concerns about fairness and long-term sustainability. The paper concludes that future enforcement efforts must blend regulation with education and empathy to cultivate an enduring safety culture.

Keywords: Road safety, motorcycle enforcement, JPJ Perak, traffic violations, public sentiment

1. Introduction

Motorcycle enforcement remains one of the most pressing road safety agendas in Malaysia, where motorcyclists account for the majority of fatal road accidents—between 60% to 75% according to JPJ statistics (BERNAMA, 2025). In response to this alarming statistic, JPJ Perak intensified its enforcement during the 2025 Chinese New Year festive season through a large-scale Special Motorcycle Operation. The operation, which involved systematic roadblocks, vehicle inspections, summons issuance, and motorcycle seizures, was designed to clamp down on various traffic violations including expired licenses, improper vehicle modifications, and technical faults such as non-compliant number plates and missing mirrors (MGPerak, 2025). While enforcement agencies declared the initiative a success due to the significant number of inspections and a 20% reduction in summonses compared to the previous year, the public response was more nuanced. This study investigates not just the outcome of enforcement, but also the emotional and cognitive responses it triggered among various stakeholders, particularly the riders, the general public, and JPJ officers themselves.

2. Literature Review

The role of enforcement in traffic management has been extensively discussed in road safety literature. Wong et al. (2019) emphasized that motorcycle-related fatalities remain a critical public health concern in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia where motorcyclists make up the majority of road accident victims. Their review highlighted that large-scale enforcement operations during festive seasons can reduce accident rates by up to 25%, but this reduction is often short-lived. Similarly, Li and Tan (2020) found that enforcement operations alone are insufficient to induce long-term behavioral change among road users. Their study in Taiwan revealed that combining enforcement with public education resulted in a 40% greater reduction in traffic violations, as it addressed both the capability and motivation dimensions of behavioral

compliance. These findings support the idea that enforcement efforts must be complemented by sustained awareness and education campaigns in order to generate lasting improvements in road safety.

In the Malaysian context, compliance challenges are often shaped by the socio-economic realities of motorcyclists. Abdullah et al. (2021) argued that a significant portion of Malaysia's motorcycle users come from lower- and middle-income households, many of whom rely on motorcycles as an affordable mode of transport. As such, technical compliance—such as maintaining valid road tax, standard number plates, and safety modifications—may be perceived as burdensome or low priority. Their findings also suggested that these riders often lack access to clear information about legal technical specifications, thus leading to unintended non-compliance. Moreover, Rahman and Hassan (2022) found that while many Malaysians support road safety goals, public trust in enforcement agencies is fragile. Their study highlighted that when enforcement is perceived as overly punitive or revenue-driven, it can create resistance and undermine community cooperation, even when the intent is to enhance safety.

There is also growing recognition in the literature of the need for integrated, community-based strategies. Wong et al. (2019) proposed that enforcement should be treated as one pillar within a broader ecosystem that includes education, engineering, and community engagement. This is echoed in the theory of planned behavior, which holds that behavioral change is more sustainable when supported by positive attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control (Li & Tan, 2020). However, few studies to date have examined how enforcement is perceived on the ground in real-time, particularly in the context of special operations like JPJ Perak's. This study aims to address that gap by combining enforcement data with public sentiment and thematic interpretation, thereby offering a more nuanced and context-sensitive view of what works—and what doesn't—in real-world traffic enforcement strategies.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore the effectiveness and public perception of the Special Motorcycle Operation conducted by JPJ Perak during the 2025 Chinese New Year. The case study approach is particularly appropriate for investigating contemporary issues in real-life settings where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are blurred (Yin, 2018). This design enables a rich, holistic understanding of both the enforcement outcomes and the lived experiences of stakeholders, particularly road users and enforcement officers. The research combined document analysis, sentiment classification, and thematic interpretation to offer a comprehensive insight into how enforcement strategies are perceived and experienced on the ground.

The research process was carried out in several structured steps. First, data collection involved retrieving secondary data from a variety of credible sources. These included media reports from BERNAMA and MGPerak, official press releases by JPJ, and user-generated public comments posted on the JPJ Perak Facebook page. The selection of these sources was based on their accessibility, public visibility, and relevance to the operation period. Public comments were gathered purposively to reflect diverse opinions about the operation, especially in response to media posts between 20 January and 9 February 2025. This step ensured that the data captured real-time sentiment during and immediately after the enforcement activities.

Second, the study conducted sentiment analysis on 100 public comments, classifying them into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. This step was informed by prior works in digital sentiment classification, which suggest that even small-scale qualitative samples can offer meaningful insights when coding is systematic (Mayring, 2014). Each comment was reviewed and manually coded to capture its affective tone and underlying concern. Following that, the third step involved thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase

method: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the results. This iterative process enabled the identification of recurring themes such as technical ambiguity, socioeconomic burden, and perceptions of fairness, which were then used to structure the discussion section.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the study employed triangulation by comparing data across different sources—media articles, official statements, and user commentary—to validate key themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While the study did not involve primary interviews or surveys, it adhered to ethical considerations by anonymising all quoted comments and excluding any personally identifiable information. As the data were publicly available, no direct consent was required, but the study took care to interpret the sentiments with contextual sensitivity and fairness. Although limited by its reliance on secondary data and the absence of stakeholder interviews, this approach still offers a valuable snapshot of enforcement impact and public engagement during a high-profile road safety campaign.

4. Sentiment Analysis

From the sentiment data gathered, approximately 55% of the public comments expressed positive sentiments, highlighting the operation's role in reducing road risks and ensuring rider compliance. These responses often commended JPJ's visibility and efforts in safeguarding lives, particularly during peak travel seasons. Around 30% of the comments, however, were negative in tone, pointing out concerns regarding the cost of compliance, unclear technical rules, and perceptions that enforcement was more punitive than educational (Rahman & Hassan, 2022). The remaining 15% were classified as neutral or mixed, reflecting calls for improvement rather than outright criticism. These comments commonly acknowledged the necessity of enforcement but urged authorities to accompany strict regulation with more targeted education and financial consideration for lower-income riders (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Table 1: Public Sentiment Distribution Toward JPJ Perak's Special Motorcycle Operation

Sentiment	Number of Comments	Percentage Sample	Representative Quote
Positive	55	55%	"This operation is good, it reduces accidents and ensures riders comply with the law."
Negative	30	30%	"The operation is costly, and many riders do not understand technical offenses."
Neutral	15	15%	"This operation is important, but it must balance enforcement with education."

5. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis of stakeholder responses revealed several recurring concerns and expectations. A dominant theme was the tension between enforcement and education. Many riders voiced confusion over specific technical regulations, such as permitted number plate fonts, required mirror types, and permissible modifications. This confusion, coupled with a lack of accessible educational resources, contributed to a perception that riders were penalized for non-compliance they did not fully understand (Li & Tan, 2020). Another prominent theme was the socioeconomic burden of enforcement. Several respondents noted that adhering to technical standards often involved costs that were difficult to bear, especially for working-class riders who relied on motorcycles as their sole means of transport (Abdullah et al., 2021). While

enforcement officers viewed compliance as a matter of discipline, the riders' feedback highlighted a lack of financial support mechanisms that could have helped with necessary repairs or document renewals.

Additionally, the theme of operational fairness emerged strongly, particularly in reference to perceived inconsistencies in the way summonses were issued. Some members of the public questioned why operations focused on minor technical issues while other more dangerous behaviors seemed overlooked. Despite these concerns, many participants also acknowledged the professionalism and rigour shown by JPJ officers during the campaign. A fourth theme emphasized the need for sustained engagement beyond festive seasons. The public viewed seasonal enforcement as reactive rather than preventive, and many called for year-long education campaigns, community roadshows, and collaboration with workshops and rider groups (Wong et al., 2019).

Table 2: Key Themes Emerged from Thematic Analysis

Theme	Key Insight
Enforcement vs Education	Riders are confused over technical regulations and lack proper explanation or outreach.
Socioeconomic Burden	Compliance can be financially burdensome for low-income riders.
Perceived Fairness	Some believe focus on minor issues is excessive while other serious violations are overlooked.
Operational Visibility & Rigor	Operation was large-scale and professional, acknowledged by most stakeholders.
Demand for Year-Round Engagement	Public called for continuous JPJ presence and education outside festive seasons.

6. Conclusion

The 2025 Special Motorcycle Operation conducted by JPJ Perak offers valuable lessons on the interplay between enforcement action and public perception. While the operation was statistically successful in reducing violations, its long-term effectiveness will depend on how enforcement strategies evolve to incorporate empathy, education, and socioeconomic realities. Public sentiment analysis revealed both strong support and significant concern, while thematic insights highlighted the need for clearer communication, community engagement, and fairness in implementation. By embedding these concerns into operational planning, JPJ and other enforcement bodies can shift from short-term compliance to long-term cultural change. In doing so, they will not only reduce accidents but also foster trust and mutual accountability between the state and its road users.

7. Discussion

The combination of enforcement statistics and public perception paints a compelling picture of both achievement and limitation. Statistically, the operation achieved its primary objective: a 20% reduction in summonses from 7,383 in 2024 to 6,039 in 2025, and over 24,000 motorcycles inspected across Perak (BERNAMA, 2025; MGPerak, 2025). This outcome suggests either increased compliance or more strategic targeting by JPJ. However, the sentiment and thematic analyses reveal that such achievements, while important, do not guarantee sustainable behavioral change. Riders' confusion over technical rules and their

financial constraints remain key barriers to consistent compliance. Furthermore, when enforcement is viewed as excessively punitive or lacking in empathy, it risks alienating the very public whose cooperation it seeks.

Table 3: Summary of Enforcement Outcomes

Enforcement Indicator	2024	2025	Change
Total Summons Issued	7,383	6,039	↓ 20%
Motorcycles Inspected	–	24,494	–
Motorcycles Seized	–	143	–
Vehicles Penalised (with summons) –		2,511	–
Operation Period	–	20–28 Jan + 31 Jan–9 Feb	–

While the operation's strength lay in its scale, visibility, and data transparency, its sustainability and public legitimacy may be compromised if educational initiatives do not accompany enforcement. Studies such as those by Rahman and Hassan (2022) highlight that public trust is essential to long-term enforcement success.

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