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From Maintenance to Strategy in Public Sector FM: Repositioning Facilities Management at Pulapol Kuching for Organisational Value

Harryanto Bujang^{1,*}

¹ Pusat Latihan PDRM (PULAPOL) Kuching, Km 24 Jalan Puncak Borneo, 93250 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Facilities Management (FM) has evolved globally from an operational maintenance function to a strategic discipline crucial for organisational value, supporting core objectives like cost efficiency, asset performance, and user satisfaction. However, in many public sector institutions in developing nations like Malaysia, FM remains underdeveloped, reactive, and operationally focused. This is particularly critical in law enforcement training environments, where facility conditions directly impact training quality and national security outcomes. This study investigates this strategic gap through an in-depth qualitative case study of Pusat Latihan Polis (PULAPOL) Kuching, a key training academy under the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM). Guided by an interpretivist philosophy, data was collected via semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, detailed document analysis, and extensive site observations. The findings reveal a significant strategic misalignment, characterised by a pervasive perception of FM as merely a maintenance function, a complete absence of performance measurement frameworks, deeply fragmented roles and siloed responsibilities, and a heavy reliance on manual, inefficient systems. A critical and promising finding was the widespread readiness and willingness among stakeholders for a strategic transformation. In response, this study develops and proposes a comprehensive, context-specific Performance-Based Facilities Management Framework (PBFMF). The PBFMF is structured around three integrated pillars: (1) Strategic Repositioning and Governance, which advocates for a centralised FM unit and inclusion in strategic planning; (2) Performance and Data-Driven Management, introducing a structured KPI system and digital dashboards; and (3) Digital Transformation and Stakeholder Integration, focusing on the adoption of CMMS, IoT, and robust engagement mechanisms. This research makes a significant contribution by offering a validated, practical model to elevate FM from a background support function to a strategic partner, thereby enhancing training efficacy, operational resilience, and long-term organisational value for PULAPOL Kuching and similar public institutions.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: harryanto@rmp.gov.my

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The discipline of Facilities Management (FM) has undergone a paradigmatic shift over the past four decades, transforming from a traditionally technical and reactive support service into a strategic function integral to the core of organisational success. Globally, FM is now recognised as a multidisciplinary profession that optimises the functionality, comfort, safety, and efficiency of the built environment by seamlessly integrating people, place, process, and technology [21]. This evolution positions FM not just as a cost centre concerned with building upkeep, but as a value generator that contributes directly to strategic objectives such as enhancing productivity, mitigating risk, fostering sustainability, and improving user satisfaction [25,41].

In high-stakes environments like government institutions, the strategic role of FM becomes even more pronounced. Within the Royal Malaysia Police (Polis Diraja Malaysia, PDRM), FM is critical for maintaining the operational readiness and effectiveness of essential facilities, particularly training centres. The Pusat Latihan Polis (PULAPOL) Kuching serves as a regional police training hub, encompassing a complex and diverse portfolio of physical infrastructures. This includes academic buildings for theoretical instruction, residential blocks for cadet accommodation, administrative offices, and specialised training grounds for physical and tactical drills. The comprehensive management and strategic oversight of these assets are fundamental to ensuring the institution fulfils its mission of producing highly skilled, disciplined, and effective law enforcement personnel.

However, a significant disconnect exists between this global, strategic view of FM and its practical application within many Malaysian public sector organisations. Like numerous other government entities in Malaysia, the FM function at PULAPOL Kuching has historically been viewed through a narrow, technical lens, often confined to routine maintenance, corrective repairs, and basic facility upkeep [33]. This operational focus has resulted in a substantial underutilisation of FM's potential to add strategic value and act as a key enabler of institutional objectives [27]. As Karamitsos [25] asserts, organisations that fail to align FM with their strategic goals inevitably experience operational inefficiencies and miss crucial opportunities for organisational advancement. This is acutely relevant in law enforcement agencies, where the physical condition, functionality, and management of training facilities have a direct and tangible impact on the quality of training, the wellbeing and morale of staff and cadets, and the ultimate standard of public service delivery.

The FM profession in Malaysia is still in a maturing phase. Myeda [33] highlights that the industry grapples with persistent challenges, including underdeveloped performance measurement systems, inconsistent service delivery standards, and a lack of robust, strategic FM frameworks. Within the context of PDRM and PULAPOL Kuching, this manifests as an absence of structured performance evaluation for FM services, leading to inconsistencies in service quality, delayed responses to maintenance requests, and limited meaningful engagement with key stakeholders, including trainers, trainees, and administrative personnel. Without the clear and deliberate integration of FM into the strategic planning fabric of PULAPOL Kuching, critical facility-related decisions are often reactive rather than proactive, thereby jeopardising the long-term sustainability, resilience, and performance of the institution's infrastructure.

Furthermore, contemporary FM practices at PULAPOL Kuching must contend with rapidly evolving expectations and demands around safety, energy efficiency, digitalisation, and cost-effectiveness. The increasing complexity of managing public sector facilities necessitates a decisive shift away from traditional, maintenance-focused models towards a more strategic, data-informed, and performance-driven approach [39]. By systematically aligning FM functions with PDRM's broader organisational mission and vision, PULAPOL Kuching can significantly enhance its operational

efficiency, extend the life cycle of valuable assets, reduce long-term operational costs, and ultimately, improve training outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

Therefore, this study is situated within the urgent and pragmatic need to critically evaluate and enhance FM practices at PULAPOL Kuching. It focuses specifically on achieving strategic alignment, implementing effective performance measurement tools, and professionalising FM roles within the Royal Malaysia Police. The research aims to provide evidence-based, context-specific recommendations to elevate FM from a background support function to a core, strategic contributor to institutional success and national security. See Table 1

Table 1

Classification of FM tasks (Sources : Then and Akhaghi, 1992)

FM class	Executive responsibilities	Management roles	Project tasks
Strategic	• Mission Statement • Business Plan	- Investment Appraisal - Real Estate Decisions - Premises Strategy - Facility Master Planning - IT Strategy	• Strategic Studies • Estate Utilization • Corporate Standards • FM Operational • Structure • Corporate Brief • Guide-line Documents • Project Program • FM Job Description • Prototypical Budgets • Database Structure
Tactical	• Corporate Structure • Procurement Policy	• Setting Standards • Planning Change • Resource • Management • Budget Management • Database Control	
Operational	• Service Delivery • Quality Control	• Managing Shared Facilities • Building Operations • Implementations • Audits • Emergencies	• Maintenance • Procurement • Refurbishment • Inventories • Post Occupancy Audits • Furniture Procurement

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the well-documented, critical role that Facilities Management (FM) plays in supporting and enhancing organisational performance, its strategic value remains profoundly under-recognised and under-leveraged within many public sector institutions in Malaysia, including the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM). At PULAPOL Kuching—a vital regional training centre responsible for shaping the capabilities of future law enforcement officers—the FM function has traditionally been approached from a predominantly reactive, technical, and operational perspective. It is viewed as a necessary overhead rather than being strategically integrated as a key enabler of organisational excellence and value creation.

This narrow and outdated focus has culminated in several interconnected and systemic issues that hinder institutional performance. Firstly, FM practices at PULAPOL Kuching are largely confined to routine maintenance activities and ad-hoc infrastructure repairs. There is a conspicuous lack of systematic alignment between these FM activities and the centre's broader strategic objectives, particularly those related to training quality, cadet development, and operational readiness. Consequently, no structured mechanism exists to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, or long-term sustainability of FM operations. This strategic misalignment has been identified in various sectors as a primary barrier to unlocking FM's inherent potential to contribute meaningfully to organisational value and competitive advantage [25,41].

Secondly, performance measurement systems for FM at PULAPOL Kuching are either entirely non-existent or severely outdated. While global FM best practices have evolved to incorporate sophisticated strategic performance indicators, service quality benchmarks, and data-driven decision-making, FM within Malaysian public institutions remains hampered by inadequate frameworks, a limited suite of key performance indicators (KPIs), and a pervasive culture of intuitive rather than evidence-based management [29,33]. This performance measurement vacuum makes it exceptionally difficult for PDRM administrators to objectively monitor FM outcomes, rationally justify budget allocations, or strategically identify and prioritise areas for service improvement and innovation.

Thirdly, there is a notable shortage of professional recognition and structured capacity-building pathways for FM personnel operating within law enforcement facilities. Many critical FM decisions are made in isolation, detached from the overarching strategic planning process. This disconnection results in operational inefficiencies, resource wastage, suboptimal asset utilisation, and diminished user satisfaction. Compounding this issue is the limited and often fragmented engagement between FM managers and key stakeholder groups, including senior police officers, training instructors, cadets, and administrative staff. This communication gap further widens the disconnect between the facility services provided and the actual, evolving needs of the organisation [43].

Given these multifaceted and persistent challenges, there is an urgent and compelling need to fundamentally reposition Facilities Management at PULAPOL Kuching. It must transition from being perceived as a peripheral support service to being recognized and integrated as a strategic partner within PDRM's organisational framework. Achieving this transformation requires the development and implementation of a context-specific performance measurement model, a stronger and more deliberate alignment between FM activities and institutional goals, and an overarching rethinking of FM's role—from a cost-centric support function to a value-generating, strategic component of public service delivery.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The overarching aim of this research is to critically examine the role, practices, and strategic alignment of Facilities Management (FM) at Pusat Latihan Polis (PULAPOL) Kuching, and to develop a robust framework for repositioning it as a strategic contributor to organizational value.

The specific research objectives are:

1. To evaluate the current state of FM implementation, including its perception, organisational structure, and service delivery models at PULAPOL Kuching.
2. To assess the degree of strategic alignment between FM activities and PDRM's strategic priorities, particularly in supporting police training, maintaining critical infrastructure, and enhancing institutional performance.
3. To identify and analyse the key challenges, limitations, and gaps in the existing FM system, with a specific focus on performance measurement, digitalisation, and stakeholder engagement.
4. To investigate the perceptions, readiness, and capacity of FM stakeholders towards a strategic transformation and the adoption of digital FM tools.
5. To develop and propose a theoretically grounded, practical, and context-specific framework for repositioning FM at PULAPOL Kuching from a maintenance-based function to a strategic, value-adding partner.

To guide the inquiry, this study is framed by the following research questions:

1. How is Facilities Management (FM) currently perceived, organised, and implemented at PULAPOL Kuching?
2. What are the key strategic, operational, and technological challenges and limitations faced in the current FM system?
3. To what extent are FM activities at PULAPOL Kuching aligned with the strategic priorities and training objectives of PDRM?
4. What are the perceptions and level of readiness of FM stakeholders (practitioners, administrators, users) towards FM transformation and digitalisation?
5. What theoretical and practical framework can effectively guide the strategic repositioning of FM in a public sector institution like PULAPOL Kuching?

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The geographical scope of this research is explicitly limited to Pusat Latihan Polis (PULAPOL) Kuching. However, the findings and the proposed framework are designed to have broader implications and offer valuable insights for FM practices across other PDRM training centres and similar public sector institutions in Malaysia. The temporal scope of the study focuses on the current state of FM practices, with a retrospective consideration of the past five years to identify persistent challenges and any recent improvement initiatives. This timeframe also allows for an assessment of the institution's responsiveness to recent governmental reforms in public sector asset and service management.

The primary limitation of this study is its qualitative, single-case-study design. While this approach provides remarkable depth and contextual understanding, it limits the statistical generalisability of the findings to all public institutions. The potential for subjective bias in the interpretation of qualitative data is acknowledged, though this was mitigated through methodological rigor, including triangulation and member checking. Furthermore, the study's focus is on developing a practical framework for repositioning, rather than on quantitatively measuring the financial impact of such a transformation, which presents an opportunity for future research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research holds significant value for multiple stakeholders:

- For PULAPOL Kuching and PDRM: It provides an evidence-based diagnostic of the current FM system and a clear, actionable roadmap for strategic improvement, leading to enhanced training environments, improved operational efficiency, and better resource utilisation.
- For Malaysian Public Policy: The study contributes to the limited body of knowledge on public sector FM in Malaysia, offering insights that can inform national policies, standards, and capacity-building programs for FM in government agencies.
- For FM Academia and Profession: It expands the theoretical and practical understanding of FM implementation in a unique, security-sensitive context and provides a validated framework that can be adapted and tested in similar environments globally.
- For FM Practitioners: It offers a practical model for advocating for and implementing strategic FM, highlighting the importance of performance measurement, digital tools, and stakeholder engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Evolution and Strategic Dimensions of Facilities Management*

The concept of Facilities Management (FM) as a formal discipline is relatively young, with its modern origins tracing back to the 1970s in the United States, emerging in response to the increasing complexity of building systems and the growing need for coordinated support services [7]. The founding of the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) in 1980 provided a professional identity and platform, catalyzing the field's development. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, FM expanded rapidly across Europe and Asia, evolving from basic operational tasks into a more integrated management approach involving strategic planning, space utilization, and life-cycle cost analysis [1].

The definition of FM has broadened in tandem with its evolving role. IFMA [21] defines it as "a profession that encompasses multiple disciplines to ensure functionality of the built environment by integrating people, place, process, and technology." Similarly, the British Institute of Facilities Management [8] emphasizes its integrative nature, describing FM as "the integration of processes within an organisation to maintain and develop the agreed services which support and improve the effectiveness of its primary activities." These definitions underscore a fundamental shift from a building-centric to an organisation-centric view of FM.

A central theme in contemporary FM literature is the concept of **strategic alignment**. Alexander [2] and Then and Tan [41] argue that for FM to deliver maximum value, its objectives and activities must be harmonised with the overarching goals of the organisation. Karamitsos [25] developed the Value Adding Alignment Model (VAAM), asserting that FM must be embedded in all phases of strategic planning to achieve true organisational integration. When effectively aligned, FM contributes to competitive advantage by optimising the workplace to support human performance, managing risks, and ensuring the long-term viability of physical assets [27].

2.2 *FM in the Public Sector and the Malaysian Context*

The public sector presents a distinct context for FM, often characterised by bureaucratic structures, rigid budgeting processes, and a primary accountability to the public rather than shareholders. In such environments, FM is frequently perceived as a non-core, operational necessity, leading to its marginalisation in strategic decision-making [36]. The focus tends to be on cost containment and compliance, often at the expense of innovation, performance, and long-term value creation.

In Malaysia, the development of FM has followed a unique trajectory. While recognised as a necessary function, it has historically been treated as a cost centre rather than a strategic asset [33]. Myeda and Pitt [34] note that FM services in many government institutions are managed through conventional maintenance departments without a structured FM framework, leading to challenges in performance measurement, strategic alignment, and professional recognition. Initiatives by bodies like the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) are promoting standardisation, but the sector remains in a maturing phase. This is particularly evident in institutional settings like PULAPOL, where the potential of FM to support mission-critical training is yet to be fully realised.

2.3 *Theoretical Foundations for FM Repositioning*

Repositioning FM requires a multi-theoretical lens. From a strategic management perspective, the Resource-Based View (RBV) [6] posits that well-managed facilities and skilled FM teams can be

valuable, rare, and inimitable resources that provide a sustained competitive advantage. Contingency Theory [15] suggests that there is no single best way to structure FM; its form must fit the specific context, size, and culture of the organisation, such as the hierarchical nature of a police training academy.

Stakeholder Theory [18] is crucial, emphasising that FM must balance and respond to the needs of diverse groups, including users, administrators, and regulators. To measure this balance and overall performance, the Balanced Scorecard [24] offers a multidimensional framework, translating strategic objectives into a coherent set of performance measures across financial, customer, internal process, and learning/growth perspectives.

From an FM-specific standpoint, Performance-Based FM [29] provides the theoretical underpinning for using KPIs and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to monitor and manage service delivery. Whole Life Costing [17] shifts the focus from initial capital cost to the total cost of ownership, encouraging more sustainable and economically sound decisions. Finally, Change Management Theory, particularly Kotter's [28] eight-step model, is essential for understanding and managing the human and cultural transition from a reactive maintenance culture to a proactive, strategic FM function.

2.4 The Role of Digitalisation and Performance Measurement

Digital transformation is a key enabler of strategic FM. The adoption of Computerised Maintenance Management Systems (CMMS), Building Information Modelling (BIM), and Internet of Things (IoT) sensors can revolutionise FM from a reactive to a predictive and data-driven discipline [19]. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [13] and Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003) help explain the factors influencing the adoption of these new technologies within an organisation.

See Figure 1:

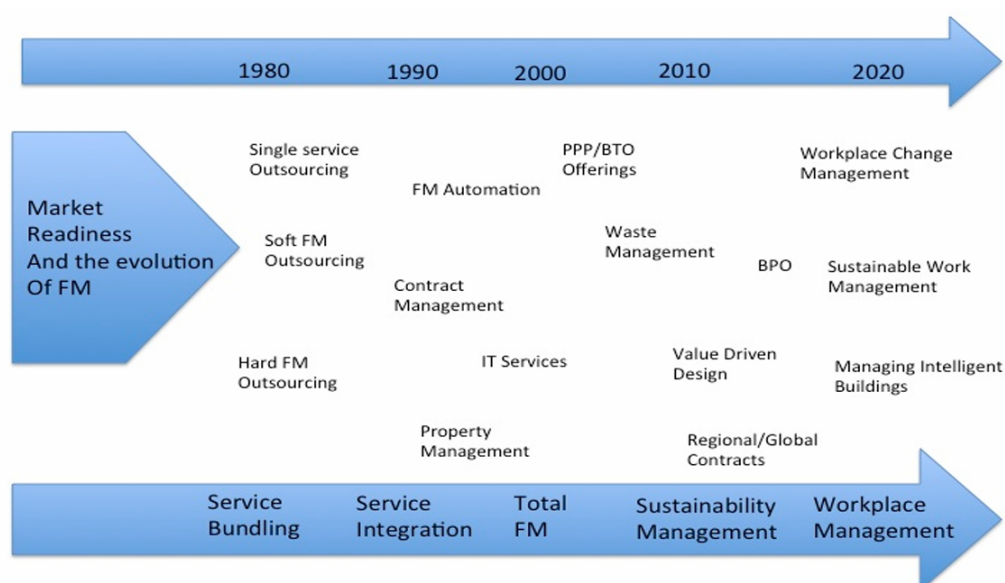


Fig. 1. Evolution of FM (Source : ISS World, 2013)

A robust performance measurement system is the cornerstone of strategic FM. Without defined KPIs—covering areas like asset availability, user satisfaction, energy efficiency, and cost per square metre—it is impossible to demonstrate value, justify investment, or drive continuous improvement

[29]. The absence of such systems, as often seen in the Malaysian public sector, perpetuates the perception of FM as a cost to be minimised rather than an investment to be optimised.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

This study is grounded in the interpretivist research philosophy, which posits that reality is socially constructed and must be understood through the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals in their specific context [14]. This paradigm is ideally suited for investigating the complex, human-centric phenomena of FM practices, organisational culture, and stakeholder perceptions at PULAPOL Kuching. It allows for a deep exploration of the "how" and "why" behind the current state of FM, which cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods alone.

A qualitative case study design was employed, with PULAPOL Kuching as the single, in-depth case. According to Yin [42], a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This design facilitates a holistic and nuanced understanding of the intricate FM ecosystem at the institution, making it the most appropriate strategy for achieving the research objectives.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

To ensure data richness and achieve methodological triangulation, three complementary data collection methods were employed over a three-month period. The first and primary method involved semi-structured interviews, conducted face-to-face with a purposively selected sample of 15 key stakeholders across hierarchical levels. At the strategic level, participants included senior police administrators and academy commandants ($n = 3$); at the tactical level, department heads overseeing facilities and logistics ($n = 4$); at the operational level, maintenance technicians, supervisors, and outsourced service provider representatives ($n = 5$); and at the end-user level, police trainees and administrative personnel ($n = 3$). The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions that maintained consistency while allowing flexibility to explore emergent themes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated where necessary to preserve semantic accuracy and contextual integrity. This approach facilitated in-depth exploration of perceptions and practices, consistent with best practices in qualitative FM and organisational studies [20,22].

2. Document Analysis:

A systematic review of institutional documents was undertaken to triangulate and contextualise the findings derived from interview data. The documents examined included: (1) facility maintenance logs and work order records (2019–2024); (2) annual and internal audit reports; (3) budget statements and procurement documentation for FM services; (4) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to logistics and maintenance; and (5) organisational charts and job descriptions. This document analysis provided critical insights into formal institutional processes, exposing discrepancies between documented policies and actual practices, as well as revealing the extent of strategic integration—or its absence—within the Facilities Management (FM) function. The systematic incorporation of document review enhanced data credibility and interpretive depth,

consistent with qualitative research standards in organisational and facilities management studies [9,37].

3. Site Observations:

Non-participant observations were conducted across several key facility zones, including classrooms, dormitories, administrative blocks, dining halls, training grounds, and central plant rooms. The observations focused on four main aspects: (1) the physical condition and maintenance of assets; (2) work processes and workflows of FM staff; (3) interactions between facility users and the built environment; and (4) the utilisation of technology and tools in performing FM tasks. Detailed field notes were systematically recorded to capture contextual nuances and behavioural patterns, while photographic documentation—obtained only where ethically permissible—was used to triangulate and enrich the observational dataset. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of operational realities and environmental dynamics within the institutional FM context, consistent with best practices in qualitative facility research [12,26].

3.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected in this study were analysed using thematic analysis, following the systematic six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke [10]. The process involved: (1) Familiarisation, through repeated reading of interview transcripts, field notes, and institutional documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data; (2) Generating Initial Codes, by systematically identifying and labelling key features of the dataset; (3) Searching for Themes, where related codes were collated into broader, meaningful categories; (4) Reviewing Themes, by ensuring coherence and consistency between coded extracts and the dataset as a whole; (5) Defining and Naming Themes, through refining the scope, focus, and interpretation of each theme; and (6) Producing the Report, which involved synthesising themes into a coherent, evidence-based narrative supported by direct data excerpts. The use of NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software facilitated efficient data management, coding, and organisation, thereby enhancing the transparency, reliability, and analytical rigour of the research process [10,11].

3.4 Ensuring Rigor and Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this qualitative research, several methodological strategies were systematically applied. Triangulation was employed by cross-verifying data from interviews, institutional documents, and on-site observations to minimise bias and enhance the robustness of thematic interpretation. Member checking was conducted by returning selected interview transcripts and preliminary summaries to participants to validate both factual accuracy and interpretive fidelity. Peer debriefing sessions were held with academic supervisors and research peers to critically examine analytical assumptions, thereby strengthening interpretive validity. In addition, an audit trail was maintained, documenting all stages of data collection, coding, and decision-making to facilitate transparency and external evaluation of the research process. These strategies collectively ensured methodological trustworthiness and enhanced the overall validity of the study's findings [30,35].

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, clearly explaining the research purpose, procedures, confidentiality assurances, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms for all individuals and the institution in the reporting of findings. All digital data was stored securely on password-protected encrypted drives.

4. Results and Findings

The analysis of the rich qualitative dataset revealed five major themes that comprehensively describe the current state of FM at PULAPOL Kuching and illuminate the path toward its strategic repositioning.

4.1 Theme 1: The Predominant Perception of FM as a Reactive Maintenance Function

The most pervasive finding was the entrenched view of FM as a technical, reactive support service, entirely disconnected from the institution's strategic core. This perception was unanimous across all stakeholder groups, from senior officers to cadets. FM was consistently equated with tasks like fixing leaks, replacing light bulbs, and managing cleaning services. A senior training officer's statement was emblematic: Facilities? That's maintenance, lah. If a door breaks or there's a leak, then FM will do their job. But strategic planning? That's not their job. That's for the commandant and the administrative planners. (P3, Senior Training Officer).

This perception was deeply internalised among the Facilities Management (FM) personnel, who consistently described their roles as “complaint-driven” and “fire-fighting.” Document analysis reinforced this finding; the Facilities Operations Log for 2022–2023 recorded thousands of corrective work orders but contained no evidence of strategic planning, preventive maintenance scheduling, or performance review aligned with institutional objectives. This reactive orientation systematically excludes FM from participating in discussions related to capital investment, long-term infrastructure planning, and training curriculum development that have facility implications. Such an operational mindset mirrors challenges observed across public sector FM environments, where the absence of strategic integration and performance-based frameworks perpetuates inefficiency and limits organisational value creation [4,23]. Consequently, FM continues to be perceived as an administrative support function rather than a strategic enabler within the institutional governance structure.

4.2 Theme 2: A Critical Vacuum in Performance Measurement and Accountability

The research uncovered a complete absence of a structured performance measurement framework for FM. While stakeholders made vague, anecdotal references to “things getting done,” there were no defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), benchmarks, or service level agreements (SLAs) to objectively measure outcomes. A Facilities Coordinator expressed the frustration of working in this vacuum: We don't have a formal way to measure how well we are doing. If something breaks, we fix it. But there is no scoring, no monthly report card, no dashboard to show our performance. How can we ask for more budget or staff when we can't even show what we achieve or where we fail? (P6, Facilities Coordinator).

This lack of metrics had several critical implications. It made it impossible to demonstrate FM's value or return on investment, leading to its treatment as a pure cost centre. It prevented data-driven decision-making, with resource allocation often based on historical budgets or immediate crises rather than strategic need. Furthermore, it fostered a culture with limited accountability, where service delays or failures could not be systematically tracked or addressed. Site observations reinforced this, revealing no visual management boards, performance dashboards, or standardized reporting tools in FM workspaces.

4.3 Theme 3: Structural Fragmentation and Siloed Responsibilities

At PULAPOL Kuching, Facilities Management (FM) functions were not coordinated under a single cohesive department but instead dispersed across multiple, disconnected units. Responsibilities were divided among the Logistics Department, which managed procurement and major service contracts; a small Maintenance Unit responsible for reactive repairs; Administrative Services, overseeing space allocation and cleaning contracts; and several training departments that independently managed their specialised equipment. This siloed arrangement resulted in overlapping duties, communication gaps, and operational inefficiencies that hindered cohesive decision-making and strategic alignment. Similar patterns of fragmented FM structures and limited interdepartmental integration have been identified in Malaysian public-sector organisations, where unclear role delineation and reactive management approaches often impede performance and resource optimisation [31,32].

An administrative staff member highlighted the daily impact: Sometimes, we don't know who is actually in charge. For minor repairs, we call the maintenance team. For renovations, we need to go through procurement, which can take months. For cleaning issues in the dormitory, it's a different outsourced contractor. So, it becomes confusing, and requests often get passed around or fall through the cracks. (P4, Administrative Staff). This fragmentation led to duplicated efforts, protracted response times for cross-departmental issues, and a complete lack of holistic, strategic oversight of the institution's entire asset portfolio. The organisational charts obtained through document analysis visually confirmed this disjointed reporting structure, with no single point of accountability for overall facility performance.

4.4 Theme 4: Overwhelming Reliance on Archaic Manual Systems

A major operational impediment identified was the near-total reliance on manual and paper-based systems for managing FM workflows. Service requests were logged in physical ledger books, work orders were issued on paper slips, and communication was heavily reliant on verbal instructions and walk-in complaints. There was no evidence of a Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS), Building Automation System (BAS), or any digital platform for tracking assets or service history.

A maintenance technician described the process: "Most of the time, someone just walks to our office or calls us on a shared phone to say, 'this is broken.' We write it in the big logbook, and then my supervisor assigns it to one of us. If the paper gets lost or we forget, the job doesn't get done until someone complains again." (P7, Maintenance Technician). This manual approach resulted in lost requests, an inability to prioritise tasks effectively, poor data integrity for analysing failure trends, and a complete lack of capacity for predictive maintenance. It entrenched a reactive culture and starkly highlighted the digital divide between PULAPOL's FM operations and modern, data-driven best practices.

4.5 Theme 5: A Promising Readiness and Willingness for Strategic Transformation

Despite the formidable challenges, a powerfully positive and consistent theme emerged: a clear recognition of the status quo's limitations and a widespread openness to change. Stakeholders across the hierarchy expressed not just a passive acceptance but an active desire for a more modern, effective, and strategic FM function. This readiness was the most critical enabler identified for any future transformation initiative.

A Commanding Officer's perspective was particularly telling: "We know that our FM system is outdated. It affects morale and, I believe, the quality of training. Our cadets deserve a better environment. We are ready to modernise. If there is a clear proposal with defined KPIs, new systems, and proper training for our people, I will give it my full support." (P1, Commanding Officer). This sentiment was echoed by FM staff, who expressed eagerness for training on new technologies and a desire to be seen as professionals contributing to the academy's mission, rather than just repairmen. This underlying cultural receptivity provides a fertile foundation for implementing the proposed strategic framework.

5. Discussion: Towards a Strategic Repositioning Framework

The findings paint a clear picture of an FM function at a crossroads, trapped in an outdated paradigm but poised for transformation. The identified themes are not isolated issues but are deeply interconnected, forming a self-reinforcing cycle of operational focus and strategic marginalisation. The perception of FM as maintenance (Theme 1) justifies the lack of performance measurement (Theme 2), which in turn makes the siloed structure (Theme 3) seem sufficient, and the manual processes (Theme 4) acceptable. Breaking this cycle requires a holistic and integrated intervention.

The promising stakeholder readiness (Theme 5) is the key that can unlock this transformation. It aligns with Stakeholder Theory [18] and Change Management Theory [28], emphasising that successful transformation depends on creating a coalition for change and empowering people to act. The findings also strongly resonate with the theoretical tenets of the Resource-Based View [6]; currently, FM is an underutilised resource, but through repositioning, it can be transformed into a source of strategic advantage for PULAPOL.

In direct response to the research objectives and synthesising the empirical findings with the theoretical foundation, this study proposes the Performance-Based Facilities Management Framework (PBFMF) for PULAPOL Kuching. The PBFMF is built on three interdependent pillars, designed to systematically address the gaps identified in the results.

Pillar 1: Strategic Repositioning and Integrated Governance

This pillar directly addresses Themes 1 and 3 by recommending the establishment of a Centralised Facilities Management (FM) Unit led by a Chief Facilities Officer (CFO) who reports directly to the institution's top management. The unit will consolidate all currently fragmented FM functions—including maintenance, space management, procurement of FM services, energy management, and minor capital projects—into a unified governance structure. The proposed structure comprises three interconnected layers: (1) Strategic Level, responsible for FM policy formulation, long-term capital planning, lifecycle costing, and alignment with the Royal Malaysia Police's (PDRM) strategic objectives; (2) Tactical Level, overseeing budgets, contracts, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and service delivery planning; and (3) Operational Level, which handles day-to-day maintenance, vendor coordination, and user service requests. This integrated governance model promotes organisational

coherence, establishes transparent accountability, enhances interdepartmental communication, and formally embeds FM representation within strategic decision-making processes—an approach widely recognised as a hallmark of mature FM practices in both public and private sectors [3,16].

Pillar 2: Performance and Data-Driven Management

This pillar addresses Theme 2 by introducing a Structured Performance Measurement System anchored in the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) approach, which provides a multidimensional framework for evaluating Facilities Management (FM) performance. The proposed system incorporates four perspectives: User (user satisfaction and request resolution time), Internal Process (planned-to-corrective maintenance ratio and asset availability), Financial (FM cost per trainee and energy consumption savings), and Learning & Growth (staff training hours and technology adoption rates). These KPIs should be continuously monitored using Digital Dashboards accessible to both management and FM staff to promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. The BSC framework has been recognised as a powerful tool in FM performance optimisation, enabling the integration of strategic and operational objectives within complex institutional environments [5,40].

Pillar 3: Digital Transformation and Stakeholder Integration

This pillar addresses Themes 4 and 5. The foundation is the procurement and implementation of a Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS). This system would digitize the entire workflow—from a mobile app for users to submit requests, to automated work order generation, scheduling, inventory management, and performance reporting. In the medium term, this can be expanded with IoT sensors for predictive maintenance (e.g., on HVAC systems) and energy monitoring.

Concurrently, a formal Stakeholder Engagement Strategy must be deployed. This includes regular user satisfaction surveys, establishing an FM liaison role for different departments, and awareness campaigns to rebrand FM as a strategic service partner. This integrated approach ensures that the technological transformation is supported by a corresponding cultural and communicative shift, maximizing the chances of successful adoption.

The proposed PBFMF provides a comprehensive, actionable, and theoretically sound roadmap for PULAPOL Kuching to bridge the gap between its current maintenance-focused reality and a future where FM is a recognised and valued strategic partner in delivering organisational excellence.

See Figure 2:



Fig. 2. Strategies repositing pillars in institutional context

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This research set out to investigate the strategic repositioning of Facilities Management at PULAPOL Kuching. The study conclusively demonstrates that the FM function is currently defined by a reactive, maintenance-oriented paradigm, suffering from a critical lack of strategic alignment, performance accountability, and digital maturity. The entrenched perception of FM as a non-strategic support service, combined with structural fragmentation and archaic manual processes, severely limits its potential to contribute to the academy's core mission of elite police training.

However, the investigation also uncovered a powerful asset: a demonstrated readiness and willingness for change among a broad cross-section of stakeholders. This cultural receptivity is the crucial catalyst that makes transformation not just necessary, but achievable. The proposed Performance-Based Facilities Management Framework (PBFMF) offers a holistic, structured, and practical pathway for this repositioning. By integrating strategic governance, performance management, and digital transformation, the PBFMF provides a coherent model to elevate FM from a cost centre to a value-generating strategic partner.

The journey from maintenance to strategy is not merely an operational upgrade; it is a strategic imperative for PULAPOL Kuching. A modern, efficient, and responsive FM function is directly linked to improved training quality, enhanced cadet and staff wellbeing, operational resilience, and the long-term sustainability of critical national infrastructure. This research contributes a validated, context-specific model that can guide PULAPOL Kuching, and institutions like it, on this essential journey.

6.2 Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings and the proposed framework, the following actionable recommendations are made for PULAPOL Kuching and PDRM:

1. Immediate Term (0-6 months):

The organisation should conduct a formal stakeholder workshop to share the study's findings and build consensus for the PBFMF, establish a cross-functional task force to plan the creation of a centralised FM Unit, and initiate the procurement process for a basic CMMS solution.

2. Medium Term (6-18 months):

The institution should officially establish a Centralised FM Unit with clearly defined roles and reporting lines, implement a Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) supported by comprehensive staff training, and develop pilot Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to establish a baseline for future performance measurement.

3. Long Term (18-36 months):

Future initiatives should fully integrate the FM Unit leader into the institution's strategic planning committee, expand the digital FM ecosystem through IoT-enabled energy and maintenance solutions, and benchmark performance against leading national and international training institutions to ensure continuous improvement.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

This study opens several avenues for future research. A quantitative investigation is recommended to measure the financial and operational impacts of implementing the PBFMF at PULAPOL Kuching over time. Comparative case studies across multiple PULAPOL centres nationwide could further reveal shared challenges and context-specific variations. Future work should also focus on developing a standardised Facilities Management (FM) competency framework and career pathway tailored to Malaysia's public sector. Additionally, an in-depth exploration of the barriers and success factors influencing digital FM transformation in resource-constrained institutions would provide valuable insights for sustainable implementation and policy advancement.

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