

Professionalism Apparatus Law Enforcement as a Factor Determinant of Legal Legitimacy in Society

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Abstract: The professionalism of law enforcement officers is a crucial factor in achieving just, effective, and legitimate law enforcement in society. In practice, however, law enforcement frequently reveals a gap between legal norms and social reality, often due to low professionalism among officers. This condition indicates that the effectiveness of law enforcement is determined not only by the clarity of legal norms but also by the quality of those responsible for implementing them. This study aims to analyze the professionalism of law enforcement from a socio-legal perspective and to examine its implications for the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions. This research employs a socio-legal method that integrates normative legal analysis with an examination of the social dimensions of law enforcement practices. The findings show that the professionalism of law enforcement officers extends beyond technical competence and procedural compliance to encompass integrity, ethical conduct, independence, and sensitivity to the social context in which the law operates. Weak professionalism contributes to disproportionate law enforcement, selective application of legal norms, discriminatory practices, and a decline in public trust in law enforcement institutions. From a socio-legal perspective, legal legitimacy is not derived solely from formal state authority, but is also constructed through public acceptance of how the law is implemented in practice. Law enforcement that is perceived as unfair, inconsistent, or lacking transparency will undermine institutional credibility and weaken legal compliance. Therefore, strengthening the professionalism of law enforcement officers is essential not only for improving the quality of law enforcement but also for bridging the gap between law in the books and law in action, while ensuring the sustainability of institutional legitimacy.

Keywords: Professionalism of Law Enforcement; Sociology of Law; Law Enforcement; Legal Legitimacy.



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I. INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement is a process for realizing ideas and concepts expected by society, so that they can be implemented in ways that are real in life, society, the nation, and the state.¹ However, the success of the enforcement law is not solely determined by the existence of comprehensive legislation, but rather depends heavily on the professionalism of the apparatus enforcers in carrying out their duties and exercising their authorities.² Professionalism in law enforcement encompasses competence, technical competence, moral integrity, independence, and the ability to exercise discretion proportionally and responsibly.³ Without professionalism, the law's potential to gain legitimacy and public trust is lost, making objective law a difficult means of justice and of order in society.⁴

Law in context: sociology of law understood not only as written norms (law in the books), but as a social practice that is alive and running in society (*law in action*).⁵ Lawrence M. Friedman emphasized that effective law is influenced by three main elements, namely structure law, substance law, and culture law.⁶ The professionalism of law enforcement officers is an important factor in shaping the law and in determining how it is implemented and experienced by the community.⁷ If law enforcement officers act in an unprofessional, discriminatory, or insensitive manner, then the law tends to be perceived as unfair and to lose its authority.

In practice, law enforcement in Indonesia still highlights issues related to the professionalism of the apparatus. Enforcement laws that are considered “sharp” at the bottom and blunt above reveal inequality in their implementation, rooted in the

¹ Farida Sekti Pahlevi, “Revitalisasi Pancasila Dalam Penegakan Hukum Yang Berkeadilan Di Indonesia,” *Justicia Islamica* 13, no. 2 (2016): 173–98.

² Mohd. Yusuf Daeng M et al., “Peran Sumber Daya Manusia Aparat Penegak Hukum Dalam Mewujudkan Penegakan Hukum Yang Efektif,” *Andrew Law Jurnal* 4, no. 2 (2025): 984–97.

³ Nasywa Awalia Putri and Kayus Kayowuan Lewoleba, “Peranan Kode Etik Jaksa Pada Pengawasan Dan Pertanggungjawaban Dalam Menjaga Integritas Penegakan Hukum Di Indonesia,” *Media Hukum Indonesia (MHI)* 3, no. 3 (2025): 366–72, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15612312>.

⁴ Putri and Lewoleba.

⁵ Muhammad Yasin et al., “Analisis Sosiologi Hukum Atas Penyalahgunaan Wewenang Tindak Pidana Korupsi Dalam Perspektif Anomie Dan Realisme Hukum,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Penegakan Hukum* 12, no. 2 (2025): 395–402.

⁶ Lalu M Alwin Ahadi, “Efektivitas Hukum Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Hukum : Relasi Urgensi Sosialisasi Terhadap Eksistensi Produk Hukum The Effectiveness of Law in Legal Philosophical Perspective : The Relation of the Urgency of Socialization to the Existence of Legal Products,” *Jurnal USM Law Review* 5, no. 1 (2022): 110–27.

⁷ Adinda Nurizkia Hijriani and Nandang Sambas, “Integritas Aparat Penegak Hukum Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Kepercayaan Publik,” *JOSH (Journal of Sharia)* 5, no. 1 (2026): 120–32.

behavior and decision-making apparatus of the law's enforcer.⁸ Condition: This not only gives rise to a sense of injustice but also contributes to a decline in trust in public institutions' enforcement of the law.⁹

Several recent cases demonstrate how the lack of professionalism and prudence of law enforcement officers can lead to social controversy and spark debate about the sense of justice in society. One example is the case of Fiki Harman in Jambi, who was named a suspect after causing the death of a mugger while trying to protect himself and his younger brother from an attack.¹⁰ The determination of suspect status sparked public reaction because it was deemed to have failed to consider the context of the victim's self-defense in an emergency.¹¹ After further investigation, law enforcement officers ultimately closed the case and released Fiki, who had proven to have acted in self-defense as stipulated in criminal law.¹²

Besides that, various cases involving apparatus enforcers of the law also reveal serious problems related to professionalism and integrity in law enforcement in Indonesia. One of the many examples that drew public attention is the bribery case involving three judges of the Surabaya District Court in the Gregorius Ronald Tannur case. If the show highlights violations of professional ethics and bribery in the judicial process, it can undermine the integrity of the justice system and cause a crisis of trust among the public. The involvement of the apparatus of justice in practice corrupts not only the principles of independence and justice, but also reveals weaknesses in the system of supervision and enforcement of the code of ethics and professional law. The conditions show that professionalism in enforcement law is not

⁸ Suhendar Suhendar, Virgiawan Cikal Permana, and Rengga Kusuma Putra, "Beyond Impunity: Reconstructing Criminal Accountability for Torture by Law Enforcement Officials," *Reformasi Hukum* 29, no. 3 (2025): 272–87.

⁹ Rizka Sahbania et al., "Korupsi Dan Lemahnya Penegakan Hukum: Analisis Ketidakadilan Dan Dampaknya Bagi Kepercayaan Publik [Corruption and Weak Law Enforcement: An Analysis of Injustice and Its Impact on Public Trust]," *Journal of the Research Center for Digital Democracy* 1, no. 1 (2025): 31–38, <https://journal.idede.org/index.php/IDEDE/article/view/175>.

¹⁰ Natasha Ancely, "Sempat Jadi Tersangka Karena Bunuh Begal, Fiki Harman Akhirnya Dibebaskan," *Kompas.Tv*, 2024, <https://www.kompas.tv/video/507944/sempat-jadi-tersangka-karena-bunuh-begal-fiki-harman-akhirnya-dibebaskan>.

¹¹ Dimas Sanjaya, "Perjalanan Kasus Fiki Habisi Begal, Jadi Tersangka Hingga Dibebaskan," *Detik.Com*, 2024, <https://www.detik.com/sumbagsel/hukum-dan-kriminal/d-7340302/perjalanan-kasus-fiki-habisi-begal-jadi-tersangka-hingga-dibebaskan>.

¹² Paisal Kumar, "Polda Jambi Akhirnya Hentikan Kasus Korban Begal Bunuh Pelaku Di Tanjab Barat, Ini Penjelasan Dirreskrimum," *Jambione.Com*, 2024, <https://www.jambione.com/hukrim/1364651481/polda-jambi-akhirnya-hentikan-kasus-korban-begal-bunuh-pelaku-di-tanjab-barat-ini-penjelasan-dirreskrimum>.

only about compliance with procedural law but also requires moral integrity, accountability, and a commitment to principled justice in every enforcement process.¹³

Studies on enforcement law during this time focus on the normative framework, the institutional structure, and the function of law in society. Various studies emphasize the importance of integrity, independence, and professionalism as prerequisites for creating a fair and effective justice system.¹⁴ On the other hand, several studies are also beginning to highlight the problem of public trust in public institutions as an indicator of institutional legitimacy in a state of law.¹⁵ However, some major studies still treat the professional apparatus, enforcement law, and legitimacy institutions as separate, so they have not yet provided a comprehensive analysis of the connection between the professional apparatus and the formation of legitimacy institutions and enforcement law in the public eye.

Besides that, existing research remains abstract and normative, focusing on regulatory analysis, codes of ethics, or the structure of institutional enforcement law. Approach the Not yet Lots, balanced with analysis and empirically based cases under investigation. How does practicing professionalism affect the enforcement of law in handling concrete cases, influence the public's perception of justice, and the credibility of institutions of law? In practice, public perception of legitimate institutions that enforce the law often forms from experience, social news, and how the authorities handle cases.¹⁶

Besides that, research on the specific mechanism by which the enforcement of laws is mediated by institutional legitimacy remains limited. The interpretation of public apparatus actions is influenced by social experience, media coverage, and

¹³ Mayla Putri Farbadi et al., "Pelanggaran Etika Dan Profesi Hukum Kasus Suap Hakim Ronald Tannur : Analisis Kritis Terhadap Integritas Penegakan Hukum Di Indonesia," *Media Hukum Indonesia (MHI)* 2, no. 6 (2025): 128–34.

¹⁴ Suud Sarim Karimullah, "The Role of Law Enforcement Officials: The Dilemma Between Professionalism and Political Interests," *Jurnal Hukum Dan Peradilan* 13, no. 2 (2024): 365, <https://doi.org/10.25216/jhp.13.2.2024.365-392>.

¹⁵ Shahriza Ilyana Ramli, "Bridging the Trust Gap: A Review of Public Perception Studies on Police Integrity," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* IX, no. XI (2025): 1700–1712, <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS>.

¹⁶ John Egbeazien Oshodi, "The Oshodi Law Enforcement Practices Inventory (OLEPI): Toward a Culturally Responsive Measure of Policing Perceptions in Africa, the Caribbean, and Beyond," *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 5, no. 5 (2025): 35–44, <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejsocial.2025.5.5.620>.

socio-political context. Not yet; lots have been analyzed systematically in the study of law and socio-legal studies. In the Indonesian context, gap studies are increasingly relevant; remember that the dynamic enforcement of laws often sparks public debate about the professionalism of the apparatus and the justice of the enforcement process.

Based on the gap, research. This analyzes the connections among the professional apparatus, enforcement law, and legitimacy institutions through an integrated approach that combines normative analysis and empirical case studies, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how professional apparatuses influence trust and legitimacy institutions, as well as enforcement law, in society.

Given the background, the article aims to analyze the professionalism enforcer law from the perspective of sociological law, as well as the implications for the legitimacy of institutions' enforcement law in Indonesia. By linking framework, theoretical sociology laws, and cases, current enforcement law, and research. This expectation can contribute academically to enrich discourse on sociological law at a time, becoming a material reflection critical for the improvement of professionalism in law enforcement.

II. METHODS

Study This uses a socio-legal research method (socio-juridical research), namely, an integrated analysis of normative law and social aspects in the practice of law enforcement.¹⁷ In this study, an analysis was conducted from a sociological perspective on law, focusing on norms and laws governing the apparatus of professionalism and the enforcement of the law, as well as the principles of enforcement in the Indonesian legal system. The perspective of sociology of law is used to understand law as a social phenomenon, especially in examining the connection between the professionalism of the law enforcement apparatus and the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions in society. The study uses the covering, statute, legal, and conceptual approaches. legislation done with study regulation legislation that regulates principles of the rule of law, duties, authorities, and professionalism enforcer law. Meanwhile, the approach used to analyze concepts

¹⁷ Jurnal Ilmiah Dunia Hukum, "Socio-Legal Research: Integration of Normative and Empirical Juridical Research in Legal Research," *Noor, Afif* 7, no. 2 (2023): 94–112.

such as professionalism-enforcer law, legitimacy law, the discretion apparatus, culture law, and the difference between law in the books and law in action from a sociological perspective.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Professionalism Law Enforcement in Perspective, Sociology of Law

Professionalism as an enforcer of law from a sociological perspective. No one can understand in a way as narrow as the technical ability to apply regulations or operating procedure law formally.¹⁸ Professionalism must be understood as a constructed social formation arising from the interaction among norm law, the ethics profession, institutional structure, the social context, and ongoing law enforcement.¹⁹ With this understanding, practice enforcement law is viewed not as a mechanistic process but as a socially loaded activity of values, interests, and power relations.²⁰

Sociology of law examines the apparatus of law enforcement, as an actor's social role determines how law is executed in practice (*law in action*).²¹ Lawrence M. Friedman emphasized that the structure, substance, and culture of law determine working law in public.²² Enforcer law, as part of structural law, plays a strategic role in actualizing norm law so as not to remain merely text-normative (*law in the books*). The professionalism apparatus becomes a determining factor in whether the law can function as a means of justice or, in practice, precisely cause injustice.²³

¹⁸ Naufal Akbar Kusuma Hadi, "Penegakan Hukum Di Indonesia Dilihat Dari Perspektif Sosiologi Hukum," *Jurnal Hukum Dan Pembangunan Ekonomi* 10, no. 2 (2022): 227–40, <https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jdh.2008.8.3.74>.

¹⁹ and Bryon G. Gustafson McClellan, Sara E., "Communicating Law Enforcement Professionalization: Social Construction of Standards," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 35, no. 1 (2012): 104–23.

²⁰ Tom R. Tyler, Phillip Atiba Goff, and Robert J. MacCoun, "The Impact of Psychological Science on Policing in the United States: Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and Effective Law Enforcement," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 16, no. 3 (2015): 75–109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100615617791>.

²¹ Ahmad M et al., "Problematizing Law Enforcement in Indonesia: A Study from the Perspective of the Sociology of Law," *Journal of Legal Contemplation* 1, no. 1 (2025): 16–26, <https://doi.org/10.63288/jlc.v1i1.2>.

²² Fitri Aliva Rachmarani, Anita Afriana, and Rai Mantili, "Small Claims Court Procedure in The Framework of Indonesian Law Reform: An Analysis of Community Legal Needs and Lawrence M. Friedman's Three Legal Sub-Systems Theory," *Jurnal Poros Hukum Padjadjaran* 6, no. 1 (2024): 48–66, <https://doi.org/10.23920/jphp.v6i1.1930>.

²³ Richard Anggi Pamungkas, Muhamad Muktafin Farchan, and Dan Samsul Arifin, "Keadilan Hukum Dalam Praktik: Menguji Idealisme Terhadap Realitas," *Integrative Perspectives of Social and Science Journal* 2, no. 3 (2025): 4324.

In a way, constitutional demands that the law be enforced professionally, rooted in the principles of the rule of law as confirmed in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Principles reinforced by Article 27, paragraph (1), of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees an equal position for every citizen before the law. Provisions: This demand apparatus enforcer law is for professional acts, non-discriminatory, and upholds high justice and certainty law in every enforcement action.²⁴

In the context of criminal law, the implementation of Constitution Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code introduces a new paradigm that emphasizes the balance among certainty, law, justice, and utility.²⁵ Article 2, paragraph (2) of the Criminal Code recognizes the validity of living law in society (*living law*) throughout, without contradiction with Pancasila, the rights of basic humans, and general principles of law. Recognition: This demands a professional apparatus, an enforcer of more laws, because the implementation of criminal law is not mechanical in nature, but rather requires sensitivity to the social context and values that develop in society.

At the level of criminal procedure law, the professionalism-enforcer law is reflected in the normative provisions of Constitution Number 20 of 2025 concerning the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP), which regulates the authority apparatus and sets time limits for the use of forced action. Article 7, paragraph (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code provides authority to the investigator to arrest, detain, search, and confiscate. However, the authority is strictly regulated by Articles 16 and 17 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which provide that an arrest may be made only on proof of a valid reason. Additionally, Article 18 of the Criminal Procedure Code requires a prior letter of arrest to ensure accountability and transparency within the apparatus.

Professionalism, the apparatus was also tested through fulfillment and protection of the rights of suspects and defendants as arranged in Article 90 paragraph (3) letter c. Criminal Procedure Code. Provisions. This ensures the right to know the

²⁴ Kania Dewi Putri Putri and Ridwan Arifin, "The Theoretical Review of Justice and Legal Certainty in Indonesia," *Mimbar Yustitia : Jurnal Hukum Dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 2, no. 2 (2018): 142–58.

²⁵ Bagus Satrio Utomo Prawiraharjo, "Implementasi Ide Keseimbangan Monodualistik Dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 2023 Tentang Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana," *Jurnal Hukum Progresif* 11, no. 2 (2023): 159–71, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jhp.11.2.159-171>.

reason for arrest, the right to receive legal assistance, and the right to be treated humanely. Thus, professionalism in enforcing the law is measured not only by enforcement success but also by the apparatus's ability to ensure a fair and respectful legal process for ordinary people. Article 142 letter p of the Criminal Procedure Code even gives the right to change the loss and rehabilitation for the injured party as a consequence of the enforcement of laws that are not valid, which shows the existence of a consequence law on action officers who are not professional.

From a sociological perspective, norms of existence show that criminal procedure law functions not only as a repressive instrument but also as a mechanism for social balance, the enforcement of interests, and the protection of citizens' rights. Satjipto Rahardjo emphasizes that law should be understood as the social purpose of human beings.²⁶ Therefore, professionalism has become the key to the law that has been formulated progressively, and it has not lost its meaning in practice.

Professionalism-enforcer law is also closely related to evolving laws governing institutional enforcement.²⁷ Soerjono Soekanto identified the law's enforcer as one of the main determinants of the law's effectiveness in society.²⁸ A strong law compels the apparatus to exercise authority in an ethical, proportionate, and responsible manner. In contrast, weak laws can give rise to formalistic, deviant enforcement practices that deviate from objective justice.²⁹

To facilitate a structured analysis, the distribution of public perceptions regarding law enforcement is presented in the table below. The data categorizes respondents' evaluations as positive, neutral, or negative, enabling a clearer

²⁶ Azka Afdhalul Rizqullah, Andre Fernando Situmorang, and Fraja Mulya Dwi Bakti, "Peran Hukum Progresif Dalam Mencari Keadilan Menurut Satjipto Rahardjo," *Nusantara: Jurnal Pendidikan, Seni, Sains Dan Sosial Humaniora* 3, no. 1 (2025): 1–12.

²⁷ Haekal Amalin Firdany Putra et al., "Membangun Budaya Hukum Yang Kuat Untuk Mendukung Supremasi Hukum," *Al-Zayn : Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum* 3, no. 2 (2025): 983–90, <https://doi.org/10.61104/alz.v3i2.1256>.

²⁸ Aunur Huda, Muhammad Miftakhul dan Rofiq, "Implementasi Tanggung Jawab Negara Terhadap Pelanggaran HAM Berat," *IN RIGHT: Jurnal Agama Dan Hak Azazi Manusia* 11, no. 1 (2022): 125.

²⁹ Elvira Jorovlea, "Examining Ethical Culture Among Legal Professionals: Factors Influencing Integrity and Decision-Making in the Judicial System," *European Science* 42, no. 06 (2023): 236–45, <https://doi.org/10.30890/2709-2313.2025-42-06-011>.

understanding of the overall level of public confidence in law enforcement performance.³⁰

Table Distribution of Public Perceptions of Law Enforcement Performance

No.	Assessment Category	Percentage (%)
1	Very good	4.7%
2	Good	36.9%
3	Total Positive	41.6%
4	Moderate / Neutral	30.9%
5	Poor	21.7%
6	Very poor	3.4%
7	Total Negative	25.1%
8	Don't know / No answer	2.4%

Source: Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI)

The survey results indicate that public perception of law enforcement in Indonesia remains relatively moderate and has not yet reached a strong level of legitimacy. With only 41.6% of respondents expressing positive views (combining 4.7% “very good” and 36.9% “good”), public approval falls short of a majority, suggesting that confidence in law enforcement's performance remains limited. Meanwhile, a significant portion of respondents (30.9%) perceive law enforcement as “moderate or neutral,” reflecting uncertainty or ambivalence, while 25.1% express negative views, indicating persistent dissatisfaction. This distribution highlights a gap between institutional expectations and societal experience, where law enforcement is not widely perceived as fully effective or fair. From a socio-legal perspective, these findings suggest that legal legitimacy remains fragile, as it depends not only on formal authority but also on public trust and perceived fairness in practice.

The low level of professionalism in the law has a significant sociological impact. Unprofessional enforcement laws can create a negative perception of the law

³⁰ Nicholas Ryan Aditya and Ardito Ramadhan, “Survei LSI: Hanya 41,6 Persen Warga Anggap Penegakkan Hukum Berjalan Baik,” *Kompas.Com*, 2025, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2025/02/09/14401291/survei-lsi-hanya-416-persen-warga-anggap-penegakkan-hukum-berjalan-baik#:~:text=JAKARTA%2C KOMPAS.com - Hasil survei Lembaga Survei Indonesia,yang memberikan nilai positif pada pelaksanaan penegakkan hukum.>

among the public, ultimately influencing public trust and the law's legitimacy. Therefore, from a sociological perspective on law, law enforcers occupy a strategic position as a connector between normative law and social reality, and, at the same time, as a prerequisite for the effective realization of the system's enforcement of just law.

Professionalism, Law Enforcement, and Problems: Implementation of Law in Practice

Professionalism in law enforcement is reflected not only in the direct actions of officers in the field but also in the methods and apparatus used to respond to, assess, and process incidents involving the public. In the Lots situation, the criminal event began with a public civil action, while the law enforcement apparatus plays a role in enforcing the law.³¹ At this point, here it is: the professionalism apparatus is tested, especially in the use of authority, the exercise of discretion, as well as the construction of fair and proportional law.

In certain contexts, the pursuit of a perpetrator is carried out by the community as a form of spontaneous criminal action. The action is outside the formal authority of law enforcement and cannot be equated with an official state apparatus.³² However, when incidents lead to serious consequences, including loss of life, the law's enforcer has an obligation to conduct a professional evaluation of the law objectively, accurately, and impartially. Professionalism is at the stage. This reflected the ability to clearly differentiate among the public, the civil, and the responsibility to uphold state law.

Problems with the implementation of the law arise when the apparatus enforcing it fails to situate the incident within the proper legal framework. Construction accountability criminal offenses that are not proportional, good with expanding and narrowing down, not quite enough answers for certain parties without a strong law, reflecting weakness in professionalism in understanding facts and

³¹ Iwan Rasiwan, *Penegakan Hukum Pidana Di Indonesia: Perspektif Sosiologis* (Jakarta Selatan: DRA Cipta Kreasi, 2025).

³² Mahrus Ali, Andi Mulyono, and Syarif Nurhidayat, "The Application of a Human Rights Approach toward Crimes of Corruption: Analyzing Anti-Corruption Regulations and Judicial Decisions," *Laws* 12, no. 4 (2023): 68, <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws12040068>.

norms of law in a way intact.³³ From the perspective of sociological law, the condition. This shows that the implementation of law depends not only on the normative text but also on the apparatus's ability to read the social context and the dynamics at play objectively.

Besides that, the use of discretion by law enforcement in determining how cases are handled often becomes a source of problems. Unauthorized discretion, accompanied by considerations of ethics and accountability, can create an impression of injustice, especially when the apparatus places greater emphasis on speed of completion or stability in situations than on the search for justice.³⁴ In certain cases, differences in how the law is applied between the parties involved are reflected in public perceptions of discrimination.

Other problems are also visible in practice settlement matters that come to the fore, non-litigation approaches, such as a request, a sorry, or an informal agreement. However, events that occurred in their own dimensions are serious crimes. When the approach is implemented without unambiguous laws, and in light of the principle of equality before the law, the professional enforcers of the law are questionable. Practice the potential cause assumption that the law is implemented in a way that is selective and position-dependent, social, or proximity institutional parties.

From the perspective of sociological law, the condition of the existence gap between law as norms (*law in the books*) and law as practiced (*law in action*). Apparatus enforcer law, as a social actor, plays a central role in determining whether the law functions as a means of justice or, conversely, strengthens the public's trust in the legal system. Weaknesses in professionalism in evaluating facts, using authority, and maintaining ethical professionalism increase the risk of implementing laws that are disproportionate and insensitive to the public's sense of justice.

Thus, the problems with the law's implementation in practice are not always due to direct action by officers in the field, but rather often arise at the stages of handling, assessment, and construction of the law in relation to certain events. Professionalism in law enforcement is a determining factor in whether the law can

³³ Sigrid Nikka, "Exploring Punitiveness, Exploiting Proportionality: Discursively Reverse-Engineering Punitive Proportionality as an Approach Towards Contemporary Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Policy," *German Law Journal*, 2025, 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2025.10174>.

³⁴ Benjamin Levin, "Disentangling Safety and Accountability in Criminal Justice Policy," *Iowa Law Review* 110 (2025): 1–54, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5189433>.

be enforced fairly and objectively, or can instead give rise to social consequences such as distrust in society and the weakening of the legitimacy of institutions' enforcement of the law.

Consequence Professionalism Law enforcement against Legitimacy Institution Law enforcement

Enforcement of professionalism laws is closely linked to legitimate institutions in the public sphere.³⁵ From the perspective of sociological law, legitimacy is not only derived from formal authority conferred by regulations and legislation but also shaped through ongoing social processes in the practice of law enforcement.³⁶ How the authorities exercise their authority, act on society, and interpret and apply the law becomes the main determining factor in whether the public accepts or precisely questions the institutions' enforcement of the law.

Enforcement action laws that do not impose professional consequences directly on the decline in trust in public institutions' enforcement of laws.³⁷ When the authorities apply the law disproportionately or inconsistently or ignore ethical principles, society will conclude that the law is not executed fairly. In that condition, the institution's enforcement law has lost its authority and moral standing, even though it still retains formal authority. The loss of this moral authority begins with weakening institutional legitimacy.

Furthermore, declining public trust leads to lower compliance with the law.³⁸ Compliance with the law is not solely built through threat sanctions, but rather through the belief that the law is enforced in a fair and dignified way. If the public looks at the apparatus enforcer law, professional compliance with the law tends to be

³⁵ Najwa Syabina Aulia, Ayu Nurhaliza Tasimia, and Betrilia, "Pengaruh Profesionalisme Penyidik Terhadap Efektivitas Penegakan Hukum Dalam Proses Penyidikan Tindak Pidana," *Jurnal Kajian Hukum Dan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan* 02, no. 1 (2025): 160–68, <https://jurnal.globalscients.com/index.php/jkhp>.

³⁶ Vannessa Mayliana Christiani and Catharina Dewi Wulansari, "Dinamika Penegakan Hukum Di Indonesia: Analisis Dari Perspektif Sosiologi Hukum," *Jurnal Impresi Indonesia* 4, no. 12 (2025): 5641–51, <https://doi.org/10.58344/jii.v4i12.7214>.

³⁷ Rifky Zaenal Mukhsinin, "Moral Degradation of Police Agencies in the Perspective of Public Trust," *Eastasouth Proceeding of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, no. 01 (2023): 25–31, <https://asj.eastasouth-institute.com/index.php/ephss>.

³⁸ Duncan Purves and Jeremy Davis, "Public Trust, Institutional Legitimacy, and the Use of Algorithms in Criminal Justice," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2022): 136–62, <https://doi.org/10.5406/21520542.36.2.03>.

minimal and instrumental. From the perspective of sociological law, the evidence shows that the law fails to function as a guide to effective social behavior.

Besides that, the low professionalism of the law enforcers also gives rise to a skeptical and apathetic public attitude towards the enforcement of the law. Skepticism appears when the public doubts the objectivity and integrity of officers; meanwhile, an apathetic attitude is reflected in the public.³⁹ To participate in the formal law, both as reporters, witnesses, and seekers of justice. Consequences. This nature is cumulative because every negative public experience interacting with the apparatus, enforcer, or law enforcement will strengthen the collective perception that law enforcement institutions are not working fairly.

From the perspective of sociological law, legitimacy, institutional enforcement, and law are shaped by the fit between normative law (law on the books) and the practice of law enforcement (*law in action*).⁴⁰ When there is a wide gap between the two, professionalism within the apparatus will be low, and the law's legitimacy will gradually erode. On the other hand, the professionalism reflected in fair, transparent, and accountable actions will strengthen the acceptance of social institutions' enforcement of the law.

To facilitate a systematic analysis, the level of public trust in law enforcement institutions is presented in the following table. The data demonstrate the distribution of public confidence across major legal institutions, thereby reflecting the relative legitimacy and perceived performance of each institution.⁴¹

Table Public Trust in Law Enforcement Institutions

No.	Law Enforcement Institution	Level of Public Trust (%)
1	Attorney General's Office	73%
2	Courts	71%

³⁹ Karimullah, "The Role of Law Enforcement Officials: The Dilemma Between Professionalism and Political Interests."

⁴⁰ Musmuliadin, Erlin Indarti, and Nur Rochaeti, "Revolutionizing Justice: Law Enforcement Through the Lens of Progressive Law," *Indonesia Law Review* 14, no. 3 (2024): 57–75, <https://doi.org/10.15742/ilrev.v14n3.3>.

⁴¹ Rizki Sandi Saputra, "Survei LSI: Tingkat Kepercayaan Publik Terhadap Polri Paling Rendah Dibandingkan Kejagung Dan KPK," *Tribunnews.Com*, 2025, <https://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2025/02/09/survei-lsi-tingkat-kepercayaan-publik-terhadap-polri-paling-rendah-dibandingkan-kejagung-dan-kpk>.

3	Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK)	69%
4	Indonesian National Police (Polri)	66%

Source: Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI)

The data indicate that public trust in law enforcement institutions in Indonesia is relatively high but unevenly distributed. The Attorney General's Office ranks highest at 73%, followed by the courts at 71%, and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) at 69%, while the Indonesian National Police (Polri) records the lowest level of trust at 66%. The relatively lower trust in the police may reflect public concerns regarding accountability, integrity, and direct interactions with law enforcement officers. In contrast, the higher trust in the Attorney General's Office may be associated with its visibility in handling major legal cases and its perceived firmness in law enforcement. From a socio-legal perspective, these findings demonstrate that institutional legitimacy is not solely derived from formal authority, but is significantly shaped by how law is implemented in practice (law in action). Therefore, strengthening professionalism and ethical conduct among law enforcement officers is essential to enhancing public trust and sustaining the legitimacy of legal institutions.

Another consequence of low professionalism in the enforcement of law is the emergence of institutionalized structural delegitimization.⁴² Delegitimization. This is not only related to individual apparatuses but can also extend to a general distrust of institutions' enforcement of the law overall. In the long term, it delegitimizes the potentially bothersome function of the justice and criminal law system, because law is no longer viewed as a means of effective and fair conflict resolution.

Furthermore, low-legitimacy institutions' enforcement of the law can push the public to seek a mechanism for settling external conflicts through formal law.⁴³ Phenomenon: This shows a decrease in the role of law as an instrument of social control and guardian order. In the context of the rule of law, conditions are a serious

⁴² Steven Debbaut and Sofie De Kimpe, "Police Legitimacy and Culture Revisited through the Lens of Self-Legitimacy," *Policing and Society* 33, no. 6 (2023): 690–702, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2023.2183955>.

⁴³ Dymytrii Hrytsyshen et al., "State Regulation in the Law Enforcement System Sphere as a Tool for Resolution of a Conflict of Interest in Society," *Society and Security* 1, no. 1(2) (2024): 84–90, [https://doi.org/10.26642/sas-2024-1\(2\)-84-90](https://doi.org/10.26642/sas-2024-1(2)-84-90).

consequence because weakening the law's legitimacy ultimately hinders the achievement of its objectives: justice, certainty, and social order.

Therefore, the professionalism-enforcer law must be understood as a fundamental prerequisite for establishing the legitimacy of institutions' enforcement of sustainable law. High professionalism enables the law to be implemented in a consistent, proportionate, and sensitive manner, fostering a sense of justice in society and thereby strengthening trust in the law and compliance with it. On the other hand, the low professionalism of the apparatus weakens the legitimacy of institutions' enforcement of the law, which ultimately erodes public trust in the rule of law.

IV. CONCLUSION

Professionalism in law enforcement is a fundamental element of the legal system, extending beyond technical competence to encompass integrity, ethical conduct, independence, and sensitivity to the values of living law in society. From a socio-legal perspective, law enforcement officers serve as a crucial link between the law on the books and the law in action, determining how legal norms are translated into practice. The findings of this study indicate that deficiencies in professionalism significantly affect the quality of law enforcement, particularly in the exercise of authority and discretion. Although normative law clearly regulates institutional duties and limits of authority, the effectiveness and fairness of law enforcement are largely determined by officers' ability to interpret and apply the law in a proportional and context-sensitive manner. Failures to maintain professionalism not only lead to errors in individual cases but also widen the gap between normative legal frameworks and social reality.

This study emphasizes that professionalism plays a central role in shaping institutional legitimacy through its direct impact on public trust, legal compliance, and perceptions of justice. Declining professionalism contributes to the erosion of public confidence, the weakening of legal obedience, and the emergence of skepticism toward law enforcement institutions. In this regard, legitimacy is not merely derived from formal authority but is constructed through consistent practices that are perceived as fair, transparent, and accountable. Therefore, strengthening professionalism must go beyond normative legal reform to foster an ethical culture,

institutional integrity, and effective oversight mechanisms. By placing professionalism at the core of law enforcement, it becomes possible to transform formal legal authority into socially recognized legitimacy while ensuring the realization of substantive justice and sustainable public trust in the legal system.

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