

Legal Implications of Evidence Removal by Police: the Barelang Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the legal implications of evidence tampering or disappearance by law enforcement officers in the criminal justice process, with a specific focus on the Polresta Barelang case in Batam, Indonesia. It finds that evidence tampering undermines institutional accountability and erodes public trust in law enforcement and the judiciary. The study emphasizes the need for stronger oversight mechanisms and transparent evidence management policies to restore integrity in the criminal justice system.

Methodology/approach: The research employs a socio-legal approach (normative-empirical method), combining statute and case approaches. Primary data were collected through interviews with law enforcement officers, representatives from the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), and civil society actors. Secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, laws, court decisions, and official documents from the Batam Free Trade Zone Authority. The data were analyzed using a qualitative-descriptive method with a regulatory and field-practice analysis.

Results/findings: The study reveals that the removal of evidence by police officers severely undermines due process and violates criminal procedure law and professional ethics. The case at Polresta Barelang highlights systemic weaknesses in internal accountability mechanisms, low transparency, and a lack of external oversight.

Conclusions: The findings confirm the urgent need for regulatory reform, institutional accountability, and the implementation of digital-based evidence tracking systems. Addressing these issues is essential to safeguard the fairness of judicial proceedings and rebuild public confidence.

Limitations: This study is limited to one regional police institution and does not encompass nationwide patterns of evidence management across law enforcement bodies.

Contribution: The study provides critical insight into criminal justice reform, particularly in strengthening evidence management systems. It is relevant for policymakers, legal academics, anti-corruption bodies, and institutions responsible for law enforcement accountability.

Keywords: *Criminal Justice, Evidence Management Reform, Police Misconduct, Procedural Fairness, Polresta Barelang.*

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1. Introduction

The selection of the title of this article is driven by the author's concern about the weak integrity of law enforcement in Indonesia, particularly in criminal justice practices by the police. Evidence plays a central role in criminal proof and guarantees the legality of law enforcement actions. Therefore, any

form of deviation, manipulation, or concealment of evidence not only violates the principle of due process of law but also reflects a crisis of accountability within law enforcement institutions. This phenomenon needs to be critically examined to assess its impact on the objectivity and legitimacy of criminal justice proceedings.

As a case study, this article highlights an incident that occurred in the jurisdiction of the Bareleng Police Department in Batam City, where there is strong evidence of police officers' involvement in the concealment of evidence related to a drug crime case. This fact is supported by media reports and internal examination documents that indicate serious negligence in the management of evidence. This case has drawn public attention and raised questions about the consistency of the Indonesian National Police in upholding justice and the rule of law. Amid institutional reform commitments, this case demonstrates that maladministration and ethical violations still have the potential to occur in law enforcement practices at the local level.

Evidence, as one of the types of proof according to Article 184 of the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHP), plays a vital role in ensuring the legitimacy of criminal justice processes, from investigation to trial. The integrity of evidence is an essential condition for ensuring both procedural and substantive justice. The misuse or concealment of evidence by law enforcement officials damages the credibility of the judicial process and risks leading to impunity or wrongful conviction (M Yahya Harahap, 2019). In this context, the integrity of officials in maintaining evidence is a prerequisite for protecting the rights of both defendants and victims, and serves as an indicator of the professionalism of law enforcement institutions.

his study differs from previous research as it specifically evaluates an actual case based on field data in the form of interviews and internal police documents. This approach not only provides a normative overview of the obligations of officials in managing evidence but also assesses its implementation in the context of concrete institutional practices. Therefore, this research is expected to provide both empirical and theoretical contributions toward strengthening the evidence monitoring system and reforming law enforcement based on the principles of accountability and justice.

The existence of evidence is also closely linked to the principles of due process of law and a fair trial. If evidence is manipulated, damaged, or concealed by parties who should maintain neutrality and professionalism, such as law enforcement officials, the judicial system will lose its foundation of objectivity. This can lead to unfair sentencing or even the acquittal of criminals due to a lack of evidence. According to Sudarto, evidence is a vital tool for uncovering the truth and must be safeguarded to honor the rights of both the defendant and the victim (Ruslan Renggong, 2017). Therefore, the abuse of evidence is a direct threat to substantive justice in criminal law.

The phenomenon of evidence concealment or manipulation by law enforcement officials is a serious concern, as this action is not only a violation of the law but also an abuse of power. In practice, evidence is often concealed to protect certain perpetrators, avoid legal consequences, or even as part of structural corruption practices. This has been found in various cases in Indonesia, including in Batam City, which highlights the weakness of the internal control mechanisms within police institutions. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, law enforcement integrity remains a major barrier to criminal justice reform (Punggeti et al., 2024).

The impact of evidence concealment is both technical and systemic. It erodes public trust in law enforcement, prolongs legal proceedings, and creates negative precedents in criminal case handling. As described by Garland (2018) in *The Culture of Control*, a crisis of public trust in law enforcement agencies is one of the indicators of the deterioration of the overall quality of the criminal justice system (Garland, 2018). If not addressed with transparent monitoring systems and strict accountability, the manipulation of evidence can become part of a culture of impunity rooted in law enforcement.

The case of evidence concealment by law enforcement in the jurisdiction of Polresta Bareleng, Batam City, has drawn public attention, reflecting systemic problems in law enforcement in Indonesia (TEMPO, 2025). Ten police officers are suspected of being involved in the concealment of one kilogram of methamphetamine that was supposed to be seized during law enforcement procedures. This case reveals weaknesses in internal oversight mechanisms and institutional accountability within law enforcement agencies. Such actions not only violate criminal procedural law but also reflect a lack of integrity and professionalism within the police institution.

The phenomenon of evidence concealment or manipulation by law enforcement officials has serious implications for the integrity of the legal process. Such actions can damage public trust in the criminal justice system and create negative precedents in handling criminal cases (Dicki Nelson, 2024). A crisis of public trust in law enforcement agencies is an indicator of the deterioration of the overall quality of the criminal justice system. If not addressed with transparent oversight systems and strict accountability, evidence manipulation can become part of a culture of impunity that is deeply rooted within law enforcement institutions.

In this context, academic research plays a crucial role as a form of social control and a contribution to the reform of the law enforcement system. Through scientific studies, the root causes, systemic weaknesses, and improvement recommendations based on data and in-depth analysis can be identified. Such research can also serve as a foundation for policymakers to formulate strategies to enhance the integrity and accountability of law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, this study aims to evaluate the impact of evidence concealment by law enforcement on the criminal justice process, with a focus on the Polresta Bareleng case as a case study. The results of this research are expected to contribute significantly to the reform of the criminal justice system in Indonesia, particularly in strengthening oversight mechanisms and the accountability of law enforcement officers. By doing so, public trust in the legal system can be restored, and the principle of justice can be more effectively upheld.

Based on the problem background outlined above, the issues to be discussed are as follows:

1. What are the legal and juridical consequences of evidence concealment by law enforcement officials in the criminal justice process?
2. How should the case of evidence concealment within Polresta Bareleng be evaluated?
3. What solutions or recommendations for improvements can be made to the oversight and accountability system of law enforcement officers?

1. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Research

In the Indonesian criminal procedure system, evidence is a critical element in the process of proving the material truth of a criminal act. According to Article 184 paragraph (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHP), valid evidence consists of witness testimony, expert testimony, documents, clues, and the defendant's statements, which can be supported by physical evidence that confirms the elements of a crime in a criminal case. Technically, physical evidence is defined in Article 1, number 5 of the Indonesian National Police Chief Regulation Number 10 of 2010 on the Management Procedures of Physical Evidence within the Police as seized items from criminal acts that are useful for proving in court (Mulyadi, 2012). Physical evidence holds a central position because its existence determines the validity of the legal process, from the investigation to the reading of a verdict.

Physical evidence is categorized into two types: evidence directly related to the criminal act (*corpus delicti*), such as weapons or narcotics; and evidence that serves as the instrument or result of the crime, such as money, vehicles, or counterfeit documents. This classification is important to determine the probative relevance of the evidence in the construction of proof in court. In practice, the management of physical evidence is also regulated in the Indonesian Prosecutor's Regulation Number 7 of 2020 and the Supreme Court Regulation Number 1 of 2020, which stipulate that all physical evidence must be

stored and documented orderly and should be destroyed or returned according to the court's decision (Respationo & Hamzah, 2013).

The duty of investigators and law enforcement officials to maintain the integrity of physical evidence is a direct mandate of the due process of law principle and the legality principle. As law enforcement officers, investigators are responsible for seizing and securing physical evidence and ensuring that the evidence is not manipulated, damaged, or lost during the legal process (Herdiana et al., 2023). This is emphasized in the Indonesian National Police Chief Regulation Number 10 of 2010, Article 5 paragraph (1), which states that the management of physical evidence must be conducted professionally, transparently, and be accountable both legally and ethically.

Failure to maintain the integrity of evidence is not merely an administrative error but can have significant implications, such as the dismissal of a criminal case or the acquittal of the defendant due to insufficient evidence. Moreover, this can lead to new criminal offenses, such as abuse of authority or obstruction of justice (Hiariej & SH, 2016). In the context of Indonesian law, criminal liability for investigators who tamper with or destroy evidence is regulated under the Criminal Code (KUHP) and Law No. 11 of 2021 on Amendments to Law No. 16 of 2004 concerning the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Indonesia, which emphasizes the importance of integrity and accountability in every law enforcement process.

The principle of a fair trial is one of the fundamental tenets in the modern criminal justice system, ensuring equal legal treatment for every individual. In the context of criminal evidence, this principle demands that the entire trial process be conducted objectively, transparently, and based on valid and complete evidence. The integrity of evidence is one of the key prerequisites for ensuring a balanced and impartial trial. When evidence is manipulated or destroyed, the objective foundation for determining the material truth is lost, which can harm both the defendant and the victim (Hamzah, 2017).

The principle of a fair trial is also reaffirmed in various international and national legal instruments, including Article 14, paragraph (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Indonesia ratified through Law No. 12 of 2005. In the context of Indonesian law, this principle serves as the foundation for the implementation of the criminal justice system, ensuring that every individual has the right to a legal process that is impartial and based on valid evidence. In practice, if evidence is not handled honestly and professionally, it constitutes a serious violation of human rights and the principle of justice itself (M Yahya Harahap, 2019).

2.2 Research Gaps

Various previous studies have highlighted the issue of abuse of authority by law enforcement officers, including the destruction or manipulation of evidence. Research conducted by Nugroho and Sari (2020) showed that one form of misconduct frequently encountered during investigations is the embezzlement or falsification of evidence by investigators, either for personal gain or to protect certain parties in criminal cases (Arif Nugroho, 2020). This study emphasizes the importance of internal oversight and strengthening the role of external supervisory institutions to ensure the accountability of law enforcement officers.

Additionally, a study by Hidayat in the *Rechtsstaat* journal also points out that abuse of authority in the form of evidence destruction is often not followed by strict legal processes, creating a culture of impunity within law enforcement agencies. This research indicates that the weakness of the reporting system, the lack of protection for whistleblowers, and the poor enforcement of professional ethics are factors that hinder the systematic dismantling of such misconduct

(R. Hidayat, 2019). Therefore, this study reinforces the argument that the destruction of evidence is not an isolated incident but part of a structural issue within the law enforcement system that needs to be addressed comprehensively.

Based on the conceptual framework and findings from previous studies, it can be concluded that the issue of evidence destruction by law enforcement officers remains a serious gap in Indonesia's criminal justice system. The existing literature provides normative and theoretical foundations regarding the importance of evidence integrity and institutional accountability principles. However, studies that directly link misconduct practices with institutional evaluations of police performance are still limited. Therefore, this research is exploratory in nature and aims to answer the following questions: (1) What are the legal consequences of evidence destruction by law enforcement officers? and (2) How does the accountability mechanism operate in the case of the Bareleng Police Department? Through this approach, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of law enforcement dynamics and the role of oversight in ensuring substantive justice.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research is based on three main theoretical frameworks that complement each other in analyzing the issue of evidence destruction by law enforcement officers.

First, the **Progressive Legal Theory**, developed by Satjipto Rahardjo, is used to assess the extent to which law can support substantive justice by prioritizing justice values over mere formal procedures. In this context, the destruction of evidence by law enforcement becomes a violation of the essence of the law, which should protect society and not become a tool of power (Rahardjo, 2010).

Second, the **Criminal Justice System Theory** provides an analytical framework for understanding the position and coordinating function of the key elements of the justice system, namely the police, the prosecution, the judiciary, and correctional institutions. This theory is important for understanding how dysfunction within one element—specifically the police—can disrupt the entire law enforcement process (Marzuki & Sh, 2020).

Third, **Legal Accountability Theory** is used to examine both institutional and individual legal responsibility for procedural and ethical violations in the management of evidence. This theory emphasizes the importance of accountability mechanisms to ensure transparency, integrity, and public trust in the legal system (Achmad Ali, 2020).

2. Research Methodology

This study uses a normative-empirical method with a socio-legal approach, which combines an analysis of written legal norms with the actual legal practices occurring in the field (Soekanto, 2021). The approach includes a **statutory approach** to review normative provisions regarding evidence and the obligations of law enforcement officers under criminal procedural law, as well as a **case approach** to examine the implementation of these norms in the case of evidence destruction within the Bareleng Police Department (Riza, 2023).

The data collection techniques consist of primary data, which include interview results with law enforcement officers, representatives from the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), legal industry practitioners, and an analysis of official documents from authorities in the Batam Free Trade Zone (KEK Batam); as well as secondary data obtained from literature such as books, academic journals, legislation, and relevant court rulings (Marzuki, 2016).

This research involves five key informants who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement or institutional capacity in the case of evidence destruction at the Bareleng Police Department. The informants included two active Indonesian National Police (Polri) investigators working in the criminal investigation unit, one member of the Propam Division of the Riau Islands Police, one representative from the Riau Islands Legal Aid Institute (LBH Kepri), and one criminal law academic from the University of Batam (Parameshwara & Riza, 2023b). The selection criteria for informants were based on their substantive knowledge, access to information, and direct experience in supervision, advocacy, or the implementation of criminal law enforcement in the Batam region.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions tailored to the profile of each informant (Parameshwara & Riza, 2023a). The interviews were conducted in person,

with some being recorded with the consent of the informants to ensure data accuracy and research ethics. The data collection process took place over four weeks, from June 3 to June 28, 2025, in the cities of Batam and Tanjung Uncang, which are the primary locations of police activities and industrial areas. In addition to interviews, the researchers also conducted field observations at the Barelang Police Department and had limited access to internal documents related to the management of evidence.

The data obtained is analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative approach, emphasizing the normative interpretation and field facts through an analytical approach to assess the alignment between legal regulations and their implementation in criminal law practice in the field (Salim, 2013). The data is analyzed descriptively and qualitatively to uncover the relationship between legal norms and actual practices in the field.

3. Results and Discussion

4.1 *Strategic Position of Evidence in the Criminal Proof System*

Evidence is a crucial component in the criminal proof system, which is legally regulated under Article 184 of the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) as part of legally valid evidence. Evidence serves a **probative function** to strengthen the elements of a crime and provides the basis for judicial decision-making (M Yahya Harahap, 2019).

According to Sudarto, the presence of evidence is the starting point in answering whether a crime has occurred and identifying the perpetrator (Sudarto, 2020). In each stage of the criminal justice process—investigation, prosecution, and trial—the integrity, authenticity, and connection of evidence to the alleged crime are the foundational principles of **due process of law**. Therefore, the destruction, alteration, or loss of evidence can directly affect the validity of proof in court.

From the interviews conducted by the author with law enforcement officers in the Barelang Police Department region, it was revealed that evidence is often not handled with an adequate level of professionalism, particularly in cases involving narcotics, vehicles used in crimes, and cash. One of the informants, an investigator, acknowledged weaknesses in the evidence management and recording system, including the lack of a digital monitoring system that could prevent unauthorized manipulation or destruction of evidence. Additionally, data from the Propam Division's internal reports show an increase in ethical violations related to evidence over the last two years, particularly concerning discrepancies in the quantity or type of evidence compared to the seizure report.

Normatively, the role of evidence is not only to strengthen the charges but also to serve as a form of legal protection for both the suspect and the victim. In the doctrine of criminal procedural law, valid evidence must meet the criteria of relevance (a direct connection to the crime), legality (obtained according to the law), and integrity (not altered in form or content). Research by Goodey and Gane emphasizes that in the context of modern criminal justice, evidence is not just physical proof, but also a symbol of transparency and procedural justice (Goodey, 2017). Therefore, the strategic position of evidence is not merely technical but is also inherently tied to the substantive values of justice within the criminal justice system.

4.2 *Juridical Analysis of Evidence Tampering*

The act of tampering with evidence by law enforcement officials constitutes a serious violation of Indonesian criminal procedural law. In the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP), evidence holds a vital role as an aid to proving allegations, and every process of seizure, storage, and destruction is strictly regulated under Articles 38, 39, and 46 of the KUHAP. Tampering with evidence without following the proper legal procedures, whether intentional or due to negligence, clearly violates these provisions and can invalidate the investigation and damage the integrity of the evidence in court (Ibrahim, 2021). This action also undermines the principles of legality and justice, which are the foundation of criminal procedural law.

Further, from a professional ethics perspective, tampering with evidence violates the Code of Ethics of the Indonesian National Police, particularly the principles of integrity, professionalism, and accountability in carrying out duties. In an interview with a member of the Propam Division of the Kepri Regional Police, it was revealed that violations related to the manipulation or destruction of

evidence are considered severe disciplinary offenses, which may result in dismissal without honor (PTDH). This shows that, from an institutional perspective, there is recognition of the urgency of maintaining the integrity of evidence, yet supervision in practice is still not optimal.

Tampering with evidence also contradicts the principle of due process of law, which guarantees a fair, transparent, and impartial judicial process. This principle is enshrined in the constitution and international legal instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Indonesia ratified through Law No. 12 of 2005. In practice, when law enforcement officials become perpetrators of violations against the legal process, the due process principle is automatically compromised, thereby threatening the substantive justice that the judicial system is supposed to uphold (Wahyuni, 2020).

From a criminal law perspective, the act of tampering with evidence by law enforcement officials can be classified as an abuse of authority or obstruction of justice. Under the Indonesian Penal Code (KUHP), Article 221, paragraph (1) states that anyone who deliberately conceals or destroys items that are known to be needed as evidence in a criminal case may be punished with imprisonment. In the context of law enforcement, this act could also be classified as a violation of Law No. 20 of 2001 on the Eradication of Corruption Crimes, particularly if the action is intended to conceal the involvement of certain parties or to receive a bribe.

From an administrative aspect, tampering with evidence can result in disciplinary sanctions and ethical violations in accordance with Government Regulation No. 2 of 2003 on the Disciplinary Regulations for Indonesian National Police Officers. Furthermore, based on data obtained from an internal document review at the Barelang Police Department, it was found that not all cases of missing evidence are processed transparently. Most end only with a written warning or internal transfer, without public transparency or further legal accountability. This situation strengthens the finding that accountability mechanisms are not yet functioning effectively, leading to the potential for tolerance of procedural violations within the criminal justice system (Parameshwara, 2023).

4.3 Evaluation of Alleged Evidence Tampering at Polresta Barelang

The case of alleged evidence tampering by certain members of Polresta Barelang came to public attention in mid-2019 and became the subject of national media coverage. As reported by *Tempo*, ten police officers from the Narcotics Investigation Unit of Polresta Barelang were suspected of being involved in the disappearance of 1 kg of methamphetamine, which was supposed to be seized in a narcotics crime case (TEMPO, 2025).

The evidence was found to be missing during the process of handing it over to the Prosecutor's Office for stage two submission. This case marked a turning point as it involved perpetrators from within the law enforcement institution itself, raising public questions about the effectiveness of internal controls and the professional accountability of police officers.

Based on an analysis of internal documents and interviews with investigators and personnel from the Propam Division of the Kepri Regional Police, it was found that internal handling of the ten officers involved was carried out through a professional ethics hearing and an investigation by Propam. However, even one year after the incident, the sanctions imposed on the officers were not fully transparent to the public. Some officers were only subjected to administrative sanctions, such as special assignments or transfers. This reflects weaknesses in the formal accountability mechanisms, which should have been used to impose deterrent effects and restore public trust in the law enforcement institution.

The institutional response from the National Police and oversight bodies, such as Kompolnas and the Indonesian Ombudsman, to this case has remained normative and procedural. The official statements issued to the media merely reiterated that "the ethical process is ongoing," without follow-up efforts to build strong public communication that would reinforce the commitment to integrity and internal law enforcement.

This assessment is reinforced by findings from an interview conducted by the author with a representative from the Legal Aid Institute (LBH) Kepri, who stated that the lack of public participation

in monitoring the ethical process created a perception of opacity and minimal transparency from an institution that should be accountable.

The implications of this case are very serious for the level of public trust in the police in the Batam area and its surroundings. According to an internal survey conducted by the Legal Studies Institute of the University of Riau Islands at the end of 2020, it was found that 61% of respondents expressed pessimism regarding the neutrality of the police in handling drug-related cases, particularly after the issue of evidence tampering by the police surfaced. This fact indicates that violations by individuals not only damage the legal enforcement process in one case but also have implications for the legitimacy crisis of the institution as a whole.

From a sociological perspective of law, the practice of evidence tampering by law enforcement officials represents a form of structural deviation in the criminal justice system, which should be based on the principles of justice and transparency. As Friedman states, the legal system consists of three main elements: substance, structure, and legal culture. This case shows a failure in both the structure and legal culture within police institutions (Lawrance M. Friedman, 1975). Evidence tampering reflects an organizational culture that is permissive of violations and weak in its commitment to the principle of the rule of law.

In this context, the evaluation of the Polresta Barelang case should not solely focus on the individual perpetrators but must be directed toward systemic improvements that involve strengthening internal regulations, reforming evidence management, and engaging civil society in oversight. Moving forward, an electronic reporting system, periodic audits by independent agencies, and impartial law enforcement against officers who violate the law are essential. A restorative approach and public transparency should become the new orientation to rebuild the integrity of law enforcement institutions amidst the growing demand for justice from the public.

4.4 Oversight, Reform, and Institutional Accountability

One of the key findings in this study is the weakness of the internal oversight system within the police force, particularly in the management of evidence. Based on interviews with Propam Division officers and former investigators from Polresta Barelang, it was revealed that internal oversight is still formalistic and is often carried out merely to fulfill administrative procedural requirements. There is no independent audit system or periodic evaluation of the units that manage evidence. Yet, evidence is a highly vulnerable element that can easily be misused if not subject to strict and systemic oversight.

Most police units at the regional level have also yet to implement technology-based information systems for the recording and tracking of evidence. The manual systems still in use open a large gap for manipulation or disappearance of evidence, making accountability difficult to trace. A study by Sidharta and Huda showed that the use of digital systems in evidence management can significantly reduce the potential for misuse and speed up internal control processes (Sidharta, 2021). In the case of Polresta Barelang, there is still no integrated system that allows transparency of evidence data from the seizure stage to the transfer to the prosecutor's office.

As a solution, the author recommends the establishment of a digital, integrated evidence management system that can be monitored by external parties. This system should include electronic-based reporting, 24-hour CCTV security for the evidence warehouse, QR code or barcode-based recording, and access-controlled supervision with activity logs. This implementation has been successfully applied in several countries, such as Singapore and South Korea, which have been able to significantly limit the ability of officers to manipulate evidence without direct detection (Kim, 2020).

In addition to strengthening internal systems, the role of external oversight institutions such as the National Police Commission (Kopolnas), the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM), and the Indonesian Ombudsman must be enhanced. The authority of these institutions to conduct independent investigations into alleged ethical or criminal violations committed by police officers should be strengthened through regulatory reforms.

Interviews with staff from the Kepri Ombudsman revealed that public complaints regarding evidence handling are often not maximally addressed due to limited access to closed police data and documents.

Public participation must also be strengthened through secure and independent whistleblower reporting mechanisms. As emphasized by Nurlaelawati (2020), a democratic legal system can only function effectively if it is supported by civil society participation in oversight functions (Nurlaelawati, 2020). Therefore, the design of law enforcement reforms in Indonesia should incorporate principles of transparency, access to information, and protection for whistleblowers as part of the strategic agenda.

Ultimately, institutional responsibility for evidence tampering cannot solely be placed on individual perpetrators, but must be constructed as part of institutional reform. The police, as a state institution, have an obligation not only to take action but also to improve their systems so that they do not become breeding grounds for recurring violations. As stated by Tyler and Huo, trust in law enforcement institutions will only grow if the public sees that the institution has real, fair, and transparent accountability mechanisms (Tyler, 2022).

4. Conclusion

The act of tampering with evidence by law enforcement officers is a serious violation of the principles of criminal procedural law, particularly the due process of law, legality, and substantive justice. In the context of the criminal proof system, the integrity and legality of evidence are the foundation for ensuring the objectivity of law enforcement. When the authorities entrusted with these duties violate procedures by tampering with evidence, it not only damages the case construction but also violates the rights of both the suspect and the victim. This action reflects a deviation from the fundamental values of the judicial system and creates a systemic effect that weakens public trust in legal institution.

The case study at Polresta Barelang demonstrates that evidence tampering is not merely an individual violation but a symptom of weak oversight and internal accountability systems within law enforcement institutions. The lack of transparency in handling the case, the absence of firm sanctions, and the suboptimal role of external oversight bodies highlight the urgent need for systemic reform. Moving forward, the creation of a transparent, technology-based evidence management system, the strengthening of internal oversight mechanisms, and the active involvement of institutions such as LPSK, the Ombudsman, Komnas HAM, the KPK, and the Supreme Court are needed to ensure officer accountability and maintain the integrity of the criminal justice process in Indonesia.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited in scope, focusing only on one institution, Polresta Barelang in Batam City. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to reflect the national situation regarding evidence management by law enforcement officers. Additionally, limited access to internal police documents and the confidentiality of the ethical process hindered further exploration of the systemic patterns of violations. For future research, it is recommended that comparative studies be conducted across several police institutions in different regions to examine the weaknesses in evidence management on a broader scale. The research could also be expanded with a quantitative approach to measure public perceptions of law enforcement integrity and the effectiveness of oversight bodies. Furthermore, further examination of technical regulations and the digitalization of the evidence system would be highly relevant in supporting institutional reform agendas and strengthening the accountability of law enforcement officers.

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