
The Existence of Forensic Psychology in the Dynamics of Law Enforcement in Indonesia

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Abstract- Forensic psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on the application of psychological principles and methods within legal contexts. In Indonesia, although its presence is increasingly recognized, the implementation of forensic psychology in the justice system still faces various structural and practical challenges. This study aims to examine the roles, challenges, and opportunities of forensic psychology in the dynamics of law enforcement in Indonesia. The method used is a literature study with a qualitative descriptive approach, through analysis of various scholarly sources, journals, training modules, and expert opinions in the fields of psychology and law. The results show that forensic psychologists play a crucial role in four stages of the legal process: prevention, investigation, sentencing, and rehabilitation. However, this role has yet to be fully optimized due to regulatory limitations, a shortage of professionals, and a lack of understanding among law enforcement personnel regarding the functions of forensic psychology. This study concludes that strengthening policies, developing professional standards, and integrating psychological science into the legal system are essential to enable forensic psychology to contribute optimally toward a more scientific, just, and humanistic judicial process.

Keywords: Forensic Psychology, Law Enforcement, Expert Witness, Judicial System, Indonesia.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern legal system, the resolution of a case is determined not only by the strength of physical evidence and formal legal procedures but also by a comprehensive understanding of the psychological aspects of the perpetrator, victim, and witnesses. This is where forensic psychology plays a crucial role. Forensic psychology is a branch of psychology that focuses on the application of psychological theories, principles, and methods within the legal context. This discipline represents a fusion between psychology and law, aiming to support the judicial process in becoming more objective, fair, and humane.

According to Bartol and Bartol (2014), forensic psychology encompasses all aspects of psychology that relate to the legal system, both criminal and civil. Forensic psychologists can work in various fields, such as assisting the police during investigations, providing expert testimony in court, conducting psychological assessments of defendants, and designing rehabilitation programs for inmates. In other words, the presence of forensic psychologists offers an additional dimension in understanding the dynamics of crime and supports a more holistic legal process.

In Indonesia, the role of forensic psychology is still in the developmental stage. Although the

Indonesian Association of Forensic Psychology (APSIFOR) was established in 2007, the contribution of forensic psychology in legal practice remains suboptimal. Jaenudin (2019) stated that the involvement of psychology in the Indonesian legal system is not yet supported by strong regulations and a clear working structure, which often results in psychologists being limited to passive consultant roles rather than active members of law enforcement teams.

One of the main challenges in implementing forensic psychology in Indonesia is the limited number of competent and certified practitioners. The chairperson of APSIFOR, Dra. Reni Kusumowardani, M.Psi., Psychologist, stated that as of 2019, APSIFOR had only around 300 members. This number is far from sufficient when compared to the caseload requiring psychological analysis, including cases of violence, sexual abuse, mental disorders, juvenile delinquency, and cybercrime.

Akhidiat and Marliani (2011) explained that the role of forensic psychologists is not limited to clinical assessments, but also involves an understanding of social psychology, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology. For example, in cases involving child abuse, a forensic psychologist must understand the dynamics of child development, recognize trauma, and elicit testimony using appropriate methods. This differentiates forensic psychologists from general clinical psychologists, as their professional duties are not only therapeutic but must also be legally accountable.

Operationally, forensic psychology covers a wide range of tasks. Kaloeti et al. (2019) noted that forensic psychologists are involved in psychological autopsies, examinations of witnesses and suspects, behavioral analysis (criminal profiling), and assessments of a person's eligibility to serve as a witness or defendant in court. Their role even extends into the correctional system, where psychologists support inmates during incarceration, assess their readiness for social reintegration, and assist in rehabilitation processes.

Nevertheless, there are significant obstacles in the practice of forensic psychology in Indonesia. One of them is the lack of standardized criteria regarding who is qualified to serve as an expert psychological witness, when psychological involvement is considered relevant, and how procedural mechanisms

should be carried out. A training module from the Education and Training Agency of the Indonesian Prosecutor's Office (2019) noted that psychological testimonies are often seen as less relevant or merely opinion-based if not supported by strong legal foundations. This perception has hindered psychologists from gaining equal standing with other legal experts in court.

On the other hand, changing times and the increasing complexity of crimes in Indonesia present a major opportunity for the advancement of forensic psychology. Cases such as sexual crimes, domestic violence, child exploitation, and cybercrime demand interdisciplinary approaches that combine legal, psychological, and social perspectives. Therefore, institutional strengthening, increasing the number of practitioners, and the establishment of clear regulatory support are urgent needs to empower forensic psychology to play a greater role in the Indonesian judicial system.

Overall, it can be concluded that forensic psychology is a vital component in a humane legal system based on social justice. This role goes beyond merely "reading someone's psyche"; it is about building a bridge between science and justice. If managed properly, forensic psychology in Indonesia could become a key force in transforming the legal system to better respond to societal dynamics and the needs of both victims and perpetrators within the legal context.

II. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method, which involves reviewing literature in the form of books, journals, scholarly articles, and official documents related to forensic psychology and its application within the Indonesian legal system. This method is considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth exploration of both theoretical and practical understandings without direct involvement in the field (Zed, 2003). The analysis is conducted descriptively through content analysis techniques applied to various sources to identify the roles, challenges, and opportunities of forensic psychology. Expert opinions are also utilized to strengthen the analysis, such as the views of Zainal Arifin Mochtar, who emphasizes the importance of psychological aspects in the justice system, and Dra. Reni Kusumowardani, who states that the

involvement of psychologists should begin at the early stages of investigation. Prof. Dr. Sarlito W. Sarwono also adds that forensic psychologists are required to remain objective, even under the pressures of the legal system.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Strategic Role of Forensic Psychology in the Indonesian Legal System

Based on a literature review of various sources and official documents, forensic psychology plays a crucial role in supporting law enforcement processes in Indonesia. Forensic psychologists contribute in four main stages of the legal system: (1) crime prevention, (2) investigation and psychological assessment of perpetrators and victims, (3) providing sentencing recommendations, and (4) rehabilitative support in correctional institutions.

In the prevention stage, forensic psychologists may engage in public education and training for law enforcement personnel regarding psychological factors that drive criminal behavior. Psychology is used as an approach to understand the root causes of criminal actions and to reduce risk factors. This aligns with the view of Bartol and Bartol (2014), who state that forensic psychologists do not only focus on post-crime actions but also play a preventive role through education and social intervention.

During the investigation stage, forensic psychologists are involved in conducting interviews with both perpetrators and victims to gather in-depth information about motives, mental conditions, and the reliability of testimony. Skills in interpreting non-verbal cues, emotional responses, and manipulative tendencies are critical at this stage. According to Akhidiat and Marliani (2011), forensic psychologists combine knowledge from cognitive and clinical psychology during interrogation and assessment processes, thus producing more objective information to support the investigation.

At the sentencing stage, forensic psychologists provide recommendations based on psychological evaluations of the defendant. These assessments include mental stability, legal competency, likelihood of recidivism, and potential for rehabilitation. As explained by Syam et al. (2017), in certain cases such as premeditated murder, forensic psychology can

play a role in determining the level of awareness and responsibility of the perpetrator. This is essential for ensuring proportionate and fair sentencing.

In the imprisonment and social reintegration stage, forensic psychologists assist inmates through rehabilitation programs, counseling, and assessments of readiness for reintegration into society. In this regard, forensic psychology works in synergy with clinical and social psychology to design recovery programs tailored to the inmates' psychological profiles.

Implementation Challenges of Forensic Psychology

Despite its broad scope of roles, the literature review reveals several structural and cultural challenges in implementing forensic psychology in Indonesia. First, there is still no clear regulatory framework that specifically governs the operational standards, competencies, and authority of forensic psychologists within the judicial system. The involvement of psychologists in legal cases is generally consultative and not legally binding unless formally requested by law enforcement authorities such as the police, prosecutors, or courts. As a result, the role of psychologists often remains passive and lacks strategic influence in legal decision-making processes.

Second, the number of active forensic psychologists in Indonesia is still very limited. According to APSIFOR data, as of 2019 there were only about 300 registered members. This number is far from sufficient compared to the number of legal cases requiring psychological assistance, especially in regions with a high case load. Reni Kusumowardani (2019) emphasized that the main challenge lies not only in quantity but also in the quality and preparedness of professionals to handle complex cases, which often involve political, media, and social pressures.

Third, the limited understanding of law enforcement officers regarding the function and scope of forensic psychologists is another major obstacle. In many cases, law enforcement still sees psychologists as administrative supporters or victim companions, rather than strategic experts whose input is crucial in ensuring justice. As stated by Zainal Arifin Mochtar (2017), the legal approach in Indonesia remains normative-legalistic, which often neglects psychological aspects in legal

considerations.

Theoretical and Practical Gaps

The study also highlights a gap between theory and practice in the development of forensic psychology in Indonesia. Theoretically, forensic psychology has long been recognized as a vital field within judicial systems in many countries. However, in the Indonesian context, the discipline has yet to be optimally integrated into psychology education. University psychology curricula do not consistently include forensic psychology as a core subject, leaving future psychologists unequipped with legal competencies from the outset.

This results in a lack of scientific publications addressing forensic psychological practices or applied research. According to Maramis (2015), this publication gap has caused scholarly discourse in the field to stagnate and hinder progress. Consequently, many psychological recommendations are ignored or unused in legal proceedings because they are not presented in formats or language compatible with the legal system.

Opportunities for Strengthening Forensic Psychology

Despite these challenges, the review also identifies significant opportunities to develop forensic psychology in Indonesia. The increasing number of cases involving sexual violence, juvenile justice, mental health issues, and cybercrime necessitates the presence of psychological experts who can bridge psychological and legal aspects in a unified process. Additionally, the emergence of new policies such as the Child Protection Act, the Mental Health Law, and the draft bill on Sexual Violence strengthens the urgency of psychology's role within the national legal framework.

If well-integrated, forensic psychology can become a valuable legal tool that not only explains what happened but also why it happened and how the legal system should respond in a just and humane way. Prof. Dr. Sarlito W. Sarwono (2010) emphasized that forensic psychologists must remain objective and scientific while also showing empathy to understand the human side of both perpetrators and victims within a legal context.

Comparison with Previous Studies

Compared to previous studies, this review aligns with the findings of Hamdi Muluk (2013), who pointed out that the involvement of psychologists in the legal system is often hindered by inter-professional perception gaps. On the other hand, Syam et al. (2017) offer a more optimistic view, showing that forensic psychology can be highly effective in uncovering hidden motives and deception, especially when methods such as lie detection and profiling are properly applied.

However, unlike in developed countries that already have established forensic psychology court guidelines, the role of psychologists in Indonesia remains unprotected by a clear legal system. This key difference significantly limits the potential contribution of psychologists within Indonesia's judicial processes.

IV. CONCLUSION

Forensic psychology plays a significant role in supporting an objective and just legal enforcement system in Indonesia. This role encompasses various stages of the legal process, ranging from the prevention of criminal acts, psychological assessment of perpetrators and victims, sentencing recommendations, to rehabilitative assistance in correctional institutions. However, its implementation still faces several obstacles, such as limited regulations, a lack of understanding among law enforcement officers, a shortage of trained professionals, and a lack of scientific publications to strengthen the discipline's position within legal practice. This study indicates that the existence of forensic psychology in Indonesia is still in its early developmental stage, requiring structural, institutional, and academic support. The need for an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates psychological insights in handling legal cases is becoming increasingly urgent, especially with the complexity of modern crimes such as sexual violence, technology-based offenses, and child-related cases. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen policies, establish clear professional standards, and integrate forensic psychology into higher education and the national legal system. With these measures, forensic psychology can contribute optimally to the creation of a judicial system that is not only legally formal but also humanistic and science-based.

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